BLACK WOMEN
ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

WHY WE DON’T SEEK PUBLIC AND PROFESSIONAL HELP

Neneh Bojang Project leader
Pawa 2009
ANXIETY

• Anxiety is the normal emotion we all experience when feeling ill at ease about a future danger we anticipate.

• Anxiety becomes a major problem for many people when feeling ill at ease becomes extreme and prevents one from functioning normally. This leads to anxiety disorders.
DEPRESSION

- Depression refers to an emotional state in which there are extreme feelings of sadness, dejection, lack of worth and emptiness.
- Depression is more than the normal everyday ups and downs. When the down mood lasts for a long time (a couple of weeks) the condition may lead to clinical depression.
- Clinical depression is a serious health problem and affects the total person. It affects our feelings and can change our behaviour, physical health and appearance, and our ability to handle everyday decisions and pressures.
Anxiety disorders and depression share a great deal in common. Many of the same symptoms exist in both disorders. Additionally, either condition can be secondary to the other. For instance, a severe anxiety disorder can be sufficiently bothersome to create a secondary case of depression in its wake.
ANXIETY SYMPTOMS

- Are you bothered by constant worries?
- Do you find it difficult to control your anxieties and worries?
- Have other people said that you worry too much?
- Do you feel constant strain and muscle tension?
- Do you become easily tired or have difficulties concentrating?
- Do you often feel restless or have trouble sleeping?
- Has anxiety and worry led to feelings of being troubled or functioning poorly in your daily life?
DEPRESSION SYMPTOMS

- Do you experience loss of energy and feel tired without any special reason?
- Do you have problems concentrating and making decisions?
- Do you lack initiative and interest in things you were interested in before?
- Do you often feel sad or dejected?
- Have you experienced an increase or reduction in appetite?
- Do you have sleeping problems?
- Do you experience a reduced or heightened sex drive?
- Do you have a heightened feeling of guilt?
- Do you think about death or taking your own life?

Knowing the signs and symptoms is important for understanding that we need help to be released from depression.

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BLACK WOMEN, ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION

• Many women suffer from anxiety and depression.
• While many white women are readily diagnosed, it is not so amongst Black women.
• Black women are three times as likely to suffer from depression than either men or white women.
• They are often not diagnosed, and readily accept that it is what it is:
  THE LIFE OF A BLACK WOMAN
• Black Women are at greater risk of anxiety and depression due to:
  sexism, racism, discrimination, stigmatization and other forms of oppression.
• This often prevents them from realising their innate human potential

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Are Anxiety, Disorders and Depression treatable?

- Yes, they are treatable.
- Between 80 and 90 percent of people with depression/anxiety disorders - even the most serious forms - can be helped.
- Symptoms can be relieved quickly through psychological therapies, medications, or a combination of both.
- **The most important step toward treating depression - and sometimes the most difficult - is asking for help.**
- Though Black Women are three times as likely to suffer from depression than either men or white women, they are less likely to seek help.

**WHY??????**
WHY WE DO NOT SEEK PUBLIC AND PROFESSIONAL HELP

- STIGMA
- GOSSIP
- THE FEAR OF APPEARING WEAK.
- IGNORANCE: We in fact have no idea that we are in so much pain.
- LIFE FULL OF STRESS - we are moving so quickly that we do not take time to process what happens to us.
- LACK OF INFORMATION ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES
- LACK OF INFORMATION AS TO WHERE TO GET HELP.
- THE ROLE OF RELIGION
- CULTURAL VALUES
- CULTURAL MISTRUST - due to slavery, racism, stigmatization and oppression

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BLACK WOMEN, ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION
WHY WE DO NOT SEEK PUBLIC AND PROFESSIONAL HELP

• IT IS TIME TO TAKE THE STIGMA OUT OF ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION, AND SEEK THE MEDICAL OR THERAPEUTIC TREATMENT NECESSARY TO COMBAT THE EFFECTS OF ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION.

• WE NO LONGER HAVE TO STRUGGLE ALONE. BLACK WOMEN HAVE BEEN CARRYING A HEAVY LOAD FOR A VERY LONG TIME, AND IT’S TIME TO SET THE LOAD DOWN.
THE STRONG BLACK WOMAN

While struggling with the reality of being a human instead of a myth, the strong black woman passed away. Medical sources say she died of natural causes, but those who knew her know she died from being silent when she should have been screaming, smiling when she should have been raging, from being sick and not wanting anyone to know because her pain might inconvenience them. She died from an overdose of other people clinging to her when she didn't even have energy for herself.
She died from loving men who didn't love themselves and could only offer her a crippled reflection. She died from raising children alone. She died from the lies her grandmother told her mother and her mother told her about life, men & racism. She died from being sexually abused as a child and having to take that truth everywhere she went every day of her life, exchanging the humiliation for guilt and back again.
She died from asphyxiation, from secrets she kept trying to burn away instead of allowing herself the kind of nervous breakdown she was entitled to, but only white girls could afford. She died from being responsible, because she was the last rung on the ladder and there was no one under her she could dump on. The strong black woman is dead.
She died from being dragged down and sat upon by un-evolved women posing as sisters and friends. She died from tolerating Mr. Pitiful, just to have a man around the house. She died from sacrificing herself for everybody and everything when what she really wanted to do was be a singer, a dancer, or some magnificent other. She died from lies of omission because she didn't want to bring the black man down.
She died from myths that would not allow her to show weakness without being chastised by the lazy and hazy. She died from hiding her real feelings until they became hard and bitter enough to invade her womb and breasts like angry tumors. She died from never being enough of what men wanted, or being too much for the men she wanted. She died from being too black and died again for not being black enough.

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She died from being misinformed about her mind, her body & the extent of her royal capabilities. She died from knees pressed too close together because respect was never part of the foreplay that was being shoved at her. And sometimes when she refused to die, when she just refused to give in she was killed by the lethal images of blonde hair, blue eyes and flat butts, being rejected by the Lamins', the Maudos, the Omars & the O'Js.
Sometimes, she was stomped to death by racism & sexism, executed by hi-tech ignorance while she carried the family in her belly, the community on her head, and the race on her back!

The strong black woman is dead! Or is she?
I know I'm not! Please inform all the strong black women that you love, respect, and admire about PAWA's Resource group and Project and join us in the process of self recovery and liberation. We deserve to feel well- We are worth it!

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