

NIU PT DEI ALLIANCE

Let's Talk About:

MENTAL HEALTH



Why Prioritize Mental Health?

Mental Health is REAL and it affects everyone in so many different ways. Mental health is related to DEI because it can be influenced by our diverse life experiences. When someone's race, identity, and sense of who they are, are repeatedly questioned and used against them, their mental health is very likely to be affected. Research shows that Black adults are 20% more likely to experience serious mental health concerns than their white counterparts. Another study displays, that 27% of women experience increased mental health struggles, compared with 10% of men.

Underserved communities often present with limited access to medical care secondary to socioeconomic status factors such as lack of transportation, fear of discrimination, lack of childcare, etc. These components can indirectly prevent an individual from receiving well-needed services from health professionals such as psychiatrists and/or psychologists. As current and future members of the healthcare community, it is important that we prioritize mental health as much as physical and behavioral health for ourselves and patients, as it is inseparably interconnected with our overall health and well-being.

4 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

STAY POSITIVE

Although life does have its challenges, it's important to develop a positive outlook by finding a balance between those negative and positive emotions. Feel your feels to get through those difficult situations but try to avoid allowing those emotions to take over.

PRACTICE GRATITUDE

We have a tendency sometimes to focus on all the bad things that may have happened throughout our lives, but there's so much good that we often overlook. It's helpful to often reflect and think about what you are grateful for during stressful times to help bring out more positive emotions.

SET REALISTIC GOALS AND PRIORITIZE

Decide what needs to get done and what can wait. Sometimes when we think of all the things we need to get done, it can become overwhelming and lead to stress. Instead try to be mindful of what you have accomplished in a day and not what you were unable to do.

EXERCISE REGULARLY

Exercising can be a great way to reduce stress and depression which can improve your mood. Try to get at least 30 minutes of physical activity each day.

PT/SPT of the Month



Mishka Spencer, SPT

Class of 2023

Where are you from?

- I was born in Kingston, Jamaica, spent most of my childhood in the UK and NYC. Now, I live in the Metro-Detroit area in Michigan.

What your Ethnicity, gender, religion?

- I am a Jamaican-American female and follow a Christian faith.

What made you want to become a PT?

- During my undergraduate studies, I was originally started as a Bio major because I enjoyed learning about the health sciences and anatomy. In a presentation I attended in the beginning of my junior year, a presenter who was a PT described their experiences in the field and I wanted to know more since then. After gaining experience in the field working as a tech and experiencing that indescribable feeling from contributing to the success of a patient throughout their rehab process, I knew I wanted to become a PT.

How would you explain your experience getting into PT school?

- Getting into PT school was no walk in the park. I remember when I wanted to switch my major to Kinesiology, and mentioned to my undergrad academic advisor that I wanted to pursue PT, and she frankly told me that I could never become a PT with the grades that I had, and that there was pretty much nothing that I could do to get accepted into a PT program. After that meeting, I recall becoming doubtful about my future, and questioned whether PT was for me. Nonetheless, I changed my major to kinesiology in the final semester of my junior year of undergrad, took 21 credits per semester to graduate on time, gained more experience in the field, and did everything I needed to be the best candidate for a PT program.

How would you explain your experience throughout PT school so far?

- PT school so far has been quite a ride. From having to take anatomy virtually, traveling all the way to PA for my first clinical experience, being away from home, and really just trying to stay motivated through a pandemic and racial reckoning certainly had its challenges. I knew this experience would not be easy, but overall it has allowed me to grow in so many ways and has been an extremely rewarding experience. As I reflect on my experience so far, I am grateful for the lessons I've learned to become a better clinician, and for everyone I've come to know, as they have surely contributed to making this experience worthwhile.

In what ways do you think your background, life experiences, and identity/identities impacted (good or bad) you in life?

- I have always been surrounded by people of different racial and cultural backgrounds as myself. This experience I feel has shaped me to be more down to earth and able to connect with anyone regardless of their background. As a Black Jamaican-American woman, there can be certain social and cultural misconceptions or stereotypes that I sometimes feel I am perceived as possessing. Often, due to the lack of diversity in some spaces I find myself in, I am the only person who looks like me. This can sometimes feel as if I have a weight on my shoulders due to the pressure of feeling as if I need to represent my community, overachieve, and succeed in anything I may pursue. However, as I continue to live and learn, I've become less focused on trying to be this perfectionist, but more on practicing mindfulness, celebrating my successes, and embracing diversity.

RESOURCES

➤ If you are in crisis, get immediate help:

- 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (formerly known as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline): 988 for English or Spanish, or Lifeline Chat. TTY users can use their preferred relay service or dial 711 then 988.
- Crisis Text Line: Text SIGNS to 741741 for 24/7, anonymous, free crisis counseling

➤ National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 or text LOVEIS to 22522

➤ National Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673) or Online Chat

➤ A PHYSICAL THERAPISTS ROLE IN MENTAL HEALTH



Interested in joining the NIU PT DEI ALLIANCE?

Email us at:
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