



# Coping with Stigma and Microaggression During COVID-19

The outbreak of the coronavirus or COVID-19 over the past few weeks has led to overwhelming reports of anti-Chinese and Asian descent sentiments. These individuals are used as scapegoats for the spread of COVID-19 and instances of xenophobia, exclusion, microaggression, and other racist behaviors are on the rise. Both children and adults have been targets of these racist behaviors that often involve physical attacks and deliberate exclusions.

According to NBC news, there were 1000 reported incidents of xenophobia, racism, and harassment towards the Asian-American and Pacific Islander population from January 28 to February 24 alone. Being subjected to any form of racist and intimidating behaviors significantly impacts a person's mental health including an increase of fear and anxiety, hypervigilance, low mood, low self-worth and self-esteem, and high levels of stress.

## Tips for Asian-Americans

- **Know that your experiences and feelings are valid.** Your experiences are real and valid. Make sure to reach out to friends, families, your community, and even through social media who might be experiencing the same experiences you have right now.
- **Limit your exposure with media and the news.** Being informed is okay and good but it can be exhausting too. Be mindful of how much time you are spending listening/watching the news. Take a break when you feel overwhelmed.
- **Put your safety first.** Going outside can be terrifying during this time. Mentally and physically preparing yourself from potential verbal and physical assaults is very important. Although we want to educate and bring awareness to others, putting your physical safety first is important.
- **Remind yourself that this is part of something bigger.** Racism and microaggression may feel like painful personal attacks at times but these are a reflection of a bigger picture involving the historical oppression of minorities.

## Tips for Teachers and Other Educators

- **Share accurate information.** Provide factual and age appropriate information about the virus, how it spreads, and how to prevent it. This can be helpful in reducing prejudice and anxiety towards the pandemic.

**Xenophobia** is the fear or hatred towards the unfamiliar and/or foreign (e.g. people, culture, traditions, etc.).

**Racism** is prejudice and discrimination towards individuals based on their membership to particular ethnic and/or racial group.

**Microaggressions** are daily, verbal and non-verbal, intentional or unintentional messages and behaviors that convey derogatory and hostile slights to a particular group.

## WHERE TO GET ADDITIONAL SUPPORT:

We can provide you with mental health referrals to locate a treatment provider: Call 805-378-1413

Call 800-SUICIDE to talk with a counselor or Text "COURAGE" to 741741 for free 24/7 confidential support

Download CALM, Headspace, or Liberate Apps for guided meditation to relax your mind & body.

- **Speak up if you witness any racist and microaggressive behaviors.** Address and respond to racist and microaggressive behaviors in a consistent manner. Further explaining why such behavior is unacceptable will be helpful as well.
- **Counter microaggressions with micro-affirmations.** Subtly acknowledge and validate your students' feelings and experiences. This will help them feel included and valued.
- **Model compassion and acceptance of differences.** Students learn from teachers, adults, and other authority figures. Try being mindful of your speech and biases when interacting with them and when talking about culture/diversity in class.
- **Create activities and projects geared towards diversity and multiculturalism.** Foster a sense of commonality among your students using activities and opportunities of helping the minorities and marginalized groups.
- **Support and assist students to seek help.** Encourage students to speak up and seek support from others when faced with racism and microaggression. Help the student by fostering a safe and welcoming environment.

### **Tips for Parents and Caregivers**

- **Promote a sense of safety for your children.** Set limits to their exposure on the news and media. Remind them that there are a lot of people who cares about them and values them.
- **Model appropriate reactions to stress and racism.** Be mindful of how to respond to stress and racism whenever your children are present. Show them how to communicate their feelings and how to use healthy coping strategies.
- **Model compassion and kindness.** Show your children how to be kind to yourself and others. Encourage them to talk to themselves as if they are talking to their friend.
- **Focus on their strengths and promote their sense of belonging.** Help your children identify role models from whom they can learn their origins and culture. Encourage your children to participate in community activities that promotes solidarity.
- **Understand and explore your children's fears and experiences.** Feeling anxiety and fear can be overwhelming to children. Help your children talk about their feelings and experiences openly and validate them as well.
- **Encourage them to seek support and talk about their experiences.** Help them understand that asking for help is okay and important. Speak about seeking help as a sign of strength and not weakness.