

Bitesized Belonging: What's the connection between mental healthcare/wellness and DEIB?

Week before last was Wellness Week at Cengage. During this time, Cengage offered a host of events tailored towards taking care of our mental, physical, financial, and emotional wellness. For many of us, it was a week of learning to reengage and prioritize our wellness. For others, it was a good refresher of practices that assist us in mitigating stress and planning for our futures. Whether or not you participated in wellness week, a question arose that's great topic for discussion: what does mental health have to do with DEIB?

What a meaty topic! In order to keep Bitesized Belonging truly “micro” in it's learning, we won't deep dive into these topics too far. Still, it's important we understand the strong connection between this work and DEIB best practices.

When it comes to mental health it's important to understand this concept exists within cultures in different ways. The way American's view mental health, for example, is going to be vastly different than how it's viewed in many East Asian countries. Still, as a DEIB practitioner, there's an important through-line which connects individuals mental health and wellbeing with DEIB best practices and goals.

Research tells us that mental healthcare and wellness play a pivotal role for many historically underrepresented communities. Whether it's creating “safe spaces”, assisting in building emotional resilience, promoting a sense of belonging, or creating psychological safety in work spaces, mental health impacts people's ability to engage effectively with each other and, ultimately, to advocate and support others through action.

Yet, without going too deep into the disparities that exist for many racially underrepresented communities within mental healthcare ([read more about that here!](#)), it's important to note that “in 2019, before the pandemic, one in five adults in the United States experienced mental illness, most often depression or an anxiety disorder. Today those numbers are significantly higher, showing that as many as 80% of Americans struggle with anxiety, depression, grief, or isolation” ([WorkHuman](#)). Those are big numbers. Knowing this, it's almost no wonder folks are feeling exhausted trying to see success in DEI efforts; how can we focus on helping others when each of us is struggling just to make it through the day?

Well, the answer might surprise you. Doing work for others—and by extension working as an advocate, ally, and/or driver of change for historically underrepresented communities—has strong evidence supporting a decrease in stress and anxiety, a marked improvement of mood, improved perspective, increase social support networks, positive sense of purpose, and overall happiness ([MentalHealthFoundation](#)).

That's right. We can improve our own mental health by supporting others!

Exercise

Review one of the following resources:

1. [20 Ways to Be An Advocate for Social Change and Transformation](#)
2. [50 Kindness Ideas for Random Acts of Kindness](#)

Select two tasks and commit to completing them before the end of the month. See if you notice a change to your own mental wellness and health.

**Please note that this advice does not constitute medical advice and should not be used as a replacement of professional healthcare guidance, advice, and/or diagnoses.*