



# Words of Wellness

The Wellness Center Monthly Newsletter

## Cultural Diversity and Mental Health

**Culture** refers to a group's shared set of beliefs, norms, and values. Common social groups have their own cultures, just as mental health professionals and clients have their own cultures, individually and collectively. There are many other cultural groupings, and it would be nearly impossible to describe all of them in one space. Among other things, this means that these different cultures view mental health management and mental illness in different ways, which can be positive and negative. But how can culture and stigma (or negative views) affect the ways people decide to take care of their mental health? According to [Mental Health First Aid](#), there are four ways culture impacts our mental health.

**Cultural stigma.** Every culture has a different way of looking at mental health. For many cultures, there is growing stigma around mental health, and mental health challenges are considered a weakness and something to hide. This can make it harder for those struggling to talk openly and ask for help. However, there are some cultures that look at mental health management more favorably than others.

**Understanding symptoms.** Culture can influence how people describe and feel about their symptoms. It can affect whether someone chooses to recognize and talk about only physical symptoms, only emotional symptoms or both. The culture of the mental health professional can also affect how a person may be assessed or diagnosed.

**Community Support.** Cultural factors can determine how much support someone gets from their family and community when it comes to mental health. Because of existing stigma, minorities are sometimes left to find mental health treatment and support alone. There is a lot of research that suggests family involvement has positive affects on recovery from mental illness, and some cultures are more likely to provide familial support than others.

**Resources.** When looking for mental health treatment, you want to talk to someone who understands your specific experiences and concerns. It can sometimes be difficult or time-consuming to find resources and treatment options that take into account specific cultures factors and needs.

by **Shanté A. Bassett, Psy.D.**  
Counselor, The Wellness Center

## What's on Your Playlist?

Across time and space, music has been associated as a tool to relieve stress, increase productivity, and assist with sleep and rest to name a few. A 6-week [study](#) showed that staff stress levels were significantly decreased after a 30-minute music therapy session each day at work. Although classical and ambient music have long been studied for their calming effects, listening to other genres also has its benefits.

For this month's issue, some Wellness Center Staff were asked to share songs that they listen to when they are seeking solace. Here's what they had to say:



**Jane Kim, PhD**  
Counselor, The Wellness Center

"There is something about putting on a record that feels different. If I'm at home, I love to listen to *Aretha Now*, by *Aretha Franklin*. I put on the record and hear that little crinkly sound for a moment before her voice commands me to "Think," and suddenly I'm in a different frame of mind, bolstered by her power as a singer and artist.

When I need to relax, I look more for melody and ambiance. I listen to *In Rainbows*, *Radiohead*. It's also a good background music for writing."



**Frank LaTerra-Bellino, M.S.Ed., LMHC, RYT**  
Director, The Wellness Center

"I listen to *Rejoice by Steve Angello, T.D. Jakes* song a lot when I am exercising. It's inspirational and pushes me to get through a challenging workout. Also, *Blue in Green by Miles Davis* sets a relaxing mood for days when you want to relax and reflect."

We may all have our go-to music whether it is for meditation, relieving stress and anxiety, working out or to simply set our mood for the day. For next month's newsletter, we will feature students and songs that provide them with stress-relief. Watch out for our Social Media Polls!

Looking for music for your meditation practice or to help get you through your workout? How about songs to help you focus during your study sessions? The Wellness Center has created a [Spotify account](#) and will have music playlists available. Tune in with us!

## Stressed? Don't let stress take over..

National stress awareness day is observed on the first Wednesday of November which aims to highlight the importance of managing stress as well as an opportunity to think about our well-being. Managing stress during this time of uncertainty can be hard. Below are some tips adapted from the [National Institute of Mental health \(NIMH\)](#):

**Be Observant.** Recognize the signs of your body's response to stress, such as difficulty sleeping, increased alcohol and other substance use, being easily angered, feeling depressed, and having low energy.

**Get regular exercise.** Just 30 minutes per day of walking can help boost your mood and improve your health.

**Try a relaxing activity.** Explore relaxation or wellness programs, which may incorporate meditation, muscle relaxation, or breathing exercises. The [Wellness Center](#) offers numerous programs and workshops to support you mental health and well-being.

**Set goals and priorities.** Decide what must get done now and what can wait. Learn to say "no" to new tasks if you start to feel like you're taking on too much.

**Stay connected.** You are not alone. Keep in touch with people who can provide emotional support and practical help. To reduce stress, ask for help from friends, family, and community or religious organizations.

[Read More](#)

## STAFF SPOTLIGHT: SAIDA GORDON, LMSW



Saida Gordon holds a master's degree in social work from Hunter College Silberman School of Social Work (2014), and a bachelor's degree in sociology/health and human services from the State University of New York at Buffalo (2010). She brings ten years of experience serving children, youth, and families throughout the five boroughs. Saida brings expertise in the areas of peer workforce development, community advocacy, and holistic interventions/services for youth and their families.

Her career has focused on bridging the gaps between marginalized communities and their access to historically oppressive systems. In her work, she prioritizes the importance of collaborative conversations that honor diversity and inclusion. She hopes that these conversations reignite people's trust and access to these systems.

In addition to her professional work, Saida holds her LMSW (2015) and SIFI (Seminar in Field Instruction) (2018), where she has served as Field Instructor for many MSW and BSW students. Outside of her work, Saida is an avid reader and supporter of social/political documentaries. She brings an endearing, energetic, and passionate lens to her work.

For the full list of the Wellness Center staff, please visit our [website](#).

### For Students:

If you are new to the Wellness Center and would like to access counseling services, please complete our intake form by scanning the QR code or visiting the link: [tinyurl.com/WellnessCenterIntake](https://tinyurl.com/WellnessCenterIntake)



Intake Form

### For Faculty and Staff:

Please contact the Center via email and briefly describe your concern or visit our webpage at [Helping Students in Distress](#) webpage.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Faculty and Staff:**  
**Anxiety in the New Normal**  
Thursday, Nov. 4  
1:00PM - 2:00PM

[RSVP here](#)

**How Students Can Manage Mental Health After the Pandemic (Students only)**  
Tuesday, Nov. 9  
2:00PM - 3:00PM

[RSVP here](#)

**Tune In!**  
[@ WLGR LaGuardia Web Radio](#)

Monday, Nov. 15  
1:00PM - 2:00PM

Join the discussion with our Counselors: Saida Gordon, Jennifer MitchellMayer and Dr. Jane Kim.

[Stream Live](#)

View our Fall 2021 e-Guidebook and [Campus Calendar](#) for information about events, groups and workshops.

[Learn More](#)

## RESOURCES



In crisis? Text "CUNY" to **741741** to text confidentially with a trained Crisis Counselor for FREE, 24/7.



If you need to speak with someone immediately, please contact NYC WELL for services at **1-888-NYC-WELL** or **1-888- 692-9355** or text **65173**.



In the event of an emergency, please call **911**.

## The Wellness Center

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