



# Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Newsletter



## National Minority Health Month

### Be the Source for Better Health

*Improving Health Outcomes Through Our Cultures, Communities, and Connections*

April is National Minority Health Month! This annual observance builds awareness about the health disparities that persist among racial and ethnic minority and American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) populations and encourages everyone to take action to end these inequities.

This year's theme, **Be the Source for Better Health: Improving Health Outcomes Through Our Cultures, Communities, and Connections**, is about understanding how the unique environments, cultures, histories, and circumstances (known as social determinants of health, or SDOH) of racial and ethnic minority and AI/AN populations impact their overall health.



Be the Source for Better Health | April 2024

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Minority Health (OMH) is committed to working with public health and community-based partners to **Be the Source for Better Health** by providing quality, equitable, and respectful care and services that are responsive to diverse cultural health beliefs and practices, preferred languages, economic and environmental circumstances, and health literacy levels. When patients are provided with culturally and linguistically appropriate information, they are better able to create healthier outcomes for themselves, their families, and their communities.

### About National Minority Health Month

Celebrated every year in April, National Minority Health Month:

- Builds awareness about the disproportionate burden of premature death and illness in people from racial and ethnic minority groups.
- Encourages action through health education, early detection and control of disease complications.

The origin of National Minority Health Month was the 1915 establishment of National Negro Health Week by Booker T. Washington. In 2002, National Minority Health Month received support from the U.S. Congress with a concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 388) that “a National Minority Health and Health Disparities Month should be established to promote educational efforts on the health problems currently facing minorities and other populations experiencing health disparities.” The resolution encouraged “all health organizations and Americans to conduct appropriate programs and activities to promote healthfulness in minority and other communities experiencing health disparities.”



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## Stress Awareness Month

### Manage Stress with The Power of Connection

Many of us feel “stressed out” more often than we would like to admit. That’s unfortunate, because chronic stress can adversely affect our physical and mental health.

If only we had a superpower that would allow us to manage stress.

Well, it may not be a superpower, but each of us does hold the power to do something about stress. It’s the power of *connection*. Getting out of our own heads and connecting with the world around us can be an effective stress-buster.

Here are some simple ways you can connect more to find stress relief.

#### Connect with family and friends

Humans are social creatures. Our ancestors learned the benefits of cooperation long ago, leaving us with an innate desire to connect. [And studies have shown that feeling connected socially can have positive health effects.](#)

Connecting with family and close friends can be a helpful antidote to stress too. People who know you well will know what you’re going through, and they may be able to offer a helpful perspective if you care to discuss the stress factors in your life.

But there’s no obligation to focus your interactions on “solving” your stress, or theirs. You may find it rejuvenating just to talk about the weather, or upcoming celebrations or gatherings. And don’t be afraid to make the first move: If you haven’t talked to an old friend in a bit, send her a “How’s it going?” message and see what you get back.

Reconnecting with an old friend can work wonders!





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## **Connect with a casual acquaintance or stranger**

The benefits of connection aren't restricted to your inner circle. [In fact, research suggests that even casual interactions - with acquaintances, or, say, your postal carrier on a sunny afternoon – promote social and emotional well-being.](#)

So if you want to defuse stress, don't miss an opportunity to enjoy small talk with a cashier or a delivery person. Or tell a coworker (or your favorite barista in a green apron) how much you appreciate them. You'll likely make their day, and you'll be lowering your stress level to boot.

And just as the benefits of connection aren't reserved for your BFFs, it's not required to be IRL either: These days, you can make a meaningful connection with friends and acquaintances via text, email, Facebook, or chat while gaming.

Don't be afraid to put good out there, in the form of positive or supportive comments on social media. Chances are, some of that good will come back to you.

## **Connect with a furry friend#**

[Did you know that studies show that merely the act of petting a dog decreases blood pressure?](#)

And that's just the beginning. Interacting with your pet can relieve stress and suppress stress hormones. Pets bring us feelings of goodwill, joy, nurturing and happiness. Everyone can relate to that wave of warmth that your pet greets you with after a long day at work!

Connecting with your pet can have additional benefits too. Taking your pet to the park might invite healthy social interaction with other people who love their pets. And if you're active with your pet – puppy yoga, anyone? – that has its own healthful upsides, too.

[Download our Move More With Pets infographic. \(PDF\)](#)

## **Connect with nature**

Get out there! Spending time in nature can improve your health and well-being.

But you don't have to hike the Alps to jettison your stress. A walk in a nearby park or around the high school track still gives you the stress-lessening benefit of fresh air, sunshine, and exercise.

You get bonus points – and bonus stress relief – if you combine your time in nature with social interaction. Invite a friend to join you for a brisk walk around the neighborhood. With each step, you may find your stress fading away.



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## Connect with yourself

You can also find stress relief by looking inward. Science recognizes the stress management and mental health benefits of prayer and belief in a higher power, as well as other forms of spirituality.

Many people find stress relief through meditation or mindfulness exercises. Others alleviate stress through mind-body practices, such as yoga or tai chi.

## Connection matters

Connection has the power to relieve stress, and the power of connection can be found in many forms – from a genuine moment of human interaction at the grocery store to a moment of silence amidst the trees in a forest.

Find the form of connection that works best for you, and let's be Healthy for Good.

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Written by American Heart Association editorial staff and reviewed by science and medicine advisors.

## Resources

[National Minority Health Month](#)

[National Stress Awareness Month](#)

### Contact the OSAA

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