
JASMINE

Today you'll work in small groups and read more about one of the students from the video. In your small group, take turns reading aloud each part of your student's story. When you're finished reading, discuss the reflection questions posted on the wall and jot down your group's answers on the chart paper on the wall.



Health Skills Models: www.rmc.org/healthskills

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Jasmine experienced depression after being affected by community violence. She also faced some challenges when trying to get help, but connecting with a therapist provided a safe space for her to talk about her feelings.

RECOGNIZING DEPRESSION I grew up with a parent who experienced depression. As an only child in a single parent home, that can be very difficult because that's your only person, she was a single mother, so that's the only person that I really had communication with and to be cut off like that [because of her depression], I definitely picked up some of those traits. I go through bouts where I'm significantly sad.



[I also had an] experience with community violence [that] was definitely heartbreaking. That's what started me going down in a spiral because it was something I didn't understand, couldn't put an answer to. I feel like when we can't find answers, that's when we get the most confused. When you experience and witness these traumatic events, when you are constantly enduring these traumatic events, you can't help but to feel some type of way about it and to be hurt about it.

IMPACTING DAILY LIFE [When I'm depressed], I shut everyone out. I don't want people to necessarily know that I'm going through a hard time, sometimes especially if I can't identify why I'm going through this or why everything is very emotional for me and bothering me. I just shut down. **When you're feeling feelings of depression, it leaves you confused. It leaves you lonely. It leaves you upset. It leaves you broken feeling.**

I think in the black community we're told that we have to be strong, we have to be independent, and these things are drilled in our head constantly, so when there's something that's happened traumatically, we feel like we're not being strong ... we're not being independent ... we're letting down our families ... we're not being who we're supposed to be.

To think that you're anything less than another person because you're going through depression is really sad for me to hear, especially when so many people experience the same thing. With the stigma in my community about depression, we're all going through something, we're all hurting, but we don't want to say what we're going through, we want to act like we're not struggling with this. And it's just hard.

Stigma for me looked like, *"What goes on in this house, stays in this house,"* and it looked like that for a lot of my friends, too. So a lot of the hurt my friends went through I didn't find out about until years later, even though I was going through it with them, not knowing I was going through it with them.

SEEKING HELP I felt like I had a great connection with a lot of my teachers. They started to notice subtle changes in me and they reached out to me. I didn't want to share what I was going through, and I felt like I was embarrassed. I felt like I was being successful at hiding my depression, but apparently not.

FINDING SUPPORT Therapy for me was a lifesaver. It was a challenge with my family because they weren't supportive of my decision to continue therapy. However, after talking with my parents and grandparents about why this is important to me and how this is changing me, I was able to have some therapy sessions with them as well. So it definitely played a big role in me feeling better.

Something that surprised me about therapy was how much I loved it. I was just so addicted to being able to express myself, and just getting it off my chest, I didn't want to hold in those feelings anymore. It was definitely comforting to be able to talk to someone and not be afraid that other people were going to find out. It's non-judgmental.

COPING SKILLS Church and my spirituality definitely helped me overcome my hard times. I feel like church gave me hope, it was a place where I was amongst people who were going through something and I could see their pain and I could see them growing, and hope that knowing that, *"Yes, I'm going through something. I'm not alone. And God is going to look out for me, He's there for me."* I also started [living] a healthier life. I became invested in reading my Bible, I became invested in the things that I put into my body, I became invested in working out.



Something that I thought wouldn't help was sharing my story. [When I started to share my story] I was able to see how so many people have gone through something similar to what I went through and could use my life and the way I got through it as an example, and it really helped me.

LOOKING FORWARD If I had to say something to someone who was afraid to get help, I want to say that you're already on the right track. You're thinking about *"How can I change my life?"* or *"How can I overcome this?"* So congratulations. This is your life, and it's a precious gift.

I've learned that life throws everyone curveballs. No matter how rich, beautiful, popular, or another label that is desired, everyone goes through something or is born with something.

Reflection Questions

1. What was going on in her life to trigger the depression?
2. Why was it so hard for her to talk about her feelings?
3. How did it impact her daily life?
4. How does Jasmine explain stigma? What is stigma?
5. What self-care strategies does Jasmine use?
6. If a friend at your high school felt depressed... list two people or resources (websites, organizations, books, etc.) that would be a valid/ reliable resource.

