

Death creates ripples of grief throughout communities

Continued from page 2

white mothers to die from a pregnancy-related complication. (Hispanic people can be of any race or combination of races.)

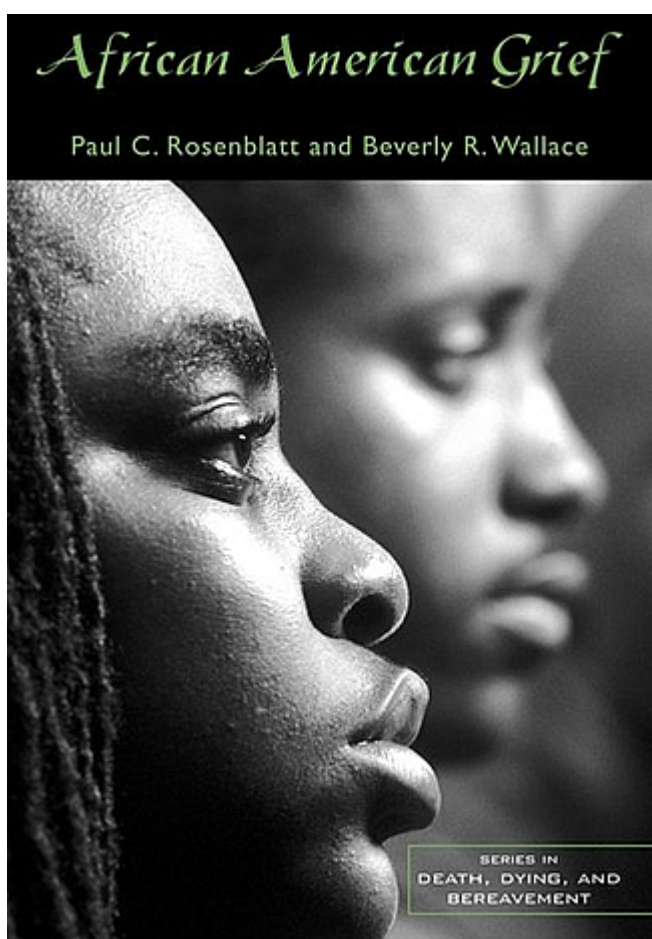
Racial disparities in health are so entrenched that even education and wealth don't fully erase them, said Tonia Branche, a neonatal-perinatal medicine fellow at Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago who was not involved in the JAMA study.

Black women with a college degree are more likely to die from pregnancy complications than white women without a high school diploma. Although researchers can't fully explain this disparity, Branche said it's possible that stress, including from systemic racism, takes a greater toll on the health of Black mothers than previously recognized.

Death creates ripples of grief throughout communities. Research has found that every death leaves an average of nine people in mourning.

Black people shoulder a great burden of grief, which can undermine their mental and physical health, said Khaliah Johnson, chief of pediatric palliative care at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta. Given the high mortality rates throughout the life span, Black people are more likely than white people to be grieving the death of a close family member at any point in their lives.

"We as Black people all have some legacy of unjust, unwarranted loss and death that compounds with each new loss," said Johnson, who was not involved with the new study. "It affects not only how we move through the world, but how we live in relationship with others and how we en-



There is no shortage of grief books on the market for African-Americans.

sure future losses."

Johnson's parents lost two sons — one who died a few days after birth and another who died as a toddler. In an essay published last year, Johnson recalled, "My parents asked themselves on numerous occasions, 'Would the outcomes for our sons have been different, might they have received different care and lived, had they not been Black?'"

Johnson said she hopes the new study gives people greater understanding of all that's lost when Black people die prematurely. "When we lose these lives young, when we lose that potential, that has an impact on all of society," she said.

And in the Black community, "our pain is real and deep and profound, and it deserves attention and validation," Johnson said. "It often feels like people just pass it over, telling you to stop complaining. But the expectation can't be that we just endure these things and bounce back."

Teleah Scott-Moore said she struggles with the death of her 16-year-old son, Timothy, an ath-

lete who hoped to attend Boston College and study sports medicine. He died of sudden cardiac arrest in 2011, a rare condition that kills about 100 young athletes a year. Research shows that an underlying heart condition that can lead to sudden cardiac death, hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, often goes unrecognized in Black patients.

Scott-Moore still wonders if she should have recognized warning signs. She also has blamed herself for failing to protect her two younger sons, who found Timothy's body after he collapsed.

At times, Scott-Moore said, she wanted to give up.

Instead, she said, the family created a foundation to promote education and health screenings to prevent such deaths. She hears from families all over the world, and supporting them has helped heal her pain.

"My grief comes back in waves, it comes back when I least expect it," said Scott-Moore, of Baltimore County, Maryland. "Life goes on, but it's a pain that never goes away."

Facts About the U.S. Black Population

BY MOHAMAD MOSLIMANI, CHRISTINE TAMIR, ABBY BUDIMAN, LUIS NOE-BUSTAMANTE AND LAUREN MORA

(Pew Research Center) - The Black population of the United States is growing. In 2021, there were an estimated 47.2 million people who self-identified as Black, making up 14.2% of the country's population. This marks a 30% increase since 2000, when there were 36.3 million Black people living in the U.S.

Black Americans are diverse. This group consists of people with varied racial and ethnic identities and experiences. The nation's Black population includes those who say their race is Black, either alone or in combination with



other racial backgrounds. It also includes Hispanics or Latinos who say their race is Black.

This fact sheet is a profile of the demographic, geographic and economic characteristics of the U.S. Black population in 2021. To present detailed data about this group, charts and analysis about the Black population are analyzed through the lens of four different demographic

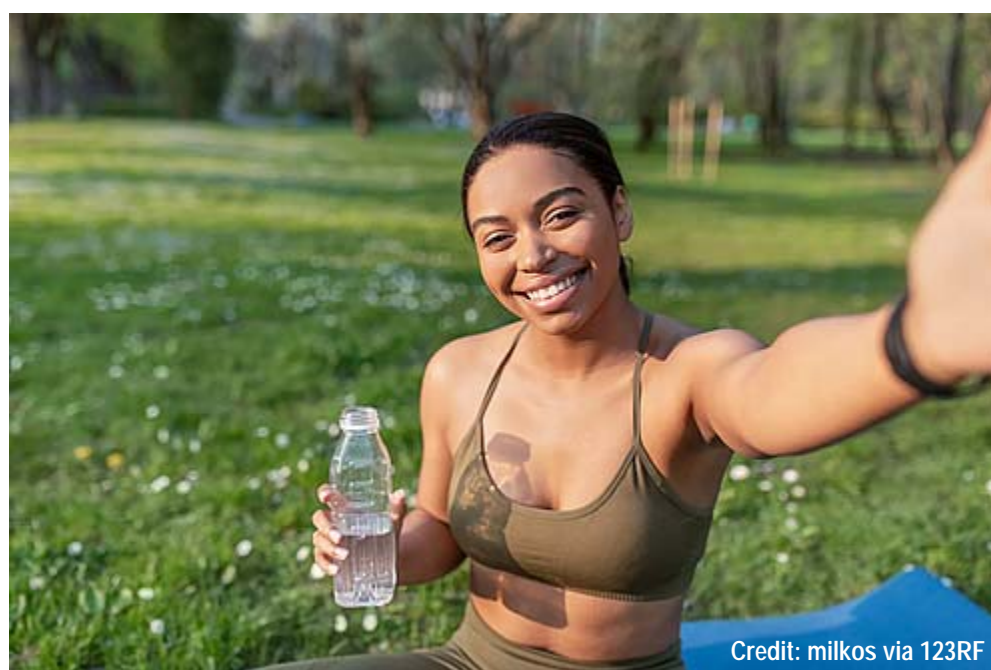
groups:

- The total U.S. Black population
- Single-race, non-Hispanic Black people
- Multiracial, non-Hispanic Black people
- Black Hispanic people

Scroll down or click through the navigation bar on the left to read about various demographic and economic characteristics of the U.S. Black population.

How are you feeling? 5 ways to check in with your mind and body

Sponsored by Texas Childrens Hospital



Credit: milkos via 123RF

(HEALTH) - Checking in with your mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical self is an important way to purposefully direct your attention during the day — if you don't know where you're starting, how can you mindfully move forward? The more you intentionally check in with yourself as part of a routine, the easier it will become — you'll eventually perform these check-ins without even knowing it! If you're new to these routines, here are five simple ways to start incorporating them into your day.

Candle gazing

Candle gazing is a great way to check in with your emotional, spiritual, mental, and physical states all at the same time — it's up to you which to focus on! Light a candle in a calm space and set a timer for at least 10 minutes. Your only task now is to watch the flame — but after a few minutes, you'll begin to notice how your body feels and whether it was easy to calm your breathing and relax into the moment; you'll see whether your thoughts keep heading towards a particular topic or feeling. After the exercise, you'll feel more connected to your whole self and can set an intention that directs energy to the areas you identified during the exercise.

Morning journal

Having too many thoughts swirling around in your head can make focusing on a specific one difficult. It's hard to identify your goals for the day and check in on your mental state when you have so much on your mind. A great way to disarm this overwhelming feeling and check in with your-

self is to establish a morning journaling routine. First thing every morning, sit down and write three pages; there isn't a structure to these pages or thoughts, just whatever comes to mind gets written on the page. After you've finished, read back through your notes and highlight or circle words that seem to appear frequently (common ones might be emotions, specific tasks, etc.). These repetitive ideas give you some insight into your current mental state for the day and will allow you to develop a focus.

Emotional wellness checklist

Checking in on your emotional state throughout the day is an integral part of mindfulness, and knowing what feelings are most prevalent can allow you to focus your time and effort in a way that works with those feelings rather than against them. If you'd like some structure in your emotional check-in, try this emotional wellness checklist. Full of aspirational practices and goals for emotional wellness in areas like social relationships and sleep, this checklist can help you focus on one or two items each day. Start your morning by reading through the checklist; mentally (or physically!) check the boxes where you feel solid, and notice which boxes are left blank. From these blank boxes, choose one or two that you can direct your energy toward for the remainder of the day. You may be surprised how much your checklist changes from day to day!

Follow the breath

One of the most basic and important check-ins we can do is

with our physical body. Not only should you connect to your body in the morning to set an intention for the day, but your check-ins throughout the day will help your mind and energy refocus on what's most pressing. A simple way to assess your physical self is with a "follow the breath" exercise. Lie (or sit) in a quiet place and put on a timer for at least 5 minutes (10 is ideal). Begin by breathing deeply, and when you've developed a comfortable rhythm, try to have your thoughts follow your breath through your body. Imagine it's traveling everywhere, getting pictures of your physical state along the way. Notice when your breath runs into an obstacle, perhaps an achy muscle or tense stomach. After your time is up, focus your energy on those trouble spots for the remainder of the day.

Affirmation list

Using affirmations in your mindfulness practice is a great way to intentionally direct your energy and start your day from a position of strength. Affirmations can also be used to check in with your mental, emotional, and spiritual states. Begin by writing/choosing a set of affirmations that you'll repeat daily (as a starting point, here are sample spiritual, motivational, and general positive affirmations). Practice saying them to yourself with a calm, positive resolve — the most important part of an affirmation is that you believe it! Every day, notice which affirmation(s) is hardest for you to believe; perhaps you speak one more quietly than the others or catch yourself mentally rolling your eyes as you say it. That affirmation will give you a clue into your current state of mind and allow you to direct your energy to rebuild that belief throughout the day.

With these exercises, you'll be able to easily check in with your entire self every day so that you can mindfully move towards personal success!



Credit: natabene via 123RF