



Ep 4 Sister Friends Social Wellness - 5-20-20 9.33 PM

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SPEAKERS

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00:10

Welcome to the Wellness for Black Girls podcast, a bi-weekly podcast that aims to empower millennial Black women on their holistic health journeys by moving through the dimensions of wellness. I'm your host TaReon Jael, a Certified Health Educator, and Clinical Lab Scientist. For more information, please visit wellnessforblackgirls.com. While I hope you enjoy listening to and learning from the podcast. Please remember that it is not intended to be a substitute for a relationship with a licensed healthcare provider. Now let's get into this episode.

00:59

Thank you for joining me today for episode number 4 of the Wellness for Black Girls podcast. Now, I just want to ask, have you been watching this season of Insecure on HBO? This show revolves around the life of the main character, Issa Dee, which is played by Issa Rae. And one of the things I love about this show is that we get to see all aspects of Issa's life, including her experiences with her girls, her sister friends, her sister circle. We get to see how those experiences impact her in so many ways. The show is currently about midway through season four, and I'm not going to give any spoilers. In this current season, we're seeing conflict between Issa and, one of our girls, her best friend, Molly. This has had me thinking about social support networks and their impact on our overall health and wellness. And I've also been thinking about how do we go about strengthening, creating, and in Issa and Molly's case, working towards healing our social support

relationships. So in this episode, we're going to learn about social wellness and how we can nurture it in our lives through the use of sister friendships.

02:39

First things first, what is social wellness? This dimension involves building and maintaining healthy relationships with friends, family and the community. This also involves having a concern for the needs of others. And one key component which the definition touches on is the integral role our social support network plays in nurturing this dimension in our lives. Social support is the network of people in our lives that we can turn to, to help us navigate the tough times, and to help us turn up or celebrate during the good times. Our social support network usually also consists of people outside our family and friends. These could be our co workers, church members or our neighbors too. We are also a part of other people's social support networks too. We want to be there for our people and show up when they need us to.

03:50

There are three different types of support. The one type we usually think of is emotional support. This is when we need someone to talk to, or we simply need someone to have our back. This is someone we know we can trust to be there for us, and vice versa. Then we think of informational support. This is when we need advice, guidance or mentoring. This can include those times when we need some help with making a major decision. Because certain people in our network can offer a different perspective or help us weigh the pros and cons of a certain decision. The other form of support is instrumental support. This is when a person offers a helping hand when we need it. For example, if we are having car trouble, and someone gives us a ride home or to work while our car is in the shop, this would be an example of instrumental support.

05:03

You know I have to share some research findings on the health benefits of social support. Research has shown that having a strong social support network offers numerous health benefits. Dr. Burt Uchino from Utah University states that social support is one of the most well documented psycho-social factors influencing physical health outcomes. Individuals with high levels of social support have lower mortality rates from cardiovascular disease, cancer, and infectious diseases. This is likely due to the fact that having this network of people looking out for us can help promote healthy lifestyle behaviors and encourage adherence to treatment plans.

06:01

We know that all of the wellness dimensions are connected. Strong, healthy social support

networks don't just benefit us physically. But they also improve our mental and emotional health by improving our ability to cope with stressful situations, alleviating the effects of emotional distress, promoting lifelong good mental health, and enhancing self esteem.

06:31

When I think about the ways this shows up in black communities, I instantly think about the friendships, black women and girls form with one another. We may call them our girls, our sister friends, or our sister circle. Listen to this definition of sister circles by Dr. Neil Barnett, and her team of researchers at Kent State University. Sister circles are support groups that draw upon the strength and courage found in African American women's friendship networks. These groups usually build upon existing friendships, kin-by-design friendships, and the sense of community found among black women. These sister circles were originally embedded in the black club movement. And have been a vital part of black women's lives for the past 150 years. Sister circles exists directly in the community, and within organizations that are components of women's lives. And many black women have ties to these organizations that go back generations. Within this type of network, we are able to talk about our experiences from not only our daily lives, but we can also talk about those instances of racism and/or sexism that we experience. And by connecting with other black women who can relate to and validate those experiences, we can find relief from those feelings of isolation. We can feel seen, heard and understood.

08:21

I've shared some data about the benefits of having a strong social support network. So let's touch on some things we can do to maintain and strengthen them. This first tip is pretty straightforward...stay in touch. This is especially important with everything that's going on right now. We can reach out and text call or video chat with our family and friends. And when we're communicating with them, we can try to be present and in the moment with them. And if we have people in our network that are within those vulnerable populations. We can do things for them, like picking up food items for them if we can. And of course, we want to be careful to wear a face mask and wash or sanitize our hands when we bring those items to them. And this has been official to us as well. Research suggests that providing social support to friends and family may be more beneficial than receiving it.

09:32

Let's say we don't have a strong social support network, but we would like to take steps to start building one. How can we do that? Well, we're living in a weird time right now. So for this one, we may have to go about building our social network differently than we normally would. Because during normal times, we can do things like volunteer in our community or join a meetup group in

our area. But during this time, we are utilizing social networking platforms. So there are platforms out there for people going through stressful times. And there are online groups around various hobbies and interests. Of course, we want to use wisdom and good judgment and be sure to stick to trustworthy platforms and sites. For more ideas and resources, check out one of my favorite episodes of the Sunday Jumpstart podcast by Jessica Lauren. It's episode number 77 how to build a supportive network. And in this episode, she gives some great pointers on how to reach out and connect with other like minded people in a way that can help us build authentic relationships. So be sure to head to the show notes and look for the links to that podcast episode.

11:04

Now back to this season of Insecure, and the conflict between Issa and Molly. At the time of this recording, the show is a little over midway through the season. So we're not sure what's going to happen between these two characters. And of course, we know it's fiction. They're fictitious characters. But I believe we can all relate to the situation in one way or another. Whether we've experienced it personally, or witnessed it happen to our family, and/or our friends, we can probably relate to this situation. So what do we do when we've experienced a split within our social network? How do we go about healing a broken relationship? For these tips, I referred to an episode of the Homecoming Podcast which is hosted by Dr. Thema Bryant-Davis, who is a licensed psychologist, ordained minister and sacred artist. I'm going to include Dr. Thema's tips for repairing broken friendships. Because the process of healing a broken friendship relationship is multi layered and nuanced. Talking about this topic can bring up a lot of emotions for people like guilt, resentment, and/or pain and so many other emotions. And I didn't want to give some blanket tips that wouldn't help us jumpstart the healing process. So I wanted to share some tips from one of Dr. Thema's recent episodes, because I felt like the tips she shared were practical, thoughtful and valuable. So if you haven't checked out Dr. Thema's podcast, you should definitely give it a listen, and I'll be sure to include a link to her podcast in the show notes.

13:06

One of the first things that Dr. Thema suggests that we do is to start by asking ourselves some honest questions. We can ask ourselves questions like, why am I wanting to mend things? Am I coming from a genuine place? What drove us apart? What happened? Is there something I need to take responsibility for and apologize for? And what is my hope for this relationship going forward? How am I going to process this experience if the other person does not want to mend things too? Once we get clear and honest about the answers to those questions, then we can reach out to that person to have a conversation. And this step is tough, isn't it? Because we don't know how, or even if the other person is going to respond, we don't know if they want to heal and mend things too. Once the conversation or conversations have taken place, then hopefully, the healing journey can start. One thing that Dr. Thema recommends is to take it slow and work on

creating some new memories through shared experiences. And this can help with rebuilding the relationship. So that's a brief summary of Dr. Thema's tips on repairing broken friendships.

14:47

Sometimes, we may be going through things that our social support network may not know how to fully help us work through and in those times, we want to reach out beyond our network. During those times, we need to connect with a licensed mental health professional. They are trained to give unbiased feedback, and to help us work through anything we may be going through. A few ways to connect with a licensed mental health professional, include checking out your health insurance company's provider directory, or by searching the Psychology Today directory, Therapy for Black Girls, Open Path Collective, Melanin and Mental Health, or Therapy for QPOC. I'll include links to these resources in the show notes as well.

15:47

That is all I have on sister friends, sister circles and social wellness. Thank you for tuning into this episode. As always, links to everything I mentioned today will be in the show notes. So all you have to do is head to wellnessforblackgirls.com and click on episode number four. The show notes with links to the resources I mentioned will be there. If you want to keep up with the podcast on social media, you can follow the podcast on Instagram @wellness4blackgirls and you can follow my personal Instagram page @tareonjael.

16:30

Also, if you could do me a huge favor and head over to the show on Apple podcasts and leave a five star rating and write a review sharing what you've been enjoying about the show thus far. Be sure to leave your Instagram handle so that I can give you a shout out in a future episode. If you're listening on a platform that does not have a rate and review system, then take a screenshot of yourself listening to the podcast and share on your IG stories. Be sure to tag the podcast @wellness4blackgirls and you can tag me too @tareonjael. This is a great way to share this episode and get the message out so together we can continue moving through the dimensions of wellness.