

DEFINING RACIAL TRAUMA



WHAT IS RACIAL TRAUMA?

- Racial trauma refers to the physical, emotional, and psychological harm caused by repeated experiences of racism, discrimination, and racial injustice.
- It's not just about one event: It is subtle, ongoing, and repetitive.



A DIFFERENT KIND OF TRAUMA

- Racial trauma is often difficult to identify because it presents as complex trauma.
- Complex trauma happens when someone experiences prolonged or repeated exposure to harmful events or environments.
- Unlike a single traumatic event, it involves ongoing stressors, often with no clear resolution.



THE REPETITIVE NATURE OF RACISM

- Racism isn't just about person-to-person interactions. It's systemic and unavoidable for victims.
- Experiencing racism repeatedly creates trauma that is layered and compounded over time.
- For every moment of racial healing, there are five experiences of racial trauma.



THE COMPLEXITY OF RACIAL TRAUMA

Why It's Hard to Recognise:

- Racial trauma can be subtle and slow, making it difficult for individuals to realise they are traumatised.
- It's often experienced alongside other life challenges, adding to its complexity.
- Normalisation of Racism: Everyday racism is often minimised or dismissed as "not a big deal."



- **Physical and Emotional Responses:**
- Shows up in the body through:
 - Declining mental health (e.g., anxiety, low self-confidence, depression, hypervigilance, emotional dysregulation).
 - Declining physical health (e.g., stress-related illnesses, Chronic Pain).
- Impacts life expectancy and overall quality of life.



A History of Harm:

- Racism isn't new—it's rooted in historical legacies of inequality, colonialism, and oppression.
- These legacies are passed down generationally, creating intergenerational trauma.



Systemic Inequalities:

Racism exists in the systems we interact with daily:

- Education
- Healthcare
- Housing
- Employment

These systems perpetuate the harm of racial trauma.



- **Why Compassion Matters:**

- **Recognising the shared impacts of racism helps us build connections and understanding.**
- **Listening to individual stories fosters compassion and empowers healing.**



Reflection and Call to Action

- **Reflection Question:**
 - How can we acknowledge and address racial trauma in our workplace?
- **A Shared Responsibility:**
 - While combating racism is essential, we must also make space to talk about racial trauma and healing.
 - Raising awareness is just the beginning—action and support are necessary for real change.

