



EMPOWERED

Colorado LGBTQ+ Mental Health and Substance Use Disorder Initiative

Meritus Spalte

Black Health Matters: Practice Radical Self-Love

By Donaven Smith, Envision:You Program Manager

2020 brought an unprecedented momentum for the Black Lives Matter movement, as well as other social justice movements. These movements are powerful and necessary in igniting change as we fight for equality, equity, and justice for marginalized and oppressed folks. However, this change has also been incredibly triggering. 2020 came and conquered and left so many people of color, including myself, burned out and desperately craving change. I wish I could write that I stayed sober and well among the pain that COVID-19 and the injustices of 2020 inflicted on me and my loved ones, but I can't.



Until college, nobody told me that being gay and brown was okay. Nobody told me that I was enough as I was. I have been called racial slurs by people who promised to love me. I have been told that my "lifestyle" is sinful and wrong in spaces where I sacrificed my identity to feel connected to a higher power. There are whole chapters in my story where I hated myself. When the pain became

too great and I intentionally entered recovery, I learned that hope and help are real, and that I am not alone.

I will always need to invest in and prioritize my recovery and mental health. There have been—and will be—setbacks and messy moments. That's okay. I continue to heal and remain committed to my wellness. I extend gentleness towards myself, radically accept who I am no matter what anyone else thinks, and surround myself with people who validate my intersectional identities. I have tried rejecting who I am and the consequences of that resulted in suicide attempts fueled by depression and drug misuse. My life began to get better when I leaned into my support systems, took therapy seriously, and practiced mindfulness and ferocious self-love. But I know that these acts of courage are much easier said than done. It's intimidating to be vulnerable with others when you've experienced trauma and rejection. It's difficult to accept ourselves among self-perceived flaws. However, the growing process is exactly that: A process that we navigate one day at a time. →

5 HEALTHY TIPS

... for better communication with your mate

- 1 Make time to regularly communicate.** Put it on your calendar if you need to!
- 2 Pick an appropriate time and place for conversations** – some don't need to happen when emotions are running high.
- 3 Take time to share** what you appreciate about them.
- 4 Good communication relies on active listening** and equal participation from all parties.
- 5 Be open and honest.** Don't avoid messy feelings - talking about them instead of stuffing them under the rug is how we create deeper relationships.

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FRESH PRESS

Celebrated in January, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. day is an official day of service meant to honor the civil rights leaders' life and legacy. It is also a good time for nonprofits to evaluate not only their forward facing actions to combat inequality but also the very structure of how philanthropic organizations operate. As addressed in the article ***21 Signs You or Your Organization May Be the White Moderate Dr. King Warned About***, the 'white moderate' is referring to one of Dr. King's speeches, where he challenges white folks who say they support equity but are more concerned about the 'absence of tension' in their actions. While the intentions of most people working in the philanthropic sector are good, it is still essential to remain critical of how we act on those intentions to ensure we are not becoming complacent and falling into this white moderate twisting of social justice.

BLACK HEALTH MATTERS *continued*

I'm proud to say that I have become grateful for who I am, and I am especially grateful for the messier parts of my story and identity. They are still beautiful. Today, I choose to nurture the parts that I once hated, rejected, and feared. I have come to love my queerness and celebrate my blackness. As you continue onward

in this new year, remember that you are not wrong or unloveable for being you. Your diverse identities—whatever they may be—put you in a position to create real social change and inspire acceptance. Trust me when I say that you are capable of and worth more than you can ever imagine.

If you're struggling as you read these words, I need you to know that you are valuable and help is available. Call **Colorado Crisis Services** at **1-844-493-8255** or text **Talk to 38255** for support.



**LOVE IS LOVE:
FEBRUARY
GIVE OUT
DAY**



From now until February 14, 2021, the delivery fee for all online flower orders made at The Perfect Petal will be donated to Envision:You! Just select the 'Love is Love' shipping option at checkout. **ORDER HERE**

ADVOCATES BOARD MEMBERS



Envision:You is excited to bring its new **Board of Directors** together for the first time in 2021. After an extensive vetting process, we are humbled to have such a diverse group of individuals committed to our mission of improving behavioral health outcomes for the LGBTQ+ population of Colorado. The range of professional and personal experiences they bring to the table will be an asset in furthering our mission.

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PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: BEHAVIORAL HEALTH PROVIDER TRAINING PROGRAM

The Envision:You LGBTQ+ Behavioral Health Provider Training Program was created to address a need for LGBTQ+ affirming care and will be aimed at registered and licensed mental health clinicians, addiction counselors, certified peer specialists, or anyone working in direct care with LGBTQ+ individuals. This multi-level training program provides education on the unique risk factors and behavioral health concerns of LGBTQ+ individuals. It also addresses how to avoid the biases that exist in healthcare and instead provide culturally relevant and affirming behavioral health interventions. Launched on February 1st, you can register for the training on our website.

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ENVISION:YOU
 **LGBTQ+** 
**Behavioral Health Provider
Training Program**

Are you qualified
to provide counseling to
the LGBTQ+ community?

ENVISION:YOU
LGBTQ+
Behavioral Health Provider Training Program

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COMMUNITY PARTNER

Envision:You is proud to host two AmeriCorps VISTA members from the Behavioral Health Equity Corps (BHEC) of Colorado. The AmeriCorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) program was created in 1964 to combat poverty



through service. That goal has since been expanded to help communities across the country to address their toughest challenges by connecting members to local organizations already doing good work to help increase these organization's capacity and reach.

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