



# EMPOWERED

IMPROVING LGBTQ+ MENTAL HEALTH

## Take care of yourself this Stress Awareness Month

By Riley McKelvy

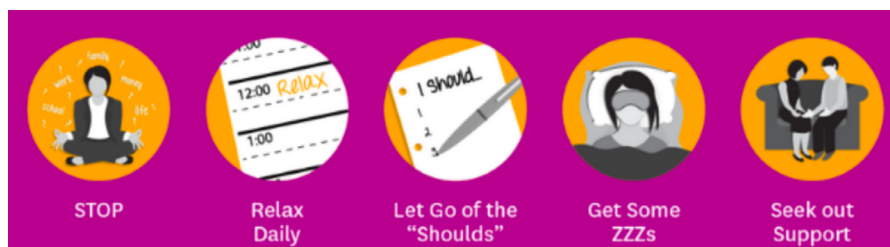
April is Stress Awareness Month. Sponsored by The Health Resource Network (HRN), a non-profit health education organization, Stress Awareness Month is a national, cooperative effort to inform people about the dangers of stress, successful coping strategies, and harmful misconceptions about stress that are prevalent in our society. It's no secret that certain world events have contributed to heightened

levels of stress in the general population over the last few years, but new studies show that stress is much more than just feeling

busy or overwhelmed. Stress can manifest in many ways. Physically, stress can present as an illness, such as unexplainable headaches or stomach aches. Mentally, stress impacts mental cognition (hello, brain fog), making even simple tasks more difficult and time consuming. Emotionally, stress can appear as increased irritability, sensitivity, and unpredictability. Even behavioral issues such as

poor sleeping patterns and substance use are directly related to the impacts of stress on the body. Another lesser known stressor is that of minority stress, the chronically high levels of stress experienced by members of marginalized groups. LGBTQ+ folks may experience chronic stress in regard to factors related to their sexual orientation or gender identity. This may be

exacerbated by social and environmental factors such as discrimination in employment or housing, and a lack



of political representation and/or policy protections. Sustained stress over time can have serious health consequences, which is why it is so important to prioritize taking care of yourselves. If this sounds like something you struggle with, we encourage you to reach out to your health provider to learn more about stress management. ●

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## FRESH PRESS

Bank of America has partnered with [ArtLifting](#) to display artwork from artists living with disabilities or impacted by housing insecurity in their financial centers across the country. Bank of America has invested \$2 million in the project, which will include the art featured in their buildings alongside the artist's story to encourage learning within the community through the diversity of the artists' experiences. Prints of the works will be available to purchase through ArtLifting's website, which will support their mission of championing artists impacted by housing insecurity and disabilities. We are excited to congratulate one of our board members, [Quána Madison](#), for being selected as one of the featured artists!



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## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT: POLICY

Envision: You, in partnership with OneColorado and Representatives Alex Valdez and Andrew Boesenecker, has introduced Colorado House Bill 22-1267 "Culturally Relevant Healthcare Training Act". The bill would create a \$1 million grant program for nonprofit organizations to create culturally relevant trainings for healthcare providers. LGBTQ+ individuals, racial and ethnic minorities, veterans, and other vulnerable communities have been discriminated against, denied care, or mistreated due to a lack of understanding and knowledge from their providers. Healthcare providers need to be a trusted source of information, support, and care for all their patients. Increasing the availability and accessibility of culturally relevant trainings will improve health outcomes by equipping providers with the tools they need to provide high quality and affirming care to all Coloradans. On March 15th, the Colorado House Public and Behavioral Health and Human Services Committee voted 9-4 to pass HB22-1267 onto the House Appropriations Committee.



## 5 HEALTHY TIPS

...for how to do nothing

- 1 Slow down.** We don't have to be productive 24/7.
- 2 Less is more.** Pare down your schedule to include likes and hobbies.
- 3 It's okay to sit around.** Allow for creative space and connection with self.
- 4 Prioritize rest – NOT procrastination.** Getting your necessary to-do list out of the way is helpful in allowing yourself to be fully present.
- 5 Know when to work and when to slow down.** There is time for work and there is time for... nothing. Trust yourself to know when which is needed, and enjoy your time spent doing less!

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## ADVOCATE

**Dr. Morgan Medlock**

This month we would like to highlight Dr. Morgan Medlock (she/her), who was appointed as the new Behavioral Health Commissioner for the State of Colorado as well as the newest member of the Governor's Cabinet. This is a part of the many exciting changes being made in Colorado's Behavioral Health system under Governor Polis' administration. We look forward to Dr. Medlock's leadership as she brings about positive change for Coloradans living with behavioral health challenges.



Eric Lutzgens: The Denver Post

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