

Coping & Wellness: Reading



The Mecca of Black Wellness



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Reading is one strategy that many people find helpful in improving their mood, reducing anxiety, finding inspiration, and increasing motivation to change. Reading is a way to think beyond your current situation, connect to others through characters presented in a story, find enjoyment and entertainment, and to learn how others may have coped with a difficult life situation. Identifying even a brief specified time each day to read a book, can help shift your focus and improve your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors. If you do not have time to read or have barriers related to your mental and physical health, consider listening to audiobooks. With a membership to your local library and downloading the app “Overdrive” you can listen to hundreds of audiobooks for free. Here are a few additional tips that may be helpful in beginning your reading and/or listening journey.

Additional Tips:

1. Do you have a preference for the types of books you enjoy reading? Select your favorite type of book and start reading or listening!
2. Identify a comfortable space in your home where you can read or listen. Create a reading/listening space with a comfortable chair, candle, or window. You could also curl up on your favorite sofa, or read a few minutes before bedtime. The options are endless and you have the control to make the space more relaxing and comfortable for your needs.
3. Specify a reading goal for the week. For example, “I will read for 30 minutes 3 times this week,” is a way to hold yourself accountable.
4. You can also get creative about where you read/listen. Pick a park bench, beach, or even during your lunch break. If listening, you may even use the book as motivation to complete tasks. For example, “I will listen to this book when I go to the gym or when I am cleaning my house.”
5. Join a book club. This is an easy way to read a variety of books AND increase your engagement with other people.

Many mental health professionals recommend reading as a pleasurable activity or as a coping and wellness strategy, but sometimes it can be difficult to decide where to start or identify a book to read. Black Mental Wellness wanted to help you by providing some suggestions of books that have been helpful, interesting, entertaining, motivational, etc. to us.

We will continue to update this list periodically, including recommendations from collaborators who work with Black Mental Wellness. We also want to hear from you. Are there any books that helped you to cope during a difficult moment? What motivated you or changed your life?

Suggested Readings:

Biography and Memoir

- Between the World and Me (Author: Ta-Nehisi Coates)
- Black Man in A White Coat (Author: Daman Tweedy)
- Every Little Step: My Story (Authors: Bobby Brown, Nick Chiles)
- Redefining Realness (Author: Janet Mock)
- The Short and Tragic Life of Robert Peace: A Brilliant Young Man Who Left Newark for the Ivy League (Author: Jeff Hobbs)
- When They Call You A Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir (Authors: Patrisse Khan Cullors and asha bandele)

Children

- I Am Human: A Book of Empathy (Author: Susan Verde; Illustrator: Peter H. Reynolds)
- I Love My Hair! (Author: Natasha Anastasia Tarpley, Illustrator: E.B. Lewis)
- Little Leaders: Bold Women in Black History (Author: Vashti Harrison)
- Now I Lay Me Down to Sleep (Author: Michael D. Gatson)
- Of Thee I Sing: A Letter to My Daughters (Author: Barack Obama)
- Please, Baby, Please (Author: Spike Lee)
- Self-Regulation & Mindfulness: Over 82 Exercises & Worksheets for Sensory Processing Disorder, ADHD, & Autism Spectrum Disorder (Author: Varleisha D. Gibbs, Ph.D., OTD, OTR/L)
- Shades of Black: A Celebration of Our Children (Author: Sandra L. Pinkney)
- Something Beautiful (Author: Sharon Dennis Wyeth)
- The Color of Us (Author: Karen Katz)
- The Kids' Guide to Staying Awesome and In Control: Simple Stuff to Help Children Regulate Their Emotions and Senses (Author: Lauren Brukner)
- Those Shoes (Author: Maribeth Boelts, Illustrator: Noah Z. Jones)

Difficult Life Stress

- Black Pain: It Just Looks Like We're Not Hurting (Author: Terrie Williams)
- Emotional First Aid: Healing Rejection, Guilt, Failure, and Other Everyday Hurts (Author: Guy Winch, Ph.D.)
- Going Off: A Black Woman's Guide for Dealing with Anger and Stress (Authors: Noreen Palmer and Faye Childs)
- Not All Black Girls Know How to Eat: A Story of Bulimia (Author: Stephanie Covington Armstrong)
- The Power of Kindness: The Unexpected Benefits of Leading a Compassionate Life (Author: Piero Ferrucci)
- Think and Grow Rich: A Black Choice (Authors: Dennis Kimbro and Napoleon Hill)

Education

- Soar: How Boys Learn, Succeed, and Develop Character (Author: David C. Banks)
- The 4th Marking Period, A Memoir of an African American Male Guidance Counselor (Author: Richard L. Wilson, Jr.)

Fictional

- Americanah (Author: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie)
- Children of Blood and Bone (Author: Bahni Turpin)
- I'm Judging You (Author: Luvvie Ajayi)
- Kindred (Author: Octavia E. Butler)
- Sing, Unburied Sing: A Novel (Author: Jesmyn Ward)
- The Parable of the Sower (Author: Octavia E. Butler)
- This Is How You Lose Her (Author: Junot Díaz)

Suggested Readings:

Grief

- Leaving Time (Author: Jodi Picoult)
- Man's Search for Meaning (Author: Viktor E. Frankl)

Mental Health and Wellness

- 24 Shades of Business: A Coloring Book for the Black Entrepreneur's Soul (Author: by Latoya Nicole)
- Bipolar Faith: A Black Woman's Journey with Depression and Faith (Author: Monica A. Coleman)
- Black Men and Depression: Understanding and Overcoming Depression in Black Men (Author: John Head)
- Black Rainbow: How Words Healed Me, My Journey Through Depression (Author: Rachel Kelly)
- Camouflaged Sisters: Silent No More! (Authors: Lila Holley & 11 Courageous Sisters in Arms)
- Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome (Author: Joy Degruy, Ph.D.)
- Set Boundaries, Find Peace: A Guide to Reclaiming Yourself (Author: Nedra Glover Tawwab)
- Shook One: Anxiety Playing Tricks on Me (Author: Charlamagne Tha God)
- Soothe Your Nerves: The Black Woman's Guide to Understanding and Overcoming Anxiety, Panic, and Fearz (Author: Angela Neal-Barnett)
- The Color of Hope: People of Color Mental Health Narratives (Author: Vanessa Hazzard)
- The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma (Author: Bessel van der Kolk, M.D.)
- The Deepest Well: Healing the Long-Term Effects of Childhood Adversity (Author: Nadine Burke Harris)
- The Social Determinants of Mental Health (Authors: Michael Compton and Ruth Shin)
- The Unapologetic Guide to Black Mental Health: Navigate an Unequal System, Learn Tools for Emotional Wellness, and Get the Help you Deserve (Author: Rheedra Walker PhD)
- What Happened to You?: Conversations on Trauma, Resilience, and Healing (Author: Oprah Winfrey, Bruce D. Perry)

Parenting

- [A Day I'll Never Forget](#) (Author: Dana L. Cunningham, Ph.D.)
- [I Wish My Dad: The Power of Vulnerable Conversations between Fathers and Sons](#) (Authors: Romal Tune and Jordan Tune)
- Longing for Daddy: Healing from the Pain of an Absent or Emotionally Distant Father (Authors: Monique Robinson and Terri McFaddin)
- Raising Black Children (Authors: James P. Comer and Alvin Poussaint)
- Revolutionary Mothering: Love on the Front Lines (Author: Alexis Gumbs)
- The Whole-Brain Child: Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind (Authors: Daniel J. Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson)

Race/Social Justice

- Ghost Boys (Author: Jewell Parker Rhodes)
- Momma Did you Hear the News (Author: Sanya Whittaker Gragg)
- My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies (Author: Resmaa Menakem)
- Something Happened in Our Town (Authors: Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins and Ann Hazzard)
- Testimony: Young African Americans on Self-Discovery and Black Identity (Author: Natasha Tarpley)
- The Hate you Give (Author: Angie Thomas)

Suggested Readings:

Relationships/Marriage

- An American Marriage (Author: Tayari Jones)
- Black Pain: It Just Looks Like We're Not Hurting (Author: Terrie M. Williams)
- Complaint Free Relationships: How to Positively Transform Your Personal, Work and Love Relationships (Author: Will Bowen)
- Emotional Sobriety: From Relationship Trauma to Resilience and Balance (Author: Tian Dayton, Ph.D.)
- How to Survive When You're the Only Black in the Office: What They Can't Teach You at White Business Schools (Author: Earl H. McClenney)
- Is Marriage for White People?: How the African American Marriage Decline Affects Everyone (Author: Ralph Richard Banks)
- Salvation: Black People and Love (Author: bell hooks)
- Why I Love Black Women (Author: Michael Eric Dyson)

Spiritual, Motivational, Empowerment

- Blessed Mode: 90 Days to Level Up Your Faith (Author: Kel Mitchell)
- Care for the Mental and Spiritual Health of Black Men: Hope to Keep Going (Religion and Race) (Author: Nicholas Grier)
- Crazy Faith, It's Only Crazy Until It Happens (Author: Michael Todd)
- Divine Disruption Holding On To Faith When Life Breaks Your Heart (Author: Dr. Tony Evans)
- Faith in the Valley: Lessons for Women on the Journey to Peace (Author: Iyanla Vanzant)
- Feeding the Soul (Because It's My Business): Finding Our Way to Joy, Love, and Freedom (Author: Tabitha Brown)
- Goodbye, Things: The New Japanese Minimalism (Author: Eriko Sugita, Translator, Fumio Sasaki)
- [Love Is An Inside Job: Getting Vulnerable With God](#) (Author: Romal Tune)
- Move Your Bus: An Extraordinary New Approach to Accelerating Success in Work and Life (Author: Ron Clark)
- No Matter What! 9 Steps to Living the Life You Love (Author: Lisa Nichols)
- Purposeful Perspectives: Empowering Black Women Towards Spiritual Alignment, Self-Mastery, and Joy (Author: Nichomi Higgins)
- Reading While Black: African American Biblical Interpretation as an Exercise in Hope (Author: Esau McCaulley)
- Reclaim Your Power!: A 30-Day Guide to Hope, Healing, and Inspiration for Men of Color (Authors: Terrance Dean, Tavis Smiley)
- Sisters of The Yam: Black Women and Self-Recovery (Author: bell hooks)
- Stress Free For Good: 10 Scientifically Proven Life Skills for Health and Happiness (Authors: Dr. Fred Luskin and Dr. Kenneth R. Pelletier)
- The Alchemist (Author: Paulo Coelho)
- The Four Agreements: A Practical Guide to Personal Freedom (A Toltec Wisdom Book) (Authors: Don Miguel Ruiz, Janet Mills)
- The Seat of the Soul (Author: Gary Zukav)
- The Secret Prayer of a Righteous Black Woman – The Power of a Mother's Prayer: Learn How to Identify and Eliminate Fear and Negative Thinking Through Faith (Author: Reea Rodney)
- The War of Art: Break Through the Blocks and Win Your Inner Creative Battles (Author: Steven Pressfield)
- Thoughts Are Things (Author: Prentice Mulford)
- Unfu*k Yourself: Get Out of Your Head and into Your Life (Author: by Gary John Bishop)
- We Should All Be Feminists (Author: Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie)
- Year of Yes: How to Dance It Out, Stand in the Sun and Be Your Own Person (Author: Shonda Rhimes)
- You Are Your Best Thing (Authors: Tarana Burke and Dr. Brené Brown)

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