



Conscious Life presents

ANXIETY SUPER CONFERENCE

Anxiety and racial trauma

Guest: Dr Patrice Douglas

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[00:00:10] Jaia Bristow

Hello, and welcome back to the Anxiety Super Conference. My name is Jaia Bristow, and I'm one of your hosts. And today I am so pleased to be welcoming Dr Patrice Douglas.

Welcome, Patrice.

Dr Patrice Douglas

Hi. Thank you for having me.

Jaia Bristow

Thanks for joining us. I'm really glad to be talking to you again. And I think this is such an important conversation we're about to be having.

Dr Patrice Douglas is a psychotherapist specializing in multicultural issues, and we're going to be talking about that. We're going to be talking about anxiety in terms of racial trauma today.

So do you want to start by telling us a little bit about why racially marginalized groups are more impacted by anxiety? Or how anxiety is differently experienced by racially marginalized groups than by those in the dominant group?

Dr Patrice Douglas

Yeah. So I think everybody, to an extent, experiences anxiety. Like the thoughts, worried about the future, sometimes it's environmental, so if something was to happen, what would you do?

But when it comes to communities of color, such as the black community, Latinx community, they deal with a little bit of a different anxiety at times, and it's usually what we call, racial anxiety. And it's mostly about you are worried about what's happening in your environment, but it's due to the color of your skin, essentially.

So they're more worried about if they go out in settings where there may be not a lot of them in the community, such as black people, if there's not a lot of black people in the situation, are they going to be in danger? If there's too many black people in the environment, are they going to be in danger?

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When they go into restaurants in case anything was to occur, are they supposed to sit with their back to the door? They're looking for exits. Sometimes they just won't even go out because they're afraid that they're going to be harassed, potentially assaulted because of their race, or ridiculed.

So a lot of times people that are in communities of color, they walk around with fear. So they may not be as engaging with people or they may not make eye contact or they may be very task oriented. So they're just trying to get things done so they can get out of there quicker.

A lot of these things are really big in the workspace. So we deal with microaggressions where there may be little things that are kind of poking at that particular community of color.

So when people of color walk around and they're anxious, a lot of times it's due to racial trauma, whether they have personally experienced it or it's been vicarious, secondary.

And so when we're talking about anxiety with communities of color, we need to ask them, we need to do a questionnaire of, is it just typical things, or is it due to you being a person of color that you're experiencing these fears?

Jaia Bristow

Absolutely. And I think it's really interesting because, as you say, most people experience some form of anxiety at some point in their lives. And as is discussed lots throughout this conference, like different ways it shows up, different types of anxiety, different triggers, different ways of coping with it, but on top of that, communities of color, people of color have this extra layer of anxiety that they're dealing with, and often that's more that can come to the forefront.

So sometimes it almost feels like there's not room for other forms of anxiety or sometimes other forms of anxiety are there, and they can be exaggerated or heightened because there's this other racial trauma and anxiety going on underneath.

So I think it's really interesting for people to hear that and to recognize that.

And then on top of that, there's a lot of stigma around mental health in general, like in society at large, but also especially within communities of color often. So do you want to speak a little bit more to that?

Dr Patrice Douglas

Yeah, absolutely. When you actually look at the different types of anxiety that are in the DSM-5, which is our big book/manual of where we find diagnosis so that we can treat people accordingly, there's like 7 different types of anxiety, like agoraphobia, general anxiety, have panic. When you look at all of those, all of those can be related to racial anxiety.

So when we look at agoraphobia, that is a disorder where people struggle being in large crowds, big places where a lot of people can be around. It's more of that phobia of something could happen, am I sure that I'm going to be safe?

So a lot of times people are experiencing that and they think it's because it's social anxiety. Social anxiety is completely different. That's more about, do you feel like people are judging you in public?

But when we look at agoraphobia in the black community, we actually see that it's because of situations where there's been police brutality.

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So recently in the United States, we had a shooting that happened in New York, Buffalo, where it was a grocery store that was in a predominantly black community, and they were targeted because of the color of their skin.

So when we talk about agoraphobia, this is one prime example where individuals, such as the black community, may not want to go to the grocery store. It's not that they don't want to be around large crowds of people because they don't like people, it's because they don't know if they're going to be safe.

So when we look at all the things that we talked about in anxiety, a lot of those things can be correlated to how you're going to be treated based off of the color of your skin.

So there is a lot of stigma. It's kind of hard to research for some because, I think if you ask any person of color, they have experienced some discrimination so I think a lot of times it's hard to determine if this is just a life experience of anxiety or this is due to being part of a marginalized community, that a lot of clinicians and professionals need to do a little bit more assessing when they're talking to their clients and their patients, because nine times out of ten, this is involving their safety based off of the color of their skin.

So we need to have more conversations about that. And also if we have more conversations about that, we're more likely to have a better adequate amount of care for them versus just sticking a label on them, getting them some medications and sending them on their way. Medications are not going to help racial tension. So these are the things that we have to be very mindful of.

Jaia Bristow

100%. And I think what you're pointing out is that, you gave the example of social anxiety, so social anxiety for a white person for example, will often be stemmed in their own personal trauma history and beliefs and thoughts and fears and feelings of unsafety. But the reality, and that's all stemmed in their personal history, maybe, but the reality is in most situations, they are probably going to be fairly safe.

And so that's a lot of the work they can do with a therapist and with support, is learning to come from their history into the present and feel the safety of the present moment and to work on that kind of trauma.

But with racial trauma, it's totally different because it might feel the same, those feelings of unsafety or fear of trauma, but the reality is the world isn't safe for a lot of people of color, and especially depending on the country people are living in and the racial dynamics in that country and where within that country they're living.

Of course, it varies from person to person, but whether they've experienced a very unsafe environment or situation or trauma, personally or not, they will still have been brought up with that kind of fear, they'll know someone who has, someone who's related to them, someone who looks like them. They'll see the way that media portrays things.

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So there's all this reinforcing off that kind of trauma and anxiety, and it's very much based in reality rather than just thoughts. And so it's a difference between, in workshops that I lead, I sometimes talk about the difference between uncomfortable and unsafe. You might feel unsafe or you might feel uncomfortable, but what is the reality?

Whereas here, of course, the reality is that the world is quite unsafe. And I think you live in the US where you were just telling me about some of the shootings that have been happening recently that are very much aimed at black people and other people of color. So it's not the same anxiety.

And as you say, it's not anxiety in general and mental health in general are often not talked about enough, but specifically, this kind of anxiety is so important to have conversations and for people of all different skin tones and racial identities to listen to this conversation.

Dr Patrice Douglas

Absolutely. And I think one of the biggest things is that, what you brought up about situations versus a person of color versus a white person being in a situation, is that also a white person knows that if they needed help, they can get it. With people of color we don't trust, help has not been helpful, help has killed us.

On top of that, a lot of times communities of color are gasoline, where it's not that big of a deal, what did they do wrong? And that's why somebody reacted that way. It is quite possible, and it happens often, where somebody that's a person of color is minding their business, nothing is going on, they may have to defend themselves, but they are the person that is being targeted as the perpetrator.

And so there's a difference also, too. And if you're needing help or it's an unsafe situation, do you have support to get out of there? And we really don't have that in communities of color. So it's more than just, okay, if I go into a situation, what are some things that I can do to make sure I'm safe? But even when you need assistance, it's not guaranteed that you're going to be helped. It may be even more so that you may get hurt even more.

So this is why a lot of individuals in communities of color hesitate going outside. We've got to deal with COVID, but it's also just dealing with, how is the world perceiving us? And then when we have these incidences of massacres and police brutality, we know that there are copies cat. We know that there's people that make mockery of it.

So if one thing happens, how much longer do we have to wait till something else happens? So now everybody is just on pins and needles.

And the one thing I want to mention about anxiety when it comes to racial, is the fight or flight response. So we know that as the center of our body, that when there's a perceived threat or something going on, our body's either going to tell us that we need to act and fight or we need to flee.

Communities of color, especially in the black communities, our fight or flight on 1000. Sometimes we don't recognize that we are experiencing these moments where we have to fight through certain things because our bodies and our minds know that it's a perceived threat. But we're threatened so much that we don't even see that this is making an impact on us.

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But we're reducing the impact, as in our mental health as well as our physical health. So stomach aches, tension headaches, hypertension, high blood pressure, diabetes because we're always on 1000 at any given time we can go to war. So what are we going to do about it? That is what's living in a person of color shoes on a day to day basis.

Jaia Bristow

And as you say, as well as all those elements you've just shared just now, and then as you were just talking about before about the lack of support as well, often if you feel unsafe or that there's a situation you don't know who is an ally and who's a perpetrator, who's going to make it worse, who's going to support you. The people and structures in place and people in power have been shown to be unreliable, historically.

And then there's all these macroaggressions like the shootings and things. There's lots of microaggressions, there's the gaslighting and there's the constantly questioning, is this person treating me this way just because they're an asshole or is it because of my racial identity? Which also makes them an asshole.

But what I mean is there's this extra layer of anxiety as well, of that questioning that gaslighting where, I was actually interviewed for this conference as well as interviewing. And one of the things I spoke about is I had a teacher who sort of bullied me and I never understood why she picked on me and I was the only person of color in my class. And I was 10 at the time so I wasn't so aware of the dynamics.

And looking back it's like oh yeah, it's obvious, but people are like how do you know? And of course I can't guarantee 100% that it was racially motivated. And so that's just one example around so many. There's times, my mum went to use the bathroom on an airplane and she was flying business, and the person was like oh no, this bathroom is for business only. You have to go to the back of the plane. And she was like excuse me, I'm sat right there.

So it's all these small things, and it's like sometimes it's more obvious, sometimes it's less obvious but it creates all this. Anyone who knows what anxiety is and has experienced it, which is most people, knows how uncomfortable it is, this anxiety. How much it feels icky in you and unsafe and all these feelings coming up and tension in your chest and tightness and who can I trust? And having your guard up. But that's heightened for communities of color and all these situations reinforce it.

And then as you say, on top of that it becomes so normalized that it's almost no longer obvious. And then on top of that as well, so it makes sense that there is more mental health issues within communities of color but then there are even more barriers sometimes to access to mental health because then again doctors and people aren't necessarily trained to support. Therapists might be more predominantly white and not had racial training. And then so all these things just add layers and layers onto the existing anxiety.

Dr Patrice Douglas

Absolutely. And also, too, we have to consider that even though everybody takes the oath in these professions, they have their own biases, and so that is also showing up. And so it's even more than just, they need the training and education. It's the fact that because we know that these things exist, we won't go to the doctor, we won't seek help unless it's somebody that looks like us.

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And then in those communities, the professionals are maybe 1% or 2% that make up that entire profession. So, it just goes a long way. And even when we see that we're talking about it and trying to make a difference, there's always little things that happen that continues the microaggressions, it continues to plant the seeds of like, these communities are less than and it's just exhausting.

And that's one of the things that I talk about a lot in my trainings and things like that, is that the code word for anxiety and depression for the black community is exhaustion. I'm tired. It doesn't mean that they need to go to sleep. It's that their soul is tired, their mind is tired, their body is tired because every day they step outside of their house, they don't know what to expect.

When they go to work, is somebody going to mention that I got a new hair do? Are they going to ask if that's my real hair? If I need to speak about something that's going on at work, am I going to be labeled aggressive?

These are all the things that why sometimes you see people in their car for a little bit longer and they wait right to the minute to go into their workplace, is because they're taking those few last seconds to take deep breaths because they know for the next 8 hours it's going to be a roller coaster emotions. And that's why a lot of people in the pandemic enjoyed working from home, because their environment was safe.

These are the things that people that are not part of communities of color, they don't have to experience it. They're more worried about work productivity and maybe what they're going to have for lunch, but we're worried about, not only our work productivity, but if we don't communicate, are we going to be sent home because we're not being a team player? Or when we do stand up for ourselves or we do talk to people, our dialogue is different or we're labeled a very harsh term that can really make or break if we're going to keep our job or not.

So there's just so many areas of racial anxiety that occur that even people of color don't even recognize that on a daily basis they're triggered. They just know that they're just trying to get through the day.

Jaia Bristow

Absolutely. And it's this like double edged sword because it's happening, like you say, this kind of, not quite self-fulfilling prophecy, but like you say, it's because people, for example, with the example with therapists, people know that if they're going to go to a therapist, that therapist probably isn't going to be able to support them in the way they need, so they don't bother going to therapy.

And then if they do go and someone isn't able to support them, then it reinforces that pattern and confirms those beliefs. And so, again, this is why this kind of work is so important for everyone, regardless of your identity, whether it's racial identity or other types of identity, is to understand the systems that are in play and to do the work to undo those internalized messages so that we can break the patterns.

Dr Patrice Douglas

Absolutely.

[00:17:59] Jaia Bristow

This is a lot of what my work is focused on, so I'm so glad we're having this conversation today.

Dr Patrice Douglas

Me too.

Jaia Bristow

What you were speaking about about microaggressions, that's so important. And Roxy Manning and I had a fantastic conversation specifically on that topic on the Trauma Super Conference. And we have another good conversation on this conference, so I encourage people to check that out as well as well as yours and my conversation on the Trauma Super Conference as well, once people are done with this event.

Dr Patrice Douglas

Yes.

Jaia Bristow

So I'm curious then, I think we're establishing quite well for anyone listening, regardless of their racial identity, the reality of racial trauma and why that adds anxiety.

And we can look at it maybe a bit more the historical context and how to know as well for someone, therefore who is a person of color, how to know for themselves when they are experiencing anxiety in relation to racial trauma, and when that's not the prime focus, for example. How do we differentiate them when it's so imbued in everyday life?

Dr Patrice Douglas

So definitely anxiety started, especially in the slavery era. And I know a lot of people feel uncomfortable when we talk about this era because they feel like it was so long ago, nobody's doing those things anymore. But slavery still happens in different parts of the world. There's still slavery in Africa. And to be honest, the slavery period of our community still plays a role in how we interact today. It's part of our generational legacy.

And if you've never heard of post traumatic slave syndrome, I definitely encourage you to read on it because it is something that, regardless of how many generations we're removed from slavery, some of the things that we're experiencing in our generational era today, where legacies go on and on and on, we still have a genetic makeup from those days. And that's where our resilience, that's where our anxiety comes from.

And so when we look at the historical context of anxiety, a lot of it stems from being medical experiments in the slavery era, women were utilized as experiments for fertility things. They were getting hysterectomies, they were getting all types of surgical procedures. And back then, they didn't have anesthesia so they were awake for these. And no matter how brutal they were, they were testing it out on us to see if they could find a solution for their white community.

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So it wasn't that they were trying to find help for us, it was so that if something was to happen, it would happen to us versus them. We were left in ditches for heat exhaustion, things like that. So that's where a lot of the medical mistrust comes from, because we were never utilized as, hey, you're sick, let's help you. It's more of like, hey, we don't really value your life, so we're going to test it on you to see if it works. If not at least no harm, no foul. We didn't lose anything important.

So you have the medical mistrust when it comes to that as far as anxiety. And then when you talk about mental health, a lot of times we either weren't treated for our mental health or if we were, it was on the most severe case, the most severe scale.

So we were often heavily medicated because there are studies that show that medical professionals feel that because of the genetic makeup of the black community that we are stronger than most, and so therefore, we need higher doses of medication.

And these doses of medication are typically something that you should grow into, get adjusted to than just starting from up here. You should be leveling up if you need to. So we were starting at this, which meant we were having a lot of side effects, a lot of psychosis, things like that. So we were often institutionalized.

So those are just some of the examples of anxiety in general, of like, going to get help, recognizing that there's a problem and allowing somebody to help us. It always wasn't really for the benefit of making us better, if anything was the benefit of hurting us.

Even the Tuskegee experiment where they said that they were providing support and care to black men that had syphilis, and come to find out they were not receiving any type of treatment so we were continuing to spread, we're continuing to potentially put our community at risk.

So a lot of times we look at medical anxiety, racial anxiety, as you can see, those intersect very well. We were treated differently because of the color of our skin, and we were also lied to. So we really didn't have the medical support that we needed.

So when you talk about that, we may have not personally felt that, but the stories and the legacies follow the generations. So newer generations are like, no, granny said, we don't need to go to the doctor because the doctors do this. The doctors do that. Grandpa said that we don't need to go to the doctor because his friend Bobby went to the doctor. He was having heart problems. They said that he was fine, he went home, he died the next day. So what's the difference?

And a lot of that is because black people's concerns are not taken into consideration. People of color, their situations are not taken at the most highest of importance, so a lot of times we lose hope.

So when you have those stories, you have those legacies, that's why some generations don't go to the doctors, some of the generations don't go to see mental health treatment is because at some point in their legacy, they heard a story or they were victim of that event.

So when you look at those things, racial anxiety shows up in a lot of ways that it's easy for somebody that is not a person of color to go get these resources and feel comfortable with it, but every time we go and we're not sure if we're going to be heard, we're not sure if we're going to be given the right stuff, we're not sure if we're going to get hurt, so we'd just rather not.

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And that's why we have higher incidences, for women, like death by pregnancy, we die more of cancer and strokes and heart attacks because we don't have the same level of care and compassion that other people may have.

So that's a lot of the historical context, and of course, I could talk all day about different examples of where a lot of this stems from, but that's the core of why we deal with anxiety all the time. It's just the fear of, when am I going to be next? When am I going to get hurt? When is it my turn?

And then we have a large amount of time where everything seems like it's going well and the world loves each other, and then you're reminded once again that you don't matter. It's just dangerous being a person of color. It doesn't have anything to do with how you speak, how you walk, how you think. It's just the fact of how you look, that you're already in danger.

And that's a problem that a lot of people that do not belong in these communities have a really tough time understanding.

So some of the things that you can do to understand racial anxiety, especially if you're a professional, one of the things is that you want to ask questions about where's anxiety stemming from. One of the questions that I always say in my DSM-5 for the culture, is ask if anything of this has to do with your race ethnic background.

Because I'm telling you right now, if you were to ask that, it will open the floodgates of probably and yes, and I don't know how to communicate that. But nine times out of ten, they're going to tell you, yeah, I deal with microaggressions at work. Yeah, I don't feel like it's safe because everybody showed a picture, there was a picture going around of a teacher at a school where she had a collage of monkeys, and in the middle of that collage was our previous President, Barack Obama.

Jaia Bristow

That's so messed up.

Dr Patrice Douglas

It is.

And so we hear about it and we say we're outraged and they're suspended. But the fact is that those types of thoughts, those types of jokes have already been embedded in whoever she showed it to.

And that's the problem with that, I mean, I'm not trying to be political and go into white supremacy and all that, but these are the roots that we're talking about.

So I guarantee you that if you were to ask somebody, do you believe that any of the symptoms that you're experiencing has anything to do with the color of your skin? Nine times out of ten, they're going to say yes. And if they don't, the fact that you asked them, the next time they come and see you, it may have brought some more memories.

Because you got to think about it, we're living in a time of survival so we're not going to harp on everything because we already knew coming out of the womb, it wasn't going to be fair for us. But when we sit down and have those silent moments which a lot of us are afraid to have because we

know how much baggage we're storing up, it will come out that a lot of things that you're experiencing that create that fear, is related to the color of your skin.

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And those are things that we have to talk about more of and find solutions on how to combat a lot of these feelings. But a lot of it takes place in the political realm. A lot of this takes place in people being allies, when you see something wrong, say something. These are things that are going to help create more safe environments for people of color.

Jaia Bristow

100%. And I think what's really interesting in everything you shared around, from slavery and the medical community and school teachers now, is showing that racial anxiety, racial trauma exists very much in the present moment. It's also historical. It's also generational. And it's also within the community.

And we know that when you live, when you're in a community and there's that kind of feeling of anxiety present, like we've just lived through a 2 year global pandemic, so everyone knows what it's like, regardless of the color of your skin, you know what it's like to be in an environment where everyone's kind of anxious about the same thing, that kind of community anxiety. And that was just within the present and community anxiety.

And then other people might know what it's like to experience historical anxiety or generational anxiety, but racial anxiety, racial trauma are all of those things. It's very present, as you said, it's still being reinforced in media, in politics, in social media, things like that.

Then on top of that, there's all the, just generational stuff. And if people know anything about generational trauma, that's pretty damn heavy. Then there's historical, which is slightly different to generational. So it's embedded in the history, it's being passed down, not just through your ancestry, but through all the different ancestry. And then it's within the community, there's that feeling as well.

So of course, it's going to be really intense and it's going to be a lot to handle. And so people might not always recognize how much they're dealing with because they're in survival mode, so they don't have the time to focus on that. Which is why often why I think in communities of color, mental health can be very dismissed or talked about as, white people problems.

But the reality is people from marginalized communities need mental health support at least as much, if not much more than people from dominant communities. And I'm not just talking about racial communities here, this is true in all different kinds of marginalized communities.

So I really appreciate you bringing this piece in. And before we run out of time, I also want to make sure that people leave with some coping strategies.

Dr Patrice Douglas

Yeah.

[00:29:19] Jaia Bristow

For people, let's start with people who are the ones suffering from anxiety. So people from communities of color who are dealing with all this racial trauma as well as all their personal shit on top of it. Let's not forget that each individual...

Dr Patrice Douglas

Let's not forget that you're still a human being. You've got other stuff to deal with. Absolutely.

Jaia Bristow

100%.

So they're dealing with that plus all of that. So what are some coping strategies for them?

Dr Patrice Douglas

So there are a ton of things that you can do for anxiety. Sometimes you have to give yourself affirmations about the safety that you do have, like, a lot of times our home is our safety. Sometimes we find safety in the car, sometimes we build safety in conversations that we may have with people that we trust. So you definitely want to focus on the areas that you feel safe and make that a really great space to have.

So at home, make sure that you have a lot of comfortable pillows and messages throughout your wall and really just make it a space where you can wean out as much negativity as possible. But that means, too, you can't be on your phone all the time looking at bad stuff on social media. We talk about good vibes in the house, but if you're bringing your phone into the house, you're bringing in all this stuff on your phone that's bringing a bad environment.

So you want to make sure that your safe places remain safe. And also remind yourself, why do you feel safe in these spaces? You also want to have some techniques. So one of my favorite techniques is grounding techniques. I'm definitely not a person that can meditate because I'm going to think about everything. And even when I do guided oh, you got off track. You're right, I did. And I'm probably not going to get back on track.

So I love the 5,4,3,2,1 method, where it's like five things you can see, four things you can hear, three things you can touch, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste. So if you go through all of that, you have to focus on what 5,4,3,2,1 you're going to be doing, you're taking yourself out of the future and you're putting yourself back in the present. That's a good grounding technique.

As well as, if you can and you're not afraid of bugs, you can go outside without your shoes and touch grass with your feet and ground with the earth. A lot of times when we reconnect with nature, that can bring some soothing intentions to you.

Social media is lovely, but it's also toxic. And I said, I'm not going to use that word too much but this fits. So you definitely want to make sure that your feed is full of funny stuff. If you follow pages that are typically okay, but when it comes to big events, they post a lot, just go ahead and unfollow them. And if you want to see what's going on, just go ahead and type them in the search bar. But you definitely want to make sure that your feed has some balance. More positive than negative.

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Definitely make sure that you're mindful of how much news you watch. I tell my clients all the time in my community that these videos that they're showing of things that are happening to us, are not for us. I don't need to see anything to know that it exists. These are for the people that say that we are out of our minds and we're making stuff up and that these things don't happen in America today because we all don't hate each other.

Now, those videos are for them. So no shooting videos, no death videos, nothing of that nature that you need to be watching. You are potentially creating secondary trauma which can lead to PTSD. You do not have to physically experience an event to have post traumatic stress syndrome. So make sure you are refraining from watching anything that can potentially upset you.

I said social media, in the news, make sure that you only try to watch the news 15 minutes a day. It doesn't have to be in one setting, 15. It can be a total of 15 throughout the day, but make sure that you are not watching it when you get up and before you go to bed. You make sure you want to watch something or listen to something that is putting you in a good space.

So those are things that I tell people to combat as much tension and anxiety that they have regarding these things, as well as reach out to a therapist. At the end of the day, sometimes just having someone to talk to and kind of process this stuff is more meaningful than anything else. It doesn't mean that there's going to be a solution, but the fact that you have a space to drop it is really what can be helpful in you moving forward.

Jaia Bristow

Fantastic. And I love that. I'm so glad you brought in that piece about limiting time on social media and the news and who those videos are aimed at. People sometimes judge me because I do not read the news. I sometimes look at headlines, but I expect the people in my environment to tell me if anything major happens. So I'm going to hear about the news, so I don't need to watch it and be traumatized by it.

I don't spend much time on social media at all, actually, and when I do, I have a very nicely curated news feed.

Dr Patrice Douglas

Your aesthetic is amazing.

Jaia Bristow

Exactly. When I came on, because I haven't been around any people recently other than doing these interviews, and we had a little chat off camera, you were telling me about some of the things that had happened that I wasn't even aware of.

And when you told me, of course it's heartbreaking and it's good to know what's happening in the world, but I'm also glad that I didn't have to read about it and watch videos about it and hear all the conversations happening around that.

So I'm so glad you brought in that piece about who those videos are for. That brings me, well, before I finish that, I also wanted to say that I love some of the other techniques you're talking about,

grounding and other things. And I think that basically whatever form of anxiety you're experiencing, whether it's social anxiety, racial anxiety, other forms of anxiety, the coping techniques are all very similar.

[00:35:04]

And this conference offers a ton of different methods. So for those where meditation is supportive, people might prefer Qigong, people might prefer DBT, CBT, EMT. So I really encourage people to find what works for you as a person.

And yes, therapists. Of course, if you can find a therapist, as we discussed, for some people, finding a therapist is difficult. So I think being really upfront with your expectations and what you need and making sure you find a therapist you trust. Either someone who can mirror your experiences, so who has a similar identity, whether that's racial or otherwise. Or if you have lots of intersecting identities from oppressed and marginalized communities, finding someone who can support you.

Or if it's not someone who can mirror your identity, someone who's done the work that they actually know how to support you. So finding the right therapist for you and not being afraid to, often therapists offer free first sessions to find out if they're the right fit for you. So go in, be open about what you need, what kind of support you're looking at, the areas you're navigating.

And then if you're a therapist listening, be honest about your capabilities and your limits. I spoke to someone recently where someone who was non-binary had approached them and was like, how are you with inclusive language? And they were like, honestly, I want to learn and I want to be better, but right now I'm not there yet and I don't want to retraumatize you so here are some other people who might be a better fit, for example. And that's good practice as a therapist, I think.

Dr Patrice Douglas

Absolutely. And the other thing that, there's two things I'll mention really quick. So sometimes you might find therapists that can work on certain things, and then that's it.

So I hear a lot of experience in the black community where they may have had a white therapist and certain things that they needed to work on they were good for, but when it came to more of racial stuff, they knew that that wasn't really going to be a fit and so they were able to successfully complete with that therapist and move on to somebody else that would have more experience in that room.

It's totally okay to have a therapist that can get you through one thing and you may need another to get you through something else. So you can definitely have that.

The other thing, too, is that there's also other areas to get therapeutic stuff. So, support groups, therapy groups. I know with the pandemic, therapy has been a challenge for people to get into because everybody has wait lists, but a lot of therapists, including myself, offer groups so that not only are you working on yourself, but you also feel like you have a community of people that are also working through things and also can be supportive as well.

So I would say I really encourage those to really explore looking into group work as well in healing circles. That can be very helpful as well.

[00:37:50] Jaia Bristow

Fantastic. And the last thing I wanted to ask, and I'm aware that we are running out of time, you said those videos aren't for the people who are living racial trauma, but they are for other people.

So for those other people, I'm looking at you white people, how can white people or people in dominant groups help?

There's lots of techniques on dealing with their own anxiety, and I think if they're feeling guilt and stuff, there's techniques on dealing with that, but how can they be supportive if they have someone in their life... I come from a mixed family, for example. I know lots of people in mixed relationships. So how can someone be supportive to a loved one who does experience racial trauma?

Dr Patrice Douglas

I definitely think that being a sounding ear is helpful, listening to their experiences, not having a lot of feedback necessarily because it can make them feel like it's being diminished, of their experience. But I think the more that, if you're paying attention to your family or your loved one or the person that you're trying to understand, it's important for you to go back to your spaces and advocate.

So the things that you learn from the black community, the things that you're learning from the Asian, Pacific Islander, Latinx, Indigenous, take those back to the white community. Say, hey, when you hear your friends or people saying certain things or colleagues, call them out. That's the biggest thing is that a lot of times communities of color, we're tired of calling people out for things when we see people know things are happening around and they're not saying anything about it.

So being an advocate and saying, hey, let's not call people that or hey, let's not phrase it that way. Let's be an ally and say it better. Let's respect everyone. When we have more allies in the space, we feel more safe.

Also get more involved with political stuff. Call your senators, get more involved in those spaces where you have the privilege and the power to make a change. We can only do so much, but we need more white individual support.

You guys can really make the change, and so if you really are an ally, it's more than just saying on social media, Black Lives Matter, Stop Asian Hate. It's more about how are you stepping into your circles and checking your friends about how they're treating people of color? That is one of the biggest things that you can do to help a person of color is be a true ally and be there for them in ways that if they're not there, they know that you're still making an impact. That is the biggest thing that they're looking for.

Jaia Bristow

100%. So it's really being an active ally and advocate rather than performative or passive. And again, there's plenty of resources out there for people wanting to engage in that.

One last thing I'd add, and I think this is true for everyone, is finding communities that can support you. So if you're someone, a person of color, or if you have intersections like me where you're a person of color and you're queer and you're disabled and all these things, then finding communities that can mirror your experiences and hold it where you don't have to educate, where you're not having that guard that you might have, even with someone you really love and are close to.

[00:40:57]

And equally, if you're from a dominant group and listening to this talk has brought stuff up or someone has called you out on something or called you in or anything like that, then again, find communities who share your experiences.

So for example, if you're white, talk to other white people and process with that so that you're not retraumatizing the people who are already experiencing the trauma.

Dr Patrice Douglas

Absolutely.

Jaia Bristow

Patrice, I wish we had another hour to keep going because I feel like there's so much more we could talk about, but hopefully I'll bring you in next time.

For people who want to find out more about you and your work, how can they do that?

Dr Patrice Douglas

So I'm definitely on social media. I do watch my aesthetics. My social media, you can definitely reach out on Instagram, [@thepatricenicole](#). On [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) I'm @patricendouglas.

You can definitely check out my website. I've got a couple of private practices, [empirecounseling.net](#), where we specialize in black and people of color.

As well as I just launched a new practice called The Weight Room and it's exclusively for black and brown males and you can find that at [thebbweightroom.com](#)

It's been a pleasure speaking with you today.

Jaia Bristow

Thank you so much. I appreciate you, immensely.

Dr Patrice Douglas

Thank you.