

# Mental Health in Your Marriage: How do you work through balancing the stressors in life?

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# Agenda

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- Introduction
  - Perspectives on Family of Origin
  - Understanding Mental Health
  - Marriage, Stressors, and Personal History
  - Strategies for Sustaining Mental and Emotional Resilience
  - Q & A
  - Resources

# Introduction

- There is a substantial mental health crisis in America and around the world that has reached dangerous levels.
- The crisis is particularly acute among Black folks, particularly given our history in America. The community is more stressed today than it has perhaps ever been before.
- Mental health impacts every facet of our lives: spiritual, psychological, emotional, social, and relational.
- Nearly 54 % of all first marriages end in divorce. Stress and mental health issues play a large role in this trend.



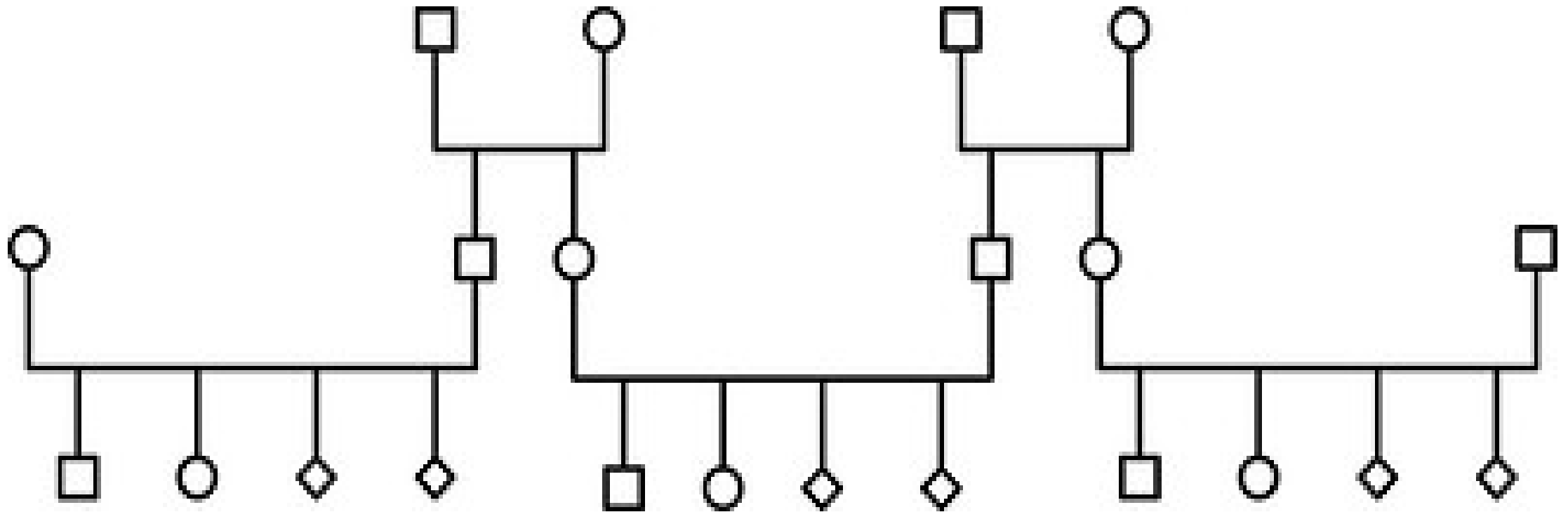
# First Address(es) and Primary Families

- Any discussion of mental health and marriage is well to begin with a consideration of our families of origin and the homes we grew up in.
- They shape our personalities and perspectives of ourselves and the world around us (parents, siblings, caregivers).
- We learn to play certain roles and characters and abide by certain rules that appear throughout our lives.
- Develop a baseline of goals and expectations for ourselves and others.
- We learn our faith from our families and even learn how to deal with conflict.



# Genogram

*A graphic representation of a family's construction, patterns, relationships, and history across multiple generations. Shows the interconnected of our lives to those that have gone before us.*

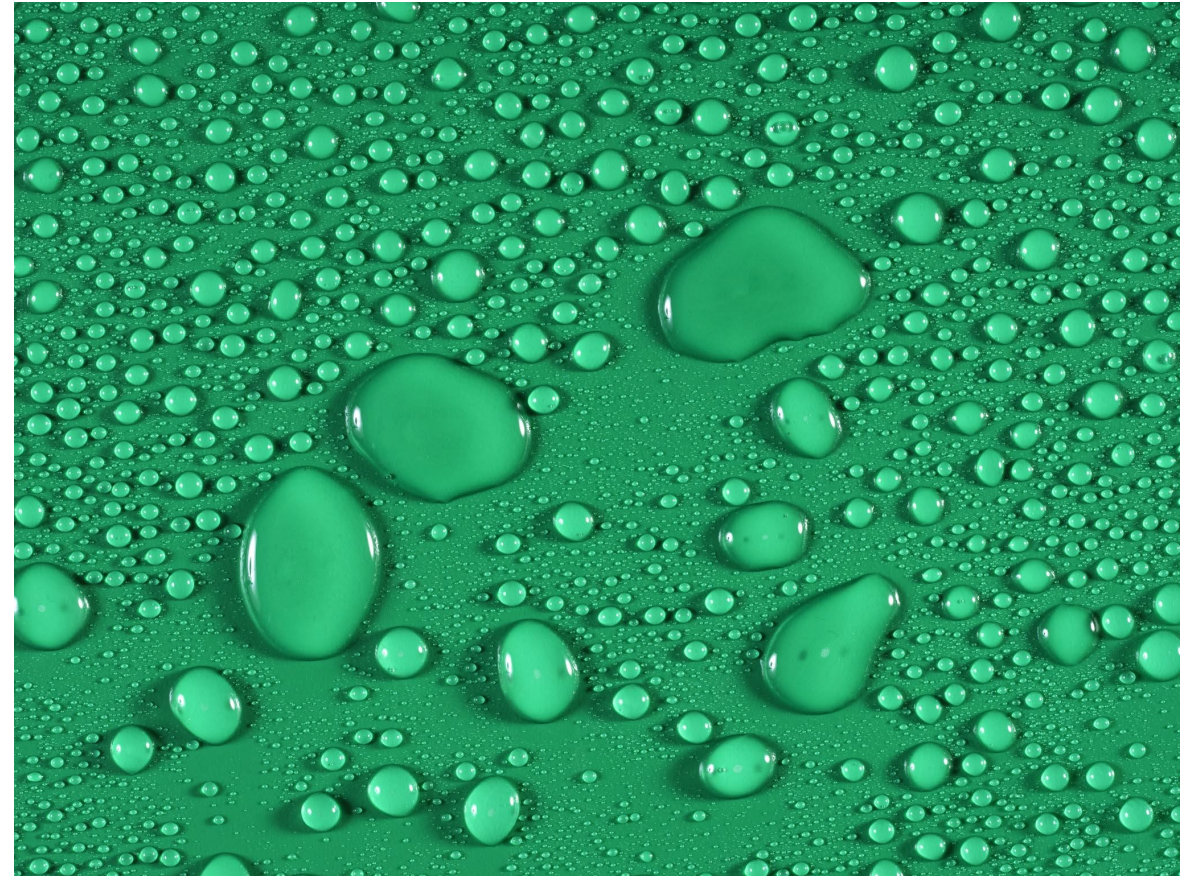




# Residual Impacts of Family of Origin

**Common impacts and patterns that show up in relationships and marriages:**

- ☐ Emotional regulation (Anxiety)
- ☐ Avoidant vs. Anxious attachment (secure and insecure attachment)
- ☐ Unresolved emotional and/or physical trauma (generational)
- ☐ Communication style
- ☐ Conflict resolution
- ☐ Coping mechanisms and Self-Esteem



# Understanding Mental Health

- Mental health is a moving target. It is not a static or fixed condition in time. There are always threats to mental stability. Stress can play a critical role in determining mental health.
- Anxiety, depression, and isolation can also significantly impact one's mental health. The story of Job is an example of the impact of these forces on one's life.
- Mental health can range from mild symptoms to more severe symptoms and conditions like schizophrenia, dementia, bi-polar, etc..
- Mental health issues can have a significant impact on relationships and marriages.



*I think mental health may be better understood as mental resilience. That is the ability to face whatever challenges may come in life and develop creative ways to face them without collapsing under the stress.*

# The First Family and Marriage

God created Adam, the first man, from the dust of the ground and then created Eve, the first woman, from Adam's rib to be his companion.





# Marriage, Stressors, and Personal History

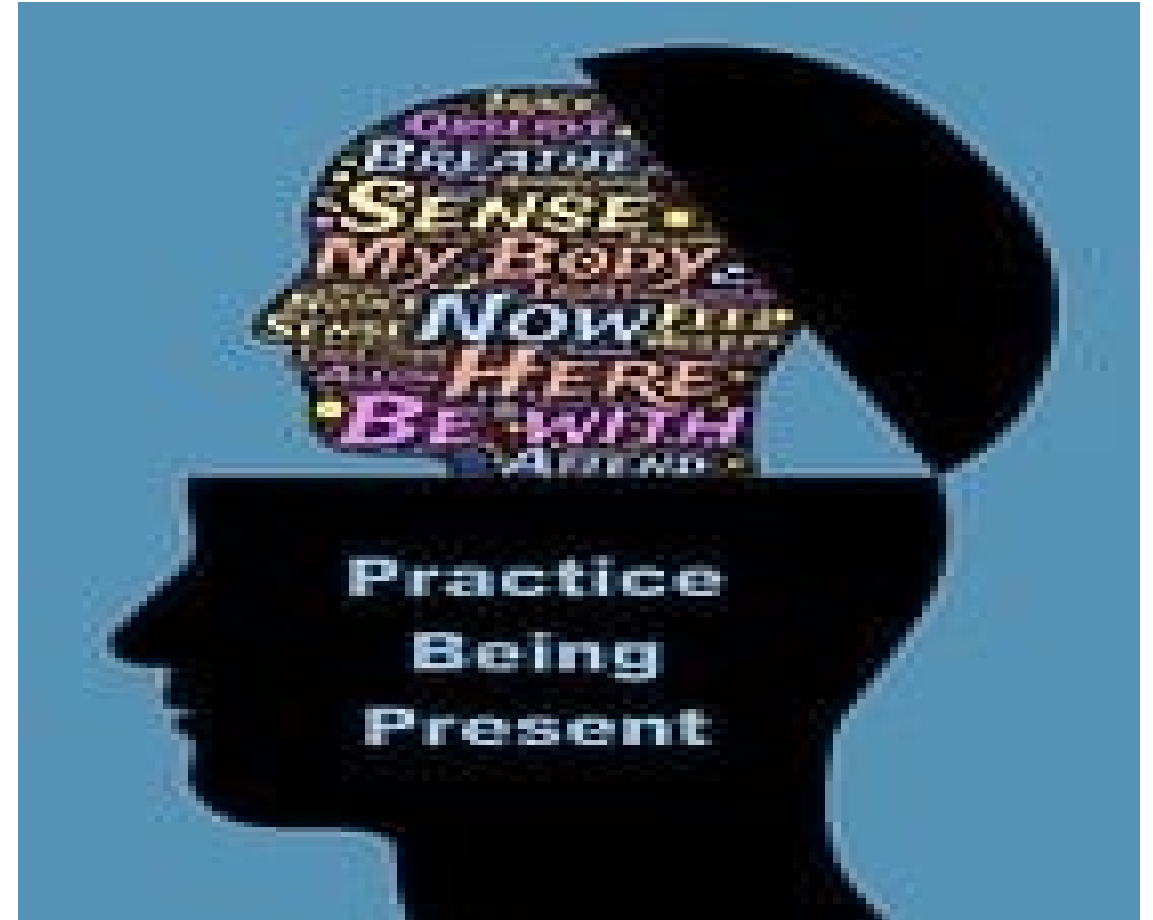
- Marriage is fundamentally a negotiation and renegotiation of our families of origin. We are never too far from home and the ins and outs of the experience.
- Every marriage must be seen in its own context which includes the duration of the marriage, stressors within and outside the marriage, and the personal and family histories of each partner, which include trauma.
- Unresolved conflict, unmet expectations, strain from unresolved personal issues, work-related issues, extended family members, and social pressures all can impact marriages.



***Successful marriages start and end with a deep understanding of ourselves and a willingness to take responsibility for our lives and actions.***

# Marks of Good Mental Health

- Understand that there is a higher power (God) that is bigger than you and me.
- Positive Mental Attitude.
- Take ownership for one's own feelings and history.
- Live from a place of gratitude and forgiveness.
- Ability to develop and maintain meaningful relationships.
- Able to set boundaries and respect differences.



# Strategies for Sustaining Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Resilience

- Develop a spirituality of curiosity.
- Practice deep self-awareness by studying your family of origin and your experiences in life.
- Learn to test new behaviors and ways of thinking.
- Stay active and engage in regular movement / exercise.
- Understand your own limits and ask for help when necessary.



Q & A



# Resources



*Growing yourself up: How to Bring Your Best To All of Life's Relationships* by Jenny Brown

*Bipolar Faith: A Black Woman's Journey with Depression and Faith* by Monica Coleman

*Extraordinary Relationships: A New Way of Thinking About Human Interactions* by Roberta M. Gilbert, M.D.



# Contact Information

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