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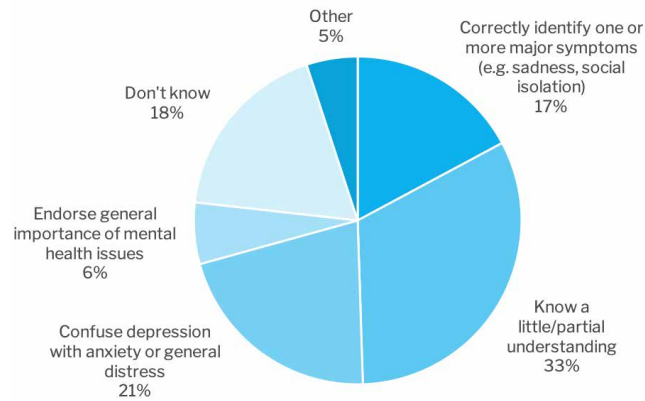
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# UNDERSTANDING OF MENTAL HEALTH & SELF-CARE AMONG ASIAN AMERICANS IN THE TWIN CITIES

Mental health is an important topic for Asian American communities. Research shows that Asian Americans use mental health services less than the general public, particularly compared to white Americans. Asian Americans also face many barriers to accessing adequate mental health services, such as language and cultural stigma around mental health in Asian American communities. In addition, mental health care providers often do not have a good understanding of the particular experiences of Asian Americans as racial and cultural minorities. Many Asian Americans also are not aware of Western concepts of mental health or of available mental health resources, which often do not outreach to Asian Americans. These barriers can make it difficult for Asian Americans to talk about mental health, recognize when they need support, and know where to go for help.

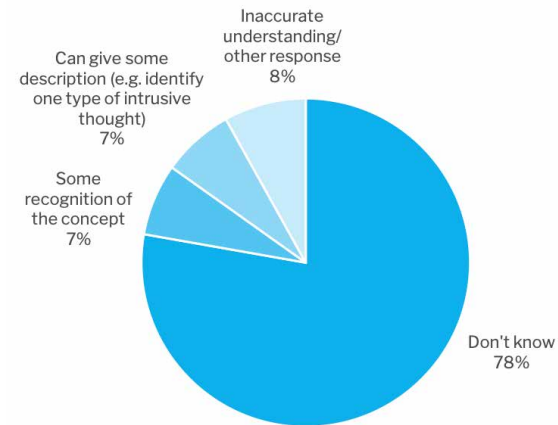
**Asian American Organizing Project (AAOP) interviewed 99 Asian Americans in the Twin Cities about their understanding of mental health and self-care.** First, we asked people about their understanding of depression. ***Depression*** is a type of mental disorder where a person feels very sad, empty, or hopeless. Sometimes people with depression will lose their appetite, feel very tired all the time, have trouble concentrating, or may isolate themselves from friends and family.



What is your understanding of **depression**?

Generally, the people we talked to were aware of the concept of depression. Only 18% of people said they didn't know about depression. Some people (17%) were able to define depression with one or more major symptoms, showing a relatively clear understanding of depression, while 33% of people indicated that they had some knowledge of the concept. Many others (21%) recognized depression as a mental health issue, but when they tried to describe depression in more detail, they gave descriptions that are actually of anxiety or general psychological distress (e.g. being "stressed out") rather than of depression specifically. This suggests that many people might not know the differences between different mental disorders, or might not be familiar with different diagnoses.

Next, we asked people about intrusive thoughts. **Intrusive thoughts** are involuntary and often disturbing thoughts, images, or ideas. Usually intrusive thoughts involve imagining something bad happening, or imagining yourself doing something bad. Anyone can have intrusive thoughts; they are normal and do not mean the bad thing will happen. However, intrusive thoughts cause serious problems for people with obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). For a person with OCD, the intrusive thought becomes an obsession that is very distressing, and the person makes extreme and time-consuming efforts to prevent the bad things in the intrusive thought from happening. This makes everyday activities very difficult for a person with OCD.



What is your understanding of **intrusive thoughts**?

The vast majority (78%) of people that we talked to did not know what intrusive thoughts were. A few people were able to give an example of an intrusive thought or seemed to have some recognition of the concept. Since "intrusive thoughts" is a specific psychological term usually only used when describing or treating OCD, it makes sense that most people are not familiar with the term. This low familiarity could also suggest that the people we talked to generally have not been exposed to clinical mental health settings, or to other places where they might have learned about different mental health conditions.

Finally, we asked people about how they take care of themselves and their mental health. Almost everyone (96%) indicated that they have self-care strategies. The most common self-care strategies people named were:

- Spending time with friends and/or family
- Hobbies (e.g. playing music, art, reading, gaming)
- Getting out of the house and doing fun activities
- Exercising or doing other physical activity
- Talking about things with trusted people
- Rest/relaxation activities
- Outdoor activities (e.g. going for walks, camping, fishing)
- Listening to music

**Overall**, the results of our survey indicate that the Asian Americans we talked to have a basic familiarity with words and concepts related to mental health, but generally do not have more specific knowledge about mental health diagnoses and symptoms. Therefore, Asian American communities in the Twin Cities may benefit from more resources and opportunities to learn about mental health issues. However, even without highly detailed knowledge about mental health, almost everyone had good ideas about ways to take care of their own well-being. These results suggest potential for continuing conversations about mental health in our Asian American communities.

## MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

### **National Organizations**

#### **National Alliance Mental Illness (NAMI)**

[nami.org](http://nami.org)

NAMI is the nation's largest grassroots mental health organization dedicated to building better lives for the millions of Americans affected by mental illness.

#### **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)**

[samhsa.gov](http://samhsa.gov)

SAMHSA's mission is to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on America's communities.

#### **Parity Implementation Coalition**

[parityispersonal.org](http://parityispersonal.org)

Parity Implementation Coalition works to end discrimination against individuals and families who seek services for mental health and substance use disorders.

### **Local Resources**

#### **Mental Health Minnesota**

[mentalhealthmn.org](http://mentalhealthmn.org)

#### **Minnesota Recovery Connection**

[minnesotarecovery.org](http://minnesotarecovery.org)

#### **Minnesota Mental Health Clinics**

[mnmentalhealthclinics.com](http://mnmentalhealthclinics.com)

#### **Family Tree Clinic**

[familytreeclinic.org](http://familytreeclinic.org)

#### **The Family Partnership**

[thefamilypartnership.org](http://thefamilypartnership.org)

#### **Walk-In Counseling Center**

[walkin.org](http://walkin.org)

#### **CAPI-USA**

[capiusa.org](http://capiusa.org)

#### **Hmong American Partnership**

[hmong.org/](http://hmong.org/)

#### **Vietnamese Social Services**

[vssmn.org](http://vssmn.org)

#### **Karen Organization of MN**

[mnkaren.org](http://mnkaren.org)

#### **LGBTQ+ Therapists Network**

[lgbttherapists.org](http://lgbttherapists.org)