Intersectionality and Mental Health

Research shows that mental health challenges impact us all, but that they are compounded by stigma and discrimination as a result of intersecting identities (race, gender, class, ability, sexuality etc.).

In order for us to build more caring and empathetic workplaces, we must create space to talk about the impacts and experiences of intersecting identities as they relate to mental health.

**KEY TERMS**

**Intersectionality:** The interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, disability, sexual orientation, and gender as they apply to a given individual or group. Intersectional identities can create interdependent systems of discrimination and disadvantage.

**Positionality:** The social, cultural and political context that makes up one's identity. It describes how this identity influences, and potentially biases, your understanding and outlook of the world. Identities and personal experiences vary within social and/or cultural groups.

**Microaggressions:** Everyday verbal, behavioral or environmental indignities, slights, put-downs and insults (intentional or unintentional) that can cause ongoing stress and trauma.

**Social Determinants of Health:** The conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live, and age, and the wider set of forces and systems that shape and influence health outcomes. These include economic policies and systems, development agendas, social norms, social policies and political systems.

**Identity and Mental Health**

Frequency of mental health problems and negative health outcomes are experienced by marginalized communities.

**WHY?**

**Discrimination**
- Racism
- Rejection (family/community)
- Isolation

**Harassment**
- Microaggressions
- Trauma
- Violence

**Structural Inequalities**
- Barriers to access/care
- Lower quality of life/care
- Lack of culturally trained mental health professionals

**EXAMPLES**

- Cultural suppression/persecution and forced assimilation have profound effects on health and social outcomes across generations.

**Protective Factors**

- Supportive community
- Connection to a peer group
- Reconnection to traditional practices and medicines

**Next Steps & Future Action**

- Read UBC's *Intersectional Approaches to Mental Health: A Facilitator's Guide* for more info and data references.
- Explore the "Building a More Equitable and Inclusive Workplace" LinkedIn Learning path.
- Explore training and education opportunities through UBC's Equity and Inclusion Office.