

How does prejudice hurt us emotionally?

Discrimination can have a profound effect on our mental and physical health. Professor Sarah Niblock, CEO of the UK Council for Psychotherapy, and psychotherapist Dwight Turner explore feelings of 'otherness', inequality and the impact they can have



Acts of violence against black people and the subsequent

protests have sparked a global conversation about inequality. Racism and discrimination erode the fabric of society and can leave a deep mark on individuals. I speak to UKCP therapist Dwight Turner about how a sense of difference and the experience of injustice can harm us and why new strategies are needed for long-lasting change.

Sarah CEO of the UK Council for Psychotherapy

About the UKCP and how to find a therapist

• **The UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP)** is the leading research, innovation, educational and

regulatory body working to advance psychotherapy for the benefit of all. We have a register of more than 8,000 individual members, who offer a range of therapy approaches for couples, individuals, families and groups. We also have more than 70 training

and accrediting organisations for those who wish to become psychotherapists.

• **To find the right therapist for you,** or learn how to become a therapist, visit psychology.org.uk



Therapist Dwight Turner looks at the psychological effects of feeling like an outsider and how to make sense of internalised experiences of prejudice

Difference and a sense of otherness are complex and there are a variety of things that form our identity. But when we experience discrimination, we are seen as only one component of how we identify ourselves. When one aspect is pointed out, we can feel as if we don't belong – when the focus is on our gender, race, sexual orientation or disability.

It's hard work living in a world that's not our own. We may find that we can't bring the fullness of who

we are to certain situations. The environments we are in often dictate how much we can be ourselves and many of us have had to adapt, but at the cost of forming a 'false self', which can lead to mental health issues, such as depression, or even affect us physically.

Widen the lens

We can take an intersectional approach to the complicated relationships between different aspects of our identity, allowing us to explore our privilege as well as our difference. We may find that grounding, as it stops us overidentifying with a sense of otherness. For example, I am a black man, but I am also heterosexual and an academic. These multiple aspects of my identity mean that at times I am an outsider, but I also hold certain privileges.

Our experiences can seep into our

unconscious. I work with clients through their dream state to help them gain insight and find meaning. Psychotherapy gives us a safe and secure place to talk and explore issues and also helps us gather the power we need to confront intimidating situations.

We may find worldwide protests and the current spotlight on discrimination triggering, but it is important that we harness this energy and drive, not to force change, but to encourage it, in the hope that we can affect a new outcome.



The podcast

Sadly, discrimination is common. Many internalise it because it can be painful to exist in a world in which we are made to feel as if we don't belong, and that can have an impact on wellbeing. Listen to Sarah Niblock and Dwight Turner discuss prejudice at psychologies.co.uk/how-does-discrimination-affect-your-mental-health-podcast-ukcp

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HOW I BECAME A THERAPIST

Integrative counsellor and psychotherapist Dwight Turner outlines his career path

TWO FACTORS steered me towards psychotherapy as a career. Firstly, I started my own therapy at the age of 28. A long-term relationship had ended, I refused to process the emotional experience and fell apart. Therapy helped me cope but it was signing up for a foundation year at the Centre of Counselling and Psychotherapy (CCPE) that put me on the road to discovering myself.

Secondly, I went to university. Returning to study as a mature student was a challenge but it was one I began moving towards when I signed up for a postgraduate diploma course at the CCPE, followed by an MA in transpersonal psychotherapy. Alongside this, I found a job as a counsellor, before completing my doctorate in 2012. Today, I am fortunate enough to be a senior lecturer at the University of Brighton, teaching future generations of counsellors and psychotherapists. dwrightturnercounselling.co.uk

Has your dream state been altered by discrimination?

Dwight Turner suggests asking yourself five questions to see if the impact of prejudice is manifesting in your subconscious

EXPERIENCES OF DISCRIMINATION are often held within and not expressed. One means by which they make themselves known is in dreams. Delving into this unconscious state, especially with the help of a psychotherapist, allows you to make sense of your internalised struggle of being made to feel like an outsider. When working with dreams, it is helpful to ask:

- 1 How am I avoiding** being with the effects of discrimination? What coping mechanisms do I have in place?
- 2 What is happening** in my dream state? Have my dreams changed?
- 3 What aspect of my dreams** am I most afraid of or angry about? How does it represent my repressed privilege?
- 4 Am I aware of my unconscious other?** Do I recognise this part of myself or do I need help to access it? What is my unconscious other trying to tell me?
- 5 In recognising the disparate aspects** of my dream identity, how may I make use of them in the real world?