

## The Black Woman's Guide to Coping with Stress: Mindfulness and Self-Compassion Skills to Create a Life of Joy and Well-Being

**Cheryl W. Giscombé**

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Cheryl W. Giscombé's inspiring guide explores why Black women are extrasusceptible to the killing effects of stress, suggesting strategies for empowerment, self-care, and radiant health.

Arguing that women must nourish their relationships with themselves first, the book notes that such a perspective runs counter to long-held beliefs in Black communities that a woman's first responsibility is to care for, support, and be an example of stoic strength for others, all while suppressing her own emotions. Passed down through generations and embedded in the unconscious, this image of a strong, self-sacrificing pillar of the community and source of family stability (referred to by the book as the "Superwoman Schema") still lingers. But while living up to its demands may make a woman revered in her community, the book shows that doing so has serious downsides for women's health and happiness.

Throughout, the stresses of navigating life in a patriarchal, racist society are noted and countered by the firm, comforting promotion of mindfulness-based approaches to coping with stress. There are denial-eliminating reflections, journaling prompts, and stories from Black women dealing with internal and external conflicts in high-stress situations. All support the idea that it is possible for Black women to "harness [their] power without being worn down by the responsibilities of having it."

Recognizing that women may encounter resistance and perhaps even anger from others when they begin implementing self-care methods, the book suggests methods to help others understand and respect women's need for change too. These include inviting outside participation in women's stress-relieving practices. But there are also strategies for disentangling from people who are not supportive.

The persuasive self-help guide *The Black Woman's Guide to Coping with Stress* suggests that focusing on personal well-being not only leads to greater health and happiness, but is a potent act of service.

KRISTINE MORRIS (May / June 2024)

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