

Topic of the Month

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Free - Help Yourself!



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**R**acism is a contagion that weakens our society and has created an ongoing [public health crisis](#). While the fundamentals of good health seem simple (a well-balanced diet, physical activity, no commercial tobacco, enough sleep, supportive relationships, and not too much stress), the decisions we make about those health essentials don't happen in a vacuum. Our choices are impacted by the social, economic, political, and environmental factors that surround us. Our decisions are influenced by the Social Determinants of Health.

**Social Determinants of Health are the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age.** They include:

- **My neighborhood and town** - Can I find safe, sturdy, and affordable housing? Are there grocery stores nearby with a variety of nutritious foods? Is the tap water I drink clean and is the air I breathe unpolluted? Is it safe to be outside?
- **My income** - Can I find a job that pays a living wage? Is that job safe? Can I afford stable housing and enough healthy food?
- **My education** - Are the local schools well-funded enough to provide a strong education? Are there programs for early childhood? How many teens graduate from high school? How many of them can pursue higher education?
- **My community** - Do I have the opportunity to participate in making the decisions that impact my community? Is my neighborhood policed fairly? Is there safe, reliable public transportation? Are there strong, supportive connections between community groups, religious groups, law enforcement, business, and government?

- **My health and healthcare** - Do I have access to competent and kind primary care providers? If so, can I afford to see them and to purchase medication if I need it? Are there opportunities for me to learn more about my health and how to take good care of myself? Will my environment enable me to act on what I learn?

**If the answers to enough of these questions are "No," then a person's own desires and decisions are defeated.** For instance, what if you *want* to eat a nutritious diet, but you don't make enough money to buy healthy food; there isn't a grocery store nearby to get that food; you can't easily get the food to your home; you don't know how to prepare it; you don't have the tools needed to cook it, or you don't have a place to store it?

**Racism is the foundation upon which these kinds of inequities are built.** Policies were written that codified beliefs about who should have access to what. Systems were put into place that allowed these inequities to become woven into the fabric of our culture. Environments were created that cemented these systems in place and snuffed out changes before they could spread. For health equity to be possible, the social determinants that affect health will have to be re-built. Sawtooth Mountain Clinic is proud to be part of the [Community Health Center](#) movement that started in the 1960s to address these very issues.

It is impossible to miss the cruelty and callousness apparent in a human being's murder when it is captured on video. But it is the same cruelty and callousness that ignores (or laments and then does nothing about) the daily premature death and disability of people of color. These deaths are all socially determined.

- [Alan Weil](#)

Taking care of ourselves can take a lot of support. We're here to help!

*Ask a nurse or provider if you'd like to talk.*

# Coming to Terms

# with Racism

**Pick any topic, and to have a productive discussion about it, everyone involved is going to need a shared understanding of the words being used.** Talking about racism can be difficult, but it's crucial for our well-being as individuals and members of communities. The more clearly we comprehend each other's terminology, the deeper our insights, the more relevant our responses, and the more healing our resulting actions will be. Want to learn more? Visit the links below or <https://www.racialequitytools.org/glossary>.

**Race** - a made-up social concept, not an actual biological fact, used to support worldviews that saw some groups of people as superior and others as inferior.

[https://www.pbs.org/race/000\\_General/000\\_00-Home.htm](https://www.pbs.org/race/000_General/000_00-Home.htm)

**Racism** - "a system of structuring opportunity and assigning value based on the social interpretation of how one looks (which is what we call "race"), that unfairly disadvantages some individuals and communities, unfairly advantages other individuals and communities, and saps the strength of the whole society through the waste of human resources."

<https://www.apha.org/topics-and-issues/health-equity/racism-and-health>

**Anti-Racist** - "Being antiracist results from a conscious decision to make frequent, consistent, equitable choices daily and to actively examine our own thoughts and actions. If we don't purposefully making antiracist choices, we will (un)consciously uphold aspects of white supremacy, white-dominant culture, and unequal institutions and society. Being racist or antiracist is not about who you are; it is about what you do."

<https://nmaahc.si.edu/learn/talking-about-race/topics/being-antiracist>

**Privilege** - "Unearned social power accorded by the formal and informal institutions of society to ALL members of a dominant group (e.g. white privilege, male privilege, etc.). Privilege is usually invisible to those who have it because they're taught not to see it, but nevertheless it puts them at an advantage over those who do not have it."

<https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/fall-2018/what-is-white-privilege-really>

**Implicit Bias** - negative associations that people unknowingly hold. They are expressed automatically, usually with no conscious awareness, and influence the way we treat other people, often with unintended discriminatory outcomes.

<https://bit.ly/3erlVeu>

**Colonization** - The process of occupying someone else's territory and then forcing upon all people one's own systems of law, government, education, religion, and other ways of living.

<https://www.facinghistory.org/stolen-lives-indigenous-peoples-canada-and-indian-residential-schools/historical-background/colonization>

**Decolonization** "A regenerative resurgence of Indigenous thought, development, sovereignty, life, communities, peoples, and land."

<https://intercontinentalcry.org/what-is-decolonization-and-why-does-it-matter/>

**Microaggression** - "The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership." (ex. Telling a person of color, "You speak English very well.")

[https://academicaffairs.ucsc.edu/events/documents/Microaggressions\\_Examples\\_Arial\\_2014\\_11\\_12.pdf](https://academicaffairs.ucsc.edu/events/documents/Microaggressions_Examples_Arial_2014_11_12.pdf)

**Intersectionality** - "the interactive effects of various forms of discrimination and disempowerment. It looks at the way that racism can interact with patriarchy, heterosexism, ableism, classism, xenophobia - seeing that the overlapping vulnerabilities create unique challenges." (ex. How might a the life of a Black disabled person be different than that of a White disabled person?)

<https://theconversation.com/what-is-intersectionality-all-of-who-i-am-105639>

**Ally** - "Someone who makes the commitment and effort to recognize their privilege (based on gender, class, race, sexual identity, etc.) and work in solidarity with oppressed groups in the struggle for justice. Allies understand that it is in their own interest to end all forms of oppression, even those from which they may benefit in concrete ways."

<https://guidetoallyship.com/>