



CULTIVATING COMMUNITY CARE – Creating Spaces You Wish to See

By Carrie Zhang, Founder of the [Asian Mental Health Project](#).

I still remember the feeling. It was after my second therapy session or in my eyes, where a blurry figure with a voice as certain as stone told me, “It sounds like you are struggling with post-traumatic stress and anxiety.”

It was the loneliness I felt when processing how I got here. I thought, “There’s no way anyone in my life can relate.” It was at this moment when what I needed most was connection and community, and it just took me a long time to find and build the community I silently longed for.

I grew up in the kind of household that berated me for expressing any sadness, anger, anxiety, or even too much excitement over anything. I felt that I did not deserve to feel any strong emotions, let alone mental health issues. The topic of mental health is highly stigmatized in the Pan-Asian community, and as a result, we tend to deny and dismiss our own feelings. So, when I started going to therapy and received my anxiety diagnosis - I did not know who to confide in through my personal life.

I noticed that the effects I experienced of racial and gender-based stereotypes, race-based bullying, and low self-esteem were similar to some of my Asian friends. And with that, I began my efforts to deliberately name what I was going through and unpack what it meant to be Asian American and experiencing mental health issues.

In 2019, I started the Asian Mental Health Project. What is now a non-profit began as an effort to find other people like me, and to build resources that would help make mental health easier to approach for the Pan-Asian community. As I spoke to more people about their experiences with mental health, I realized that though we all had very different individual experiences - there were a lot of feelings that we experienced as a collective. From that point on, AMHP began exploring culturally specific topics on social media such as intergenerational trauma, race-based bullying, and more.

These days, AMHP offers free virtual affinity groups, mental healthcare grant opportunities, community events, and multimedia resources. When I look back at the work we do, I always think about the version of me who felt so alone in that therapist's office.

I've learned now that we are not alone and that our stories are powerful links between us and our communities. By using the power of storytelling, we can create our own solutions to build resilient, positive communities.

You can cultivate your own community care. In May, I got to speak with amazing youth activists about the importance of being true to our stories in order to create connection and community through Right Our Story. You can also get involved! Through Right Our Story, join a youth-led group of advocates working for a world without bullying. Right Our Story aims to engage our peers, tweens, and teens, to elevate the issue of race-based bullying and become anti-bullying advocates and activists in their own schools and networks.

Resources like the Asian Mental Health Project and Right Our Story started by allowing ourselves to be held by the community and to be vulnerable in our genuine connection with one another. [Join](#) the digital community of Right Our Story here & let's end race-based bullying in order to build the communities we wish to be a part of.

Share your stories here.

