

# Asian You(th)

Racism, Mental  
Health & Identity

## ***Hong Fook Youth Ambassadors***

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Scarborough  
Youth United

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# Special thanks to

Hong Fook Mental Health Association, particularly the Youth & Family Services staff, and the Youth Ambassador program collaborators for supporting the opportunity to create this booklet project.

This project came from a community-university collaboration between several partners, including the University of Toronto, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work research team (My Script My Voice), Scarborough Youth United, the Chinese Canadian National Council Toronto Chapter, The Asian Canadian Living Archive (TACLA), and more. The project was funded in part by Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for a Connection Grant Project titled "The "Invisibilized" Canadians: Exposing the Unseen and Unheard Stories of Anti-Asian Racism".

And finally, **thank you to all the people that supported the Hong Fook Youth Ambassadors team this past year**, and contributed their valuable time, efforts, and stories to this booklet. We wouldn't be able to do this without your support!



## Land Acknowledgement

We honour the land that we're on, which has been the site of human activity since time immemorial. This land we're standing on is the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis. This land is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Upper Canada Treaties. **We recognize that there's no single land acknowledgement that reflects our collective relationships to the land and its stewards.** In speaking on racism, health, and identity in this booklet, it's equally vital to note the unique historical and ongoing injustices that the Indigenous community faces in these areas and more, the impact of Asian diaspora settling on Turtle Island (Canada), and the parallel experiences of racism both communities harbour in shared histories. We stand in solidarity against oppression and legacy of settler colonialism, and commit to empowering Indigenous causes.

# Disclaimer

While this project is created by youth, for youth, all are welcome to benefit and learn from its contents!

This booklet created by the Hong Fook Youth Ambassadors 2022-2023 team is meant to be a casual read for youth to get curious and jumpstart their journey to learn more. It isn't an academic deep dive and shouldn't serve as a sole source on any topics covered. The information in this booklet is independently researched by the Youth Ambassadors; the bracketed numbers reference citations for copyrighted information within the **Bibliography (page 68)**.

This booklet isn't a replacement for activism or mental health support. Please reference the **Calls to Action (page 31) or Resources (page 62)** for starting points on how to get involved or access supports you need. Throughout this booklet, you may see us abbreviate "Anti-Asian Racism" to AAR, and "Mental Health" to MH. For more definitions of unfamiliar words and terms you encounter throughout this Booklet, see the **Glossary on page 64**.

Please keep in mind that not everyone has the same experiences or shares the same opinions. This booklet isn't meant to simplify or generalize the various rich and different Asian cultures and diasporic communities that are ever-evolving and changing.

## Content Warnings:

Some examples within this booklet may be upsetting or triggering as we discuss anti-Asian racism, personal stories, and mental health. Here are some content warnings for the booklet: discussions of racism, hate crimes, xenophobia, mental illnesses, trauma, and the sharing of personal experiences with these. Mentions of: social concepts such as white supremacy, colonialism; death; and effects of mental illness, including suicidal thoughts and self harm.

**Please take care of yourself as you need, and reach out to trusted loved ones or community resources for support. Call a hotline or mental health service to talk if you need help.**

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# Introduction

In today's North American society, it's hard to connect to your own Asian identity. Often there isn't enough time dedicated towards all that comes with being Asian.

**As youth, in particular, we're facing anti-Asian racism, dealing with mental health, and all the while trying to develop a good sense of each of our own Asian identities.** In this booklet, the Hong Fook Youth Ambassadors team discusses these topics through the lens of being Asian and how you yourself as an Asian youth can promote positive change in your own life.

The Hong Fook Youth Ambassadors (YA) program empowers Asian youth to lead two community action projects aimed at bringing a greater awareness of mental health and issues related to it, such as anti-Asian racism. **The 2022-2023 team, Melanie, Archie, Xinlin, Winsome, and Julia, created this booklet as one of these projects.**

The YA program is developed and supported by the staff and community partners of Hong Fook Mental Health Association. Hong Fook is the leading ethno-cultural community mental health agency with a culturally competent team serving Asian and other communities in the Greater Toronto Area. **You can read more about what services, community programming, and opportunities Hong Fook offers at [hongfook.ca](http://hongfook.ca).**

Hong Fook Youth Ambassadors. (2023). Asian You(th): Racism, Mental Health & Identity. Hong Fook Mental Health Association & University of Toronto, Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work.

# Brief History of AAR

Let's build up a basic understanding of race within our society, and some key aspects of the oppressive history of anti-Asian racism in North America.

## Race, Racism and AAR

**Race:** Socially constructed ways to group people based on specific traits, such as skin colour, accent, diet, etc.

**Racism:** An ideology that a certain racial group is inherently superior to the others.

**Anti-Asian Racism (AAR):** a type of racism targeting Asian people. AAR is unique due to being both explicit, like other racisms, as well as implicit (e.g. model minority myth). (1)

## In 1982,

Vincent Chin, a Chinese man, got into a bar fight with two white men who blamed him for “the Japanese taking over their auto-industry jobs”. Though Vincent died from the injuries caused by these men, the men were only fined \$3000. This incident caused outrage from Asian communities that further fuelled the fight for civil rights. (2)

## Lasting effects

The anti-Asian racism of the past is echoed in the way it manifests today. The heavy history of AAR follows Asian communities as they continue to fight for their rights.

## Timeline of Asians in North America (2)

### 1850s:

Chinese immigrants came to North America, and willingly worked low-wage yet high demand railway jobs. It stirred the racist trope of “Asians coming to steal White jobs”. Anti-Asian hate was legalized through Asians not being allowed to testify against a White person. It resulted in violent events and even murders, such as “George Hall shot and killed Chinese immigrant Ling Sing”.

### 1880s:

Due to cheap labour needs decreasing, the Chinese Exclusion Act & Chinese Head Tax were established to reduce the number of Chinese immigrants in North America. The act remained effective until 1947.

### 1980s:

The “Asians coming to steal White jobs” racist trope returned when the Vietnamese refugees of the Vietnam Civil War started shrimp businesses that slowly dominated the industry in Canada. It resulted in the infamous KKK patrolling water areas and setting Vietnamese-owned fishing boats on fire.

### 2020s:

Since COVID-19 began in China, many blamed Asians for it. In the U.S., anti-Asian hate crimes spiked by 150%.

# *Xenophobia & Orientalism*

Notice that anti-Asian racism is intertwined deeply with concepts surrounding xenophobia. All these terms come together to help explain the ways that AAR has manifested.

## **Orientalism**

the Western colonialist study of Asian culture. These European scholars **saw Asian, Arab, and Indian culture as one culture** that's "exotic", "abnormal", and "foreign". Their "research" reinforces stereotypes about these cultures by **simplifying entirely different cultures** into fantasy media tropes and aesthetics for cultural appropriation and consumption. (5,6,119)

## **Xenophobia**

the fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners. Examples include microaggressions that imply someone is an outsider, violent attacks against immigrants, and exclusion from workplaces by deeming someone "untrustworthy". (118,4)

## **Sinophobia ("Yellow Peril")**

the Westerners' fear of Asians invading and disrupting Western values. It's historically depicted through fictional Asian figures with exaggerated features, leaving the Asian communities embarrassed and alienated from their bodies. (118,8)

## **"Perpetual Foreigner"**

the idea that citizens of an ethnic or racial group don't belong, no matter their citizenship status. **It causes harm by removing their sense of belonging.** For example, an Asian person could have been born and raised in Canada but still be considered non-citizen by others. (9)





# ***Stereotypes & Microaggressions***

## **Stereotype**

a belief applied to all people with a certain shared trait that's **often untrue or overly generalizing**. Stereotypes that Asians face include:

- Being seen as smart, particularly the expectation to excel in STEM fields
- Expected to be hard-working and obedient
- Thought to be wealthy and successful

These stereotypes lead to teachers, mentors, parents, and others putting sweeping general expectations and pressures onto individual Asian people, **limiting their freedom to choose their own life paths** or receive help when they need it. (10-12)

In particular, AAR isn't always very visible and obvious. The roots of many hate crimes and microaggressions alike are through common stereotypes.



## **Microaggression**

a subtle behaviour that's directed at a member of a marginalized group, and has harmful effects. They're often **disguised as jokes or compliments**, and originate from prejudice and unconscious bias. Stereotypes turn into microaggressions when they result in subtly discriminating treatment to that person or group. (13)

## One of the most impactful and well-known stereotypes that affect Asians:

### Model Minority (Myth)

When a non-white group excels at certain aspects (ie. wealth, work or school), Western society labels them as “role models” for other non-white groups. Though it’s seen as a “positive” stereotype, this label causes harm by ignoring the oppression and racism that the group does face, and treating the entire group of people as a monolith (“They're all the same”). It’s important to advocate that this stereotype isn't true, and recognize all the diverse cultures and Asians that exist.

(14,15)



### Related stereotypes and concepts:

#### "Perfect Student"

Asian parents are especially stereotyped and known for their extremely high expectations for their kids. The pressure to get 100% or A+ on every subject, and achieve the highest degree in education is often **overwhelming**.

Deal with expectations and reassure your parents that you're thinking ahead by listening to their thoughts, expressing your worries to them, and **communicating honestly about your own plans for your future.** (16,17)

## Generational Trauma:

occurs when older family members unintentionally pass their trauma down to younger family members. It can affect multiple generations over the course of hundreds of years.

AAR is a big factor in traumas of Asian communities and families. Learning to address your trauma through personal or family therapy can break the harmful cycle. (16,17)

### Hear more about the harmful effects of AAR from the My Script My Voice (MSMV) study with Asian youth (18):

“Even if there's [a] history of oppression, it wasn't highlighted or seen. So, some people would tell me Asians are the second-most privileged group [next] to White people.”

- **Youth Participant 27**



“Sometimes if I'm in a student group, and I feel singled out, [...] sometimes I question if they're being racist towards me or is it something else? Sometimes I work with a group of guys and I think, is it because I'm the only girl? Or is it because I'm the only Chinese person here?”

- **Youth Participant 8**

People living within a white-dominant society often feel the negative effects of being compared to white people, and racialized groups specifically feel the pressure to appeal to white people in order to succeed. It can be difficult to tell the direct causes of uncomfortable incidents, which makes it harder to report or fight against racism.

“A lot of us disregard that part and it's also because... of the model minority myth! We're told: "see, look at the Asians! They can succeed. They're quiet. They don't ever start anything. All the other People of Colour should be like them" and it's so harmful.”

- **MSMV Study Youth Participant 14**

“You can see a lot about how Asians don't want to cause trouble and stuff. And I feel like especially were in the past, like it influences how people responded to racism. They'll be like [it's] no big deal, but it actually does pile up and it like affecting you a lot like inside.”

- **MSMV Study Youth Participant 23**

We can see that the Model Minority Myth helps to keep a hierarchy of race and pressures Asians to be like white people or want to appease them. This often leads to feelings of insecurity and inadequacy, and loss of personal and cultural identity. **It's difficult to find solidarity within the community through the subtle ways that AAR manifests.** (18)

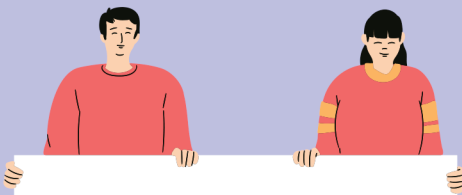
# Intersectionality & solidarity

## Intersectionality

The concept that all oppression is linked and the way that different identities, such as race, gender, and class, overlap affects the discrimination or disadvantages one faces.

**These parallel struggles are currently, and historically have been, created through white supremacy in our white-dominant society of North America.**

White supremacy survives through the division of those it deems non-white in order to maintain the elevation of whiteness above all else. Our Asian community is stronger if we band together with other oppressed groups to create a more equitable society for all. (19,20)



Let's talk about how AAR is just one part of the greater system of oppression that includes other racialized and marginalized communities.



## Asian & Black solidarity

Though anti-Asian and anti-Black racisms have their differing histories, they aren't unrelated: The Model Minority Myth itself has acted as a racial wedge between Asian and Black people, normalizing the stereotypes of Black failure and Asian success. We must continue our dual fights against COVID-racism and fueling the Black Lives Matter movement against police brutality, recognizing the solidarity between Black and Asian communities. (20)

## POC Solidarity

Often, Asians are seen as closer to whiteness compared to other people of colour (POC). Even within Asian identities, East Asians are viewed as more acceptable than other Asian groups (i.e. South, Southeast, or Central Asians). However, it is **more effective to acknowledge that the patterns of oppression POC face may differ but all of it still comes from white supremacy.**

For example, both Asian Americans and Latinx folks are deemed perpetual foreigners. POC and biracial people of any ethnicity face colourism, which is discrimination against people with darker skin. (21)

## Indigenous Solidarity

Asian diaspora are settlers, part of a legacy of settler colonialism that oppresses Indigenous groups in Turtle Island (a.k.a. Canada). However, **there does exist a meaningful history of reciprocal relationship-building** (i.e. between Chinese railway workers & Sto:lo First Nations in British Columbia). Let's continue legacy of sharing the land through proactive solidarity to Indigenous reconciliation and "land-back" movements, learning the history of the land, and listening to Indigenous voices on how to care for it. (22)

## Intersectionality as a whole

Intersectionality as a whole: We must continue to gather in solidarity of other social and human rights movements. You may discover that many of them overlap with your intersectional identity, or those of your community. Take the time to look into the histories and ways to support these causes. A non-exhaustive list:

- **Gender and sexuality:** Feminism, LGBTQ+ and queer rights
- **Citizenship:** immigrants and migrants, and refugee rights
- **Bodily autonomy:** Fat liberation and body positivity, disability justice, and harm reduction
- **Religious and ethnic:** fighting against Islamophobia and Antisemitism

We can learn a lot about how these identities intersect with being Asian and interact with experiences of AAR or mental health.

Let's create a holistic approach to improving society, championing mental wellness, and dismantling all forms of racism when we stand up for our diverse identities as Asians in the global community.

# What AAR Looks Like Today

## Impacted Livelihoods

All Asian restaurants had an **18.4% decline in visits** compared to non-Asian restaurants. (23)



## We imagine...

a world where Asians and other racialized groups have equitable opportunities to succeed, where we're celebrated for our colourful cultures, and we all feel safe and proud inhabiting our identities. **Listen to experiences from the Asian community** and how we envision the future!

## During COVID-19,

verbal & physical assaults against Asians rose significantly. **1 in every 6** Asian American adults reported a hate crime in 2021, compared to 1 in every 8 in 2020. (23)

## Current efforts

all the Canadian Government has done is created a webpage addressing AAR and listed some basic resources.

**We demand that the Canadian government is proactive in dismantling anti-Asian hate** by recognizing it's an urgent issue and funding anti-racism initiatives that support healing. (24)

## Our Vision for the Future

### Empower individuals to take action:

Overcoming the bystander effect as individuals is one of the most powerful ways to combat AAR. **Don't remain silent in the face of continuous abuse.** If you act quickly, others will support you and follow your example. (15)

**Check in and offer support:** Allies can show their support by checking in with Asian peers, showing awareness of the news, concern for their well-being, and offering specific forms of assistance. (15)



“I do think that, in general,[...] **anti-racism should be taught in schools.** [...] But I also feel like it’s our – it’s everyone’s duty in life to, if you face these things, or if you see someone face these kinds of things, to take a stand, and not be, even an indirect bystander.”

- MSMV Study Youth Participant 35 (18)

“One thing that I think has been helpful is just discussion. I think through discussion, [...] you're able to share your personal experiences and, like, maybe **other people can resonate with that and that creates a sense of community...**”

- MSMV Study Youth Participant 5 (18)



# Stigma & Shame

## Mental Illness

is the reduced ability for a person to function effectively over a prolonged period of time. It's **experienced by 1 in 3 Canadians** during their lifetime. (25,26)

## Mental Health

is the state of your psychological and emotional well-being. Poor mental health can lead to mental and physical illness. (25,26)

Concepts of mental health, mental illness, and identity are often related to stigma and shame.

## Stigma

is the harmful judgment from others, often a negative stereotype. It often results in discrimination. (27,28)



## Shame

is the feeling of being seen and judged for having done something “strange” or “wrong”. Encountering these often stops people from getting help or addressing problems, due to the inability to deal with the **feelings of fear and discomfort** caused by both stigma and shame. (27,28)



## Ways to deal with stigma and shame related to mental health:

- Talk openly about mental health
- Practice kindness to yourself and others facing mental illness
- Stop the use of ableist and stigmatizing words
- Learn about the experiences of mental illness

(29)

## Ways that AAR contributes to stigma and shame:

- **Paranoia:** Asians constantly feel concerned about if they're doing anything wrong and how that negatively affects the way others treat them.
- **The "Other":** Asians are seen as different, so their mental health is overlooked, making it even less likely they ask for help.

Read more about the Impacts of AAR on Mental Health on page 22. (30)

# Self-Esteem & Confidence

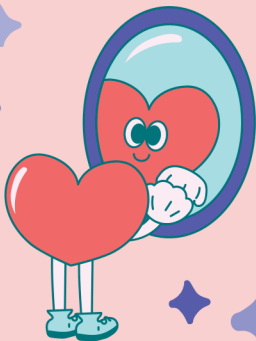
**Around 85%**

of adults and teens worldwide are thought to have poor self-esteem. (31)



## Confidence

Having high self-esteem and confidence can lead to a better performance in many aspects, even academically. (33)



## Self-esteem

is how you **think and feel about your own traits**. Positive thoughts of these mean high self-esteem, while negative thoughts mean low self-esteem.

Signs of low self-esteem include **low confidence level**, negative inner self-talk, mental illness, and it can even lead to physical illness. (32)



## Benefits of high self-confidence

A 2020 study found that good self-confidence can lead to reduced test anxiety, **more interest in goal seeking**, and growth of comfort with others. (34)

## Low to high

To find the cause(s) of your low self-esteem, recognize any unhelpful beliefs and thoughts that you have.

Ask yourself: “**Is this thought really true?**”

How can I reframe this thought in a positive light or also see the good parts of this?”



## Mental health?

Low self-esteem and poor mental health can both cause withdrawal from your loved ones, and from activities, even for fun. They may **internally reinforce each other** through negative beliefs of yourself. (35,36)



## Visible ways

that we affect our self-esteem & confidence include: interactions with **people we know and trust**, whether that be friends or family members.

## INvisible ways

include trying to live up to others' expectations, difficult life events, and mental illnesses. (35,36)



**From 2008-2017,**

in the rise of social media, the number of young adults experiencing psychological distress in a given month **grew 71%.**



## ***Social Media & Cyberbullying***

### **Social media**

connects people globally, allowing them to share and interact in lots of ways, but has equally negative impacts on mental health through exposure to unhealthy ideas, behaviours, and interactions. (37)

### **“Perfect” Online**

We often see only **one** side of others online, which leads us to think, “Why can’t I be like them? What’s wrong with me?” It’s easy to fall into the unhealthy trap of feeding our insecurities and obsessing over comparing our own lives with theirs.

**Recognize that social media is often heavily curated:** specific small or best parts of someone’s life are shared to make their life appear always “perfect”, exciting, or relatable.



## Create a healthy relationship to social media use

**Connect with others:** Befriend kind people with shared interests and support each other online just like real in-person relationships. Remove yourself from online spaces or people that upset or drain you: you can unfollow, block, mute, and/or report.


**Post mindfully:** Promote healthy and helpful ideas, and share credible and genuine information.

**Take breaks:** Step away often, track how your time is really spent, and routinely reevaluate the purpose of social media in your life. (39)

### Cyberbullying:

the act of sending hurtful messages to someone on the internet, happens all the time on social media.

It's very easy for people to leave mean comments under pseudonyms and feel like they aren't **speaking to and hurting real people.**



A good way to respond to cyberbullying is, **“Don’t”**. Don’t reply, don’t give them attention as it can make the situation worse, and don’t hesitate to block access to those that harm you or make you feel unsafe online.

(38)

# Impacts of Anti-Asian Racism on Mental Health



## Paranoia

makes a person feel suspicious of their surroundings. Someone that has experienced discrimination may be afraid of getting hurt again.

“...I was already paranoid and really aware of my place... in the world. But like, after that I was so [...] hyper-aware of all of my surroundings when people are around.”

- **MSMV Study Youth Participant 14** (18)

Mental health is affected greatly by anti-Asian racism in many ways.

**AAR can cause paranoia**, and lead to higher levels of **stress, depression, anxiety, and substance abuse**. It intersects and exacerbates the impact of dealing with other forms of oppression such as sexism and opposition to sex work. (18)

## More overt racism

and violent examples of AAR also reinforce the fear of bodily harm and increased risk of murder from people enacting their racist beliefs.

“After the murder in Atlanta including the six Asian women who worked in massage parlours, anti-Asian, anti-massage parlour, and anti-sex work hate hasn't ended.”

- Elene Lam, Executive Director of Butterfly



Incidents of AAR are a part of the trauma of oppression, experienced through marginalization, violence, and systemic inequity. Oppression causes people to worry for the safety of not only themselves, but also their loved ones. These chronic worries often initiate the body's coping mechanisms, which can take form as negative routines and habits. (40)



# Transform the suffering of AAR on mental health

## 1. Promote mental health services and support for Asians:

Increase access to both individuals and communities affected by AAR, including language interpretation, culturally relevant resources, and promoting services. (41)



## 2. Address the root causes of racism:

Break down systemic and institutional discrimination in healthcare, and promote a more inclusive and equitable society. Change policies, create education and awareness, and promote equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) initiatives in workplaces, schools, and more. (42)

## 3. Foster community resilience and social support networks:

Help individuals and communities cope with racism's impact on mental health. This can involve promoting community engagement, social connectedness, and intersectional solidarity. (43)



# Self Care Tips & MH Practices

## Good physical health:

Enough exercise, nutritious food, and quality sleep is shown to directly improve mental health.

**Exercise releases feel-good brain chemicals**, and can lead to gaining confidence in yourself through your body image.

**Guideline:** minimum 30 minutes of exercise, 3-5 times per week. (44)

## Nutrition is Vital:

What you eat directly affects the structure and function of your brain. Good nutrition regulates mood and a healthy bacteria biome in your gut.

**“Traditional” diets are shown to lower the risk of depression by up to 35%.**

**Guideline:** Focus on having fresh fruits and vegetables, lots of water, and moderate amounts of protein and carbs. Have less processed, salty, sugary or fatty foods, and less caffeine. (45)

## Self Care:

The commercial wellness industry makes us believe that we have to buy items but actually, you can practice self care without spending.

**Care for yourself by:** looking after your emotional needs, doing self-reflection and journalling, and adding daily mental health activities, like walks in nature.



## Mindfulness:

The act of being fully present in the moment without judgment, and can improve mental health as effectively as other treatments.

**You can train your mind to calm itself** in stressful moments, through relaxation of the parasympathetic nervous system in your body.

**Guideline:** Set aside time daily to practice techniques, such as Deep Breathing and Body Scan Meditation. (46,47)

# Stress, Productivity & Burnout



## Ways to manage stress

- Practice self care, such as making **time for breaks**, hobbies, and accessing your support network.
- Create work-life balance by **setting boundaries** against overworking, and building time management skills.
- **Request accommodations** from student success or employers to meet mental health needs during education or work. (48,49)

## Stress

is a normal bodily reaction to the demands of life. A small amount that is temporary can be good, but if your mind and body never come off high alert, it can lead to health issues.



## Productivity:

the ability of an individual or group to work efficiently to maximize output. Separating productivity from your identity is generally positive to mental health and prevents burnout. Poor self esteem, mental health and emotional management often causes procrastination and low productivity, too. Humans aren't machines and your self worth shouldn't be the same as your ability to create results. **Not everything that's worth doing has to contribute to wealth, growth, and be useful to others.** Look for time in your day or week to participate in fun activities you enjoy, get creative, have good rest, and build social bonds. (50)



# Tired, fatigued, or burnt out?

**Tiredness:** is temporary, often caused by expending energy, and can be fixed by adequate quality of sleep and nourishment to refill energy levels.

**Fatigue** is feeling chronically and constantly weak and tired, lasting a month or more. It can be mental, physical, or both, and is possibly caused by many factors. Exhaustion is fatigue over a shorter time, and can contribute to burnout.

**Burnout** is a syndrome of chronic and unmanageable workplace stress and emotional frustration.

Signs include: feeling that your work is unimportant or out of your control. It causes energy depletion, mental distance and negativity towards your job. In recent years, this term is also used casually to describe chronic stress in other life areas, too. (51)

## Prevent & address burnout

practice stress management, create a healthy relationship to productivity, find meaningful and fulfilling activities outside of work or school, and practice emotional awareness. (51)



## Create a healthy routine:

1. **List out** what's important for you to include and prioritize! Don't forget basic needs like sleep, food, and self care.
2. **Divide your big goals** into smaller, more achievable goals to gain confidence and establish habits steadily over time. Congratulate yourself on every small step!
3. **Make a clear plan**, starting with one week at a time to build on your victories. Remember to have fun, forgive yourself for "failing", and reward yourself for positive change! (52)

# Strategies for managing your time

Time management helps a lot with reducing stress, procrastination, and likelihood of burnout.

Everyone's different, so it may take time and testing to **figure out what works best for you** and your lifestyle. Stay curious and determined in adapting to new strategies as your life changes!

## The Eisenhower Matrix:

helps you prioritize your tasks by urgency and importance.

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	Crying Baby Kitchen Fire Some Calls	Exercise Vocation Planning
NOT IMPORTANT	Interruptions Distractions Other Calls	Trivia Busy Work Time Wasters

## The Pomodoro Technique

Uses a timer to divide tasks to make responsibilities less scary and reduce stress from the workload.

1. Identify the task and its goal.
2. Set a **25 minute** timer.
3. Concentrate solely on the goal until the timer ends.
4. Take a **5 minute** break. This ends one round.
5. After every 4 pomodoro rounds, take a longer break for about 15-30 minutes. (53)

## Time Blocking

is dividing the day or week into blocks of time, with each block dedicated to only working on that specific task.

Here's an example of a time-blocked day:

Time	MONDAY	12:00-12:30	lunch
6:00-6:30		12:30-1:00	work
6:30-7:00	morning routine	1:00-1:30	work
7:00-7:30	morning routine	1:30-2:00	work
7:30-8:00	travel	2:00-2:30	errands
8:00-8:30	work	2:30-3:00	errands
8:30-9:00	work	3:00-3:30	errands
9:00-9:30	work	3:30-4:00	errands
9:30-10:00	work	4:00-4:30	groceries
10:00-10:30	break	4:30-5:00	groceries
10:30-11:00	work	5:00-5:30	make dinner
11:00-11:30	work	5:30-6:00	make dinner
11:30-12:00	work	6:00-6:30	clean up
		6:30-7:00	tomorrow prep

# Harm Reduction

## Risky behaviours

People trying to cope with poor mental health are more likely to participate in risky behaviours, such as substance use, sexual activity, gambling, self harm, and other higher risk activities. In fact, people with a mental illness are **twice as likely** to have a substance use disorder or face addiction. Anti-Asian racism is one major impacting factor on people choosing to increase risky behaviours. (56)



## Principles of Harm Reduction

make risky behaviours safer and limit their negative effects on your life. A summary of some:

1. **Everyone deserves dignity and support** from others, no matter why they partake.
2. **Minimize harmful effects / stigma** by learning safer practices, and how to help each other in a crisis or dangerous situation.
3. **Empower people that partake** to advocate for themselves, and for services/resources that reduce harm and minimize situations that encourage poor coping mechanisms. (57)

# Relationship Building Skills



Here are some examples of skills that you can work on to help build healthy and positive relationships with others:

## Empathy

is asking yourself how you would feel if you were the other person in their situation. It can:

- **resolve conflicts** by understanding others better,
- **give perspective** to regulate your own emotions.

You can learn to be more empathetic by:

- practicing **active listening**,
- examining how fictional characters **feel or think**,
- **challenging your biases or assumptions** of others. (58)





## Social skills

Mental illness can slow the development of social skills needed for building relationships. Some ways to improve a few key social skills:

- **Social Perception:** Recognize what others feel and value by focusing on the goal of the current interaction. Figure out together what each person wants or expects out of the situation.
- **Conversational Skills:** Discover common interests together by staying curious about someone else's life. Ask each other questions and inspire each other to share more. Focus on being genuine about yourself, rather than impressing them. (59)



## Communication

Being able to talk openly with others, and create mutual understanding is very important.

### Good communication skills will:

- minimize your internal doubts and fears,
- foster close emotional connections,
- reduce and resolve conflicts with other people.



Improve your communication by:

- **using “I” statements** to express how you think or feel, instead of generalizing or speaking for others,
- **validating the other person's emotions** even when you disagree,
- focusing on **understanding someone**, instead of your next reply.

(60)

# Get Involved

## Donate to

**community organizations, non-profits, and charities** doing good work, including fighting AAR, advocating for mental health, and elevating youth voices.

**Many accept donations on their website**, and do yearly fundraising for their mission. Make sure to look into the recent impact of their actions and verify that they're trustworthy.



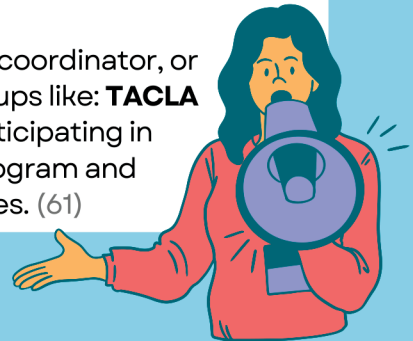
You can also donate useful items like **food and hygiene products**, donate to individuals through mutual aid efforts, and donate to local community centres, libraries, immigration services, and more that are serving your community directly.

## Become an Advocate or Activist

for causes you care about! Figure out what social issue or human rights cause you want to support, learn history and strategies to advocate for it, and join community organizations, collectives and local chapter groups related to your cause.

**Other ways include:** attending local protests, marches and council meetings, and joining student or workers unions and councils.

You can become a community organizer, coordinator, or educator doing good work, alongside groups like: **TACLA** as a researcher or writer, **CCNCTO** by participating in Fight COVID Racism, Intergenerational Program and more anti-Asian racism activism initiatives. (61)





## Research



Participating in research studies helps society by gathering information on how to improve people’s lives, take better action, and what current needs of a community are. Though you may not directly benefit, you may value the possibility of helping yourself or others.

**Look for studies and surveys** targeting your demographics, such as schools, hospitals, and research groups. Even responding to polls and feedback surveys can help out!  
(64)

## Education

**Pursue an education or career in the (mental) health care sector** by researching pathways into the job you want, whether that is in counselling, nursing, psychology, or more. The University of Toronto Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, and many others have research opportunities and programs to support your learning. **Participate in eligible training and workshops** with community organizations, such as SafeTalk, Wellness Recovery Action Plan, and Peer Support.  
(65)

## Volunteering



Volunteering helps you to get to know your community, learn about and support causes you care about, and develop your skills. Join local events and fundraisers put on by community groups.

As an Asian youth, you can volunteer with organizations like:

- **Hong Fook** Mental Health Association, with programs such as Youth Ambassadors and Youth Council,
- **Scarborough Youth United** (SYU) as an organizer, coordinator, or workshop facilitator.

Learn about current projects and ways you can get involved on the organization’s website. (62,63)

Learn about more community organizations in the Resources section on page 62.

# Access Services



## Support Groups

bring together people with similar experiences to share their personal stories, feelings, and coping strategies. (66)



## Counselling & Therapy

assists anyone in exploring options and solutions for their needs, getting resources and information, developing strengths and coping strategies, and promoting healing and self-empowerment.

(66)

## Help Lines

a special phone service that gives information or assistance on a specific subject. For example, suicidal thoughts, psychotic breakdowns, or manic episodes can all be benefitted by calling a mental health crisis hotline. (66)



## Trusted professionals

Ask your doctor, a mental health professional, or a local clinic/hospital about mental health programs and services. Nonprofit groups and community organizations may also have specific options. **When you access a new service or program, you might feel scared or nervous.** Try to pace yourself and check in on your boundaries. Try the new thing out for a few weeks. If it doesn't feel like a good fit for you, consider a different professional, service, group, or program. (67)




## Hong Fook Youth & Family Services

promotes the resilience of East Asian youth (ages 12-29), their family members and caretakers.

Both HF Youth & Family Hubs (Toronto and York Region) host programs. For more information, contact a Hong Fook Youth Outreach Specialist at **647-534-8493**.

## Ontario Structured Psychotherapy (OSP) program

offers free therapy to help people who are depressed, stressed, anxious, or have anxiety-related conditions learn to improve their mental health, using cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT).



## Community Programs


provide mental health knowledge and resources to empower individuals to be proactive with their mental health. The program strengthens communities by reducing stigma, advocating for mental health resources, and encouraging community participation. (68)

## Report Incidents

Report incidents of anti-Asian racism through the online COVID reporting tool at **[covidracism.ca/report](https://covidracism.ca/report)** or **[ccnctoronto.ca/demands](https://ccnctoronto.ca/demands)**.

The reporting tool is offered in English, French, and both traditional and simplified Chinese.

Simply fill out a short survey about the incident that you want to report on the website.



# ***Build Community***

## **Peer Support Group**

Build hope and trust with others, reduce stigma around mental health, and mutual share of coping strategies. Includes both Young Adult and LGBTQ+ groups.

## **Online platforms**

can be used to campaign for awareness or gather in community groups to have discussions and share resources.

For example, you can use **Instagram** to post about mental health, start conversations in the comments, and also create private Instagram group chats to discuss mental health. **Discord** and **WeChat** are also popular platforms to have group chats, but you can use any tool, platform or method to create discussion spaces.

## **Spaces to talk:**

Celebrate strengths and decrease stigma for people with mental illness through discussion of important topics like mental health and anti-Asian racism in your community.

- **Start a formal club at school** through your student council and school administration.
- **Create casual meetup groups** between peers by setting a time and place to come together and share experiences. (69)

## **Discovery College**

Showcase your strengths, learn and practice new skills, and build resilience in your life.

**Workshops have included** Wellness Recovery Action Plan, Resilience Training, Mindfulness, Speechcraft, Peer Support Training, Writing for Self Expression, Emotional intelligence, and more.

Hong Fook also offers occasional opportunities for storytelling through art and film, such as the Digital Storytelling Initiative.

# Start Conversations



**Only 8.6%**

of Asian Americans have **taken the initiative to receive mental health resources**. White people are 3x more likely to use mental health resources compared to Asians, in the U.S.. (70)



Starting conversations about both AAR and mental health will increase awareness that these resources are available, and **destigmatize and reduce barriers to getting help** with mental health, such as pressures of AAR. (70)

Talking about anti-Asian racism online is important because **AAR influences cyberbullying and online harassment** that Asians experience when they're engaged online.

One way to combat this is by creating social media campaigns addressing AAR, such as the **Youth Ambassadors Project 1 on the Hong Fook Youth & Family Instagram** (@hongfookyouthfam). (30,72)



## Start conversations with:

### Friends:

- **Question** biases, prejudices, and harmful “jokes”
- **Share** both positive and negative experiences related to AAR and MH with each other
- **Invite** peers to become allies and activists together

### Family:

- **Plan** family discussions about racism or mental health, and how it has impacted your different family members in the past and present
- **Learn** together about the history of Asians in North America, and the history of older generations in your family

### At school:

- **Talk** to your teachers, counsellors, and other school staff about creating presentations about MH or AAR
- **Plan** with them to invite community organizations to do workshops
- **Set** guidelines to address racist incidents between students or staff



# Keep in Touch



## Follow trusted journalists & news sources

Many post their work on traditional news websites, and also social media, such as Instagram and Twitter. (75)

Take advantage of the internet age and use these resources to keep up to date with causes and topics you care about!

## Subscribe to email newsletters

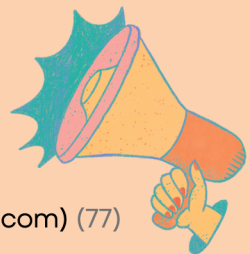
Have emails with news and updates from sources you care about sent to you regularly to view in your online inbox. (75)

## Find credible information:

- **Watch out for Wikipedia:** It is peer edited publicly by many people, so it is not always guaranteed to be true. Look into their cited sources!
- **Beware of writing style:** A reliable source should write in an unbiased and well-edited manner, and is transparent about who is writing, why they wrote, and where they get their information.
- **Research what biases and beliefs the writers hold,** and find out the history, sponsors, and intentions for the news source. Is the writer trying to persuade or provoke emotions in you? (76)

## Some popular & reputable sources:

- Associated Press News (apnews.com)
- CBC (cbc.ca)
- The Economist (economist.com) (77)



# Youth Ambassador Team

Hear from the Hong Fook Youth Ambassadors: **Xinlin, Archie, Melanie, Julia, and Winsome!**

## Anti-Asian Racism:

### How has being Asian affected the expectations you faced from others?

“I receive high expectations from my family and peers as “working hard” is a quality that’s highly valued in Chinese cultures. When my peers were glad with a 70%, **I was concerned about getting anything lower than a 90%.**”

- Xinlin

“Both the culture of Hong Kong, where I was born, and my parents, instilled high expectations on me to become successful and wealthy. **Deep inside, I felt unhappy, alone, and confused.** I wanted to prove my worth to my Asian parents, yet the need to be better and neglecting other factors in life caused me great unhappiness.”

- Archie



“Respect is almost regarded as a religious obligation in many Asian cultures. Concepts of valuing family most highly and formal displays of respect affect the decision-making of Asian parents, as well as family dynamics and emotions around responsibility. This manifests as negative stigma surrounding mental health and personal expression, which have **made me feel trapped and constricted growing up.**”

- Melanie







“I have faced many negative stereotypes in my own life, such as being held to a certain beauty standard, being put down because I couldn’t do math, and having an “accent” due to my speech impediment. This has affected me because I **worked hard to be pretty, but that still isn't enough for some people.** Due to having some learning disabilities, it was more difficult to comprehend math.”

- Julia

“Realizing the effects of anti-Asian racism on myself is still a new and ongoing process for me. For most of my childhood, I felt the effects of being different and disconnected from my cultural identity without specific reasons to point towards. As I got older, I started noticing the ways in which **our white dominant society has purposely kept me from appreciating my Asian identity.**”

- Winsome



## Mental Health:

### How has your mental health journey been affected by AAR?

“Having lived in a predominantly white community, I tried very hard to fit in. Despite my best effort to stay out of trouble, they always found a way to bring me down, and **that was when I became quiet and even depressed.**”

- Xinlin

“Discussing mental health concerns is considered taboo in many Asian cultures and as a result, many tend to dismiss, deny, or neglect their symptoms. As an Asian-Canadian, **I feared to be thought of as weak or “crazy” for struggling with my mental health.** This shame and embarrassment results in Asian-Canadians who suffer from mental health to struggle in silence and never seek help.”

- Melanie

“Mental health issues can impair thoughts, cause me to lose my confidence, ruin relationships, and **potentially cause people to harm themselves.** Good mental health encourages me to reach my full potential.”

- Julia

“Mental health is a vital part of overall health; this is true for myself and for everyone, whether they realize it or not.

Without dedicating care towards my own emotional, mental, and self awareness, **I lose out on developing my inner personality to its full potential.** A society where everyone has the space and skills to care for their mental health would be a more compassionate, vibrant, and fruitful place.”

- Winsome



## Asianness:

### How do you demonstrate pride for being Asian?

“I continue to speak, read, and write in Chinese. I am also actively catching up with what’s happening in the Chinese community. In other words, **my way of demonstrating pride for being Asian is instead of losing the identity over time, I kept and maintained it.**”

- Xinlin

“By supporting Asian businesses: **I eat at Asian-owned restaurants, shop in Chinese stores and watch Chinese movie productions**, which promotes Asian success and representation in Canada.” - Archie

“I educate myself on Asian issues, listen to Asian music, and hang out with my Asian friends. From Hong Fook, I have learned to dismantle internalized AAR. **I realized my culture isn’t something that I should be ashamed of.**” - Julia

“Connecting to my Asianness is still new for me. **Part of this journey is to get in touch with family and cultural traditions again**, such as enjoying the beauty of the qipao, learning homestyle regional recipes, and opting into holiday festivities again, like lighting paper lanterns.”

- Winsome

“As time went on, I realized my culture wasn’t shameful or embarrassing; it was special and **I became proud through cultural dishes and language.**”

My family and I partake in an annual dumpling making tradition for Lunar New Year. Maintaining my language skills is also very important, and I hope to teach future generations the same.”

- Melanie



# Hong Fook Youth Program Staff

## Anti-Asian Racism:

### How has being Asian affected the expectations you faced from others?

“The expectations I have are around minority myth, people assume that I came from a wealthy family and that I do well academically. Some, **due to reading fake news, assumed that I fled from my home country** because there was no freedom.” - Hannah

“During Covid, I was at Sobeys and a worker came up to me to chat about Covid and how it was brought over by the Chinese. **I didn't feel any ill intention, but was alarmed by how normalized that discourse is.** (The worker didn't seem to realize it was a taboo thing to say.)” - Linda

Hear from the Hong Fook Mental Health Association Youth & Family Services Program staff: **Hannah** (Youth Program Worker & Coordinator), **Linda** (Youth Clinician), and **Bernie** (Youth Program Worker).



“Growing up Asian meant that I was expected and stereotyped to have top grades and take specific courses. In high school, there was **a set of STEM courses called the “Asian 6 pack”**, and **I stood out because I wasn't interested in taking any.** Sometimes it made me feel dumb because I had no interest nor particular skill at science or math.” - Bernie

## Mental Health:

### Why is mental health important?

“My mental health **shapes how I interact with the world** and with myself, thus influencing everything in my life.” - Linda

“Mental health is important as it’s a facet of our overall holistic wellbeing. Physical wellness means nothing if one’s mind isn’t in the right place, and there can often be no reprieve from intrusive mental stresses. **Everyone goes through difficult times and that’s nothing to be ashamed of.**” - Bernie

## Asianness:

### How do you demonstrate pride for being Asian?

“I am definitely proud and honored to be an Asian. Even though I live in Canada, I still celebrate almost all of the Chinese festivals. One of my favorite cultural practices is **changing to a new set of Chun Lian (New Year Couplets)** before Chinese New Year’s eve.” - Hannah

“I often feel disconnected to mainstream Western culture because growing up I was mostly exposed to Chinese shows (TVB, etc). I felt like I didn’t belong here. **Working at Hong Fook gives me a deep sense of belonging, acceptance, and freedom** to be connected to the values and cultural stories that matter to me. - Linda

“**I have fully embraced being both Canadian and Chinese.** Oftentimes people think it needs to be one or the other, but I’ve learned to have both fully as a part of who I am. Eating mooncakes during the Mid Autumn Festival and being with family is one of my favourite cultural traditions!” - Bernie

## Anti-Asian Racism:

### How has being Asian affected the expectations you faced from others?

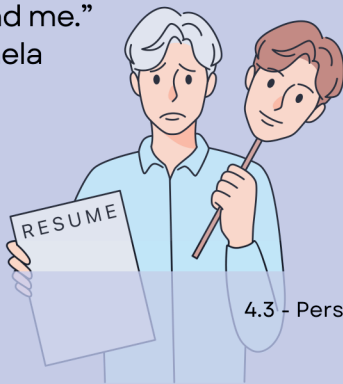
“The main expectation has been the stereotype of 'being good at school'. My parents have often just internalized expectations for me; it caused a lack of support or dialogue about how I'm doing in school – **I'm simply expected to work hard and do well.**”

- Jonathan

“The stereotypes that I've faced affected how I view myself: **I struggled to identify between the "nerdy", "smart" or "quiet" Asian stereotype, and the "rebellious" or "cool" Asian stereotype.**

This affected my grades in school, the relationship I had with myself and the people around me.”

- Eumela



## Hong Fook Partners

Hear from the partner agencies of Hong Fook: the University of Toronto Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work research team of Dr. Lin Fang: **Jonathan and Eumela**, both research assistants. As well as, **Grayson** from The Asian Canadian Living Archive (TACLA).

“Once at work, a young white boy of similar age was shocked that my English was so good and proceeded to explain that most "Chinese" people don't speak English well. **Other's perceptions of my Asianness have left me with a clear awareness of race and racial dynamics within society.** I am not white, but also I am not left with wanting or envy for such a thing.”

- Grayson

## Mental Health:

### Who are your role models for mental wellness?

“My therapist has given me the tools I've needed to manage my mental wellness on my own. I went through about three different therapists **until I met one that looked like me and understood my experiences as an Asian person**, from a mental health perspective.”

- Eumela



### Why is mental health important?

“Mental health is both personally relevant, and also has a universal quality of life context / important politics that’s difficult and problematic. **I've been on medication since my youth and have engaged regularly with mental health professionals.** I think anti-Asian racism, especially its internalized form, was a big part of mental health issues and crises I've experienced in the past.” - Grayson



## Asianness:

### What is your relationship to your Asianness?



**“My relationship to my Asianness is complete love!** I love being Asian and looking Asian. My family helps me feel connected: My grandparents and I have lived in the same household for most of my life. The practice of having a multi-generational home gave me a lot of perspective on those who came before me, and the value in paying respects to your elders.”

- Eumela

“My relationship to my Asianness has matured over time through things such as visiting “motherland” and regaining my “mother tongue”. **I feel most connected through being in with Asians and co-ethnics, and my family.** I love throwing salt; it’s an old Korean superstition to throw salt or have salt thrown on your back if you come near ghosts or come home from a funeral.”

- Grayson



### How do you demonstrate pride for being Asian?

**“Connecting my Asianness with broader contexts, rather than understanding it in isolation, is important for how I take pride in it.** I think we often try to understand AAR in isolation, or discuss issues affecting Asian communities without reference to structural social problems. My university courses have emphasized the importance of coalitions and cross-sectional pride.”

- Jonathan





## What do you envision for a positive and healthy future?

“Asian communities place a lot of value in maintaining traditions and self-reliance, which can both be constructive or contribute to unhealthy responses to AAR and MH. **Maintaining traditions can discourage us from making necessary changes or speaking about our current struggles, and being overly self-reliant can lead to an unwillingness to get help when it's needed.** Of course, instead of blaming Asian communities, it's about finding collective ways to encourage more healthy relationships with these ideas.”

- Jonathan

“My vision is towards an Asian community that's **more interested in community and sustainable networks of care for the vulnerable.**

An Asian community that stands in solidarity with the multiple versions of itself in addition to being in solidarity with the racialized and marginalized communities that exist simultaneously to it.”

- Grayson



## Anti-Asian Racism:

### How has being Asian affected the expectations you faced from others?

“Being Asian, I have been **expected to meet expectations that are above reality**. Such as parents expecting me to make six figures out of school, and being in a relationship with the perfect girl in their vision. All these expectations are formed without understanding where I stand in life.” - Alex, brother

## Asian Peers & Community

Hear from the Asian friends and family of the Hong Fook Youth Ambassadors:  
**Alex, Jared, Vaness, MXKO, C.V., Lana, Katie, and Ben!**



“**Growing up Filipino and Spanish, I struggled with not fully physically identifying with either.** During the peak of COVID-19, it was then I truly didn’t feel safe. I had several accounts of Asian-based violence towards me at work, where people yelled racist things and spit on me, while I was serving them.” - Jared, friend

“Growing up as a first-generation Chinese-Canadian, I always felt the pressure to succeed and make my family proud in this new country. Thus, I was pushed into the STEM field, with common extracurriculars like piano and math contests. **Being unable to express myself freely from a young age led to burnout and a loss of identity in my older years.**” - Vaness, friend

“I was always expected to be better than everyone else around me at almost everything - math, science, arts, even language. It was odd, as this both meshed and competed with people’s need to excuse my flaws by bringing up my disabilities. **I was expected to be perfect because I was Asian, but any shortcomings were inherently non-Asian and completely disability-related (both untrue).**” - MXKO, friend

“Different stereotypes I’ve faced are often related to **model minority myths or heavy sexualization/fetishization of my Asian identity** - affecting my self esteem and the way I perceive myself, which is disconnected from the boxes that society will continue to put me in.”  
- C.V., friend

## Mental Health:

### Why is mental health important?

“Mental health is important to me because **it affects how I think, feel and act**. It helps determine how I handle stress and make healthy choices.” - Lana, friend

“Mental health stigma within the community and my culture: mental health support or advocacy was **very often considered irrelevant, too soft and sensitive, or simply not real** - particularly by authority figures in my life growing up. It has taken years of therapy, research and friendships to unlearn that internalized mentality.” - C.V., friend

## Asianness:

### What is your relationship to your Asianness?

“My relationship with my Asian heritage was whitewashed and I feel uncomfortable to be Asian at times. **I connect to my heritage by interacting with other Asians that are more connected to theirs**. I love getting red pocket money during Chinese New Year and I demonstrate my pride by enjoying cultural food.”  
- Katie, friend



“I’m glad that I’m Chinese but **sometimes it doesn’t fully feel like I’m Chinese. Like, it feels like an internal culture clash sometimes**. For example, I enjoy partaking in Chinese traditions but my Cantonese and Mandarin feel like they’re fading away sometimes.” - Ben, friend

“I am very proud of my Asianness, and I feel connected because of the stories I’ve heard and been told. Right now, **I’m learning more about naming conventions and meanings, which help me internalize what “belonging” can mean** to various people.”  
- MXKO, friend

# What do you envision for a positive and healthy future?



**“A future where we can call each other in and have tough discussions,** while holding kindness for ourselves and our growth. One in which we break down stigma, barriers, and misinformation together, and acknowledge that there are multiple truths of what being “Asian”, “mentally healthy”, or an “activist” look like in our communities.” - MXKO, friend



**“I hope that we as a community can one day break down the stigma and myths surrounding mental health, as well as come together to shut down anti-Asian racism (internal AND external). We deserve to be uplifted and celebrated, and we deserve to break these cycles of harm.”**  
- C.V., friend



# Asian Countries & Flags

## Disclaimer:

The following chapter is a non-exhaustive list of information for some Asian countries, focusing more on the demographics that Hong Fook Mental Health Association serves.

**Asians aren't a monolith**, and this isn't an encyclopedic deep dive. Please feel welcome to research more about Asian countries and Asian diasporic communities that are briefly touched upon here or the vast many others that are beautifully different! Enjoy these fun facts collected as of 2023.

## China



**Population:** 1.41 billion

**Main language:** Mandarin

- The Great Wall is actually an accumulation of walls.
- The Forbidden City is the world's largest palace.
- Yangtze River is Asia's longest river. (79,80)

## South Korea



**Population:** 51.27 million

**Main language:** Korean

- 70% of Korea is made up of mountains.
- E-Sports gaming is very popular and sponsored by major companies.
- Seoul is the 3rd best city in the world to be a university student. (81,82)

## Cambodia



**Population:** 16.50 million

**Main language:** Khmer

- It has the only national flag with a building on it.
- Cambodian New Year is in April.
- Tuk tuks (auto rickshaws) are a common way of transportation. (83, 85-87)

## Vietnam



**Population:** 100.38 million

**Main language:** Vietnamese

- The nation is shaped like the letter "S".
- The most played sport is soccer.
- It has 5,800 islands. (89-91)

## East Asia:

the region between Central Asia, Russia, and the Pacific Ocean roughly up to the beginning of the Tropic of Cancer, and has eight countries.

Facts from three of its countries:

- **Hong Kong:** The name of the city is a Cantonese phrase that translates to fragrance harbor.
- **Japan:** Up to 60% of the animated shows in the world are produced in Japan.
- **Mongolia:** Its capital Ulaanbaatar is the world's chilliest capital city with an average of 1.3 degrees Celsius.

(92,93)



## Southeast Asia:

the region defining the tropical and equatorial countries between South and East Asia to the North and Oceania to the South, and has eleven countries.

Facts from three of its countries:

- **Indonesia:** It's the world's largest Muslim-majority nation.
- **Philippines:** A "merienda" is a late afternoon dessert or snack.
- **Malaysia:** The Taman Negara, a tropical rainforest, is believed to be over 130 million years old.

(92,93)



## Central Asia:

in the centre of Asia, from the Caspian Sea on its west side to the west part of China. It has five nations.

Facts from three of its countries:

- **Kazakhstan:** Ninth largest country in the world.
- **Azerbaijan:** Many of the oldest hearths on earth are found here.
- **Armenia:** The village of Areni's wineries are among the oldest.

(94-97)



## Southeast Asia:

includes the Indian peninsula and Indo-Gangetic Plains, and has nine nations.

Facts from three of its countries:

- **India:** has at least 300K mosques.
- **Sri Lanka:** Its former name was Ceylon.
- **Pakistan:** It has the tallest paved road.

(98-102)



# Asian Media Figures of Significance

Learn a bit about beloved Asian media figures!

## Sandra Oh

a Canadian-American model and actor. She's best known for her performances as Rita Wu on HBO's comedy *Arliss* and Dr. Cristina Yang on ABC's medical drama *Grey's Anatomy*.



## Shyam Selvadurai

a theatre director and writer for TV and literature. His short story "The Demoness Kali" published in *Toronto Life* won the Gold Prize in the 30th National Magazine Awards. A new historical novel about the Buddha's wife, "Mansion of the Moon" released in May 2022.



## Asian Canadians (103):

### Dr. Theresa Tam

During the COVID-19 pandemic, she served as Canada's top public health officer and director of the Public Health Agency of Canada. Tam helped guide us through other health crises (SARS, H1N1, Ebola), too.



### Vivienne Poy

Senator Vivienne Poy was a fashion designer and entrepreneur before being appointed to the Senate of Canada as the first Asian-Canadian. In 1981, she also established a popular fashion label named Vivienne Poy Mode. (103)

## Asian Americans (104-5):

### Lucy Liu

has acted in films and tv shows such as "Ally McBeal" and "Charlie's Angels". A few of her awards: for Critics' Choice TV, two Screen Actors Guild, and Seoul International Drama.

### Jim Lee

a Korean American comic book artist and writer, and the President, Publisher, and Chief Creative Officer at DC Comics since 2018. He began as an artist for Marvel Comics.



(132)



(133)

### Vera Wang

a famous Asian-American fashion designer, most well-known for her haute couture and bridal gown designs. She also expanded into menswear, jewelry, fragrances, eyewear, and household goods.

### Kalpana Chawla

the first woman of Indian ancestry to travel to space was an American astronaut and aerospace engineer. As a mission specialist and main robotic arm operator, she made her first flight on the Space Shuttle Columbia in 1997. (104,105)



(134)



(14)



## Asians outside North America (106-8):

### Xukun Cai

Popular Chinese songwriter, singer, and rapper, born 1998. Significant work: 情人 released 2020.

### Genghis Khan

Lived from the years 1162 to 1227. Founder of the Mongol Empire, which became the largest continuous land empire in history, and the first Khagan.



### Maria Ressa

Maria Ressa: a Filipino investigative journalist and the first Nobel Prize recipient of the country, with her award in the field of Peace in 2021. She co-founded the Rappler online news site in 2012.

### Akira Yoshino

Japanese Chemist born January 30, 1948. Winner of 2019 Nobel Prize in Chemistry for their accomplishments in the development and improvement of lithium-ion batteries. (106-108)



A small taste of Asian cultures and traditions!

## Food & drink:

### Sushi

a Japanese dish of raw fish, sometimes rolled in rice, seaweed, and other fillings. It has Southeast Asian origins, where fishermen would preserve fish by packing in salt and ice.



### Biryani

a rice dish well known in South Asia. It's made of rice, meat (chicken or lamb), vegetables, and various spices. (109)

# Asian Cultural Significance



### Kimchi

a Korean dish made by fermenting vegetables with a variety of seasonings, including chili flakes, ginger, and fish sauce. A common vegetable used in kimchi is Napa cabbage.



## Traditional clothing:

### Nepal

the traditional dress for Nepali girls is named “bhāntānlan”. It’s an ankle-length, tightly fitting dress with long sleeves.



### Cambodia

Kramas are checkered cotton scarves, the most common Cambodian item of clothing. They’re worn for fashion, sun protection, or many other uses.



### China

Traditional clothes include hanfu, qipao (cheongsam), tang suit, and the zhongshan suit. Common materials are linen, cotton, and silk.

(110-112)



## Traditions & activities (113):

### Tea ceremonies

a traditional social activity in many Asian countries, including China, Japan, and Korea. It involves the **preparation and serving of tea in a ritualistic manner**, and often includes elements of meditation and mindfulness.

### Martial arts

such as karate, judo, and kendo, are popular. These disciplines often involve physical training, mental discipline, and a focus on personal growth and development.

### Calligraphy

a traditional art form that involves the **creation of beautiful writing using brushes and ink**.

It's popular in East Asian and Southeast Asian countries, like China and Indonesia. (113)



## Popular religions (114):

### South Asia - Hinduism

acceptance and celebration of diverse traditions due to the religion's belief that reality has no true definition.



### East Asia - Daoism

promotes the concepts of accepting and yielding, values being carefree and joyful.

### Central / South Asia - Islam

meaning surrender, to surrender to the sole god, Allah. (114)

## Holidays (115,116):

### Lunar New Year

celebrated by many cultures in the East, it's the first day of the new year on the lunar calendar (typically between January 20th and the end of February).



### Diwali

the festival of light, celebrating the triumph of good over evil, celebrated by Hindus, Sikhs and Jains.



### Holi

known by the festival of love, color, and/or spring. On the Hindu calendar's full moon, people gather around bonfires and throw color powders at each other to celebrate good over evil.



### Ramadan

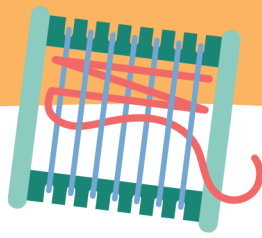
takes place on the sighting of the crescent moon in the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, celebrated by most countries with a large Muslim population.

### Songkran

13th of April, the New Year in Thailand. People celebrate this by having a water fight, symbolizing washing away the previous year for a brand new start.

(115,116)

## **Inventions (117):**



### **Silk weaving**

was invented 3500 B.C.E in China, silk clothings was seen as the one of the most desired clothings at the time as well as in the ages to come. Silk played an important role in the diplomacy of China as it was such a desirable material.



### **Soap**

was invented around 3500 B.C.E. in Babylon (present day - Iraq). Soap allowed people to lift dirt as well as oils off utensils, improving hygiene and has remained an important tool to use to prevent sickness.



### **Indo-Arabic numbers**

between 500 and 100 B.C.E., they were invented in India. This number system was spread to Europe by Arab mathematicians and eventually evolved to become what we use in today's society—the Arabic numeral system. (117)

# Resources

Use these resources to find out and learn more about anti-Asian racism, mental health, and exploring your Asian identity!

## Hong Fook Mental Health Association (HF MHA)

- Website: [hongfook.ca](http://hongfook.ca)
- Hong Fook services representative name & email:
  - Bernie Yeung (Youth Program Worker)  
[byeung@hongfook.ca](mailto:byeung@hongfook.ca)
- Hong Fook instagram: @hongfookmha
- Youth & Family Services representative name & email:
  - Cherry Cheung (Youth Outreach/Intake Worker)
  - [ccheung@hongfook.ca](mailto:ccheung@hongfook.ca)
  - (647) 534-8493
- Youth & Family Services instagram: @hfyouthfam

## My Script My Voice Team (MSMV)

- Website: [myscriptmyvoice.com](http://myscriptmyvoice.com)
- Email: [myscriptmyvoice@gmail.com](mailto:myscriptmyvoice@gmail.com)
- University of Toronto FIFSW website: [socialwork.utoronto.ca](http://socialwork.utoronto.ca)

## Chinese Canadian National Council - Toronto Chapter (CCNCTO)

- Website: [ccnctoronto.ca](http://ccnctoronto.ca)
- Email: [info@ccnctoronto.ca](mailto:info@ccnctoronto.ca)
- Phone: 416-596-0833
- Fight COVID-19 Racism: [covidracism.ca](http://covidracism.ca)



### **Scarborough Youth United (SYU)**

- Website: [scarboroughyouthunited.org](http://scarboroughyouthunited.org)
- Email: [scarboroughyouthunited@gmail.com](mailto:scarboroughyouthunited@gmail.com)
- Instagram: @scarboroughyouthunited

### **The Asian Canadian Living Archive (TACLA)**

- Website: [tacla.ca](http://tacla.ca)
- Instagram: @taclanese
- Twitter: @taclanese

### **Hope+Me Mood Disorders Association of Ontario**

- Website: [mooddisorders.ca](http://mooddisorders.ca)
- Instagram: @hopeandmemdao

### **Asian Community Aids Services (ACAS)**

- Website: [acas.org](http://acas.org)
- Instagram: @acastoronto
- Queer Trans Asian Youth instagram: @queerasianyouth

### **Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)**

- Website: [www.camh.ca](http://www.camh.ca)
- Phone: 1-416-535-8501
- Patient & Family Learning Space email: [pfls@camh.ca](mailto:pfls@camh.ca)

### **Centre for Immigrant and Community Services (CICS)**

- Website: [www.cicscanada.com](http://www.cicscanada.com)
- Email: [info@cicscanada.com](mailto:info@cicscanada.com)



# Glossary

The following glossary is non-exhaustive.

Feel free to research more about these terms and concepts on your own! All definitions included are cited as (118) unless otherwise indicated.

## A - C

**Ableism:** Discrimination or prejudice against individuals with disabilities.

**Advocate:** Someone who stands up for what they believe in.

**Anti-Asian Racism (AAR):** A type of racism targeting Asian people. (2)

**Bias:** A tendency to judge someone or something, usually based on the past.

**BIPOC:** It's an acronym for Black, Indigenous, and People Of Colour, that's used to talk about the specific experiences and oppression that these groups encounter. (-)

**Burnout:** A syndrome of chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed. (51)

**Bystander Effect:** The inhibiting influence of the presence of others on a person's willingness to help someone in need. (119)

**Chinese Exclusion Act:** A 1923-1947 law preventing Chinese people from moving to the United States and Canada. (2)

**Chinese Head Tax:** The Chinese head tax was enacted to restrict immigration after Chinese labour was no longer needed to build the Canadian Pacific Railway. Between 1885 and 1923, Chinese immigrants had to pay a head tax to enter Canada. (120)

**Colonialism:** The domination and exploitation of an area by a foreign nation.

**Confidence:** Believing that someone can do something or something could happen.

## C - M

**Cultural significance:** What's important to someone's culture, such as history, appearance and beliefs, and traditions. (121)

**Cyberbullying:** The act of sending hurtful messages to someone on the internet. (38)

**Diaspora:** People that moved, migrated or are living more permanently away from their native and ancestral homelands.

**Discrimination:** The act of judging categorically, often unfairly and based in prejudices.

**Equity:** What's fair to everyone to succeed, without bias or favouritism. It isn't the same as equality because it adapts to a specific person or group's needs.

**Fetishize:** The act of giving something a sexualized desire. When done towards a person, this is usually without their consent and negatively affects the way they are treated.

**Generational trauma:** When certain groups experience events such as sexism, racism or war, psychological damage is passed down from generation to generation through genes and culture. (122)

**Hate crime:** Crimes motivated by hostility to the victim as a member of a group.

**Internalize:** To incorporate something within your identity and the self.

**Intersectionality:** The concept that all oppression is linked and the way that different identities, such as race, gender, and class, overlap affects the discrimination or disadvantages one faces. (19)

**Manifest:** The verb means to make something evident or certain by showing.

**Marginalization:** The act(s) to enforce that someone or group has an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group.

**Mental health:** Our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. (123)

## M - R



**Mental illness:** Patterns of significant differences in the way we feel, think, and how we react to stress, that's related to high distress and poor functioning. (124)

**Microaggression:** A subtle behaviour caused by prejudice that's directed at a member of a marginalized group. (13)

**Mindfulness:** The act of being fully present in the moment without judgement. (-)

**Model Minority (Myth):** The stereotype that when a non-white group excels at certain aspects, they're "role models" for other non-white groups. It causes harm by ignoring the oppression that the group does face, and treating all people in the group as the same. (1)

**Neurodivergence or neurodiversity:** Encompasses different ways of thinking that aren't typical, such as ADHD or autism. (125)

**Nutrition:** The food, drinks and vitamins you consume and how they influence your health. (126)

**Oppression:** The misuse of power, discrimination and violence against a group of people. It's often built into a society, and seen in interpersonal relationships.

**Orientalism:** The Western colonialist study of Asian culture. (119)

**People of colour (POC):** A person whose race and racial identity isn't white, Caucasian or of Western European ancestry. This includes Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian people. See also: BIPOC. (-)

**Perpetual foreigner:** The idea that citizens of an ethnic or racial group don't belong, no matter their citizenship status. (9)

**Prejudice:** Injury or damage resulting from some judgment or action of another in disregard of one's rights.

**Privilege:** An advantage that only one person or group of people has, usually because of their position, or their social categories and identity. (126)

**Productivity:** The rate at which someone completes tasks, yields results or profits. It isn't directly related to judgement of someone's success at life as a whole. (126)

**Psychology:** The science of the human mind and its behaviour.

**Race or racialized group:** Socially constructed ways to group people based on specific traits. (1)

## R - Z

**Racism:** An ideology that a certain racial group is inherently superior to the others. (1)

**Self-esteem:** How a person thinks and feels about their own characteristics. (32)

**Settler colonialism:** When a group of people arrive to occupy an area, acquire political control, impose their culture, and exploit a land and its people. (127)

**Shame:** The feeling of being seen and judged for having done something “strange” or “wrong”. (28)

**Sinophobia:** Anti-Chinese sentiment or the fear of China, its people or culture. (126)

**Solidarity:** A group joined together to form a bond of support and agreement. (126)

**Stereotype:** A belief applied to all people with a certain shared trait that’s often untrue or overly generalizing. (119)

**Stigma:** The harmful negative general judgement from others. (27)

**Strength:** Being mentally or physically strong, and ability to resist or endure.

**Trauma:** A physical or mental upset, disordered state about a past experience of severe stress. It can be triggering or cause ongoing stress when it’s brought up.

**Trigger:** Something that can cause an intense and usually negative emotional reaction in (someone).

**Vitriol:** Overly harsh language or criticism.

**White supremacy:** The discriminatory belief that all white people are better than people of colour and that white people should have authority and control over them.

**Xenophobia:** The fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners.

**Yellow Peril:** The Westerners’ fear of Asians invading and disrupting Western values.

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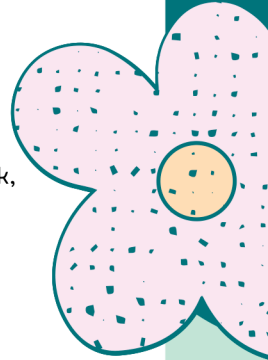
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# Conclusion

Thank you so much for reading our booklet!

As Youth Ambassadors, our biggest hope is that you come away feeling more knowledgeable, curious, and empowered to make a difference. No matter big or small, anything you can do to spur on the causes in your own personal life, or even on a wider, community or global scale:

**It matters. We see you.  
And we're here together with you!**

As youth, it can be easy to feel hopeless or overwhelmed. We inherit the world, and the world needs lots of improving. We can see just how much this is the case throughout the difficult and tough topics we cover. Yet, there's also celebration, too.

We hope that this booklet is the first of many steps on your journey to enacting positive change for the future! Let's imagine a more beautiful, and joyful world for us all.


On behalf of all who contributed, and the **2022-2023 Youth Ambassador team, Melanie, Archie, Xinlin, Winsome, and Julia, we wish you well and we hope to see you again! Thank you!**



What does it mean to be Asian?

Have you thought about  
all the parts that come with it;

facing and fighting  
anti-Asian racism,  
learning about and caring  
for your mental health,  
and celebrating your Asian identity  
and culture alongside other Asians?



**In this booklet, the Hong Fook  
Youth Ambassadors team  
discusses the importance of  
addressing these aspects of  
being Asian and how you and  
your circle of loved ones can  
support a positive and healthy  
Asian community.**

