



ASCEND STRATEGIC
COMMUNICATIONS

LET'S TALK ABOUT IT. ©

A FAMILY GUIDE

TO HEALTH, WELLNESS AND LONGEVITY

The purpose of this guide is to help

FACILITATE CROSS- GENERATIONAL DIALOGUE

about health, wellness, and longevity for multiethnic racial families as a first step to close the disparities gap in communities of color. We believe prioritizing conversations around generational health—past to present—can change outlook and outcomes for families and society.

Multiethnic-racial families have strong family ties and an unwavering commitment to the values, traditions, and practices that parents share with their children from their own ethnic-racial-cultural backgrounds that represent important cultural assets. Researcher, Hughes et al. calls this ethnic-racial socialization, which refers to messages conveyed to youth about the history, culture, values, traditions, and heritage of their ethnic or racial group(s), which are conveyed to youth through numerous mechanisms including attending cultural events; visiting parents' (or ancestors') home country and learning the language(s) of that home country; introducing music, art, and literature associated with their ethnic or racial heritage; eating and learning to cook traditional foods; watching television and films about the history and culture of their ethnic or racial group, etc. (Huguley et al., [2019](#)).

Missing from this list, is family discussions around health and wellness. These cultural events and family gatherings are critical moments to meet family members for the first time and learn about family history. In fact, discussions around health and genetics often happen after there is a diagnosis—far too late for preventative measures. For certain conditions such as diabetes, decedents of someone with diabetes assume the same fate and don't see this disease as preventable.



In the United States,

WE KNOW THAT LONG- STANDING SYSTEMIC HEALTH AND SOCIAL INEQUITIES INCREASE THE LIKELIHOOD OF POOR OUTCOMES OR DEATH FOR MEMBERS OF RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITY GROUPS.

Some common conditions that plague minority communities at significantly higher rates include:

- Cancer
- Mental Illness
- Diabetes/Hypertension
- Sickle Cell Anemia
- Substance Abuse

Common Reasons for Health Disparities

- Poverty
- Environmental threats
- Inadequate access to health care
- Individual and behavioral factors
- Educational inequalities



Social Determinants of Health



Yet, these discussions aren't happening within multiethnic-racial families on a regular basis. It's also not happening as it should between doctors and these patients. According to Brookings, "poor communication is a failing of the health system, not of patients. A good health system engages fairly and respectfully with everyone who seeks care, and it recognizes that its patients and plan enrollees come with a range of previous experiences with the health care system, as well as different literacy levels, language fluency, and cultural norms. It is the responsibility of system managers, and front-line providers, to ensure that everything from examination room interactions to provider training is guided by good communication techniques. But while health managers will usually say they recognize the importance of good communication, there remain profound barriers to introducing and implementing the techniques needed to achieve better outcomes and equity." Multiethnic-racial patients can, however, advocate for themselves despite these barriers.

A PLAN OF ACTION FOR YOUR FAMILY

Change can begin with a single person. It just takes a desire and commitment. Here are some steps to get started:



BECOME A CHANGE AGENT.

Decide that you will be the driver for change in your family. Be relentless about learning your family's medical history

IDENTIFY THE FAMILY MATRIARCH AND NUTURE THIS RELATIONSHIP.

This is often the most respected and listened-to person in the family. This person is also most likely to know how your deceased relatives died and existing illnesses in those who are living.

UTILIZE FAMILY GATHERING FOR DISCUSSIONS.

Utilize family gatherings for discussions. Often, these gatherings have multiple generations present and provide opportunities to have what could be somber discussions, in a light-hearted environment.

SHARE SIMPLE, IMPACTFUL DATA IN WORD PICTURES.

People often respond to relatable concepts. It is far easier for someone to understand, "Of the eight people at our table, 4 will die from heart-related complications," vs. "50% of people will die from heart-related complications.

ASK SPECIFIC HEALTH-RELATED QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR FAMILY HISTORY.

Knowing as much as you can about your family history, can provide critical information for you to share with your doctor and future generations. Consider these:

- Tell me about (grandma/dad, aunt/uncle). What was she/he like? This helps build rapport with family members so they don't feel judged.
- How did she/he die? This helps determine potential health conditions to note.
- What kind of symptoms did she/he had leading up to her/his death? This helps build awareness of symptoms for you and other family members.
- Does anyone else in the family have similar concerns/symptoms?
- What foods did she/he like? This helps identify foods you may want to avoid.
- How did she/he prepare it? I'd love to try that recipe. This could help determine level of nutrition and ways to modify a cherished recipe with a healthier alternative.
- Did she/he enjoy the outdoors? This can help determine level of physical activity

KEEP A HEALTH JOURNAL AND KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING.

You will likely learn more than you expected. So, writing everything down in critical to identifying patterns and risks in your family that you can share with your doctor and future generations.

SCHEDULE AND ATTEND MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS.

Knowledge is power over your health. With a better understanding of your family history, you can better advocate for your care. Doing so can change outcomes for you and your family.

Note: This guide is not meant to be exhaustive. Nor is it meant to generalize any group. It is simply an approach to spurring conversations within families that could help change health outcomes.