



NATIONAL COUNCIL OF NEGRO WOMEN, INC.

Tomorrow Begins Today: African American Women As We Age

How do African American women feel about themselves? Research conducted by the National Council of Negro Women reveals that most African American women report that they feel positively about themselves. Often, however, this self-evaluation is linked to women's feelings about their ability to provide and care for others. Life satisfaction is made up of two core components: internally-derived satisfaction developing a positive sense of self, and externally-derived satisfaction social involvement and fulfillment derived from interaction with others, including family and spiritual fulfillment.

Facts About African American Women and Life Satisfaction

- More than 50 percent of African American women report feeling stressed and accept stress as a daily part of life.
- African American women feel that religious faith is a positive force in their lives. Over 80 percent of African American women report praying and 91 percent say they are affiliated with a religious group.
- A satisfying marriage can enhance life satisfaction; about 42 percent of African American women are married.
- Positive social engagement with other family members is associated with life satisfaction. Over 80 percent of African American women report very high social engagement with their children.
- Research shows that a sense of control is related to life satisfaction. Over 60 percent of African American women feel in control of their lives and that their lives have purpose.
- African American women report feeling more optimistic about their lives than they really are. Although 91 percent of African American women report satisfaction with their lives, only 18 percent appear to meet objective criteria such as satisfying interpersonal relationships, spiritual satisfaction, and feeling in control of one's life that measure life satisfaction.
- Gender and race may have a double negative effect on African American women and their level of personal satisfaction.

Steps that African American Women Can Take to Improve Life Satisfaction

- Decide to lead a more purposeful life. Define your own life goals, prioritize and plan how to pursue them.
- If it is right for you, join a faith community. Spiritual satisfaction is often the vital link between internal and external fulfillment and can be a source of support and strength during challenging times.
- Explore creative passions such as reading, writing, singing, and making music. Developing interests can lead to friendships, building community with groups of like-minded people, and feelings of positive achievement with mastering a skill.
- Learn to ask for help with life's problems if you need it. Speak to a counselor, doctor, or faith representative when life seems overwhelming.
- Embrace yourself! Honoring our self-worth improves the number and quality of healthy relationships in our lives. Self-satisfaction is highest when we believe that we have value beyond any role that we fulfill for others. Each of us is worthy of love and leading highly satisfying lives.