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Help at the hair salon

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New Haven (WTNH) - The Ethnic Diversity Task Force and the Connecticut Psychological Association (CPA) are teaming up to increase mental health awareness in people of color and they're doing it at hair salons and barber shops across the state.

It's a day off for the hairstylists at Hair Happenings in New Haven but their longtime clients are on their minds.

"They're very comfortable with us, it's a nice salon, it's a comfortable salon and we're very caring," said Cindy Calvert, owner of Hair Happenings.

So Cindy invited the CPA into her salon to teach her staff techniques on how to notice common signs of depression and make proper referrals to mental health professionals.

"Many people of color will feel more more readily open to their hair stylists," said Dr. Jan Owens-Lane from CPA. "They will share with their stylists psychological issues they won't share with a clinician."

It's called Mindstylz and it's a program that encourages more people of color to access mental health treatment.

"We're talking about someone who has difficulty thinking, concentrating, working, going to school. We are talking about people who are impaired in their daily living," said Dr. Owens-Lane.

And many times the hair stylist or barber becomes a sounding board for their clients.

"Over the years you've become friends and they're part of your family. It's an everyday thing so sometimes you know the most intimate things about them so we become very close," said stylist Feny Taylor.

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A closeness that requires a sensitive approach when it comes to mental health issues.

"Be sure the intention is helpful, give sensitive feedback in private," said Dr. Ree Gunter from the CPA.

It's all about sending the client home looking good and feeling good.

Visit www.mindstylz.org for more information.

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