Taraji P. Henson Discloses Depression and Anxiety Problems

The actress says she's in therapy and hopes other people with mental health issues won't feel ashamed to seek professional help too.

April 9, 2019 By Alicia Green

Last year, Real Health reported that actress Taraji P. Henson launched the Boris Lawrence Henson Foundation in honor of her late father to address mental health in the Black community. (Henson's dad experienced mental health challenges after he returned from a tour of duty in the Vietnam War.) Now, the Empire star reveals that she suffers from depression and anxiety, reports Variety.

"I suffer from depression," Henson told Variety. "My anxiety is kicking up even more every day, and I've never really dealt with anxiety like that. It's something new."

Henson started seeing a therapist to help her cope and better understand herself. "It has to be regularly, and that's what I learned," she explained. "It gets frustrating because you're waiting for them to fix you, but it's not that easy."

Henson tried several different therapists before finding the right one—a process she compared to creating a solid relationship—and encouraged others dealing with mental health issues to do the same.

"I've got to feel comfortable because that's the only way I'm going to keep coming back to you," the star said. "To keep dealing with this ugly stuff, I have to feel totally safe. I need to feel like even though I know we don't have all day, you've got to make me feel like we have all day."

Henson said both social media and a lack of privacy contributed to her mental health woes. She explained that social media makes people second-guess themselves and compare their lives to those of others. The entertainer also added that life in the limelight feels suffocating sometimes and makes her more conscious about everything because she can't live the way she wants.

Henson said this way of living was depressing to her, and she felt herself changing and becoming agoraphobic (an extreme or irrational fear of entering open or crowded places, leaving one's home or being in places from which it's hard to escape). "I have anxiety sometimes when I just want to go outside, and I can't," she explained. "Somebody's got to go with me."

But Henson believes God wouldn't give her more than she could handle, so she addresses her problems and tries to maintain her sanity.

On April 5, she was honored at Variety's Power of Women New York for her work to combat stigma and change the conversation around mental health in her community, according to Variety.

"My dad is one of the reasons I started this foundation, and my son, my neighbor, my friends, my community, our children is why I keep going," she said. "The history of mental illness for Black people in America stretches all the way back 400 years, 15 million people and an ocean that holds the stories."

Click here to learn why actor Michael B. Jordan turned to therapy following his role in Black Panther.

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