

IRISH-AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH



The Cliffs of Moher in Ireland
Pictures provided by Lauren Meaux

1762:
World's first St. Patrick's Day in New York City to honor Irish soldiers in the English military

1776:
Nine Irish Natives sign the Declaration of Independence

1850:
One million Irish Natives immigrate to the U.S. during the Irish Potato Famine

1991:
First Irish American Heritage Month

LOCAL EVENTS

- ◆ Birmingham St. Patrick's Day Bar Crawl
[Sat, Mar 13, 2021 at 11:00 AM](#)
- ◆ Shamrocks and Shenanigans Virtual 4 Mile Run
[Virtual – whole month of March](#)
- ◆ Little Sunshine Foundation Bingo
[Virtual - March 13 2021](#)
- ◆ Leprechaun Libations and Shamrock Shenanigans Virtual Mixology and Cooking Event
[Virtual - March 11, 2021](#)
- ◆ Free Cooking Class: Irish Soda Bread and Homemade Guinness Butter
[Virtual - March 11, 2021](#)

FUN FACTS

- ◆ As of 2019, Irish Americans make up 9.8% of the U.S. population
- ◆ That's a total of 30.4 million Irish Americans in the U.S.
- ◆ There are 391, 046 Irish Americans in Alabama
- ◆ The White House was designed by Irishman James Hoban
- ◆ 253 Irish Natives have been awarded the U.S. Medal of Freedom (more than the number of awardees from any other nation)
- ◆ 16 towns in the U.S. share the name of Ireland's capital, Dublin—including one in Alabama



IRISH AMERICANS AND PSYCHOLOGY

“This is one race of people for whom psychoanalysis is of no use whatsoever.” – [allegedly](#) Sigmund Freud about the Irish

HISTORY

The Irish and Irish diaspora suffer [disproportionately from mental illnesses](#) (e.g., depression, alcoholism, schizophrenia) compared to other ethnic groups. One theory for this phenomenon, proposed by [Professor Oonagh Walsh](#), relates to an infamous period in Irish history—the Great Famine (a.k.a. the Irish Potato Famine). The Great Famine (1845-1851) was a period of significant nutritional deprivation in Ireland that Dr. Walsh suggests led to epigenetic changes that persisted over generations to result in higher rates of physical and mental illnesses in current Irish and Irish American populations. [Other theories](#) for the overrepresentation of mental illness in Irish Americans is the traditionally high paternal age—which increases the chances of genetic mutations—and cultural suppression of discussing mental health issues—particularly given the Catholic church’s historical stance on such issues.



Kelly Doudell's family crest

PRESENT DAY

For Irish Americans, local pubs play a large role as a social center in the U.S. and act as the place for them to find hospitality, exchange leads on employment opportunities, and enjoy native Irish music. Furthermore, young men use these opportunities to display their masculinity by “[drinking like men](#),” which typically involves consuming a large amount of alcohol. Relatedly, approximately [40% of Irish Americans](#) indicate currently or previously experiencing a problem with drinking, often reporting drinking for [relief from painful feelings](#) (e.g., guilt, low self-esteem, anxiety).



INFLUENCE OF COVID-19 ON MENTAL HEALTH

Since community and social engagement are generally very important to Irish Americans, many Irish Americans are reporting experiencing [anxiety and depression](#) for the first time due to the social isolation from COVID-19. To help mitigate these effects, the Irish Network USA has started “virtual coffees” to give Irish Americans a chance to stay connected to one another. Additionally, some non-profit organizations (e.g., Slainte 2020) formed to provide financial relief for Irish Americans adversely impacted by COVID-19.

TREATMENT IMPLICATIONS

- ◇ Clients who are influenced by their traditional Irish culture may be more restricted in how they express their feelings. Thus, a clinician may choose to appeal to the client’s [sense of responsibility and work on bolstering self-esteem](#).
- ◇ Clinicians should be aware that [male Irish American clients may resist family involvement](#) in therapy, preferring to handle issues on their own, and may deemphasize the effect of these issues on others.
- ◇ Patterns of indirect communication are [more frequent in Irish culture](#); therefore, a clinician who is specific and direct may be interpreted as impolite or rude.
- ◇ Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) has been shown to be a [useful adjunct to treatment](#) for Irish Americans, providing an alternative to the pub.
- ◇ Clinicians may choose to encourage Irish American clients to participate in local Irish social events, which could be helpful in forming a [sense of community](#).



IRISH FOLKSONGS

Irish folksongs are a form of customary storytelling for the Irish. These songs are widely known for their tragic themes that reflect the hardships faced by many Irish Natives and Irish Americans. Below is one such folksong retold by Lauren Meaux, as recited to her by her Native Irish grandparents:

*Two little children, a boy and a girl,
Sat by the old church door.
The little girl's cheeks were as brown as the
curls,
That hung on the dress that she wore.*

*The boy's coat was faded, and hatless, his head,
A tear shone in each little eye.
"Why don't you run home to your mother?" I
said
And this was the maiden's reply.*

*"Mamma's in Heaven, angels took her away.
Left Jim and me all alone.
We came here to stay 'til close of the day,
For we have no Mamma or home."*

*"We can't earn our bread, we're too little," she
said,*

*"Jim five and I only seven.
There's no one to love us since Papa is gone
And our darling Mamma is in Heaven."*

*"Papa was lost out at sea long ago;
We waited all night on the shore.
For he was a life-saving Captain, you know,
And never came back anymore."*

*"Then Mamma got sick, angels took her away,"
They said, "to a home fair and bright.
She said she would come for her darlings
sometime,
Perhaps she is coming tonight."*

*"Perhaps there's no room up in Heaven," she
said,
"For two little darlings to keep"
She then placed her hand under Jim's little head,
She kissed him and they both fell asleep.*



Lauren Meaux's
grandparents (left)
Teresa and Malachy
Corrigan and her
aunt, Ursula, and
mother, Sheila
(bottom)



POPULAR IRISH RECIPES

(click on the pictures for recipes)



Irish Soda Bread



Classic Irish Stew



Ham Hock Concannon



Dublin Coddle



Corned Beef and Cabbage



"Fifteens" Fridge Cake

