

TIPS FOR FAMILY MEMBERS

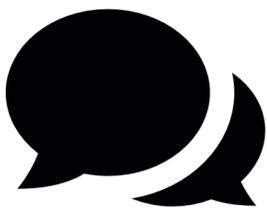
Family is central to the lives of young South Asian women (YSAW). This sheet provides guidance to parents and family members of YSAW with mental health and addiction issues, identifying ways to support them throughout life and during recovery. The four areas covered include mental health and recovery, conversations with your daughter, meeting your daughter's needs and managing your worries.

1 Mental Health & Recovery



- Learn the basic signs and symptoms of mental health and addiction issues. Some common signs you may notice include changes to sleeping or eating habits, rebelling, less energy, less motivation, losing interest in activities, excessive worry, mood swings, and feeling down. You can find more information at <https://www.camh.ca/en/health-info/mental-illness-and-addiction-index>.
- You may notice mental health impacting other areas of her life for example attending school or family functions. Instead of punishing her, spend time trying to understand how she is feeling and how you can support her.
- Focus on creating a supportive home environment with open communication.
- Avoid focusing on the problem as we can get stuck in a cycle that is not helpful to the person in distress.
- Religion and spirituality is one source of support and healing. Include your daughter in all decision making about how to incorporate these practices and rituals into their life so they feel involved, listened to and empowered. Be open to her beliefs and preferences.

2 Conversations with your daughter



- Having conversations about feelings and difficulties can be upsetting for the parent, child and other family members. Remember to be patient, calm and caring in your approach and tone of voice. This might be the first time your daughter is opening up about her mental health. She needs to know she has your support.
- Try not to make assumptions. Ask questions to learn more about how your daughter is feeling rather than make a statement as this can lead to her shutting down and withdrawing.
- When a significant event occurs in your daughter's life (e.g. loss of a loved one, being a victim of violence, failing an exam) create protected time to talk about her experience of the event and discuss her needs. It is important to get support early on before one's mental health worsens.
- Our behaviour and mood are connected to our mental health. Be mindful of this during conversations with your daughter. As previously mentioned, try to keep your focus on understanding the underlying issue and not just focusing on the problem.
- Keep these conversations going even when your daughter moves away for school or work - they might still need you and your support.

3 Managing your daughter's needs



- Try not to impose a fixed idea of beauty onto your daughter. Every person is beautiful as they are. Every culture understands beauty differently, but we need to work together to challenge harmful stereotypes. Having fixed ideals about beauty can seriously impact her mental health. For example, try not to comment on skin colour, hair type, and body shape and size.
- Be curious about what makes your daughter unique and special. What are her talents? What is she interested in? What ideas does she have about her life? Who are the important people in her life outside of the family unit? Who inspires her most?
- Acceptance is important to your daughter. She wants to experience acceptance within the family. Reflect on how can you help create an environment where your daughter experiences self-acceptance?
- Be open to your daughter's career choices. Limiting her choice and making decisions on her behalf can have a negative impact on mental health and lead to more problems.

4 Managing your worries



- There is a lot of pressure and expectation that comes from being an immigrant to Canada. You might have worries like will my children will be successful? Will it be worth all the pain and suffering of moving countries? Try to focus on the here and now, trust your children will do the best they can, support them the best you can and with their version of success.
- Living in a South Asian community can be difficult for you as a parent too. You might have fears about what community members say. While it can be difficult to manage at times, remember what happens in your family unit and with your children is most important. The gossip and back chatting that often occurs is a unhealthy component of South Asian communities that must stop - you can play your part!
- Comparing your family to others can leave you feeling less than, and instill beliefs of not being good enough in your children. Speak to your daughter about how she would like to handle conversations with people in the community and make a decision together.
- Learn about what gets in the way of you caring for your own mental and physical health. There are many resources available to support you too. Take care of your own mental health - this is important to ensuring you can be the best parent for your daughter as she navigates life.