Supporting a Loved One
Understanding the Journey and Seeking Professional Help

Being Supportive

Watching someone you care about suffer is difficult. If the person has a physical injury, it is easier to see where the pain is and to try and help them recover and heal. When our heart is hurting, we cannot visibly see the wound, the scars, or when something causes the pain to surface. This is when it is really important to be a caring and supportive person to your loved one.

- Give them time and space to express their emotions without judgment
- Don't overwhelm them with too much information or advice or ask them too many questions
- Do not try to “fix” them
- Focus on what you have, rather than what is missing in your life (Chardi Kala)
- Respect their privacy and confidentiality
- Encourage the person to speak with a mental health professional to get additional support

Just as some wounds may need stitches rather than a bandage, mental health support can range from a caring listener, counseling services, medication, to hospitalization.

What are the Different Types of Mental Health Professionals?

Mental health therapists have different education and training backgrounds. A counselor or clinical social worker has a master's degree, is licensed, and has specific training to conduct therapy. A psychologist has a doctorate and has both the counseling and research background within the field of psychology. A psychiatrist is a medical doctor who can prescribe medications for mental health issues, but they do not conduct therapy sessions.

How to Find a Counselor or Therapist

- Ask your doctor
- Check with your insurance company for behavioral health services
- Check online directories for South Asian mental health professionals
- Call 211 (United Way) to find nonprofits and local health centers that offer mental health services for free
- Ask for a counselor that speaks your preferred language and has familiarity with your culture
- Many therapists can offer tele-health services (via phone/video)
- It is important to take time and interview several therapists before choosing the one with whom you feel most comfortable

Why is Seeking Professional Help Important?

Mental health professionals are highly trained and respected for their education and skills. A therapist is a person whose job it is to create a safe, trusting environment in which the person seeking help can share their experiences and learn more coping skills. While a good friend or family member can be a support for a loved one, it is best to seek the help of a professional when their mental health is not improving. When we avoid or delay addressing mental health concerns, it can lead to more symptoms, physical health issues, suicide attempts, or even death.