



Meet Sucharita

Sucharita is a 41 year old woman from Bangladesh. She has been in Canada for 8 years and is currently staying with a friend. Sucharita is looking for work currently as she has to support herself and 4 people. She struggles with post-traumatic stress, and has added stressors as she is not able to meet her daily needs. She finds it difficult to communicate her needs and fears not being taken seriously. She would like to be able to rent in an area where her children will be able to attend elementary and high school.

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Impacts on Mental Well-Being

Difficulty communicating her needs

Sucharita has difficulty expressing herself in English but can communicate effectively in Bengali. Many support services, however, do not provide readily available interpretation or translated resources.

Difficulty navigating transportation

Sucharita lives far from public transportation. This makes attending programs or running errands extremely challenging, contributing significantly to her stress and feelings of isolation. Winter months become harsh and poses additional barriers.

Difficulty meeting daily needs amid caregiving

As Sucharita seeks employment, she has experienced food insecurity while supporting herself and her four children. She often experiences chronic stress and worries for her children and their health.

Lack of cultural sensitivity in services

Sucharita has faced barriers to accessing services due to a disconnect between her traditional customs and service providers' understanding of them. This misalignment prevents her from reaching out for professional help or attending community programs.

2 Contributors to Healing and Mental Well-Being

Trauma-informed translator present when accessing resources

Access to a Bengali-English interpreter would enable Sucharita to clearly communicate her needs when seeking services. A trauma informed interpreter can further assist her sense of safety to share vulnerable information to better help providers identify her needs.

Financial and economic resources to meet her daily needs

A range of programs that support her daily needs and provide opportunities for employment could help reduce the stress alongside affordable childminding services. Sucharita is wanting support attending to her children and their many diverse needs.

Access to transportation systems

Affordable housing for Sucharita near public transportation would enable easier access to services. Proximity to transit would also support her four children traveling to school and extracurricular activities.

Culturally sensitive services and programming

Culturally sensitive services can help Sucharita feel comfortable accessing resources. This may include the presence of other Bengali women in group programs, availability of translators, and the integration of her cultural values into support services.

“My mental health has significantly improved. I used to stay at home but now going out and connecting with others makes me feel better. I get happiness in everything.”

3

Integrating Expressive Arts to Improve Mental Health & Well-Being

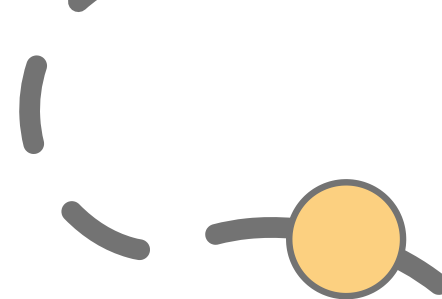
“ I was depressed and restless in the past. But drawing has taught me how to with my mental stress.”

Diverse art modalities allows for reconnection to culture.
Participating in ribbon dancing within an expressive arts program helped Sucharita reconnect with her body and sense of self. Drawing on Bengali folk dance traditions, the activity evoked positive memories of home and helped reduce feelings of isolation.

Closing the language gap to encourage self-expression
The presence of translators in the art therapy program enabled Sucharita to express her thoughts and emotions comfortably. Connecting with other Bengali-speaking participants also allowed her to engage with peers who shared her language and cultural background.

Breathing exercises incorporated into art making
Incorporating breathing exercises alongside various art modalities allowed Sucharita to safely release anxiety. She reported feeling calmer, more grounded, and better able to manage her emotions afterward.

Connecting with her Children
Sucharita has gained confidence through peer interactions and trying new activities in the programs. She shares her learnings with her children, who enjoy practicing art-making techniques. The art package she received has reduced costs, enabling her to continue activities at home.



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Sustainable Change, Looking Forwards...

Independence in navigating barriers faced
As Sucharita continues participating in services and programs, she applies the skills learned in the expressive arts program. Alongside other Bengali women, she gained knowledge of her rights in Canada and was encouraged to complete independent tasks, fostering greater autonomy both within the program and in her daily life.

Meaningful connections formed through art
Sucharita developed meaningful interpersonal relationships through the program, benefiting from a supportive environment that encouraged connection through group activities and storytelling. She has stayed in contact with fellow participants, helping her build a strong community where she can continue practicing her language and cultural traditions.

Continued practice and learning of self-care techniques
Somatic techniques, including breathing exercises, have helped Sucharita manage her anxiety, even in situations outside her control. She continues to practice art modalities, such as ribbon dancing. She has integrated daily habits to express her emotions and stay connected to her cultural heritage.

“Learning my rights has taught me how to protect myself and where to seek help in the future.”

