



*Having open communication with your children is the key: Listen and try to understand where they are coming from.*

### **HEALTHY COMMUNICATION**

- Communicate in a way that is bi-cultural, respecting both worlds.
- **Make sure it is 2-way, involving listening AND sharing**
- Try not to lecture - they will tune you out.
- **Be assertive, NOT aggressive**
- Stay non-judgmental & open
- **Try not to blame; use “I statements”**
  - Ex. “You never clean your room!” vs. “I really feel upset when you don’t clean your room.”
- **You will be more effective if you are open to compromising or finding a middle ground.**

***Teach your child that seeking help and support is healthy and a sign of strength... NOT weakness.***

*Let go of stigma and shame – taking good care of our mental health is more important than image and being concerned with “what will people think”.*

- **Let them know they can come to you, and that you will be open and non-judgmental.**
- Embrace psychological health as being just as important as physical health.
- **If you notice signs of mental distress in your child, open a dialogue about it.**
- Contact SAMHIN for more support in this process.
- **Talk with friends and family you trust for your own support.**



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## ***Bridging the Gap:***

***Opening Communication in South Asian Families***

**A Guide for Parents**



**SAMHIN**



***South Asian Mental Health Initiative and Network***



## **Who Am I? South Asians growing up in the U.S. often feel a conflict in navigating their two worlds (Indian vs. American)**

### **Challenges/pressures your children may face:**

- Feelings of being "different" (racially, culturally, religiously, socially, sexually)
- Wanting acceptance from friends and also family
- Puberty and hormone related confusion for developing adolescents
- Romantic relationships/dating/sexuality issues & questioning
- Pressure to achieve, while finding their passion and defining success in broader terms (finding their own path)
- Desiring more autonomy and freedom (like their peers)

### **Major Areas of Concern:**

- Career and Major choices
- Gender Gap Issues
- Relationships & Dating
- Stigma & Mental Health Concerns

### **Psychological Issues we see among South Asian college students:**

- Not wanting to worry or disappoint family
- Inner conflict and feeling a need to hide a part of themselves
- Pressure to conform to traditional cultural values while also being accepted by peers
- Shame and low self-esteem if they are not doing well because of pursuing a career or major that is not a fit for them
- Negotiating new-found freedom and wanting to make healthy choices

***These pressures can lead to psychological distress for many South Asian youth - depression, severe anxiety ...and even suicidality.***



***Help your child form a healthy bi-cultural Identity in which core values of both South Asian and American cultures are embraced.***

- Respect and be open to both worldviews.
- Recognize that this integration will look different for each individual & family – It is a continuum.

### **STRENGTH-BASED PARENTING**

- Provide constructive feedback rather than criticism.
- Recognize your child's strengths.
- Praise positive behaviors → this increases self-esteem and motivation.
- Focus on your child's behavior, not character.
- Provide empathy and support.