

## **Episode 6: Accessing Support**

This podcast is brought to you by Southern Migrant and Refugee Centre, Better Place Australia, and South Eastern Melbourne Primary Health Network.

**Host, Ms. Mariam:** Dear viewers, hello and greetings, now you are watching another part of the program about mental health. Mental and psychological problems among us are increasing day by day, though psychological issues are becoming more widely understood, the subject of whether anyone does not experience mental and psychological problems is one that is being asked today, Is there anything we can do to address this? Can we avoid developing or treating these disorders? We ask for the answers to these questions from our dear guests. Ms Hana Farooqi, a psychologist with a master's degree from the Catholic University of Australia, and Mr. Hossein Rezaei, one of Melbourne's top translators, are with us during this program. Mr. Rezaei will discuss his personal experiences while he helped people with mental health issues and how to access the services that are offered in our society.

Welcome, and thank you for coming. I would like to ask Ms. Hana Farooqi what she considers to be a mental disease in the context of psychology.

**Dr. Hana Farooqi:** Thank you for your question. Last week we talked about the normal state of mental health, and now we are talking about the state where mental health is disrupted. Illness of mental health is a state in which a person finds problems in his emotions and in his behaviour toward others. Sometimes we can call these states mental disorders, which are diagnosed according to accepted criteria.

**Host, Ms. Mariam:** Can you give us some examples of mental illnesses that are very common in our society?

**Dr. Hana Farooqi:** Yes, there are mental diseases present in any country and they can develop at any age or under any conditions. About 50 percent of Australians between the ages of 16 and 85 have experienced mental illness at some point in their lives. The two most prevalent mental diseases are anxiety and depression. You will go through a lot of ups and downs in life and confront numerous challenges; as a result, you may suffer sadness, stress, and grief. Sometimes sadness and distress last for a long time, disrupting our everyday lives to the point that we are unable to carry out our daily tasks. We may also

notice other changes, such as changes to our sleep patterns, food, emotions, and way of thinking.

**Host, Ms. Mariam:** Well, Mr. Rezaei, you as a translator have worked a lot with non-profit mental health organizations that work with the people of Afghanistan, can you give us information about your experiences and views in this regard?

**Mr. Hossein Rezaei:** Yes, I have been there as a translator when my fellow Afghans had appointments with doctors in these organisations, whether we spoke on the phone, through Zoom, or in person. As an example, I have been in Dandenong at the section of Services for Youth and Adolescents, at Monash Health, in the psychiatric emergency department of Dandenong Hospital, and at the Foundation House where we were assisting individuals who had recently arrived from Afghanistan. I have assisted many of our fellow countrymen who attended these services and experienced the issues Ms. Hana mentioned, such as experiencing a sense of sadness and anxiety or missing their family, and I have seen that many of these services have been successful, and I have helped them there.

**Host, Ms. Mariam:** Ms. Hana, when we come across mental health services, there are many options, whether you see a counsellor, a psychologist, a psychiatrist, or a psychotherapist. Since you are working in this field, you can tell us the difference between a counsellor and a psychologist, and a psychiatrist?

**Dr. Hana Farooqi:** Yes, it must be acknowledged that discussing the differences in our Afghani community takes a little more time. The fields of mental health have produced specialists such as counsellors, psychologists, and psychiatrists. Only the type of education they received, and the length of their schooling varies. The psychiatrist is the one with the greatest education, which requires that he or she first become a doctor before specializing in psychology. A psychologist is not permitted to issue prescriptions, but he may diagnose mental diseases and suggest a course of therapy. Although the counsellor has professional training and can suggest therapies, they cannot write prescriptions.

**Host, Ms. Mariam:** According to the information you gave, I had a question about how psychologists, psychiatrists, and counsellors can help someone who has mental and emotional problems.

**Dr. Hana Farooqi:** Psychiatrists are specially trained in diagnosing, treating, and evaluating patients with mental health problems. They can perform a thorough evaluation of the patient's condition and determine the type of mental issue the patient has and how it occurred. They provide patients with exceptional care and assist them in comprehending and resolving their problems. Some patients can receive these therapies in just a few sessions, while others can need several. It would be best to speak with your doctor or psychologist if you know someone who is experiencing mental health issues in order to find a solution to your issue.

**Host, Ms. Mariam:** Mr. Rezaei, Australia is an English-speaking country, how can our people refer to psychotherapy services, especially those who do not know English or know less?

**Mr. Hossein Rezaei:** Mariam, in response to your question, I would like to say that while it is true that Australia is mostly an English-speaking country and that this cannot be changed, we are grateful to have psychologists like Ms. Hena and the many others who are fluent in Dari and Farsi. Additionally, we have psychologists who are instructed to communicate with clients in our local language during visits and consultations, and patients are frequently instructed to take medication. It is true that issues with the English language are just one of the numerous issues that our countrymen encounter, but we have free services available, such as a translator who can be reached by phone or in person. Our compatriots can speak to the consultant over the phone and receive the same services they would receive in person; they do not need to see you or know you.

**Host, Ms. Mariam:** Our society does not take mental problems seriously and does not rush to treat these mental problems. Have you seen people in your field of work who improve their mental health through these services or have completely recovered?

**Mr. Hossein Rezaei:** Yes, I do recall a fellow countryman who missed his family back in Pakistan. He was upset and depressed, and they advised him that it is best to take care of his health because no matter how much you sorrow, he might not be able to visit his family or do anything. This man visited a psychiatric office and took medication and battled depression for a short while, but he continued living his life with optimistic views, and eventually, his family arrived. This was one of the success stories that I was present in the several sessions

there as a translator. My advice to all compatriots is to take mental problems very seriously and if they prevent and treat them from the beginning, they can deal with the problems much more easily.

**Host, Ms. Mariam:** You said that psychological problems are seen among teenagers, especially at the age of 11 and 12. What is your experience with them?

**Mr. Hossein Rezaei:** Yes, when our teenagers and young people move to Australia, they must learn the language and compete hard with other students at the Victoria level, which puts them under mental or intellectual pressure. When I attended Better Plus, many of the students who attended had three or four sessions with a very skilled female psychologist who was able to provide them with ideas and concepts, which allowed them to advance the solution and succeed. My advice for all teenagers is to take the mental issue and the stress they have in the exam seriously and go to a psychologist.

**Dr. Hana Farooqi:** The sooner you seek assistance or consult a counsellor or psychologist whenever you notice changes in your mental health, the greater the likelihood of improvement and treatment. We saw that over the course of several months and multiple sessions, people claimed to have improved and be able to perform the same everyday duties once more if they try in the early stages with the GP and psychologist.

**Mr. Hossein Rezaei:** Thank you for your invitation and thanks to the listeners who follow this program.

**Dr. Hana Farooqi:** Thank you for the invitation.

**Host, Ms. Mariam:** We come to the end of this week's podcast, and thanks to the listeners who follow the program.

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