



Mental Health Matters

A Monthly Newsletter from Atlantic Behavioral Health

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS | July 2024

Taking Care of Our Mental Health in a Multicultural World

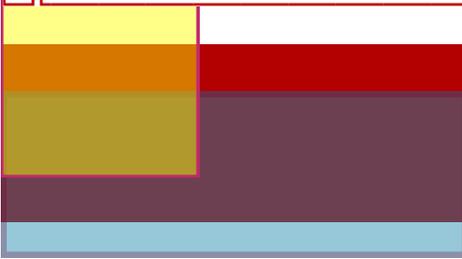
*“The East has a lot to learn from the West.
And the West has a lot to learn from the East”*

Dr. Sunil Khushalani

Atlantic Behavioral Health Medical Director

We all come from somewhere and we live in a multicultural country with people who arrive from far and wide, either generations ago, or perhaps, just the other day. This tapestry of heritage is what makes our communities so rich and fresh.

Taking care of our mental health in a multicultural community presents interesting and sometimes challenging questions that need attention, new learning, and better resources for everyone, as we all grow in our understanding and care for our mental health.



**Atlantic
Health System**
Behavioral Health

While many immigrant communities may start out with strong cultural and familial supports, some individual's mental health face challenges due to migration, acculturation, and other social determinants. Studies have shown that there has been a recent rise in mental health distress in South Asian Communities. [Mental Health and Stress among South Asians - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

South Asia, includes the countries of [Bangladesh](#), [Bhutan](#), [India](#), [Pakistan](#), [Nepal](#), and the [Maldives](#). Some resources also include Afghanistan. [South Asia | Geography, Countries, Map, & History | Britannica](#). Nearly 5.4 million South Asians live in the United States.

To understand the mental health trends and needs of the South Asian communities, we asked Dr. Sunil Khushalani to help us learn more. Dr. Khushalani is the Atlantic Behavioral Health medical director and a psychiatrist who is widely published in the field of mental health and substance use disorders and is often called to speak on these subjects. In our discussion with Dr. Khushalani, he highlighted the industriousness, diversity, and strong sense of community and family within the South Asian community as significant strengths. Dr. Khushalani praised the hardworking nature of the South Asian community, noting their significant contributions to various industries and professions in the U.S.

The diversity within the South Asian community is vast. Dr. Khushalani described the multitude of languages, religions, and cultural practices that enrich the community's sense of unity and family.

The importance of family and interdependence in decision-making stands out in the South Asian community. This is a striking contrast with the individualistic values prevalent in American culture and while a great strength for the community, may be one of the barriers to getting mental health care when it is needed.

Barriers to Mental Health Care

Dr. Khushalani has identified several barriers to mental health care for South Asians.

These include:

- **Cultural preferences** for South Asian providers. Many South Asians have a preference for mental health providers from their own cultural background. This may be true for many cultures, and it can be a barrier to care if such providers are not available.
- **Concerns about confidentiality.** There are also strong concerns about confidentiality and privacy within this community and a lack of understanding in some of the privacy laws in the U.S. healthcare system.
- **Fear.** Concerns about the impact of seeking mental health care on family reputation can be a source of fear, discomfort or shame that prevents South Asians from seeking help.



**Atlantic
Health System**

Behavioral Health

- **Lack of resources.** Like many new arrivals to this country, insurance and payment can be barriers to getting mental health care. Financial barriers to accessing mental health care, include the high cost of private practitioners and challenges faced by uninsured or underinsured individuals within the community.

The lack of providers who speak one's language or understand one's culture can also be a barrier for many people. Dr. Khushalani emphasized the need for culturally and linguistically sensitive mental health care providers to better serve all multicultural communities.

But things may be changing. While younger generations still face barriers with parents and family, they do seem to have a more open attitude towards mental health care. These younger South Asians are more open to discussing mental health which may be a positive change.

Wherever you may be from, it is important that you know that your mental health matters.

What can you do to address your mental health needs?

- Understand that mental health issues can affect anyone no matter where you come from. Speak to your primary care provider to discuss your mental health needs as well as your physical health needs.
- Try to understand how cultural and familial factors can impact help-seeking and attempt to initiate conversations to overcome these barriers with people in and around your community.
- Give yourself time and space to grieve some of the losses you and your family may have experienced while adjusting to a new culture.
- Ask your provider if they have specific questions about your culture so that they can understand you better.
- Consider joining an Atlantic Health System Business Resource Group (BRG) to support your connection to your community. [AHS Business Resource Groups \(atlantichealth.org\)](http://atlantichealth.org)

How can the mental health systems rise to the challenge of providing care in our ever-changing communities?

- ***Acknowledge, embrace, and learn about the different cultures that live and work in our communities.***
- ***Ask about the immigration experience and how it has impacted their mental health.***
- ***Advocate for more resources for all communities to support good mental health.***
- ***Remember that every patient is a unique story.***



**Atlantic
Health System**

Behavioral Health

CRISIS RESOURCES

If you feel you or someone you know may harm themselves or someone else:

988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: **988**

The Trevor Lifeline for LGBTQIA+ Youth : **1-866-488-7386**

Veterans Crisis Line: **Dial 988 and Press 1**

Dial 211: 211 provides callers with information about and referrals to social services for every day needs and in times of crisis

National Domestic Violence Hotline at **1-800-799-SAFE**

National Sexual Assault Hotline at **1-800-656-HOPE**

Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)
24/7 Hotline **1-800-656-4673**

ADDICTION RESOURCES

SAMHSA's National Helpline is a free, confidential, 24/7, 365-day-a-year treatment referral and information service (in English and [Spanish](#))

[Also visit the online treatment locator.](#) Call: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

Alcoholics Anonymous - [Northern New Jersey AA - Meeting Finder \(nnjaa.org\)](#)

Narcotics Anonymous - [NA Meetings in NJ \(narcoticsanonymousnj.org\)](#)

NJ Self Help Clearinghouse 800-367-6274 - [FIND A GROUP | NJSHGCH \(njgroups.org\)](#)

CONCERN

Your Employee Assistance Program:

973-451-0025

Atlantic Behavioral Health Crisis Intervention Services

24/7 Hotlines:

Chilton Medical Center: 973-831-5078

Hackettstown Medical Center: 908-454-5141

Morristown Medical Center: 973-540-0100

Overlook Medical Center: 908-522-3586

Newton Medical Center: 973-383-0973

Email: CONCERN-EAP@atlanticealth.org

AHS Business Resource Groups
(atlanticealth.org)



**Atlantic
Health System**
Behavioral Health