

Mahmuda's Story

“In the process of getting help to get away from an abusive husband, I was suggested to seek counseling. I wanted to get help from those who have the knowledge of and is sensitive to my cultural background, so I asked to be with Sakhi.

I'm a well educated, well functioning, and a conscious human being who has been here in the USA since elementary school. Even with being aware of all the help geared to domestic abuse this great county has to offer, I was in a state of shock, or rather, paralyzed to seek help. Sadly, the South Asian community looks down on a woman who dares to leave her spouse because of the abuse. We get a pat on the back for staying in an abusive relationship; “strong woman” they label us.

Far after the end of abusive relationship, I'm continuously hunted by the cultural stigma and backlashes sometimes even within family and friend circle, which is horrible. It feels like I ran away from one abuser and now facing many more; faceless; the whole culture!

Sakhi helped and continues to help me with the process of being a survivor. Through the Chai and Chat group I'm learning to ask for and accept help. This is a big deal because it is hard to trust others when we have failed to trust ourselves. A sense of community, awareness and fountain of strength are few words that come in mind when I think about Sakhi's Chai and Chat group.

I am confident that the help from SAKHI extends far more than it may have been intended. I've acquired skills to speak up not only for myself but feel confident to help others in need. Through the support of this organization, I'm able to be a voice in my family, my immediate and extended community. I want other women to also say "I'm divorced" with a smile because leaving an abusive husband takes a lot of inner strength. I refuse to be a poor statistic of abused Asian women, I want to be an example of a strong Asian woman instead; my culture has lot of beauty to offer.

Though all our journeys in the group are different, we strive towards common goals -- self-care, and optimism. We achieve this through our weekly meeting that consists of sharing laughter and tears, sadness and worries, ideas and updates, past and outlook to a better future no matter how blurred it may be. Basically, to feel all the emotions that we are entitled to feel in a safe place, at our own pace. Domestic abuse is not prejudice to age, social, economical or educational status. I'm honored to be among the bravest and strongest of women in our group, though they might not yet label themselves as such.”

Fatima's Story

Fahima is a victim of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse at the hands of her husband. She was born and raised in Bangladesh and married her husband on January 21st, 2007. She came to the US on January 19th, 2007, and is currently a US citizen.

Her husband would threaten her and record himself sexually assaulting her and torture her with those recordings. This has resulted in severe emotional and psychological trauma, including depression, paranoia, and anxiety. She is always stressed out and anxious and she has trouble sleeping.

Fahima currently receives mental health counseling from Sakhi, but because she is still traumatized she does not show up much to the sessions. She needs encouragement and reassurance that getting mental health counseling will empower her and help her heal and grow and move on in life.

Lovely's Story

Lovely dealt with a mental and emotional issues after the death of her first husband and child in Bangladesh. She suffered from PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) as a result of the accident. In Bangladesh, she had a strong network of support from her family and friends, and was thus able to restart her life and get back on her feet. Such a

Family and support system are needed to maintaining a person's physical and mental health.

Lovely was a female athlete in Bangladesh. She represented Bangladesh at the national and international level, and was a gold medalist shooter in the South Asia SAF game. She had a very happy married life in Bangladesh. Her husband was also a gold medalist shooter and they had a three-year-old daughter. On 31st October 2012 after EID that year, her private car was hit by a truck and her daughter and husband died in the crash while she was critically injured.

At the suggestion of her family, Lovely married a US citizen in 2015 and immigrated legally to the United States. Unfortunately, her marriage proved to be tragic, as her husband financially, physically, and verbally abused her. Her husband took complete control of the household finances, providing no room for her to be independent which is common nature in South Asian community.

Furthermore, Lovely's husband used physical and emotional abuse to exercise power and keep her in loneliness and isolation. Because of the brutal, attack of abuses that she faced from her husband, Lovely developed depression and experienced suicidal thoughts. She worked in her husband's travel agency without payment. Her husband repeatedly threatened to withdraw his sponsorship of her conditional green card and used the details of her previous tragedy to emotionally blackmail her. He told her that she had no right to live and pushed her into a depression that ultimately led her to attempt suicide.

Lovely was referred to Sakhi by Elmhurst hospital on 2/8/2016, She was unable to properly convey her story or life experience without breaking down into tears or stress in first three sessions, as she was still processing her trauma and feeling the effects of it. Such effects included anxiety, nightmares, inability to sleep, paranoia, loss of hope, and loss of interest in anything that previously gave her life meaning.

Sakhi assured her that she is not alone, connected her with a lawyer and helped Lovely find a temporary housing, subletting a room from another Bangladeshi family. After that She applied for a job, interviewed and took the position. She is working part time in a first food shop in Laguardia airport. She is happy in this situation.

