

Mental Health with Sandy Kaur

Speaker Key:

CB Chantal Boyle

SK Sandy Kaur

00:00:21

CB

Welcome to the Sunflower Conversations with me, Chantal. I am joined today by Sandy Sehat, who is the founder of Sehat, a charity which is focused on mental health and suicide in the South Asian and Punjabi community. Sandy is also a Sunflower Friend. Now, I just first of all need to check, Sandy, have I pronounced the name correctly, and if I haven't, could you please put me straight?

SK

Thank you for having me, Chantal. So, the organisation is called Sehat. It's easy to pronounce for me, purely because I founded it, I put it together. Sehat in Punjabi and Urdu, as well as many of the dialects is health. I think one of the key things, as you mentioned, is we support mental health and suicide prevention within communities. So, yes, it's correct in reading the name, but just with a little bit of a pronunciation correction, it's Sehat.

CB

Sehat.

00:01:23

SK

That's it, perfect.

CB

Thank you. Tell us, tell us a little bit about yourself, please?

SK

What would you like to know? There's so many different levels to me as a person, but also through my charitable work per se. I initially started doing mental health community work with a platform called Sikh Forgiveness, which predominantly

supports the Sikh and Punjabi community doing mental health conversations and trying to normalise that conversation at a community level.

Over the years, we've had such a great intro to community accepting that conversation and trying to bring on that space, in a safe space for communities, that Sehhat was established. Now, Sehhat is something we focus on, on a nation-wide level, on the basis that there's so much more work that we want to do and we want to open the doors to everyone, as we did with Sikh Forgiveness.

I think a little bit about myself is more so the fact that I have a passion just generally helping people. I used to work a full-time job and I have a normal life. Well, normal, as they say. But I think, if anything, I probably have the most joy in trying to give my support to others. Whether it's just being there for them or, just even in my friend circles or people that I meet, is knowing who that person is and just learning more about them brings me so much joy. I think that's my passion and that's what I've brought to my organisation, is how can we allow people to be their authentic selves, without having what society expects us to be. That's me in a nutshell, in a small way.

00:03:30

CB

You're an empath.

SS

Massively.

CB

An energetic empath, I should add that.

SK

I hope so. I don't know, many would say probably a workaholic empath.

CB

What service does Sehhat provide and where do you operate?

SK

We at the moment have mostly an online service and operate mostly on online platforms. Essentially, we are in the process of building a service point for Sehhat. We are reachable online, on platforms like Instagram, social media. Our services are based one-to-one because we understand that you can't really group everybody's experiences altogether. We are currently working on trying to build better services for suicide prevention and we raise awareness on how we can bring that education within community.

Our services are mainly built on education and awareness at the moment, until we can have the bandwidth to provide one-to-one or support groups. We're looking to start working on virtual and face-to-face workshops, where people can share their lived experience with people, as well as professionals. Our service is at this moment in time quite varied.

00:05:02

CB

It's a very heavy topic, isn't it, suicide?

SK

Yes.

CB

But essential that we speak about it and that it's brought out into the open. I'm just wondering, what was the push for you to make your charity focus on that topic, and mental health in the round? Was there a demand for it or was it through your personal experience? What was the driver for?

SK

I think for me was everybody struggles with mental health at some point, whether it's something that they acknowledge is happening or not. I think the driver for me when it came to suicide prevention was the levels of stories and people who were just struggling in silence and also behind closed doors. I've been doing workshops and group work across the UK for nearly five years now and one of the key topics I always tend to bring up is suicide. I know we say it's a heavy topic, but I think that's a level of conditioning potentially community has provided to it, as well as mental health.

What people don't realise is, when you're talking about suicide is acknowledging that it's happening or that there's a thought in someone's head of thinking like that. And how we can support them in finding a better thought process that isn't driving them to those negative feelings. What really helps in those conditions is giving someone support. In community, I've noticed and experienced, people in the South Asian community don't have that because of the level of negativity that's attached to it. It's very much like mental health, there's already a stigma attached to it and an expectation of it's not something that you can talk about.

00:07:10

I think since I've narrowed down the conversation of we want to support suicide prevention, there's been a lot of people who have come forward, to me directly and to our organisation, who have wanted to seek help. Especially understand from the South Asian perspective what is the barrier that's preventing people from seeking help.

We began the conversation many years ago and a lot of the stuff that we've done with Sikh Forgiveness is bilingual resources and trying to understand how we can support people on all levels. That was really when we understood that there was such a lack of resources for us as a community. Not only do we experience language barriers from seeking professional help, but there's also a language barrier because there's a lot of things in Punjabi and other languages that don't reflect things like mental health and suicide.

CB

Just don't exist within the...

SK

Yes, words like depression. The dialects, as well, are so different from each region. For example, the Punjabi I speak can be different to someone who also speak Punjabi, as well. Our dialect or the words that we may use will be different. The description could potentially be the same, but the word that we use, say for example sorry, could mean something else or said differently in another language, but mean the same thing. I think that's the hard thing.

00:08:50

One of the things that we focused on quite recently is what does suicide mean in all different languages. And even what I've noticed, what I've known suicide to be growing up, from movies or books or films or any form of context that's been linked to suicide, is completely different to a friend of mine who also speaks Punjabi, as well. It's like, I've not really heard of that phrase before, what does that mean and how did that come about?

You're learning new things from different communities, but I think, as you mentioned, suicide's a heavy conversation. But it's not a heavy conversation because we just don't speak about it enough. We're scared of approaching the conversations and we don't know how to approach the conversations. That's what makes it heavy because people are afraid of saying the wrong thing or not approaching the conversation in the right way because they don't want to upset the other person. Even in suicide prevention training and a lot of mental health courses that are out there, they would often say that sometimes, if someone is experiencing suicidal thoughts, is to be very blunt and say, are you having suicidal thoughts?

CB

This is very interesting to me because even in Western culture, talking about suicide, mental health is only kind of coming to the fore in the last three years or so. If somebody dies and it's as a result of suicide, very often that's not mentioned, how they died, which is difficult for everybody else to them process what happened, why have they died? I have a question and that is, in Western culture, particularly in the UK, I'm talking about that, that's my experience, we generally don't talk about death anyway.

00:11:08

Death is a part of life, so I feel that this is something that should be spoken about a lot more openly. It's something that should be spoken about in PHSC lessons within school, so that, it's going to happen to us all at some point, we learn strategies of how to process grief, etc., and how to talk about death.

Within the cultures that you are supporting and your own culture, how is death treated and is it celebrated? When somebody dies, is there almost a celebration of that person's life or how is the approach to death?

SK

Such a good question. There's so many different levels to that question, on the basis that within each culture there's a process of how death or grief is acknowledged. As every culture, there's the ceremonial side, where families, friends and everything will be involved. But then there's always, just as in the Western Culture, the after period of the death and the funeral and the families being involved with supporting. That's the period that everybody seems to experience the true grief process.

It's funny because we've been speaking about grief quite recently within my organisation for quite some time. One of the things that we noticed when it came to speaking about grief and death and losing someone is actually, grief has so many different levels for a person. But also, what we don't talk about enough is the grief the person experiences for themselves. They're grieving potentially a past version of themselves or a future version that they'd hoped to have had.

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This is at all age levels and you're right, it does need to be addressed at a school level. I think that kind of links into mental health, is how much more do we need to encourage mental health conversations at school and university levels? But also ensure that there's representation for the individuals at those universities and schools.

Because one of the things that we struggle with or have found is, yes, schools and universities are doing a lot of things, but they're not representing. Therefore, they're losing the support services and individual needs because culturally, they don't understand. Then that's an even bigger struggle for them because the person will shut down and they will not feel that they're supported or listened to or valid.

I think one of the things that we hope with the grief work that we're doing is how do we support someone to acknowledge that it's a journey? Whatever you're grieving, whether it's a person, whether it's a past version of yourself or an experience or a wish that you had, even a pet, something like that. We want people to celebrate their lives, that's what we encourage as an organisation, is celebrate the person's life or celebrate that life that you wished or that person.

And what would you do for them now? Because I think often, we get stuck on that page of we only think of them at a sad time. Most people I've known who have

experienced loss have celebrated the person's life and have always gone out to do something for them or have pushed themselves to do things in their memory. And continued to do all the things that they would have loved to do with them, or they would've loved to do, but I think that's very far down the line before they've actually accepted the loss has happened. That's only through speaking relatable people, people who are representatives of who they are, as well, and who understands their culture.

00:16:00

CB

I know that in Jamaican culture, for example, when somebody dies everybody comes to the house and it's a nine night celebration, there's food. That's a really strong cultural thing which occurs. It is different from culture to culture, and it is understanding those differences and nuances and how best to talk about it. Even different expressions to use, like should you say I'm sorry for your loss? Even that. In English culture it's just talking about, using the word dead or death seems to be an absolute no-no word.

Going back to mental health, which is obviously where all this stems from in regards to suicide prevention. You've mentioned that there's different words for that in Punjabi and Urdu, and the different communities within those. Has that been like taking a sledgehammer to crush a nut, to even commence those conversations? How did you journey into it? How do you knock on somebody's door and say I want to discuss something with you that you're probably going to say I have no idea what you're talking about, and it doesn't affect me?

SK

To begin with, it was really hard. I started the mental health journey of raising awareness about five years ago now. And that was very much at community level, so it was very alien to people, who was like, what are you talking about? What is mental health and why would you want to even discuss such a topic?

00:18:02

For me, I'm very much in an open culture, where my parents have acknowledged what mental health is and have experienced grief and have experienced loss and experienced hardship in their life. For me to then experience all the things I've done in school and working life and the stigmas I felt, even just as a South Asian woman, but just as a woman, as well, in the industry I work in. There's a lot of links to things like stress and anxiety and depression that I've experienced in my own life, as well. There's young women and men out there who are experiencing this and as a culture and as a faith, we should provide that safe space, and it's starting at that community level.

And, yes, it was considerably hard as a young person, to go into those places and ring people, saying hi, I'd like to do a mental health talk. And they're like, huh?

CB

Is there a difference between men accepting you to talk to them or is it mainly women who will accept that conversation from you, as you are a woman?

SK

I think to begin with, when I started, yes. I certainly thought there was that aspect of how people might want to speak to me. Because I also look very young and ultimately, there's that judgment of you're only 22, what have you experienced in life to even understand what I'm going through? But actually, even as a 22-year-old, you can experience a hell of a lot. We respect people's confidentiality and space, very much so, in the fact that communities haven't experienced that level of safe space. They've acknowledged that they can reach out and ask for help. We will try and give them as much help as we can, as a team, but we're very open with them in the sense of this is what we can do and this is who we can provide services and support to, for an individual. However, we cannot control you to do that. We give them that level of control back and that's what people have respected.

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Because people can see me, and I've gone into community, people know who they're talking to, people know what aspects I'm coming from. There isn't that level of fear of they're going to judge me or they're going to criticise what I'm experiencing.

And we do tackle conversations that most community-level organisations potentially don't. We've gone to gurdwara spaces and asked them to have conversations with incorporating co-production groups with periods and grief suicide and mental health, alcohol addiction. Some of these conversations are conversations that have never been had before.

CB

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I have some friends and their experience within their community is that it's always, to the outside world, outside families, outside of the household, that everything is going great and that there is a level of judgement from community, so that you could never present any weakness, for fear of it being judged and it being discussed within the community. Even so far as somebody within the family is getting married, so the whole of the outside of the house has to be repainted because we wouldn't want anybody coming here to think that we weren't on the top of our game.

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If that has been something that's inherently within your culture, that you're so concerned about what other people are going to think and say about you, opening up a conversation about mental health must be extremely challenging. To overcome that fear that is this going to be discussed? You've mentioned how you create a safe

space and that you have built up that trust. Somebody calling you and saying, actually, I think I need a bit of support, how do you go about that? What would be the... I don't know, like you said you do different courses and what have you, how does that go?

SK

It's kind of like a step-by-step process, really. If someone was to reach out to us and say I need support, it's understanding what kind of support they're looking for. And, ultimately, giving them that sound space to say, actually, this is what I'm struggling with. That sound space is probably, potentially the first sound space they've had with anyone. Really honouring that level of saying, okay, what can we do to help? Where is this stemming from? And working with them slowly in a step-by-step process, to see what we can provide them.

I think one of the key things also is, is understanding where they are from because we're very keen to work with local support. I think that's been one of the difficult things that I've experienced, just as a person, but also as an organisation. In key areas, say for example in the UK, it's very accessible to get mental health or representation, potentially. However, if you live in a smaller, very white-based area, where you can't seek that help with our support and you're having to travel quite far, it can be quite difficult.

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A lot of the support we provide come through online. We work through them on a process of how can we help you, where are you based, what kind of support are you looking for? Because not everybody wants to have therapy. They may have had something like CBT via NHS Choice, which hasn't worked for them. They might be experiencing something where it is potentially grief related and they need specific grief therapy or a support group.

It's understanding where that stems from, rather than just signposting them and say try this. If they ultimately have suggested I'm struggling with this, I'm looking for someone who is a male or a female, does speak Punjabi and is based in the Midlands, then we would say, okay, let's work together, see what we can find. Does this relate to you? Can you resonate to this person? And thankfully, most therapists out there, and groups, will provide a 15 to 20 minute consultation when it comes to therapy. It's working with them and saying is this something that you would consider?

Often that does work, sometimes it's the case of that doesn't feel right for me. We would provide them a list of people that they could potentially reach out to. Because one of the key things we found, and you may probably know this as well, sometimes you don't always click with the right therapist.

00:25:36

CB

I think that's really crucial, isn't it? It's really crucial because it takes a lot to open up and we're all human, you're not going to get on... I went for some... I've had counselling twice in my life. The first time I just thought the woman was amazing, she was great, and if I could afford it, I'd continue to do it to this day, it was a long time ago. It was wonderful and I don't know how she went about it, but it worked for me. We started talking about things that, they were buried, things I hadn't considered or thought about. It was perfect.

Then I had another one, it was for a different subject, but I was just like, I feel so uncomfortable talking to you. We are on different planets, a solar system, and I just don't feel uncomfortable. And so, I didn't continue with it.

SK

If therapy isn't the right thing, what is it that you're looking for? Have you tried holistic therapies? Because we have the knowledge that when it comes to mental health, there's not one shoe fits all, there's a multitude of things someone needs when they're struggling with their health.

They do need professional help, whether it's medical, a GP is always your first point of contact. Can communities help you? Can a grassroot help you? Is there a local support group that you can go to? Can reading help you? Can self-care or journal or speaking to friends and family? Finding those people who understand what you experience, be a place of solace. It's basically building up that box of yours that you need to refer to if you need help.

CB Toolbox.

00:27:39

SK

Yes, your toolbox. I always say it's either a toolbox or a self-care box, like your go-to box. It's one of the things I highly recommend to everybody, is find things that bring you joy and put them in that box. Regardless of whatever it is, if you want to remember someone or even things like our memories. Our bodies, our minds hold and store memories from everything, smells, the textures. This is why they use grounding a lot when it comes to anxiety or any other mental health struggles. Because we hold those memories, they trigger a memory in your brain.

CB

So, grounding, let's go back here. Grounding, this term, can you explain?

SK

Grounding is a technique which is used a lot for when you're struggling, potentially with anxiety. It's grounding yourself in that moment. It's what do you hear, what do you smell, what can you feel, what can you taste? It's realigning with your senses and focusing on those moments. Sometimes you would have earth grounding, which

is walking outside barefoot, so you can feel the grass, so you can hear the birds, so you can refocus on your breath.

These are the things that are grounding techniques which will help things like panic attacks, anxiety, when you're stressed. A lot of the time people use this when they're meditating, as well. It's things like that, finding a technique which helps you. And it doesn't work for everyone, and we appreciate it doesn't work for everyone, but there's so many techniques out there that help. The breathwork technique, counting for breathing in for five, all of these things, there's so many different techniques.

00:29:36

And this is something that I mentioned earlier, not every technique, not every therapist is going to fit what you feel is comfortable. It's understanding with yourself first, I think it all starts with you. One, accepting that you struggle with poor mental health. Then understanding what that is, whether it's anxiety or whether it's depression or whether it's too much stress in your life, or if it's your health in general.

If you're experiencing physical pains, then it's reaching out to someone. Even with physical pain, some people would rather not say anything because they don't want to come across as weak. Even things like period pain. Women and young girls can experience a whole other spectrum of period pain which can be debilitating.

CB

Well, until recently we didn't speak about periods. And if you had to go to the toilet, particularly in school, trying to let the teacher let you go to the toilet is a bit of a mission in the first place. You're not allowed to take your bag with you, are you? So, you're trying to hide your sanitary product up the sleeve of your arm, as if it's something really, really shameful. Which it isn't, it's not shameful, that's just part of our being, as women.

SK

And you do experience low moods during that time, you do have a level of symptoms which not everybody understands and not everybody experiences. That comes down to it's mentally impacting you and it's physically impacting you.

00:31:23

CB

It's debilitating. It can be so debilitating and it's on such a regular basis, as well, isn't it?

SK

Absolutely, monthly, as well. It's not something you can say I'll just switch it off.

CB

Yes, I'll come back to that in six months' time.

SK

But also, I think the sad thing is, as much as women experience a lot of health changes, menopause, premenopausal, experiences mental health, childbirth, postpartum, periods at such a young age, they don't have that potential saying I can't do this today. They're expected to just carry on with it. It's the same as with men, they can't openly turn around and say I'm having a poor mental health day, just leave me alone.

CB

There's two expectations there that we put on children. If you're a girl, you have these period pains and it's like, well, that's just part of life, get on with it. Which actually, there are things that can be done medically to support that journey, additional oestrogen and things like that, but it's just been instilled.

If you're starting to have to put up with pain in your... Women are getting their periods at a lot younger age now, so preteens even, you're having to put up with that, from that young age. Everything, as we've discussed, it's physical and it's mental pain. That just becomes like I just have to put up with it. I guess that's where it stems, the mental health and not talking about the pain that you experience. With boys, we have this other, ridiculous expectation that boys don't cry. Up until a certain...

SK

Not even just boys don't cry, it's that boys can't show any emotion.

00:33:18

CB

I often really feel sorry for boys because it's such a stark swich over, as in when they're really tiny, they're super cute and they'll get cuddles from their mum and their dad and strangers. Then they just reach a certain height, age, and all of a sudden that is switched off. It's completely switched off and it's toughen up.

SK

What I also have noticed is that people don't tell their children or their friends, if they're males, that they love them.

CB

Yes, it's crazy.

SS

They just say they care about them. As women, you would easily say I'm so proud of you, go get this, girl. I know I do it with my male friends, that I'll be like, I'm proud of you. And I sit there and think they probably think I'm absolutely crazy for saying that to them. But even with my nephews and nieces and things like that, now they know that I talk about mental health, they're very much open to speaking openly with me. And I've noticed younger individuals are very much open to saying I wish schools had this and I wish we had the support.

But I've noticed adult males who haven't had that mental health or emotional support, and what a difference it would potentially have made. If they would have had a space to acknowledge grief. A lot of South Asian or Sikh boys have grown up with a lot of bullying because of the way they look and their appearance. That's impacted a lot of people growing up and into adulthood.

00:35:06

It's trying to protect that generation and also give them that education of how you can support them. What does support mean for them as an individual? As a person of colour, as well, as a person of faith, someone who has a different appearance, and how can we do that on a level? And I think that comes from all aspects. One of our key things as an organisation we've tried to do is we want to encourage that anyone can seek any support for mental health on a wider spectrum. Whether it's at school, whether it's at university, whether it's in a workplace, but also in places of faith. People regularly visit the places of faith for every celebration of life.

Even when they're struggling, someone will pray, or someone will go to get some solace or some peace. Or they will speak to close friends and family. These can play a small factor in someone's life, but also a massive factor in someone's life. It's understanding how you can do that. These are the things potentially, even in places of faith, men do not have the space to talk there or feel comfortable. Not even women, they just don't feel comfortable speaking in those spaces.

CB

Is that why you've commissioned a joined survey with Sikh Forgiveness on preventing suicide? Because you mentioned about Sikh boys looking different because of the headdress that they wear. There's an obvious difference before anything else, in a sense. Is that why you've done this, and can you tell me a bit about it?

00:36:51

SK

I think there was lots of reasons why we wanted to do it. We wanted to focus on suicide prevention as a whole, and with Sikh Forgiveness we have that level of community and trust within community, which has allowed us to do the survey and research that we're doing. Again, it was understanding what our community is missing. What is the need? What are the requirements that people who are struggling mentally are not receiving? We want to honour and support everyone who has

experience suicide ideation, but also all the individuals who have struggled with the impact of suicide.

CB

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How did you discover the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower and what do you think about it?

SK

I think I mainly discovered it at work and I had a really good conversation with a colleague of mine. And everywhere I therefore went I could see the Sunflower lanyard or someone was talking about it. And it was like someone was telling me. A friend of mine actually who when I mentioned the hidden disabilities and I looked into a little bit more it was covering conversations about PTSD, dyslexia and dyspraxia and depression, anxiety.

I was like, why doesn't the community know about this? Why do we not encourage people to get that additional support? But also, look at the resources that are available for them, free of charge, as well. This is what we would want to do, is we're trying to equip communities in understanding there's so many resources out there that they can get help with themselves. As soon as I began the conversations within my own network and community levels, it was like, I need to understand Hidden Disabilities. I need a lanyard to let people know that I need space and that they need to understand that just because I don't look as though I have a disability, I do have one.

00:39:19

Giving people that understanding of what it means, not just mentally, but physically as well. I think this is why I wanted to work with them on a long-term basis. For me it's education. Giving people that education on a safe ground of saying a hidden disability can look like this, this, this. But also, I think we talked about it earlier, if someone has a physical disability and you can see it, any other condition, mental health or struggles they're experiencing, are ignored.

I think it's a space of actually, they need to be acknowledged as well. We can't just link everything to just because I can see it, that's what it must be. It's actually, just because you can't see it, doesn't mean they can't struggle.

CB

Exactly. It's a good way of describing it, the struggle. Because for some reason, the expectation is so much higher. I've heard from people who are cancer survivors, patients who have gone through this gruelling treatment, but then sometimes they can be left with other, life-long health impacts. But the implication is like, you had cancer and now you're better, so what's the issue? Actually, that person is really, really having to contend with other serious health impacts and they're not visible.

00:41:08

SK

It's also things like, as we mentioned earlier, there's an element of grief that they're experiencing because they would've been a completely different person, had they never experienced a cancer diagnosis. Then there's the fear, of I'm sure most people who have had cancer in the past, of it potentially coming back and what the risks are. Having to change the way they live and what they consume in food. Changing their whole, entire lifestyle to address that.

That's just the physical aspect of what they could be experiencing in the aftermath, but it's the self-esteem, it's the confidence. It's also how sometimes people can treat them to what they would've treated them if they didn't have a diagnosis. People would potentially have that extra care, or they would ask 'how are you?', all the time. They don't like to have potentially health conversations.

CB

But wearing the lanyard means that you're able to communicate to people that I'm still experiencing a disability or a condition, illness that you can't see, so I still require that extra kindness and a bit of support. You've applied to become a Sunflower Friend, which we're delighted about. How do you plan to be a Sunflower Friend?

SK

We're working on some really exciting stuff already with the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Scheme. I think one of the key things for us is being a Sunflower Friend is incorporating it into communities. Bringing that education to communities and giving them the understanding of actually, even if it didn't apply to them, I think this is one of the key things that we want to change the mindset of. Is you can come to a mental health conversation or a workshop, or you can come to a workshop for disabilities or alcohol addiction or PTSD, but it doesn't have to be for you. You can provide that support to someone else.

00:43:35

For example, for me, I'm interested in being a Sunflower Friend because I know it can help so many people that I know. My knowledge can be supporting all of those individuals that would've never had that knowledge before. And giving them that access, but also giving them that access on the basis from a South Asian and Punjabi aspect of could this be for you? Can I help you in any way? What do you need to understand?

But also, helping friends and family. We mentioned this earlier, on the basis that someone who could experience even high sensitivities to sounds, it could really help someone by having a lanyard. Traveling to work or being in loud spaces, these kind of things could really help someone. We've had a lot of conversations at a community level of so many different health aspects that a Sunflower lanyard and scheme could help them ease the conversation, as well. And making them available.

Most places are now so open because of the mental health conversations, that they do want to help their community. They do want to help the people, they do want to make their industries and their spaces safe spaces.

I think that was one of the key things that we wanted to do. In the Sikh faith, for example, one of our key things is providing a seva, which is a selfless service to communities. That's helping anyone, regardless of what background they're from or culture or faith, it is helping others. And that's embedded in our faith, and even just us as human beings.

00:45:28

I think that was one of the key things that I've been able to really feel comfort in my faith and being able to help others that my teachings and my space of my faith has been able to give me that gift to help others and that knowledge. I think that's what was really key for me, is how can I help people who potentially don't have the opportunity to talk about mental health or anything that they're struggling with so openly as potentially I have. And if I can provide them a safe space or some education or just a listening ear or a helping hand in some way, and be a friend on that aspect, then that's what I can hopefully do.

When I saw the Sunflower lanyard, I was like, this can mean such a big thing for community levels. Hopefully that's what I can do.

CB

And that is what you will do, I have no doubt. Do you have any support for anyone who's listening, who feels that they or someone they know needs some support? Do you have a bite-sized bit of advice?

SK

I would say just if you know someone who's struggling and you don't really know how to approach the conversation, is just be a support for them. Let them know that you're there for them and always check in on them on an ad-hoc basis or a friendly level. Don't ever make them feel as though you're being too overprotective because I think that's something that we can often do. Allow them to open up to you in their time because giving someone that control over their own emotions, which sometimes people don't have, can be a massive turning point if they open up to you, as a friend, or any person that they care about.

00:47:33

And then work with them on how you can get that support. But I think just be there for them and provide them whatever you can in the space that you can. If you really are struggling as a friend to give them support, is look for other support, grassroots communities, organisations, and speak with them and see if you can obtain some resources and some support accesses through that, and then take it from there. I think that would be my advice if you're trying to support someone else.

If you're trying to support yourself, do the same for yourself. Listen to what your body and your mind and your environment is telling you and take a step back and seek help. There's always someone that is willing to help you. Reach out and the right person who is there to support you will.

CB

How can people find you and your charity?

SK

You can find Sehhat on @Sehhat on Twitter, now X, should I say.

CB

I don't know what you call it. I've noticed that people go, Twitter, now X.

00:48:49

SK

You're so used to saying Twitter, but then you realise it's called X.

CB

I don't know how that changed. That name change, I don't know [overtalking].

SK

No, I'm not quite sure how they link the name.

CB

[Overtalking] how long that's going to take for the...

SK

You can find Sehhat on Instagram and on Twitter, soon to be LinkedIn and other platforms. Our website is www.sehhat.co.uk. And if you need to email us or require any support, you can email us at info@sehhat.co.uk.

CB

Perfect. And we will include all of these links in the show notes, so that people can easily find you and seek out support. Sandy, thanks so much for your time today. It's been very interesting talking about the cultural differences and also touching on mental health and preventing suicide. It's something that everybody of all faiths really need to get to grips with and take any kind of training that's available. I would suggest that everybody reaches out to Sehhat and gets the support and information that you've made available. Thank you very much.

SK

thank you so much, Chantal. I really appreciate you giving me the opportunity to talk today.

CB

If you are interested in any of the advice discussed in this podcast, please follow up with your GP or healthcare practitioner. If you have enjoyed this podcast, please subscribe, like and share to help raise awareness of non-visible disabilities and the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower.

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