

Handout 2

Wali and Fariha: Discussion Questions

Answer the following questions to be discussed as a class.

1. What was one of the biggest **challenges** for Wali and his parents as Wali was growing up?
 - a) What did his parents think “**success**” meant? Why?
 - b) What was Wali more interested in?
 - c) How did Wali’s parents **feel** about his passions?
2. What does Wali say about the **expectations** and **anxieties** that **parents** sometimes have?
3. In your own words, **summarise** the difficulties Wali shares about **language** and discussing mental health in other countries.

4. How was Wali's mother able to **show she cared**? What difference did that make in their relationship?
5. In what way(s) is Wali's story **relatable** to you and/or your peers?
6. As Wali mentioned, not every young person "gets that chance" to share their passions with their parents. **List 2-3 ways** that you could show you care to a friend who did not have the same support from the adults in their lives the way Wali eventually did.

Transcript: Wali & Fariha

WALI: Hi, I'm Wali. This is my mom.

FARIHA: Hi, I'm Fariha. This is my son, Wali, and we have known each other for the past 25 years.

WALI: Nice joke, mom. Growing up, one of the biggest struggles for my family and I was what I was gonna do when I was older. My parents, coming from Pakistan to Canada, had this very cultural idea that for their kid to be successful he had to be a lawyer, a doctor, or an engineer. That's what it would take to succeed.

FARIHA: Just to ensure that, you know, you have a good future you will be able to support for your family and that was pretty much it.

WALI: I was more interested in arts, and my parents, because of this cultural gap, didn't understand how to support me at first with what I was doing and what my intentions were.

FARIHA: I was not happy with that. He was interested in poetry, and I thought poetry was just a hobby, he cannot have a future with it.

WALI: But what they didn't understand, and what I think gets lost in translation, is that when you put such high expectations on your kids, the anxieties that you have slowly start translating into the anxieties that your kids have. In the native Urdu language spoken in Pakistan, I don't even know if there are the right words to adequately explain what I was going through, and I think that's part of the problem with the discourse of mental health in those countries, where sometimes there isn't even the right words to properly show how you're feeling, and over time, as I really fought to pursue my art and pursue my passions, it was like, "Mom I want you to come to an event with me. I want you to see what I do," and her being open-minded enough to be like, "All right fine. Let's give it a go, and let's see what it's all about."

FARIHA: People were cheering, and they were very happy, and you know they came over to hug him, hug me, and his teacher. Very proud moment.

WALI: Thank you.

FARIHA: Very proud moment in my life.

WALI: For her to come out and support me and go to a poetry slam, a lot of kids don't get that chance.

FARIHA: I realised, you know, he has his own life. I cannot dictate him. He has to go his own way. He has to do what he likes to do. When I was growing up, I didn't get that chance, so I wanted to give him that chance, so that he could do what he loves to do.

WALI: For me to have that opportunity was huge because it gave me the confidence that I do have support from my parents, and they do want to take the time and be there for me, even if it's something that they really don't understand. I'm happy I got to, you know, openly talk to her about all these things because really it, it created a friendship. I feel like I'm her best friend, and I can tell her anything.