



**KASHMIR CARE**<sup>®</sup>  
**FOUNDATION**  
Humanity Always....Education First!

“Self-Help” Module for



Designed by:  
**Dr. Mir Zahoor Gul**

# PARENTS

Developed by:

**sāwab**

Supporting Always Wholeheartedly, All Broken-hearted

(Brain and Behavior Science Academy)

February, 2026

## Manual prepared by:

▶ **Prof. (Dr.) Mushtaq Margoob**  
(M.D. Psychiatry)

▶ **Ms. Aeiman Rafiq**  
(M.Phil. Clinical Psychology)

▶ **Dr. Syed Bushra Imtiyaz**  
(M.D. Psychiatry)

## Illustrations Designed by:

**Ms. Aeiman Rafiq**  
(M.Phil. Clinical Psychology)

## Acknowledging team SAWAB

### ▶ Clinical Psychologists

▶ **Dr. Huda Mushtaq**  
(M.Phil Clinical Psychology, Ph.D)

▶ **Dr. Ajaz Ahmad Khan**  
(M.Phil; Ph.D. Clinical Psychology)

▶ **Dr. Mudassir Hassan Pandith**  
(M.Phil Clinical Psychology, Ph.D)

▶ **Ms. Iqra Amin**  
(M.Phil. Clinical Psychology)

### ▶ Psychiatrists

▶ **Prof. (Dr.) Abdul Majid**  
(M.D. Psychiatry)

▶ **Dr. Yuman Kawoos**  
(M.D. Psychiatry;  
IACAM fellow - Child & Adolescent Psychiatry)

▶ **Dr. Deeba Nazir**  
(M.D. Psychiatry;  
IACAM fellow - Child & Adolescent psychiatry)

▶ **Dr. Imtiyaz Mansoor**  
(MD Psychiatry)

## **HOLISTIC EDUCATION EXPERT**

▶ **MR. TARIQ MARGOOB**



The Parent Wellbeing and Support Manual has been developed by SAWAB to help parents strengthen emotional resilience, understand everyday stress, and build healthy wellbeing practices. This manual has been created exclusively for educational purposes, personal reflection, and family wellbeing. The Kashmir Care Foundation has provided support to SAWAB in the development and production of this resource.

The information included in this manual offers basic guidance, practical strategies, and general knowledge related to emotional health and coping. However, it should not be considered a substitute for professional mental health care, psychological assessment, or medical treatment.

If you or a family member is experiencing ongoing stress, emotional overwhelm, changes in behaviour, difficulty coping, or any concerns that interfere with daily functioning, it is recommended to seek support from a qualified mental health professional such as a clinical psychologist or psychiatrist. Reaching out for timely help is an important step toward maintaining wellbeing.

For questions, feedback, or suggestions regarding this module, please contact:

▶ SAWAB:  
[officialsawab3@gmail.com](mailto:officialsawab3@gmail.com)

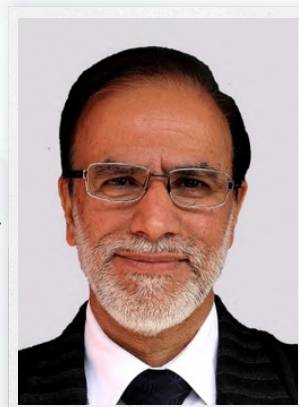
▶ Kashmir Care Foundation (KCF):  
[info@kashmircarefoundation.org](mailto:info@kashmircarefoundation.org)

This publication is made available as open-access for educational and non-commercial use. Users may read, download, and share the material with proper attribution. No part of this publication may be reproduced, adapted, translated, or used for commercial purposes without prior written permission from the copyright holder

Copyright © 2026 SAWAB, in collaboration with Kashmir Care Foundation.  
All rights reserved.

## Foreward

Parenting is one of the most significant and demanding roles in life, a reality that becomes especially evident during a child's transition into adolescence. With this understanding, the SAWAB Team has developed this Self-Help Manual to support parents who are navigating complex and rapidly changing circumstances. In Kashmir, parenting occurs amid multiple pressures, including social change, academic stress, uncertainty in the broader environment, and shifting family



structures. These factors affect not only children's emotional and behavioral development but also the mental and emotional well-being of parents.

Parenting today differs markedly from earlier generations. Children are growing up in a fast-paced, digitally driven world shaped by mobile technology, social media, academic competition, and chronic stress. At the same time, parents face their own professional, social, and emotional demands, often with limited support. The gradual shift from extended to nuclear family systems has further reduced shared caregiving and guidance, leaving many parents to manage challenges in isolation. Raising adolescents requires patience, emotional balance, and consistent decision-making; capacities that are difficult to sustain when parents themselves are stressed or exhausted. Research consistently highlights parental well-being as a cornerstone of effective parenting. When parents attend to their own mental health, they are better able to respond thoughtfully and support their children's development.

Parents are often unfairly blamed when children display emotional or behavioral difficulties. Such challenges arise from a complex interaction of social, educational, environmental, and emotional influences, not from parenting alone. Greater empathy, shared responsibility, and collaboration particularly between parents and educators are essential to creating a supportive environment in which children can thrive. An often-overlooked source of avoidable parental stress is unchecked permissiveness. While meeting every demand may feel caring in the short term, excessive permissiveness can weaken resilience and responsibility in children, leading to greater strain on parents over time, especially during adolescence. From a self-care perspective, setting clear, consistent, and developmentally appropriate boundaries is both protective and constructive.

This manual emphasizes that self-care is not a luxury or a weakness but a necessity. By caring for your own mental and emotional health, you will foster a

more stable and supportive home environment.

We hope this manual offers reassurance, guidance, and strength. Above all, may it remind you that caring for yourself is one of the most meaningful investments you can make in your child's well-being.

**Prof. (Dr.) Mushtaq Ahmad Margoob**

Founder,  
SAWAB - Centre and Neurorehabilitation Unit



## Table of Contents

Page No.	Content
07	Introduction
10	Understanding Adolescents and Why They May Appear Difficult at Times
11	Self-Care for Parents: What is Self Care and Why Should You Do It?
11	Learning the Art of Self-Care as a Parent
15	Reaching Your Limits: How to Recognise When You Are Reaching Your Limit as a Parent
17	What Helps When You're Reaching Your Limit as a Parent
20	Therapy Tools to be Used in the Moment of Overwhelm
23	When to Seek Help
24	Where to Seek Help
25	My Safety Net Plan for Self-Harming Thoughts
26	Case Vignettes

## Introduction

The journey of becoming a parent is often seen as a defining chapter in one's life. It brings moments that feel meaningful and enriching, but it also carries an invisible and sometimes overwhelming load. But parents need support, understanding and rest too. Because when parents feel rested and supported, they are able to respond with patience and clarity, and to function more fully in their daily lives. This booklet is meant to sit beside you as a companion, rather than to instruct or correct you. It is not a guide on how to parent, nor a checklist of what should be done differently. Instead, it is a space for you, the adult carrying so much, to pause, reflect, and gently make sense of your own experience. Its aim is to help you reconnect with yourself and find steadiness again.

As you move through these pages, you will be invited to explore:

- The unique challenges that often arise while parenting adolescents
- What self-care can look like for parents, and how it can be woven into everyday life
- Signs of parental burnout, and ways of responding when the load begins to feel too heavy



Think of this booklet as a small self-care toolkit, something you can open whenever you feel overwhelmed, disconnected, or alone in the process. Take what feels useful in the moment and leave what does not. Even the smallest steps toward care and understanding can make a meaningful difference.

## Understanding the Challenges of Parenting in Today's World

Parenting can be deeply rewarding, but it is also an inherently demanding and ongoing role. There is no manual for parenting, yet each day brings new decisions, uncertainties, and emotional responsibilities that are rarely taught or modelled. Many parents describe feeling **"always on duty,"** sometimes accompanied by a sense of losing touch with parts of themselves, as they struggle to find time for adequate rest, personal care, hobbies or social connections. Feeling tired, uncertain, or overwhelmed are not indicators of poor parenting, but expected responses to the intensity and complexity of the role. **"Khaandar korr te gindun rov, bache zaye te nindr raev"**, is a familiar proverb in Kashmiri households, one that most parents have been reminded of at least once while navigating the anxieties of raising children. Every generation has faced its own parenting challenges, but -

- today's parents encounter circumstances that differ in important ways from those of earlier generations. Social changes have meaningfully reshaped the parenting landscape. Families are increasingly smaller and more nuclear. While this can offer privacy and independence, it can also mean fewer shared responsibilities and reduced day-to-day support. Rising living costs, inflation, and growing educational expectations place additional pressure on families, often leaving parents feeling pulled in multiple directions.

Many parents today carry a significant **"mental load,"** continuously planning and monitoring routines, screen time, schooling, extracurricular activities, meals, and countless daily decisions. Concerns about safety are also more prominent, shaped by exposure to political unrest, natural disasters, pandemics, and increased awareness around safeguarding children's physical and emotional boundaries.

- adolescents access to experiences that are difficult for parents to fully monitor or understand. Many young people encounter cyberbullying, misinformation, unrealistic standards, or age-inappropriate content earlier than parents anticipate. It is common for parents to feel uncertain about how to begin conversations or provide guidance in this rapidly changing space. Over time, increased screen use can quietly replace shared family activities, creating distance at this stage when connection and communication are essential.



Digital exposure presents another challenge. Smartphones, social media, and online platforms provide children and -

## Parenting Adolescents in Kashmir:

Parents in Kashmir carry the weight of their own childhood experiences while guiding their children through a world that feels unpredictable and rapidly changing. Many parents grew up under authoritarian parenting, where rules were strict, emotions were rarely expressed, and academic success was treated as the only path to safety and security. As they raise adolescents, so many parents often feel torn. They want to give their children freedom and emotional support, yet they fear that too much structure might replicate the harshness they experienced growing up.

highway blockades, or costly air travel if studying outside can create an added sense of instability and cause of concern for Kashmiri parents. In such conditions, it may be understandable that many parents in Kashmir report heightened stress and caregiver burnout. It is possible to feel tired, anxious, or emotionally drained, even while loving your child deeply.



Living in a region shaped by long-standing socio-political conflict adds another layer of complexity. The worry about safety, and often feeling overwhelmed by circumstances beyond their control. Meanwhile, adolescents face their own pressures, disrupted routines, reduced physical activity, stress, and lifestyle habits that affect mood and behaviour. Even frequent climate-related disruptions such as flood alerts, heavy snow,

## Understanding Adolescents and Why they May Appear Difficult at Times

Raising adolescents brings challenges that are quite different from those encountered in early childhood. Adolescence is a time of significant physical change, alongside rapid and ongoing development in the brain. For parents, understanding two key aspects of how the adolescent brain functions can be especially helpful:

- During puberty, the **brain's accelerator**, which fuels excitement, curiosity, and reward-seeking, becomes highly active. This creates a strong pull toward exploration, new experiences and social curiosity.
- At the same time, the brain's brake, which supports self-control, planning, and reflective decision-making, develops more slowly, and continues maturing into early adulthood. Because the accelerator is strong while the brake is still catching up, adolescents may find it harder to pause, consider consequences or regulate impulses in the moment.

You may now be able to understand that adolescents are not being difficult on purpose and neither is it a parental flaw to struggle during this stage of parenting. Adolescence is a developmental phase which creates a central challenge for all parents, who must adapt their caregiving to match an adolescent's shifting motivations and expanding abilities. It is worth remembering that even when adolescents seem distant, parents and parental figures continue to matter deeply



and are often needed more than anyone else.

A substantial body of evidence shows that the family environment plays a central role in shaping how adolescents behave, cope and make sense of the world. Home is where they first learn how emotions are communicated, how rules function and how relationships are negotiated. Even as they rely more on peers for understanding and influence, parents remain one of the strongest and most consistent forces in their emotional and behavioural development.

## Self-Care for Parents: What is Self-Care and Why Should You Do It?

Self-care is the intentional practice of looking after your own physical, mental, and emotional health. In Kashmiri, you could call it “**pannis paanas watun**”. There is a common misconception that self-care involves elaborate, expensive or indulgent activities, but that is not primarily what it is. Self-care is about engaging in consistent, even if simple, activities that support health and wellbeing. Drinking enough water, attending a doctor’s appointment, or eating nourishing meals are all forms of self-care. For many parents prioritising their own needs can feel selfish. Parenting is often chosen out of love, duty, or hope, and involves giving generously of oneself to children, family, and the future.

Research shows that when parents maintain their own self-care, they experience lower stress, better emotional regulation, and greater patience with their children. This idea is often captured in the familiar, if clichéd, airplane instruction to “**put on your own oxygen mask before assisting others**”, a reminder that caring for oneself is not an indulgence or optional luxury, but a necessity for living well and being able to care well for others.

Finally, by taking care of yourself, you also model healthy habits and coping skills that your children can carry into their own lives.



## Learning the Art of Self-Care as a Parent

Think of everything around you: your car needs fuel, your phone needs charging, even the air conditioning needs servicing now and then. But you, dear parent; you keep running on empty, telling yourself you don’t have time to stop.

There is an old “**daleel**” of a woodcutter. He spent the whole day cutting wood with a blunt axe. Someone said to him, “**If you take just five minutes to sharpen your axe, your whole work will be done in half the time.**” He replied, “**I don’t have time to stop**”. By evening, he was exhausted, frustrated, and still behind. If he had paused for just a few minutes and sharpened his axe, the whole day would have been easier. Parenting adolescents is the same. You work hard, often under pressure and yet when you do not stop to “sharpen your axe,” you end up depleted, irritable, and emotionally drained. Remember self-care makes you more effective, not less.

## 1. Protect Your Energy:

Nothing drains you faster than a lack of sleep, proper nutrition, and hydration. Eating balanced meals, getting enough rest, and taking short breaks during the day help maintain your physical and emotional energy. Skipping these basics can be the reasons why you often find yourself feeling tired, irritable, and drained easily. Build rituals in your day, even 5-10 minutes long, that signal **"me time"**. Some people enjoy sipping tea alone before everyone wakes, reading a book at bedtime, stretching before breakfast, taking a short evening walk, or taking time to water plants. Similarly, even on busy days, conscious food choices, like having a boiled egg for breakfast or packing leftovers from dinner for your office lunch, help maintain your energy, rather than relying on unhealthy snacks.



## 2. Set boundaries and balance connections:

Parenting can make it feel as though everything is urgent and everything depends on you. In reality, not every problem needs to be solved immediately. Learning to say **"no"** to tasks that exceed your capacity, and expressing your limits calmly and kindly, is an important skill to develop. This not only protects your energy but also teaches your children that boundaries are healthy and that it is okay to prioritise your own needs. A well-known porcupine parable may be relevant here: porcupines move closer to stay warm, but if they come too close, their quills hurt each other. Families are similar, we need closeness, but we also need space. Finding this balance helps you remain emotionally available without becoming exhausted.

## 3. Reduce mental load:

Many parents, especially mothers, feel as though they are always **"on"**, even when they are physically resting. The mind keeps working: planning, deciding, and worrying about what lies ahead. This constant mental activity is exhausting and often invisible.

Here are some research-backed strategies to ease this mental load:

- **Share the thinking:** Share planning and decision-making with your partner instead of carrying it alone.
- **Write things down:** Write tasks down rather than keeping everything in your head. This reduces mental clutter and frees up mental space.
- **Decide once:** Make decisions once instead of revisiting the same choices repeatedly, which helps reduce decision fatigue.
- **Plan ahead to reduce daily decisions:** Set aside time once a week to plan a simple routine for the coming days. Keeping daily choices pre-planned, such as meals or clothing, reduces decision fatigue. Planning ahead and maintaining a basic structure are effective ways to lower stress and mental overload.

#### 4. Be kind to yourself:

Many Kashmiri parents grew up with strict discipline and little emotional guidance. Self-compassion means treating yourself as you would treat a struggling child. Notice your struggles without judgment, forgive your mistakes, care for your needs without guilt, and remember that every parent feels lost sometimes. Being kind to yourself also includes looking after your health: attend check-ups on time, see your doctor when needed, and -



#### 5. Manage daily worries:

Worry is a natural part of parenting, but when it becomes constant, it steals peace from the present. Learn to separate what is within your control from what is not. Focus your energy on what you can influence, that is your routines, your responses, and the habits you encourage at home and let go of what you cannot control, such as exam results, others' opinions, or your teen's changing moods. Create a **"worry window"**: Set aside a fixed 10–15 minutes each day to think about worries. When worries arise at other times, gently remind yourself that you will return to them later, and bring your attention back to the present moment.

#### 6. Build your "Circle of Support".

Parenting today can be demanding and, at times, isolating. Having a structured circle of support enables you to share the emotional and practical demands of parenting, and reduce isolation.

Here are some practical ways to build a support system:

- Divide tasks between family members, and even include your older children in some errands
- Accept help without hesitation. It is healthy to seek and receive support from parents, siblings, older children, or other relatives, without feeling shame or guilt.
- If you can afford it, hire help: Hiring a babysitter, paid caregiver, or other support can help ease daily responsibilities, and it's okay to invest in this support without feeling guilty.
- Build a social network of trusted peers, such as friends, neighbours, or relatives, with whom you can spend time, share experiences, discuss challenges, and seek practical advice.



## 7. Invest in yourself.

Make time for doing things or learning new skills that make you happy or help you feel confident and competent as a person, beyond your role as a parent. This is one of the most significant protective steps against burnout. Some examples:

- Learning a skill; e.g., driving a scooty or a car, swimming, baking, knitting
- Learning a new language
- Reciting scriptures, learning tajweed
- Reading new books

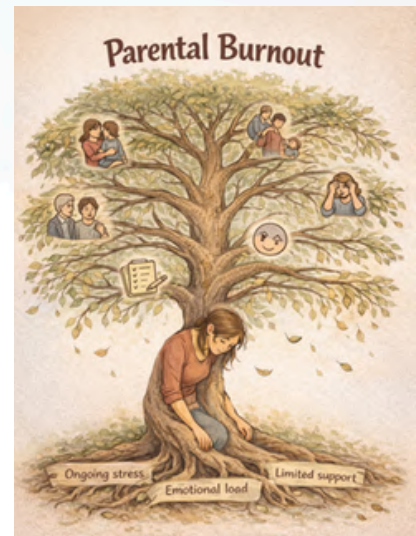


## Reaching Your Limits: How to Recognize When You Are Reaching Your Limit as a Parent

When parenting demands are high and support is limited, it is natural to feel exhausted or overwhelmed. However, when stress and exhaustion continue for a prolonged period and remain unresolved, they can lead to caregiver burnout. Burnout is a well-recognized condition experienced by people in caregiving roles. It is not a sign of being a **“bad” or “failing”** parent. Rather, it often means you have been coping for a long time without enough rest, support, or relief.

### Who is at risk of burnout?

Some parents are more vulnerable to burnout than others. This includes mothers, who, in most cultures, tend to carry a disproportionate share of the parenting load, single parents, parents of children with special needs, and those caring for both children and aging parents. Personal factors, particularly ongoing or unresolved mental or physical health difficulties, can also increase feelings of overwhelm. Certain personality traits, such as perfectionism, very high self-expectations, or difficulty asking for help, can further intensify stress and raise the risk of burnout.



Recognizing overwhelm is the first step toward caring for yourself. Below are simplified examples of how burnout may show up. Experiencing these symptoms occasionally is common and does not mean burnout; they become concerning only when they are persistent, ongoing, and begin to interfere with daily functioning.

### 1). Emotional exhaustion

Your tolerance for stress feels much lower than before. Small issues may trigger irritation, anger, or tears. You may react quickly and then regret it later. Kashmiri parents often describe this as **“bardasht khatam gasun,” “jaldi tang yun,”** or **“kaeth kaeth paeth shararath yin /wadun bokh yun.”**

### 2). Mental overload and fog

Your mind feels constantly tired from ongoing thinking and planning. You may notice difficulty concentrating, forgetting things, or feeling mentally slow. Even simple decisions can start to feel overwhelming. Commonly in Kashmir, phrases such as, **“mashraff basun,” “ath wath ne yinn,”** and **“dimaag baasun aavur/bandd,”** are used, describing a foggy, overloaded mind.

### 3). Reduced empathy and emotional distancing

When you keep giving without enough rest, your emotional capacity can feel depleted. You may feel distant, disconnected, or emotionally numb toward family members. In local terms, this is often called **"behissi"**. Some parents describe feeling like a robot, doing what needs to be done but not really feeling present. For example, you may notice you don't feel the same happiness when your child shares something exciting from their day (**"tamah ravun"**), or you may cut them short, or you hear the words but you don't really listen to what they say, as your mind escapes somewhere else.

### 4). Feeling inadequate or ineffective (**"bey aetimadi"**)

Over time, despite trying your best, you may start to feel that nothing you do is enough. This can lead to self-doubt and a sense of inadequacy in your role as a parent or caregiver. You might find yourself thinking, **"Other parents seem to manage better than me,"** even though this may not reflect reality.

### 5). Cynicism, withdrawal, and wish to escape

You may begin to dread daily parenting tasks and feel worn down by the repetition and constant responsibility. Some parents notice increasing negativity or a wish to disappear for a while just to get relief. Instead of asking for help, thoughts like **"Wai, be tchzallha"** may come up.

### 6). **"Unexplained" physical symptoms:**

Burnout doesn't only affect your mood and motivation, it can also show up in your body. Common physical symptoms may include persistent fatigue, headaches, muscle tension, stomach problems, changes in sleep or appetite, or feeling run-down despite rest. These signals can indicate that your body is under chronic stress and may be asking for attention. It is always important to seek medical advice when these become persistent and distressing.

Reaching your limit is not a personal weakness. It is a known and an expected response experienced by many caregivers, to prolonged responsibility without enough support. Noticing these signs early allows you to adjust, seek help, and protect yourself before reaching a breaking point.

## What Helps When You're Reaching Your Limit as a Parent

Parenting older children often requires endurance, flexibility, and emotional regulation. In these moments, what helps most is not doing more, but doing things differently. Constant physical presence without emotional attunement can increase fatigue for parents and frustration for children. Instead, slowing down, becoming more aware of your own capacity, and offering support in a more intentional and regulated way can help restore balance.

Here are a few ways you can begin to regain steadiness and emotional balance during such times.

### 1. Own your feelings and take charge of your actions.

Acknowledging, **"I am exhausted right now,"** can help reduce self-blame. You don't need to fix everything; simply recognizing that you're in a high-demand phase allows you to respond with care rather than pushing harder. It's okay to feel whatever arises, anger, guilt, sadness, or frustration, all of these emotions are ok to have. What matters is how you act on them. You may not feel in control of your emotions, but you are responsible for how you choose to act on them.



For example, feeling anger is fine, but using that anger to harm yourself or others through words or actions is not. If you choose to pause and respond thoughtfully, rather than reacting in the heat of the moment, you can strengthen your sense of control and reduce agitation.

### 2. Lower expectations before you lower connection

When you're low on energy, focus on what matters most, safety, respect, and basic routines. For example, check that your teen has eaten and slept, or listen for a few minutes about their day instead of solving every problem. Let small battles go, like forgotten chores or messy rooms. Your calm presence matters more than perfection.

### 3. Separate your child's distress from your competence

Adolescents can be unhappy even with supportive parenting. Remind yourself:

- "My child's feelings are real."
- "They are not a measure of my worth as a parent."
- "I can care deeply without fixing everything."

This mental shift reduces emotional overload and protects you from exhaustion.



### 4. Ask for help earlier than feels comfortable

Support does not have to be dramatic or formal:

- Ask your partner or someone reliable to take over for the day and go to bed early
- Ask someone to listen rather than advise, or call a trusted helpline like **14416 (TELEMANAS)**
- Accept practical help without explaining yourself

Remember, needing help is realistic, not a failure.

### 5. Reduce self-criticism intentionally

When you notice harsh self-talk, immediately replace it with:

- "This is hard, and I am doing my best with what I have."
- "I can be a caring parent and still feel exhausted."

Self-compassion improves patience more effectively than self-pressure.

### 6. Use repair, not perfection

If you react in a way you regret:

- Acknowledge it briefly
- Apologize if needed
- Move forward

Repair builds trust and reduces lingering guilt, helping for both you and your child.



## 7. Know when to seek additional support

Consider professional or structured support if:

- You feel persistently numb, irritable, or hopeless.
- Sleep or functioning is significantly affected.
- Parenting feels unbearable rather than difficult.
- Persistent and distressing physical symptoms.

Support at this stage is preventative, not a last resort.



## Therapy Tools to be Used in the Moment of Overwhelm

These evidence-based techniques can help you pause, check unhelpful thoughts, and respond more calmly in a challenging moment.

### 1. Pausing

Pausing is a simple but powerful tool during challenging parenting moments. When emotions run high, the brain shifts into a reactive stress response, making calm thinking difficult. Even a brief pause, like taking a slow breath, stepping aside, or telling yourself, "I can respond after a moment", creates space between feeling and action. The prophetic Sunnah of drinking a glass of water when angry works the same way: it distracts the mind and allows the impulse of anger to subside. Pausing does not mean ignoring your child or giving in. It helps you respond thoughtfully, regain control, and prevent escalation.

### 2. Grounding Tools

When you are overworked or stressed, it can become difficult to focus on the task at hand or remain calm. Mental overload often pulls attention into worries about the past or future, increasing tension and emotional reactivity. Grounding techniques help anchor you in the present moment and restore a sense of stability. They do not remove problems, but they strengthen your ability to face them with clarity and steadiness. Here are some ways you can do ground in overwhelming situations:

#### • Breathing

Deep breathing helps regulate your body and mind, bringing a sense of calm and focus even during stressful moments. It slows down your heart rate, reduces tension, and helps you feel more present. You can try this simple exercise anytime during the day:

- Sit comfortably preferably in a quiet place.
- Inhale slowly through your nose for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, feeling your chest or stomach rise.
- Exhale gently through your mouth for 4 seconds, noticing the release of tension.
- Repeat this cycle three times, paying attention to your breath and the sensations in your body



## • Name 5 things you can see

Noticing things around you helps bring your attention back to the present moment, grounding you and helping you feel calmer. Here's a simple way to do it:

- Look around and focus on five objects you can see.
- Observe and describe them to yourself based on their color, texture, or temperature.



## 3. Questioning and Reframing Negative Thoughts

In stressful moments, automatic thoughts can make situations feel more overwhelming. Gently checking these thoughts helps you respond with greater calm and clarity.

### Step 1: Notice the Situation

Pause and identify what triggered your reaction, such as an argument with your adolescent.

### Step 2: Name Your Feelings

Acknowledge what you are feeling, such as anger, frustration, or worry, without judging yourself. Say it so you can hear it eg., **"I am feeling angry"**, or **"Mai chhi shararath"**, or **"Be chhas pareshan"** as the situation may be.

### Step 3: Notice the Thought

Pay attention to the automatic thought that comes to mind, e.g., **"He never listens to me."**, **"Yi chhu nafarmaan shurr"**.

### Step 4: Question the Thought

Ask yourself whether this thought is a fact or a feeling, whether it is helpful in this moment, and how someone you trust might view the situation. Ask yourself **"Does he truly never listen to me?"** ...

**Last time I asked him to skip going to his friend's house and go to the mosque instead and he listened even though his friend was throwing a party"**

### Step 5: Reframe

Create a more balanced thought, such as **"He is still a kid, he is still learning, and I can guide him calmly."** Then respond from this place of steadiness.

# COGNITIVE REFRAMING: A 5-STEP PROCESS FOR PARENTS & ADOLESCENTS

## 1. IDENTIFY THE SITUATION



Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 2. RECOGNIZE YOUR FEELINGS



Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 3. NOTICE YOUR THOUGHTS



Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 4. CHECK / QUESTION YOUR THOUGHTS



Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 5. REFRAME



Notes: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_





## When to Seek Help?

There may be times when, even after making space for rest and self-care, feelings of overwhelm, fatigue, or emotional disconnection continue. These experiences can develop gradually, especially when parents consistently prioritize the needs of others while neglecting their own. When such feelings persist, they may indicate early signs of burnout or emotional strain.

Some indicators that additional support may be needed include:

### 1. No Improvement Despite Self-Care

You have been actively trying self-care strategies, but despite your efforts, your distress does not reduce or continues to worsen. You feel unable to move forward.

### 2. Distress Lasting Several Weeks

Emotional distress such as stress, sadness, or anxiety persists for more than 2–3 weeks with little or no relief.

### 3. Persistent Physical Symptoms Without Clear Medical Cause

Ongoing and distressing physical complaints (e.g., headaches, fatigue, sleep or stomach problems)

### 4. Impairment Functioning in Daily Life

You are unable to manage your daily responsibilities whether at home, work, or in parenting.

### 5. Risk Behaviours or Harmful Coping Patterns

You notice increasing reliance on unhealthy coping behaviours that provide short-term relief but cause long-term harm e.g., excessive smoking

### 6. Thoughts of Self-Harm or Hopelessness

You experience thoughts of harming yourself or persistent feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, or being a burden.

Pausing to recognize that something does not feel right is an important first step. You do not have to manage these feelings alone. Speaking with someone you trust may provide clarity and support, and seeking help from a mental health professional or doctor can offer the guidance and strategies needed to restore balance and wellbeing.



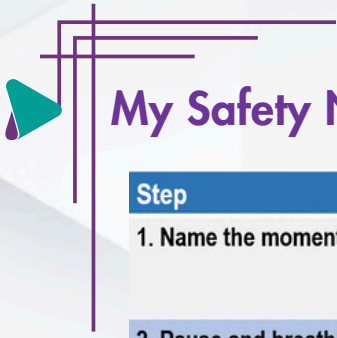
## Where to Seek Help?

If difficult feelings persist, intensify, or begin to interfere with daily functioning, seeking professional support becomes important. In Kashmir, reliable mental health services include:

- The nearest District Hospital
- Centre for Child Guidance and Well-Being (CGWC), SMHS Hospital, Srinagar (specialized services for children and adolescents up to 18 years)
- Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (IMHANS), Rainawari, Srinagar
- Advanced Centre for Mental Health, JVC Hospital, Bemina, Srinagar
- TELE-MANAS helpline (14416), available free of cost, 24x7

If speaking to someone in person feels difficult, the TELE-MANAS helpline connects you with trained counsellors, psychologists, or psychiatrists at any time. Reaching out reflects strength and awareness, and support is available when needed.





## My Safety Net Plan for Self-harming thoughts

Step	What Helps Me (Fill In)
1. Name the moment	What usually triggers this feeling for me? _____
2. Pause and breathe	Which grounding helps me most? (breathing, prayer, cold water, walking, etc.) _____ _____
3. Keep myself safe	Where do I feel safest when emotions rise? _____ _____
4. Reach out to someone	Names and numbers of safe people I can reach out to: 1. _____ 2. _____
5. Ground or distract	Activities that help distract or calm me: _____ _____
6. Remind myself	My personal reasons to stay alive and seek support: _____ _____
7. Seek professional support	Mental health support I can contact: <b>Tele-MANAS: 14416</b> (24x7 Mental Health Helpline) Other support: _____





# Case Vignettes



## 1. "Yim doh roezen ne yithi"

A working couple had two adolescent children with important exams approaching in a month's time. Both parents were juggling long hours outside the home while trying to stay on top of revision schedules, school meetings, meals, housework, and constant worries about their children's future. Evenings were rushed and tense. Small reminders turned into sharp exchanges. Everyone was exhausted and angry all the time. Days ended with frustration and self-blame. Weeks blurred into a sense of running on empty. One evening, instead of pushing themselves harder, they sat down and named what was really happening: "We are feeling stressed; we need to arrange for help." They realized they didn't have to carry everything alone. They decided to keep feelings of shame aside and reach out to their family and friends. So, the grandparents came to stay for a while to help with meals and supervision. A helpful friend offered to carpool along with her own children and help with early-morning tuitions. On some evenings, the parents allowed themselves to let go of perfection. They cooked simple food, did only the most essential cleaning and laundry, and relaxed some rules around the house.

With morning drop-offs being taken care of by the friend and evenings sorted by the grandparents, some of the practical load eased and their home felt calmer. The parents were more present, and the adolescents felt less rushed and more reassured.



The parents found room to talk not just about schedules, but about how stretched they both had felt, taking on all the load by themselves. They agreed that this was a demanding phase, not a permanent failure. Exams would pass, and this intensity would ease. "Yim doh roezen ne yithi," an older voice called out from the background, and everyone shared a laugh; you can either have your privacy, or you can have your village. For now, they were simply grateful for the village. They understood that asking for help was not selfish. Life's demands change, and it is okay to lean on others and to offer support in return when roles reverse. They felt proud that they chose reason over shame and reached out when they needed it most.

## 2. “Paanas waatun te chhi ibadat”

A 47-year-old married man, father of three adolescent children, found himself carrying the weight of two generations. His elderly father, diagnosed with dementia, lived with the family and required constant supervision. There was no external caregiving support available. His wife managed the household and children but much of the emotional and practical responsibility of his old father’s care fell on him. Every day juggling work deadlines, parenting duties, and caregiving needs left him feeling persistently exhausted, Days felt long and heavy, and he dreaded waking up each morning, knowing the same exhausting cycle awaited him. What troubled him most was the thought that feeling this way meant he was failing as a son, a husband, a father, and even as a believer.

One evening after Maghrib prayers, overwhelmed and close to tears, he approached the local imam at the masjid and spoke openly about his feelings for the first time. The imam listened attentively and offered spiritual reassurance, reminding him that caring for oneself is not a betrayal of responsibility but a trust (amānah), and guided him to seek professional help.

Initially hesitant, he presented to IMHANS, where a psychiatrist reassured that what he was experiencing was caregiver burnout: a common, well-recognized response to prolonged caregiving stress without adequate support.

A clinical psychologist was involved, and together they developed a self-help plan. His older daughter volunteered to spend short, meaningful time with their grandfather including talking with him, going on brief walks, and helping with medication reminders under supervision. This gave the man some much-needed breathing space and eased his mental load. He also practiced regular breathing and muscle-relaxation exercises to calm his body and mind.

He was taught to let go of unrealistic expectations of himself and others. He learned that some days would be harder than others, and that this was part of life, not a personal failure. Over time, the burden did not disappear, but it felt more manageable. He learned that speaking to someone trusted can lighten the load and open a way forward when none seems visible

### 3. “Paan khosh thavun gov ayaal khosh thavun”

A 40-year-old mother of a teenage son, had long struggled with managing her emotions. Over the years, she had silently carried the weight of unprocessed frustrations, personal expectations, and the subtle pressures of daily family life. She had never sought help, believing she should be able to handle it all. Lately, however, things had been getting worse. Her teenage son was navigating the usual challenges of adolescence, mood swings, academic pressures, and testing boundaries, and their interactions had become increasingly tense. She often felt insulted, dismissed, or frustrated by his behaviour, while he complained that she was disconnected, overly critical, and didn't understand him. Arguments escalated quickly, leaving both emotionally drained and tense for hours after the conflicts had ended.

One afternoon, after yet another heated clash over his school performance, she paused. She sat on the edge of the sofa, closed her eyes, and took a few deep breaths, noticing the tightness in her chest, the racing thoughts in her mind, and the sudden tears threatening to spill. For the first time, she allowed herself to reflect. These feelings weren't just about her son. They had been building silently inside her for years, fueled by stress, unmet needs, and a lack of personal support. She realized that she could not handle this alone and that continuing the cycle of anger and guilt was harming both herself and her son.



Summoning courage, she reached out to 1441, the mental health helpline, and was connected to a trained professional. Initially hesitant and unsure if therapy would help, she gradually began attending sessions with a clinical psychologist. Over the following weeks, she learned to identify her own emotional triggers, recognize patterns of reactivity, and practice small reflective exercises to understand her son's perspective. Techniques such as pausing before responding, mindful breathing, journaling, and emotion labeling helped. Conflicts still occurred, but they no longer left her feeling shattered or overwhelmed. Gradually, she learned to hold space for her own emotions, recognize her limits, and release the unrealistic expectation that she must always be perfect as a mother, wife, and individual. Over time, the household atmosphere improved.

The mother felt lighter, more resilient, and better able to navigate parenting challenges without losing herself in the process. She discovered that seeking timely support whether professional or relational, was not a sign of weakness but a path toward healthier interactions and personal well-being.



*You can download the soft copy of this module & other modules by scanning the below QR code*



*Please don't hesitate to contact us with your ideas & feedback*