



CROSS CULTURAL EXPRESSIONS NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER IS

Seasonal Affective Disorder
(SAD) Awareness Month



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WHAT'S GOING ON AT CCE?

TRAPPED.:A Powerful New Film Exploring Ancestral Trauma and Mental Health in Immigrant Families

We are thrilled to announce that TRAPPED., the powerful new film from Cross Cultural Expressions, is now streaming on our official YouTube channel, CCE Productions.

TRAPPED. explores the deep and often unspoken impact of ancestral trauma on immigrant families, following a young woman's journey as she finds herself suffocating under the weight of her mother's unhealed wounds. With a gripping narrative and deeply human performances by Navah Rahbar, Brian Felker, Pantea Ommi and Nasi Nassiri, the film explores the silent burdens that immigrant children carry and the difficult path toward breaking free.

Written and directed by Mastaneh Moghadam, LCSW, and created in partnership with the Los Angeles Department of Mental Health, TRAPPED. is more than a film—it's a call to reflection, understanding, and hope.

Please watch, share, and join us in sparking meaningful conversations about mental health, family, and healing.

"Our Immigrant Stories: A Collection of Essays From the Iranian Diaspora." and "Our Immigrant Stories: A

Collection of Essays from the Eastern European Diaspora"

Cross Cultural Expressions in partnership with the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health has brought together members of the Iranian and Eastern European communities of Los Angeles county to share their unique stories around the immigrant experience through a series of essays. These stories, along with each contributing writer's original artwork have been compiled in two beautiful books titled "Our Immigrant Stories: A Collection of Essays From the Iranian Diaspora." and "Our Immigrant Stories: A Collection of Essays from the Eastern European Diaspora". Both books (which includes English translations of all the shared stories) also include mental health articles and mental health resource lists. If you are interested in receiving a copy of one or both of these books, please use these links available on our website [Cross Cultural Expressions](https://www.cceccc.org) [THE IRANIAN DIASPORA](https://www.cceccc.org) and [THE EASTERN EUROPEAN DIASPORA](https://www.cceccc.org)

“BEHIND THE SMILE: WHAT DEPRESSION CAN REALLY LOOK LIKE”

Many people imagine depression as something easy to recognize, marked by visible sadness or withdrawal. But for many individuals, depression can look very different. This is sometimes called “smiling depression,” a term used when someone appears cheerful, high functioning, and put together on the outside while privately carrying emotional pain.

People who experience this often hide their struggles because they do not want to worry others, or they fear being misunderstood. They may succeed in work or school, maintain relationships, and seem outgoing and social. Yet behind the smile, they may feel exhausted, overwhelmed, or disconnected.

Smiling depression can be especially challenging because it often goes unnoticed. Friends may not realize support is needed, and the person who is struggling may feel pressure to continue pretending everything is fine. This gap between what they feel and what they show can increase their sense of isolation.

Recognizing that depression does not always look the same is an important step in reducing stigma. It reminds us to check in with the people we love, even those who seem strong and upbeat. Gentle conversations, genuine listening, and creating safe spaces for honesty can make a meaningful difference.

Mental health is not always visible, and that is why compassion matters, for others and for ourselves.

By: Darya Amini
CCE Volunteer

MOVIE OF THE MONTH



Big Hero 6 offers a thoughtful and compassionate look at mental health, especially through Hiro's journey after losing his brother, Tadashi. The film portrays how grief can manifest as isolation, anger, and hopelessness, and how these emotions can cloud judgment and decision-making. Baymax, designed to care for people's well-being, becomes a symbol of support—reminding us that healing often requires connection, vulnerability, and accepting help. As Hiro learns to lean on his friends and process his pain rather than bury it, the movie highlights the importance of community, emotional expression, and recognizing that recovery is not linear. In this way, Big Hero 6 gently illustrates how facing loss with support can lead to resilience and renewed purpose.

MENTAL HEALTH HERO OF THE MONTH: ROBIN WILLIAMS

Robin Williams understood something most people never talk about. The people who make others laugh the hardest are often the ones who know sadness on a deep, personal level. His famous words about “the saddest people” weren’t just a quote, they were a window into how he saw the world. He knew what it felt like to carry heavy emotions, and that is exactly why he tried so hard to lift everyone else up.

What made Robin remarkable wasn’t only his talent, but the way he used joy as a form of kindness. He tried to make sure no one around him ever felt the kind of loneliness or worthlessness he had experienced. His humor came from a place of empathy, not performance. That is why people felt safe with him, why his presence felt warm, and why his loss was felt so deeply.

By speaking openly about his struggles, Robin reminded us that mental health is complicated and often invisible. He showed that someone can be full of light and still be fighting a silent battle. His honesty helped people recognize their own feelings without shame and encouraged others to look beyond the surface.

We honor Robin Williams because his life taught us to check in on the people who seem fine, to lead with compassion, and to remember that kindness can truly change someone’s day. His legacy is a reminder that caring for one another matters more than we realize.

“You will have bad times, but they will always wake you up to the stuff you weren’t paying attention to.”

ROBIN WILLIAMS



YARAN IRANIAN PEER COUNSELING HELPLINE

A program of Cross Cultural Expressions

In Times of Global Conflict, We Stand With You



At Cross Cultural Expressions, we understand that war—anywhere in the world—brings deep emotional and mental stress. The impact is felt not only by those directly affected in war-torn regions, but by communities, families, and individuals everywhere.

We want you to know: you are not alone.

Whether you're grieving, anxious, or simply overwhelmed, your feelings are valid.

We are here to listen, support, and uplift.

We stand for peace, love, and freedom—for everyone, across all cultures and borders.

If you or someone you know is struggling, please reach out. Together, we can hold space for healing, connection, and hope.

Speak with one of our Yaran Iranian peer counselors via our telephone helpline:

(818) 332-7999