

PARTICIPANT INSIGHTS

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ANNA

Anna is a 39-year-old South Asian woman who lives with her husband and two children in a city in Western Canada. She immigrated to Canada with her family approximately seven years ago. Prior to coming to Canada, she had been employed as a teacher. After immigrating, she had her second child and became a stay-at-home parent for several years. At the time, she was also living in a small town with a very small South Asian population. Anna reported that her focus on parenting and social isolation had a negative impact on her mental health, *“because you’re new to this country, if you’re staying home, I was depressed for a long time”* and *“when you’re depressed, you’re not yourself you are sort of a grumpy person. You are sometimes hating yourself.”*

Then, after she moved to a larger city in the same province, Anna decided to return to work. She attended IM&M+ to obtain support for this decision:

I wanted to work. I wanted to do something, and I didn't know where to start like because I didn't know what to do, you know. I didn't know who to ask, if I could ask for volunteering, or anything, because you know for me it was

everything was new. So thankfully my friends mentioned that you know you should talk to so and so about IM&M+ and I joined. And yeah, things became easier. I learned so much.

After successfully completing the IM&M+ program, Anna found employment and is currently working two to three shifts per week as an on-call employee for a daycare centre. She is also looking to upgrade her qualifications in this field:

I'm looking to get registered for a college to get Level 2 daycare certification. I think it's about a year long. So, I'm looking for colleges right now to move forward with that. IM&M+ made things easier in what should I do, sort of helped give that direction.

Anna identified several benefits to participating in the IM&M+ program, including (a) providing her with an opportunity to interact with other people after a period of relative isolation as a stay-at-home parent, *“I would actually shy away from long discussion and now I love talking.*

I feel like IM&M+ helped bring that part of me that was sort of lost over the years”), (b) informing her about Canadian norms related to the job market (“...learning about Canadian culture about how to make resumes, how to answer some you know, interview questions”) and providing her with increased confidence in interacting with others, including in the context of finding employment:

There was this [Community Project], where we would go to the mall, and we were handing out nice things to people written on cards. Before I would never approach a stranger. This is the kind of person I wouldn't approach, but the response was so nice. Some people were so happy, and I was like, “Okay, you can talk to like total strangers who might look that they might not be interested or would not be liking that.” ... Yeah, I think, talking to total strangers who might not seem interested. But you know, getting them into a conversation.

your feelings. So that was a very positive thing, I was expressing what I'm feeling every day. It was a lot of positivity. You also sort of stood out in their eyes, and you don't think about those positive things. So that actually changed me, as I was very in a very dark place before.

Another component of IM&M+ that Anna found to be very beneficial for improving her confidence and self-perceptions was the “power box” activity:

We would find some skills of another person, and we would write about them in their power boxes. And it was always like “Wow!” When you open your power boxes we would find somebody else's comment or, you know, any skill that described you. So it was always good feeling, “Okay, I didn't know I had that.” It's nice to have an outside perspective and see what they see.

SPECIFIC COMPONENTS OF THE IM&M+ PROGRAM

Coming into IM&M+ after a period of relative isolation, Anna found the supportive group atmosphere that was fostered in the IM&M+ group to be a crucial aspect of the program for supporting her:

It was positive because I was talking to them almost every day we were discussing. We were always talking, you know. “How am I feeling today?” they would ask, and I was, like, nobody asked me over the years, so many years. Nobody has ever asked me every day how you are feeling and even if you're allowed, they are sometimes not always ready to listen to all