



A LEAD MAGNET FROM BARAKA

The Iranian-Canadian Therapy Guide

What therapy in your own language actually offers — and how to begin.

BARAKA Ontology & Clinical Counselling

West Vancouver, BC · Bilingual: English & Farsi

Mental Health · Naturopathic Medicine · Coaching · Community

barakaocc.com

Before you read this

"The body remembers in the language it was wounded in."

If you are an Iranian-Canadian considering therapy — for the first time, or after years of English-language therapy that helped but didn't quite reach — this guide is for you. It is written in English because most Iranian-Canadians read English easily and we want this accessible. The therapy itself, if you choose to come, can happen in Persian, in English, or fluidly between them.

Most Iranian-Canadians I work with come carrying material they have not been able to fully process — immigration grief, intergenerational weight, the specific loneliness of being Iranian outside Iran, the family-of-origin work that needs to happen in Persian to actually land, the long shadow of historical events that reach individual nervous systems through blood and language and lived culture.

This guide will help you decide whether Persian-language therapy is right for you, what presenting issues most often bring Iranian-Canadians in, what a first session looks like, how to navigate the family conversation about therapy if needed, and what resources exist in our community beyond therapy itself.

Part 1 — Who benefits from Persian-language therapy

In our experience, certain groups benefit particularly:

- **Recent immigrants** whose English is functional but not native
- **Older Iranian-Canadians** who came as adults and remain primary-Farsi
- **Iranian-Canadians processing pre-immigration material** — childhood, family, anything from before Canada
- **Couples where one or both partners are most fluent in Farsi**
- **Iranian-Canadians who feel they cannot fully be themselves in English-only therapy**
- **Anyone who has done English-language therapy and felt "something didn't quite land"**

Equally honestly, some Iranian-Canadians prefer English:

- Those who came as children and whose adult identity is English-primary
- Those who specifically want to work outside the cultural context of their family
- Those whose Farsi is no longer fluent enough for clinical-depth conversation
- Those whose presenting issue lives in their English-language professional life

There is no right answer. The question is what serves *you*.

A self-screening

Read each statement. Notice your response.

- When I imagine talking about my childhood, the language I would naturally use is Farsi.
- I have done therapy in English and felt understood intellectually but not at the deeper levels.
- I have spent therapy time explaining cultural context, and it exhausted me.
- I cannot quite access certain emotions — particularly anger or longing — in English the way I can in Farsi.
- There are family-of-origin patterns that don't translate cleanly into Western therapy frames.
- I would want to bring my parents or partner into therapy at some point, and they're more comfortable in Farsi.
- There's something I've been carrying about Iran that I haven't been able to talk about in English.

If three or more resonate, Persian-language therapy is likely the right fit.

Part 2 — Common presenting issues for Iranian-Canadian clients

These are the layers that bring our Iranian-Canadian clients in most often. You may recognize one, several, or all of them.

Immigration grief

The unprocessed loss of country, language, daily life, professional identity, family network, the version of yourself who existed in your home country. This grief is often unnamed for years because we don't have a clear cultural category for it.

The aging parents you cannot easily visit

The helplessness of watching your parents age across an ocean. The impossibility of being there for the small daily moments. The funerals you cannot attend. The cheleh you cannot observe in person. The visa, financial, and political constraints on movement.

Intergenerational trauma

Material your parents carried — from the revolution, the war, displacement, persecution, loss — that has reached your nervous system through attachment, family environment, and, increasingly understood, epigenetic transmission. You may carry trauma symptoms from events that happened before you were born.

Diaspora identity questions

Who are you now? Iranian? Canadian? Both? Neither? The identity question that doesn't have a satisfying answer — and the slow recognition that the question itself may be the wrong frame.

The success-story role

The pressure to be the family success story. To vindicate the immigration. To send money home. To make the sacrifice meaningful. This pressure is often invisible to others and constant for those carrying it.

Bicultural relationships and parenting

Marrying outside the culture, or inside but with very different family expectations. Raising children in Canada and grieving what they will not inherit. The specific tensions of bicultural households where each partner brings different unstated norms about marriage, family, and child-raising.

The political-emotional weight

Watching events in Iran from across an ocean. Witness fatigue. Survivor's guilt. The exhaustion of caring about a place you cannot help directly. The cost of staying informed alongside the cost of disengaging.

Part 3 — What a first session looks like

Before you book

- Most clients begin with a free 15-minute Meet & Greet — phone or video, in either language. Use it to ask anything you want, including how the therapist will hold confidentiality (important when the Iranian-Canadian community can feel small).
- You can ask for a sample of clinical Farsi to make sure the depth is there.
- If you have specific cultural or religious concerns, name them before the first paid session.

The first session itself

Mostly listening. The therapist will ask why you came, what you're hoping for, your story as much as you want to share, and what you've tried before. You don't need to know what's wrong. Most clients don't, when they begin.

Confidentiality, specifically

What confidentiality means in clinical practice

Registered Clinical Counsellors (RCCs) and other regulated mental health practitioners in BC are bound by strict confidentiality. Information from your sessions is not shared with anyone without your written consent — not your family, not your community, not your employer. The limits are narrow and standard across Canada: imminent risk of serious harm to self or others, court order, or suspected abuse of a child or vulnerable adult. Outside these specific limits, what you say in session stays in session.

Part 4 — Talking to your family about therapy

For some Iranian-Canadians, the harder part of starting therapy is not the therapy itself but the conversation with parents, spouse, or extended family about why you're going.

Common reactions you may face

- **"Why do you need a stranger? Talk to me."** — From a parent who genuinely wants to be that for you.
- **"Is something wrong with you?"** — Reflecting cultural stigma around mental health.
- **"What will people say?"** — The aabero (face/honor) concern.
- **"You're going to talk about us?"** — Family privacy concerns.
- **"Therapy is for people with serious problems."** — A misconception about scope.

Language you can use

Adapting the conversation

"I'm going to a counsellor — like a coach for the inner part of life. It's not because something is wrong with us or with me. It's because I want to grow, and they're trained to help with that. I'm not going to talk badly about anyone. They're bound by very strict privacy laws — they cannot share what I say with anyone. Many people in Canada do this regularly. It's like going to a physician but for the mind and emotions."

If a parent wants to know specifically what you're discussing

You don't have to share. Your therapy is yours. You can say: "I love you and I'm not going to share what we talk about, just like you wouldn't share what you discuss with your doctor. It's nothing about you. It's my own inner work." Repeat as needed. Most parents, given time and consistency, come to accept this.

Part 5 — Persian-speaking community resources

Therapy is one part of healing. Community is another. Below are resources for Iranian-Canadians in the Lower Mainland that complement clinical care.

Professional and clinical

- **Baraka Ontology & Clinical Counselling** — Persian-speaking depth-oriented therapy, naturopathic medicine, and coaching. West Vancouver. (236) 455-6306.
- **BC Reproductive Mental Health** — perinatal mental health, will work with interpreter or Persian-speaking referral. 604-875-2025.
- **Multicultural Helping House Society** — settlement and mental health support across cultures, including Persian-speaking workers when available.
- **Canadian Mental Health Association BC** — general mental health resources, some multilingual options.

Community and cultural

- **The North Shore Persian community** — multiple cultural organizations, Persian schools for second-generation children, Nowruz celebrations and cheleh observances.
- **Persian-Canadian women's circles** — informal and formal groups in West Vancouver, North Vancouver, and downtown Vancouver.
- **Iranian Canadian Congress** — civic and community advocacy, BC chapter.
- **Persian poetry circles** — Rumi, Hafez, and contemporary readings. The poetry tradition is itself therapeutic for many of our clients.

Online and book resources

- **Ninisite.com** — first Farsi-language pregnancy and parenting site (co-founded by Baraka's Dr. Rosita Fatemi).
- **The Persian translations of attachment, somatic, and parts work** — increasingly available; we maintain a small clinic library.
- **The Baraka community platform** — forums, groups, blog, members. A growing online space where Persian and English speakers gather around the topics this guide raises.

A final word

If you have been carrying weight you have not been able to set down — for years, for decades, for as long as you can remember — please know that the work of setting it down can begin in your own language, with someone who does not need it explained.

You are not alone. You are not the first. You are not broken for needing help.



We are with you.

Whether you choose Baraka or another Persian-speaking practice, we hope this guide has helped you see that the door is open. The work is real, the relief is real, and the version of yourself on the other side of it is still very much you.

When you're ready to begin.

Baraka offers depth-oriented therapy, naturopathic medicine, integrative coaching, and community in West Vancouver — in English and Farsi, in person at our Ambleside office or online across British Columbia. Our practice is built around the belief that healing happens at the intersection of clinical rigour, cultural fluency, and the deeper questions of meaning, identity, and being.

What a first step looks like

- **Free 15-minute consultation** — a no-pressure conversation by phone or video to ask questions and explore fit.
- **First session** — 50 to 90 minutes depending on the service. Mostly listening; we go where the work goes.
- **Ongoing therapy or care** — only if it's the right fit, at a cadence that works for your life.

Book a free 15-minute consult → barakaocc.com | (236) 455-6306

This guide is educational and is not a substitute for clinical care. If you are in crisis, please call 9-8-8 (Canada Suicide Crisis Helpline, 24/7) or go to your nearest emergency department.

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