

## A Guide to *Lotus*

*Lotus* is a mini-series that follows the characters Rani and Raj as they navigate their relationship and careers. The final submission includes the script for Episode 1 of *Lotus* and a summary of episodes 2-5. It is meant for submission to entertainment companies who can produce the show. The series is designed to shed light on the struggles of South Asian American adults who experienced domestic violence as children. Below is a product explanation for the show, including a breakdown of the issue, audience, and key messages.

### ***The Issue***

In the United States, South Asians are one of the fastest-growing ethnic groups and include people originating from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Bhutan.<sup>1,2</sup> While domestic violence goes severely underreported within this population due to stigma, it is found that at least 1 in 4 of South Asian women experience family violence within their households.<sup>3</sup> Domestic violence is defined as “physical violence, sexual violence, stalking, or psychological aggression by a current or former partner or spouse” and can also include economic, verbal, immigration-related, and in-laws related abuse.<sup>2,4</sup>

According to the Office for National Statistics, the experience of abuse during youth predisposes one to abuse during adulthood, either as the perpetrator or receiver or such abuse.<sup>5</sup> Thus, children who lived in such harmful environments are likely to continue living in a cycle of trauma throughout their life. Many South Asian American children exposed to domestic violence have unique factors which inform their experience, including the “role of the extended family, identifying with two cultures, fear about what the South Asian community will think, gender differences, and the importance of projecting an image of perfection.”<sup>1</sup> These, along with the actual experience of violence in childhood, place this population at an increased risk for poor mental health outcomes in adulthood.<sup>6</sup> Researchers have identified resilience as one avenue through which poor mental health outcomes can be improved.

Resilience is the ability to positively adapt and navigate one’s way to resources that sustain wellbeing after adverse events.<sup>7</sup> Higher levels of resilience result in enhanced self-esteem, lower depression and anxiety, and better psychological well-being.<sup>7</sup> Behaviors that promote resilience include increasing community/social support, increasing the belief that one can influence their own lives (i.e. personal agency), and connecting to positive adults.<sup>8</sup> This program focuses on modeling and developing these behaviors within the primary audience. Ultimately, we aim to equip people who were exposed to domestic violence as children with the resilience to not only thrive in life, but also to break the cycle of intergenerational trauma and violence.

### ***The Audience***

The primary audience is first- and second-generation South Asians (ages 22-25) who were exposed to domestic violence during youth. The secondary audience includes peers and other South Asian community members who are peripheral to the primary audience.

## ***The Messages***

The script for *Lotus* discusses the following key messages. They are presented through the three main behaviors which increase resilience: increasing social support, personal agency, and connecting to positive adults.

<b>Behavior</b>	<b>Key Message</b>
Personal Agency	I have control over my own life.
	I can plan for the future and take the steps I need to achieve my goals.
	I have the power to take myself out of a dangerous situation.
Increasing Social Support	It may be easy to isolate myself, but it doesn't help my mental health to keep doing so.
	Finding a community has helped me feel accepted and loved.
Connection to Positive Adults	I can connect to people who are kind, respectful, and supportive.

The characters in the show employ these messages to model how one can move forward from trauma through building resilience with these methods. However, please note that these messages are not the central focus of the show. As per the principles of entertainment education, the show places entertainment at the forefront while seamlessly incorporating messages that audiences can process in an effortless manner.

## ***The Story***

*Lotus* takes place over the course of five episodes. At its core, the story is about budding love between the two main characters, Rani and Raj. Raj just began working as a journalist for the *720 Gazette*. Raj has low self-esteem and often doesn't feel in control of his life. Determined to make a good impression on his team, he pitches to write an article about the story and impact of The Lotus, a high-profile rock band that fuses South Asian and western music. When his boss approves, he books a ticket for their concert in the city that night.

Rani is a painter. While she has been able to make money from her work through commissions, she finds herself unable to produce anything of her own volition. She tends to isolate herself and often has nightmares about her childhood. She often uses music to cope and is a big fan of The Lotus. She already has a ticket to their concert tonight.

That night Rani and Raj end up riding the same taxi to the concert. However, excessive traffic and a blown tire prevent them from ever making it. This gives them time to connect. Over the next few weeks, we see their relationship blossom. They both increase their social support and connect to positive adults by meeting others through a fan club for The Lotus. They also

discover that they, along with many others they meet in the South Asian community, experienced some form of domestic violence as children.

Rani is able to channel her trauma into her paintings, sell them, and feel a greater sense of control over her life and emotions. Raj is able to process his experiences through writing, improves at work, and feels a greater sense of agency. They fall in love and heal together. At the end of the story, they finally go to a The Lotus concert and are able to meet the band.

### ***Dissemination***

The script for *Lotus* is intended to be produced into a television show and disseminated on platforms that are most accessed by the primary audience. This platform will be determined through research on the media habits of the primary audience and may include streaming platforms such as Netflix or Hulu.

### ***Supporting Elements***

The end of each episode of *Lotus* should prompt viewers to access a website that links to resources about mental health and intimate partner violence as well as places that the primary audience can go to for help with these issues. The show should also include transmedia elements. This can include social media packages for Instagram, TikTok, WhatsApp, and other platforms. The transmedia elements should be developed after research into the media habits of the primary audience and should launch on platforms where chances of a broad reach are high. Transmedia should reinforce the public health messages presented in the series. For example, characters from the show can talk about mental health, domestic violence, and other important topics in South Asian communities. The show should also aim to partner with researchers and celebrities from these communities who can reinforce messages on their own platforms. Ultimately, the goal is widespread dissemination so that these messages reach as many people from the primary audience as possible and promote behavior change.

Please note that there are no supporting elements included with the submission of this project at the current moment. However, a successful show should incorporate these elements if the series is ever produced.

### ***Resources***

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3. MIDLARSKY, E., VENKATARAMANI-KOTHARI, A. and PLANTE, M. (2006), Domestic Violence in the Chinese and South Asian Immigrant Communities. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 1087: 279-300. <https://doi-org.proxy1.library.jhu.edu/10.1196/annals.1385.003>
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5. Office for National Statistics. (2017). People who were abused as children are more likely to be abused as an adult. Census 2021. Accessed April 13, 2022. Retrieved from <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/peoplewhowereabusedaschildrenaremorelikelytobeabusedasanadult/2017-09-27>
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