



BODY BRAVE  
recovery for every body



## KAREN'S EXPERIENCE: INTEGRATING THE EXPERIENCE AND LOOKING AHEAD



*Sonia was finally making major progress toward recovery. She had achieved a stable weight and no longer struggled with eating disorder symptoms.* Body image issues were still troublesome at times, but she was able to cope with these thoughts effectively. She'd returned to university and completed her degree in Economics. Also, she'd met a great guy online. As Matthew and Sonia's relationship deepened, I could see a sparkle return to her eyes. *I said to Pradeep, "Can you believe it? It's like seeing her come back to life."*

We both felt profoundly grateful that Sonia was making such significant steps in her recovery journey. The past eight years had been a terrifying time in our lives, filled with uncertainty and dread. As caregivers, we were constantly questioning ourselves, trying to figure out if we were missing something. I often felt so lonely, not knowing where to turn for help. Even when Sonia did get into hospital-based treatment, I found that very little support was provided for caregivers. The medical staff were often unwilling to discuss anything about Sonia's care with us, citing privacy issues. But this attitude seemed so wrong! After all, we would be the ones caring for Sonia after discharge from hospital.

*"Something needs to change," I said to Pradeep one day.*

*"Caregivers need to be recognized for their essential role - don't you think?" Pradeep agreed wholeheartedly.*



*As Sonia continued to consolidate her recovery, I kept reflecting about the journey Pradeep and I had taken as caregivers.* Trying to integrate this experience in my mind and heart was such a challenge. How do I make sense of Sonia's years of suffering? And how do I make sense of the struggles Pradeep and I experienced as her parents?

*I felt both sadness and anger- sadness about the pain our family went through, as well as anger about the stigma surrounding these illnesses and the scarcity of treatment resources.*



*Sonia and I often spoke about how difficult it was to integrate the experiences of the past eight years into our lives.* Now that she was so much better, would we simply try to forget about that nightmare we had gone through? That seemed impossible!

Instead, a seed of an idea began to germinate within our hearts.

We wanted to start something to support people with eating disorders, and those who love them.

In August of 2018, we made the first steps to establish Body Brave as a national charitable organization. Since that time, Body Brave has continued to grow and evolve, drawing strength and inspiration from people with lived experience of an eating disorder.

*~Dr. Karen Trollope-Kumar*

