

URL: <https://ecorner.stanford.edu/clips/raised-to-make-a-difference/>

Shiza Shahid, co-founder and co-CEO of Our Place, shares how her family's story and their dedication to education laid the foundation for her entrepreneurial journey. Though she had never heard of entrepreneurship growing up in Pakistan, she gained a strong drive to help others and make a difference.



Transcript

- My childhood was certainly very formative 00:00:05,520 in who I am today, as it is for all of us.. I come from a very modest, self-made family.. My mother was born into a very patriarchal time and place.. She was the oldest of her parents' too many daughters.. She was told from a young age she wouldn't get to pursue a career or higher education or choose who she would marry.. Met my father when she was 19 years old for the first time on their wedding day.. My father, thankfully, is a pretty woke dude, at least for his generation.. You know, he also came from a very modest family, lost his own father when he was quite young, grew up quite poor, but they worked hard to build a life.. And they were not entrepreneurs, my father joined the Pakistani navy and rose up the ranks, but they were radical in their approach to education in that they made the decision that no matter the cost, their children would have the very best education in the country, even when they couldn't afford it, even when, you know, their extended family warned them not to send their daughters into these, you know, corrupt Western institutions.. My parents were really firm in their belief around education and really allowed us to dream the biggest dreams possible..

But I had never heard the word entrepreneurship growing up.. There really is not an equivalent in my native tongue, Urdu.. The closest is probably, you know, businessman or trader.. There certainly weren't women starting companies, and that exposure came to me in life a lot later.. In fact, business, if anything, was seen as this dirty word, as selfish, as greedy, as corrupt, as it often was in Pakistan, a place where, you know, a lot of people had to bribe a lot of people to get anything done.. So I didn't grow up knowing that I could build a business.. That would come later.. But I did grow up very entrepreneurial.. And by that, what I mean is from a young age, I would see things that were wrong in the world and I would decide that it was my place to fix them.. So when I was 13 years old, I carried medical supplies into a women's prison..

When I was 15 years old, there was a huge earthquake in Pakistan and I spent the next year volunteering in an earthquake relief camp for women, girls, children, who had been displaced by the earthquake.. When Pakistan had a military dictator, I protested.. In fact, when he came to speak at Stanford, I took the microphone and asked him, you know, a question that got him pretty pissed off that day and made national news.. So the sense of the world has many issues, the world is broken, that is unfair, I have a certain amount of privilege as a girl getting a great education with a supportive family and I can make a difference, that was within me from a very young age.. And I think to me that is, at its core, what entrepreneurship is...