

Global Enlightenment Academy & Community

Maryam Sharifi

About the Author

My unique experiences growing up led me to build a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping people discover their purpose in life and develop essential life skills. My name is Maryam Sharifi, the founder of Global Enlightenment Academy & Community. Growing up as the "odd one out" in Iran, I was very different from all my siblings. I approached life from a different perspective, which helped me later in life. At about 15 or 16, I was involved in an arranged marriage and left Iran.

My experiences of living in Europe exposed me to different cultures, languages, and customs, making me more sensitive to other people's situations. This sensitivity led me to question everything; why we live the way we live, and our quality of life and living conditions. I wanted to come up with a better solution to improve people's lives.

Driven by a deep concern for the most vulnerable segments of society, I directed my attention toward areas needing significant care and attention. It was clear to me that the educational system, children, and women were experiencing immense hardships and required expanded opportunities for their betterment.

Following the dissolution of my marriage in my late twenties, I found myself completely alone in the world without any support system. With my family residing thousands of miles away, I faced the daunting task of navigating life independently. During my time in college, I excelled academically with a flawless 4.0 GPA and secured a scholarship, envisioning a future as a cardiologist. However, circumstances after my divorce dictated that I become self-reliant, prompting a shift in my career path.

In this new chapter, I embraced the field of computer science and technology, graduating at the top of my class. Unfortunately, by the early 1990s, the demand for my chosen degree had significantly declined. Determined to adapt and thrive, I decided to put myself through business school, graduating with honors. Despite these achievements, a sense of dissatisfaction persisted within me.

Driven by a perpetual quest for knowledge, I serendipitously encountered the teachings of Eastern philosophy and holistic wellness during my time at the International School of Healing Art in San Diego. This introduction sparked a transformative journey, where I delved into the profound understanding of holistic living and well-being.

My hero's journey led me to a new world of self-mastery. I was then introduced to an alternative education of self-growth and discovered a mastermind community that became my second family. This journey led me to wonderful mentors such as Bob Proctor, Tony Robbins, and many more great teachers and mentors.

It was through this journey that I clarified my vision and the idea of creating a community of learners who are passionate about improving themselves and serving others. I wanted to provide the resources and guidance I did not have when I was going through difficult times and to help others avoid the same mistakes. My vision is to create a community of eager learners, visionaries, and life learners who are equally interested in creating a better world and serving others. Although I do not regret all the life challenges that made me who I am today, I do not want others to feel as I did; hopeless, alone, without guidance, mentors, and resources.

How many people do we know that are unhappy with the choices they made in their career or education? I know a friend who went to a law school because her father was an attorney and wanted her to follow in his footsteps. She graduated and passed the bar and gave her diploma to her father, and started her passion as a travel writer.

Growing up, my passion for learning and books helped me discover a different way of looking at the world. It was this passion for learning that drove me to pick myself back up after my divorce and continue on the path toward building a welcoming and joyous community of equally interested life learners. In the era of Artificial Intelligence, we need more specialized knowledge and skills to live up to our true human potential. That's why I wanted to offer an alternative educational system to provide a better

background of information and understanding of the world, to extract the true potential of each student, and to clarify their desires and purposes in life.

I am dedicated to supporting individuals of all ages and backgrounds who are re-entering the workforce after experiencing life crises. My goal is to empower them to make informed decisions that will effectively prepare them for future challenges and equip them with the essential skills and knowledge to become self-sufficient and resilient.

Specifically, I aim to provide guidance and assistance to children, young adults, men, and women during their transition back into the workforce. By offering practical mentoring and resources, I strive to help them navigate the complexities of life after a crisis. This includes helping them identify and pursue suitable career paths, develop effective decision-making strategies, and enhance their overall well-being.

Furthermore, I am committed to fostering their personal growth and resourcefulness. Through tailored support and education, I seek to instill valuable life skills that will serve them well in various situations. These skills encompass financial literacy, problem-solving abilities, effective communication, and emotional resilience, enabling them to take control of their lives and thrive in the face of adversity.

Turning Point

I have seen firsthand how the rise of technology and the isolation it can cause, particularly for children, can be dangerous. The accessibility of social media and the reclusiveness of our homes make it easier than ever to feel disconnected from others. This is why I believe there is a growing need for a community where people can live together in a positive and supportive environment.

With the lifestyle of social media, influencers, and smartphones, our kids are glued to the screen and so disconnected from nature. At Global Enlightenment Academy, we recognize the importance of getting kids outdoors and connecting with nature. To fill this gap by providing the campus on acres of ranch and having outdoor

classrooms where our children breathe fresh air and interact with nature. Our variety of programs, such as organic gardening, animal rescue farm, and planting tree events, will create an environment where not only we live, work and study in an eco-friendly, sustainable community but get our children involved in creating and maintaining that.

In addition to supporting younger generations, we also want to offer a supportive community for older adults. We recognize the wealth of knowledge and wisdom that older generations possess, and we believe that they have much to offer in terms of guiding younger generations and helping them find their paths in life. Our campus community provides flexibility for all age groups, allowing them to come and go as they please and contribute to the community in their unique ways.

Having a solid connection with the people in a community and with nature contributes to the overall health of people. This is a better outcome than what I have noticed with the isolation of older people and how their health and mental stability can be negatively affected under these circumstances.

I have a vision for the future that involves innovative ideas for a comprehensive support system for these groups of people who rely on the kindness and generosity of our organization and others like us. Retired individuals possess a wealth of knowledge and wisdom that can guide younger generations in finding their paths in life and understanding the world around them. By having the older generation teach life lessons and pass on inspiration, we can bridge the generational gap and provide the youth with guidance, offering a second chance at life through our nonprofit. The flexibility of our campus community allows these groups to move freely and decide when to come and go, enabling them to serve in the capacity that suits them best.

Inspiration

The idea for this community of supportive people formed in my mind as early as my childhood. I remember when I was ten years old, reading a book by Anton Makarenko that became the inspiration for the path I would later lead in life. During the chaos in Russia caused by two World Wars and the revolution, Makarenko created a

community of orphaned kids. He gathered these kids, who were living on the streets, and formed a camp where he taught them life skills. They created a farm, learned how to tend to it, and worked on it. The institution was named the Gorky Colony after the great realist Russian writer Maxim Gorky. The result of all their hard work was that these once-orphaned kids gained the necessary life skills to lead respectable careers as doctors, engineers, and other exceptional positions. The transformation was incredible; to take a group of kids that were cast out of society and turn them into high-achieving, successful adults. There is so much we can do when we create a supportive and trustworthy environment where kids can flourish.

This tradition of giving and welcoming others is deeply rooted in my family's culture and tradition, and we continue to do it to this day. As my family grows, I want to continue passing on these same morals and values to my children and their partners. I want them to understand the importance of creating connections with others and nurturing them. This is why I founded Global Enlightenment Academy & Community, a nonprofit organization that seeks to support and empower all people, women, and children who are looking for a strong community to care for them as they build their lives.

I remember when I was a kid, maybe around five or six years old, when my father and mother set an example for me that I'll never forget. Once or twice a year, my father would hold a celebration at our home. The time of the year and the purpose of the celebration are long forgotten, but I remember the most important details being how big the events were and the endless generosity involved. All of our relatives were coming to our home, and the entire backyard was set up to be ready with enough space and food to hold hundreds of people. We had a driver that would find and bring back all the homeless people, day laborers, and other less fortunate people that would need and appreciate the meal. The gathering lasted all day, where they were being served, taken care of, and then given a ride back at the end of the day. This selfless generosity of sharing a meal between people that could help and people that needed help left a lasting memory.

When I became an adult, I wanted to share these same experiences from my childhood with my son when he was little. I was eager to give him the same sense of generosity and kindness my father and mother displayed so many years ago. For Thanksgiving and Christmas, I wanted to be a positive role model and demonstrate to

my son what the holidays were supposed to be about. We made food and took it to homeless people. My family and I amusingly learned our lesson one year. My mom made Persian food for the homeless, which was gourmet quality. Once we began serving it, the food was so foreign, although delicious, that everyone questioned what it was and asked if there was anything else available. The following year, we switched to taking McDonald's lunch to them.

We have since been making quality food that is more well-known with a lot better results. We continue this tradition of giving and welcoming others because it is deeply rooted in my family's culture and tradition. Now that my son has grown up, my daughter-in-law will cook food and hand it out to homeless people we meet to share our gifts and spread togetherness.

As my family continues to grow, I want to continue passing on the same morals and values I learned as a child. These beliefs have allowed me to see the world through a different lens and create connections with others that I want to nurture through my nonprofit organization. Many of the women and children I meet are looking for a strong community that can support their growth and care for them as they build their lives up. They have a special place in my heart, and I want to share similar experiences and knowledge, not just with my family but with everyone that comes to Global Enlightenment Academy & Community for a brighter future.

We often hold the misconception that kids are lost causes, and unfortunately, many high school students reflect this idea. However, with the right care and attention, these students can flourish into valuable members of society. At Global Enlightenment Academy & Community, we aim to provide the support, education, and preparation necessary for the younger generation to reach their full potential.

As children leave the nest, parents can experience a sense of emptiness that causes significant mental stress. This feeling is not limited to parents of young children; even adult empty nesters can struggle to adjust, feeling as if they have lost a part of themselves. I went through this when my son got married and moved away from home. It was a struggle to pick myself up and carry on. I didn't have a readily available organization that could help me through this process, but I somehow found the support I needed. I went down the path of self-mastery journey and attended many motivational seminars and workshops to reconnect and remember my purpose in life. At Global

Enlightenment Academy & Community, we aim to provide the necessary support to help parents regain their excitement for life, overcome depression, and rediscover their purpose.

Global Enlightenment Academy & Community

Global Enlightenment Academy & Community (GEA) offers a more hands-on approach to helping people achieve their dreams and receive the support they need to progress on their life journey. We provide several options for anyone entering the program to follow the path they are most interested in. One of our core beliefs is to allow individuals to pursue what truly makes them happy. For instance, if someone wants to become a dentist, our organization would arrange for them to visit a dentist's office, shadow one of the staff, and give them the opportunity to reflect on their decision to pursue that profession. This accelerated approach bypasses conventional means and helps individuals avoid wasting money, resources, and time pursuing a career they may not enjoy in the long run. Saving time by pursuing a career that will bring complete satisfaction is critical.

We understand that time is a precious commodity, and we cannot afford to pursue the wrong paths. We aim to help individuals in a short amount of time in a friendly and supportive environment, regardless of their age. Learning is a lifelong pursuit, and we help individuals identify their interests and acquire the necessary skills to achieve their goals.

Our Mission

Our mission is to create a joyous community that inspires individuals to discover and embrace their true purpose in life while fostering a sense of peace and connection with Mother Nature and all beings on Earth. We are guided by our core values of respect, growth, and a collective spirit of harmony, and we strive to create a safe,

inclusive, and diverse platform for individuals to achieve their goals and make a positive impact on the world.

Our Vision

Our vision encompasses the establishment of a globally renowned academy spanning over 100 acres of serene ranch land. This academy will serve as a hub for individuals from all walks of life, fostering a sense of unity and growth as they engage in immersive learning experiences. Nestled within our dome homes and dormitories, learners of all ages and backgrounds will reside, striving to unlock their full potential while making contributions to the GEA community.

Central to our mission is a team of accomplished educators and mentors who will guide students in the exploration of their authentic purpose and aspirations. They will impart not only practical life skills and critical thinking abilities but also cultivate a profound understanding of the world. Emphasizing values such as sustainability, mindfulness, and holistic well-being, our curriculum aims to develop individuals who are not only intellectually equipped but also socially and ethically conscious.

At GEA, our ultimate goal is to actively contribute to a world where access to quality education, essential resources, and heightened awareness are available to all. We are committed to supporting individuals undergoing transformative life experiences by providing an inclusive and nurturing environment. Here, people can freely exchange knowledge, learn from one another, teach what they have learned, and collaborate to discover innovative solutions to global challenges.

Through our innovative initiatives and inclusive approach, we intend to create a supportive environment where individuals can explore their passions, talents, and purpose and unlock their full potential. We will provide opportunities for personal and professional growth, encouraging lifelong learning and self-discovery among our community members.

I felt helpless and had no idea what awaited me in the future after my divorce. I went through a hard time adjusting to the new reality and worked hard to own my own business and then, entered the real estate industry and have made a good life for myself. Through my experiences and personal life, I have met many women who are going through crises while they try to figure out the next stage in life. Global Enlightenment Academy & Community is working with these women to guide them to a state of stability and a community of mentoring and support. We want to help women who are going through pivotal transitions as they work toward a better life. For the women who are going through a divorce, we seek to reframe their circumstances as a way of seeing divorce as a new stage in life. Divorce does not signal the end of your life but rather the start of a new chapter in your personal growth. They are given the opportunity to reevaluate their circumstances and use that time to become a better version of themselves.

We're expanding our nonprofit organization's classes to meet the growing demand for a more comprehensive curriculum. Additionally, our mastermind community encourages individuals to embrace their masculine or feminine personal power sources to raise awareness and foster growth.

In the same effort to open more courses up for adults, we wish to grow to have transformational education to empower everyone to become responsible and productive global citizens. As we nurture and support children, they become a light that brings about positive change in our society. Much like the story of Anton Makarenko, I want the kids to learn the fundamentals by getting their hands dirty and building a connection with nature. They can plant trees, work closely with animals, and tend to a farm. When children lose their connection with nature, they start to become detached in other areas as well, which is the main reason for having a physical location for our campus. It gives a more personal feel and has a more lasting and meaningful outcome.

Ultimately Global Enlightenment Academy and Community strives to be a lighthouse that guides future children to follow their dreams and grow into compassionate and purpose-driven individuals.

Words of Wisdom

The Hero Within

To me, being a hero holds significant meaning due to the multitude of challenges I have encountered throughout my life, from the heartbreaking dissolution of my marriage and the failure of my business venture to the repeated relocations between states and the emotional journey of my son's departure after his marriage. I found myself grappling with adversity and repeatedly starting over from scratch. These experiences brought me to the lowest points in my life, instilling within me a pervasive sense of purposelessness. Discovering that inner energy, or whatever your own word for it is, deep within me led me to become the person I am today. That's where I believe being a hero lies, deep within all of us.

I remember listening to Mariah Carey's song titled "Hero," which asks us to look inside ourselves to find the hero within. These words made a profound impact on me while I was going through my breakthrough in life. Allow me to mention a few of the words here. She sings:

"There is a hero

If you look inside your heart

You don't have to be afraid

Of what you are

There's an answer

If you reach into your soul

And the sorrow that you know

Will melt away

And then a hero comes along

With the strength to carry on
And you cast your fears aside
And you know you can survive
So, when you feel like hope is gone
Look inside you and be strong
And you'll finally see the truth
That a hero lies in you."

These words make me emotional every time I read or hear them. Once I sought my inner hero, I discovered the starting point of my self-mastery journey. At the time, there was no one there to take my hand, no one to come and rescue me, no superhero to save the day.

Even with the Global Enlightenment Academy & Community, we encourage others to become the heroes they need in their lives. It is your decision whether you join our cause, donate money, spread our message, or come to us should you need help reconnecting with your journey. A hero must look inside themselves at the person they are and understand the person they need to become to achieve important life goals.

There is a stigma around asking for help that only serves to hold us back and cause problems that could otherwise be avoided. I have learned in my many years that there is almost a virtue in admitting you need someone's assistance and admitting that you are unable to do something by yourself. In fact, we need each other, and no one has ever achieved great things alone. It's powerful to seek a hero to help you through difficult times and trust someone else to do so. This is one of the concepts we encourage through the Global Enlightenment Academy & Community. We aspire to be the hero you need when there comes a time that you seek us out. We educate and mentor everyone to be their own hero in life.

Each one of us has a hero inside, a warrior within, waiting to be brought to the surface to make the necessary changes to seek help and make an effort in our lives. Once we can activate the hero inside ourselves, we can turn our attention toward others who need our help. They need a hero to help them when they are unable to help themselves.

As we look to the future, I envision my nonprofit as more than simply an academy or a community. I want to see it eventually become a place where it still focuses on those core principles but also becomes a place where people can return and always feel welcome. We are working on getting Global Enlightenment Academy & Community to a stage in its development where people can come for a retreat, be around like-minded people, and carry on the bond we built with them during an important transformation in their lives.

We want others to return and use their own generosity to assist people who have recently joined. The Academy also wants to find professionals and academics that can join our mission and be a part of the growing community. With the help of others, especially those that have mastered their craft, we can continue to encourage, support, and guide those that need our help and who need a lifeline.

My vision is to make a positive difference in the lives of people and the new generation and leave a lasting legacy behind. We envision our academy as a lighthouse that guides our future children, young adults, men, and women to follow their dreams and grow into compassionate, mindful, and purpose-driven individuals. We are passionate about getting back to nature and bringing ourselves closer in touch with Mother Earth, creating a harmonious community that inspires collective growth and transformation.

We are seeking strategic partnerships, funding, and support to bring our vision to life and create a brighter future for our children and generations to come. We believe that by partnering with universities, community organizations, and like-minded individuals, we can make a positive difference in the world and bring about true global enlightenment.

Maryam Sharifi

Global Enlightenment Academy

