

Parent's Relationship

My mom opened Kanishka's Gastropub in 2013. I was ecstatic. We would become the first Mother-Son Indian duo on Food Network peeling potatoes, skinning chicken, and grinding spices, sharing our Bengali recipes with the world.

However, the restaurant tore apart my parent's relationship. Two years after opening, my dad started coming home late most nights, plastered from "happy hour with work colleagues." My mom, trying to balance her day job at Kaiser and owning a restaurant, poured her stress on me, "What the hell is wrong with you! Always watching YouTube and never talking!"

The worst time came when my parents tried to fix their relationship. Repeated date nights induced more arguments. Enduring the stress of her restaurant, my father, and her mistakes, my mom attempted to end her life. Fortunately, I found her just in time.

Over the next two years, things were at times still hard, but gradually improved. My parents decided to start anew, took some time apart, then got back together. My mom started to pick me up from activities on time and my dad and I bonded more, watching Warriors and 49ers games.

But at times I still had to emotionally support my mom to avoid sudden India trips, or put my siblings to bed if my parents weren't home at night. Over time, I found it difficult being my family's glue. I wanted back the family I had before the restaurant--the one that ate Luchi Mongsho together every Sunday night.

So I looked for comfort in creation. I began spending more time in our garage, carefully constructing planes from sheets of foam. I found purpose balancing the fuselage or leveling the ailerons to precisely 90 degrees. I loved cutting new parts and assembling them perfectly. Here, I could fix all the mistakes.

In high school, I slowly began to forge a community of creators with my peers. Sophomore year, I started an engineering club and found that I had a talent for managing people and encouraging them to create an idea even if it failed. I also learned how to take feedback and become more resilient. Here, I could nerd-out about warp drives and the possibility of anti-matter without being ignored. I would give a weekly report on new technology and we would have hour-long conversations about the various uses a blacker material could have.

While building a community at school rebuilt my confidence, I still found I enjoyed being alone at times. While driving in my car, I'd let my mind wander to movies like Big Hero Six and contemplate if a zero-friction bike really was possible. I'd create ideas like an AI highway system that tells drivers exactly when to switch lanes based on timing and calculus to prevent braking from nearby cars. Or I'd blueprint a new classroom with interactive desks, allowing students to dive deep into historical events like a VR game. I found outlining complex ideas like these sometimes provide insights into something I'm researching or could one day materialize into future projects.

Looking back (and perhaps inadvertently), the conflicts from the restaurant days have taught me valuable lessons. Helping my mom through her relationship taught me to watch out for those in

emotional distress. Spending nights alone made me more independent--after all, it was then that I signed up for advanced math and programming courses and decided to apply for software internships. Most of all, seeing my mom start her restaurant from no food-industry experience inspired me to found two clubs and a Hydrogen Car Team.

Even though we eat Luchi Monsho on a monthly basis now, I know my family will never be the way it was. My mom and I won't become a Food Network mother-son duo. I can't fix all the mistakes. But I can use them to improve the present.