

Shappi Khorsandi

Shappi Khorsandi is a successful stand-up comedian, broadcaster and social commentator. She and her family were forced to flee from Iran when she was a child, after her father published a satirical poem against the new regime. We asked her about how her upbringing has informed her personal philosophy.

My mum and dad never took us to religious places, or prayed, or told us there was a god.

At school some teachers believed in god and talked to us about it. We sang hymns in



assembly. I really liked singing hymns. I still do. I really like singing with a whole lot of people, it makes me feel uplifted, but the songs don't have to be religious.

Do we need religious books to tell us what is right and what is wrong?

I know the Bible and other religious books are full of stories to help people know right from wrong. I know some of the stories. But I can understand right from wrong without these books. I can question myself and try and be honest about why I behave in certain ways. For example, I have learned that there is no such

thing as helping someone and not getting anything in return because helping someone makes you feel good inside. That's what you get and that is enough.

I have also learned to treat other people the way I would like to be treated, with respect and kindness.

When I was younger, I was mean to people sometimes. Sometimes, when I was jealous of someone I did mean things like ignore them or say rude things about them to other people. I learned that doing this made me feel bad inside. So I stopped doing it and it made a big

difference to my life. My life got happier. More people wanted to be my friend, more people trusted me and helped me when I needed help.

“I believe we can be kind just because we are human.”

My parents taught me to share.

It was very important to my parents to teach me to be polite and caring. They taught me to say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’. They taught me to not just share, but to give things away when another kid wanted it, or needed it more than me. Like the last sweet or a book, or a really huge stick I’d found.

I still forget to be kind and generous

sometimes because I get wrapped up in what I want. My dad is very good at reminding me to put my feet in other people’s shoes when I get like this. When I do that, I see what I wanted wasn’t worth all the fuss, although this can take a while.

Why should we be kind?

I believe we can be kind just because we are human. Being kind is doing something for someone without being asked, or noticing how they are feeling without being told. Being kind is helping someone else and not wanting anything in return, even if it makes you late for work or school, or costs you some money or makes you tired. It makes you connected with a positive energy, it feels like you helped turn the world a little.