As a child in the Philippines, Sheila Marcelo grew up watching her parents run a variety of entrepreneurial endeavors. At age seven, when she accompanied her mother and father to the rice mill they ran, she spent her time asking the workers questions about their jobs. “I was very curious,” says Marcelo, who ultimately followed in her parents’ footsteps, building the successful online marketplace Care.com.
Marcelo, the fifth of six children, was raised in a tight-knit family. Her parents, who eloped in their late teens, did not fall into stereotypical gender roles. “My father was the one who stood by the window and waved goodbye until he couldn’t see me anymore,” says Marcelo, who learned math alongside her older brothers. “They did not have certain expectations just because I was a girl,” she recalls.

As a student at Mount Holyoke College, Marcelo attended a cross-college function for Filipino students and met Ron Marcelo, a student at Yale. The pair married and had a son, Ryan, while both remained in college. When the young family moved to Boston, Marcelo deferred her admission to Harvard Law School in order to gain litigation experience. “That gave me exposure to strategic consulting and business,” says Marcelo, who applied to HBS during her first year of law school.

“At the core of everything we do, whether building a product or delivering a service, are the people behind it. Relationships are what matter.”

“Grad school was not an easy time for me,” she reflects. “I was juggling being a mother and wife, working [for Monitor Group], and studying,” she says, noting that the fact that Ron was also earning his MBA at HBS was an asset. The pair took Ryan to HBS’s day-care facility on their way to class each day, discussing coursework and cases in their spare moments.

After working as a teaching fellow at HBS for a year and delivering her second son, Marcelo joined Upromise, a start-up that helps families save money for college. “I was the eighth employee, and I consider that period my general management tour of duty,” says Marcelo, who found enthusiastic mentors at the young company and was soon asked to join the management team.

“Care.com brings together Marcelo’s passion for helping others and her entrepreneurial and management skills, to enable working families to find the care they need. More than 11 million people across 16 countries now use the service to find help with their children, parents, pets, and homes. “We help families achieve their aspirations by giving them peace of mind in helping their loved ones,” says Marcelo, whose philanthropic endeavors focus on women, entrepreneurship, education, and helping those in need in the Philippines.

With hard work and determination, Sheila Marcelo has built an enormously successful entrepreneurial venture that has helped millions of families manage their lives. Earlier this year, Marcelo rang the opening bell of the New York Stock Exchange, surrounded by family and colleagues. “It was very emotional,” she says of Care.com’s IPO. “We have built an incredible team of people that is making an impact on the lives of families, and we are also helping companies and economies.”