

The Truth About Making “Skin Decisions” with Plastic Surgeon Sheila Nazarian

SPEAKERS

Dr. Sheila Nazarian, Lara Schmoisman

Lara Schmoisman

This is Coffee N.5. I'm your host, Lara Schmoisman. Welcome to a new episode of Coffee N. 5. Our guest today is Dr. Sheila Nazarian, a very well known plastic surgeon. She's the founder of Nazarian Plastic Surgery, Spa 26, she launched The Skin Spot, a collection of medical grade skincare products, and creator of the Nazarian Institute and Think BIG, a space for people who want to expand as a brand. You can also see her in the Netflix show Skin Decision Before and After. Sheila, thank you so much for being here sipping coffee, number five, or six, maybe for me today. But I want to talk to you today. I mean, you're such an example of a powerful woman, but not because of powerful of what you accomplish, or who you are today. I think you're such a powerful woman from who you are and where you're coming from. And that's a story that not many people talk about. So who is the real Sheila, where are you coming from?

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

Yeah, of course. Nice to be on with you, Lara. Thank you so much for the opportunity. I think, you know, I think it's kind of an underdog story. My mom was nine months pregnant, she flew from Iran to New York to give birth to me, so she could have a citizen as a child, and then flew back to Iran. That was 1979. It was the revolution. And, you know, we're Jewish, we're very Jewish, and what kind of, you know, didn't end up so great for Jews and Iran. Unfortunately, a lot of restrictions. We weren't allowed to leave the country. And a lot of this stuff I'm going to tell you kind of, I learned recently, because my family was very reticent to talk about it. So basically, my dad was a pathologist, and he ran the Shahs Heart Hospital and Iran, and one of his technicians was kind of in the siege. So he was in the Revolutionary Guard that overthrew the shop. And it was 1985. It was the ronnie rock war, there was bombs everywhere, and my dad had had actually saved this technicians eyesight. He had diagnosed him with a parasite in his eye, and it saved his eyesight. So the technician came to my dad and said, Listen, you saved my eyes, I'm gonna save your life. You're on the kill list. And you have to leave the country tonight. And so he was basically on this list to be murdered. So he basically left my mom, my sister and I his passport with the government and said he was going on a medical mission and left the country. And so we were kind of there by ourselves for a little while. And there was a there's an organization called HIAS H-I-A-S that helped a lot of the Jews get out of Iran at the time. And this is a really interesting story, Lara, that I just found out three years ago, because it was actually classified information. I was asked to donate to this Persian Jewish organization, as frequently happens in LA, they were having an event with someone who served in the Carter administration. And I was like, Sure, I'll sponsor this event. And I go with my husband, we had no idea who the speaker was, we had no idea what we were getting into. And the guy that was there actually gave us all this information. So Carter,

when there was an Iran like contra issue, you know, they're holding the American hostages, Carter gave the mandate to get all Iranians out of America, which meant the Bahais, which meant the sons and daughters of people who served in the Shahs army, and if they would have been sent back, they all would have been killed. Okay. So this gentleman had actually, you know, heard about what happened during the Holocaust, where a lot of German Jews had asked, you know, Roosevelt to get seek asylum in the US and were turned away, and they were killed. So when he found this out, he said, if that opportunity ever lands on my desk, that I could save lives, I'm going to take it. So what he did is, even though Carter gave the, you know, mandate, get all the get all the persons out of America, what he did is he went and found out that if persons file for asylum and asylum applications are locked in a closet and never looked at, they can't make the person's leave. And not only that, he worked with this, this company's people that helped get me and my family out. So imagine me I'm sitting in the audience listening to this guy speak who I don't know who he is, and he single handedly saved our lives. So he not only did he prevent the Persians in America to be sent back to Iran, he also allowed other people in Iran to file for asylum applications that he locked in a closet to never be looked at. So that so that we could get into

Lara Schmoisman

this is an incredible story. And there's so many incredible stories out there. We don't know. I mean, my family went from Russia to Argentina. I mean, we have crazy stories.

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

I was...was..., are you Jewish too, Lara?

Lara Schmoisman

Yeah

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

I mean, Russia was really bad. I mean, really bad. I just recently been on Violet Benson's podcast, and she had a similar story. She's also a Russian Jew. Horrible things happen to her

Lara Schmoisman

Yeah, I'm 100% Russian jew that immigrate to Argentina like, actually was really funny someone came to my house yesterday like, and they want to speak Russian to me, they get really offended because they see that I have an accent. It's not a Latino accent the normal Latino accent because I'm married to an Israeli. So I got a lot of his accent. And but they, I look so Russian that I cannot deny it. I am 100% now I want to come back to you. And so you came to the United

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

Yeah, so we came to the US, you know, we my family, my mom, my sister and I actually escaped on the back of a pickup truck. We went to a bazaar one day they threw corn on top of us smuggled last across the border to Pakistan. We were there for three months waiting for visas finally reunited with my dad and Vienna came over here, you know, totally ESL totally Fresh Off the Boat. I always joke like I had a mustache and hairy legs. And my mom would let me do anything about it, you know, just really nerdy. I was, you know, super smart at the time. But I think I had a bit of imposter syndrome like, oh,

they're gonna figure me out. They put me in a gifted class, but they're going to come back and say it was a mistake, or you know, things like that. But thinking back on it now, it's like, No, I was pretty smart. But it took me a long time to kind of get to the point to know what my strengths are and know what my weaknesses are, and be able to speak openly about both. Because as a woman, you know, it's like, oh, if you say you're something you're good at, you're bragging, if you say something you're not good at, you're weak. So it's just,

Lara Schmoisman

I'm just so over that like, if you're good at something, just saying.

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

Yeah, same.

Lara Schmoisman

Yeah, I mean, at some point, you're gonna figure it out anyway. So why not? But you found not only such a niche in your life, you found also the understanding of what make people click.

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

I think it's coming from a point of, you know, empathy. I think it's being a nerd, having been teased for being you know, the way that I was, Lara was super skinny. I mean, people would drop skeletons in my backpack and follow me, you know,

Lara Schmoisman

were the opposite. I was over overweight girl. So I understand you but from the other side.

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

It goes both ways, I guess. But um, no, I mean, just always, you know, coming from a place of like, but you know, that feels you, right? It's like, I'm going to prove people wrong. It can be very motivating. But it can also be very, like, restrictive. So it took me a while to sort of say, you know what, I'm not doing this to prove anyone wrong. Anyone. I'm just doing what makes me happy and what fulfills me?

Lara Schmoisman

Yeah, and I think that's liberating. I think that's, that's not only feel like, okay, I can do this. It's like, I'm gonna do it, whatever you think is right or not, I'm just doing it for me. And that's when you find the real self. And like, I always say, like, the fact that I can do this podcast, or like, my English is self taught. So I mean, I the fact that I'm doing a podcast, it's like, unthinkable for me to speak in English. And either at some point, I don't give a fuck, and others just do it. It's just for me, it's more important to hear other people's stories.

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

Yeah, not too bad. But you know, when you share people's stories, and I think we all have stories, you inspire others, and you say, Well, he did it, I can do it. And that has such profound ripple effects. That when you're starting, like when I did the Netflix show, honestly, a lot in my head, it was like, Oh, my

friends and family are gonna see me on TV. But when you start getting messages from like, Nigeria, and the Philippines, and Brazil, like all these places, you're like, holy shit, like everyone's looking at it.

Lara Schmoisman

Absolutely, but also so humbling to people, like, send messages to you. And I'm sure you know that there's those two sides of the people, the people that admire you and the other people say, look at her look what she's doing.

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

Oh, yeah, I've been I've been on the receiving end of the look at her like what she's doing for many years. But then once you reach a pinnacle, once you reach that turning point, which for me was the show, then everybody becomes team, team Sheila like team, you know?

Lara Schmoisman

And then how do you deal with that with people that you felt like they weren't like, looking at you...like, what is she doing? And now how we are friends again? How do you deal with that?

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

You know, I think I don't have that many people that close to me, it's I always think of it as I always say, it's like a Thanksgiving or Shabbat dinner analogy, you know, like, what does it take for you for it to feel like Thanksgiving? Do you need the turkey? Do you need the gravy? Maybe you can do with or without the cranberry sauce, you know? You have to figure out who's at the Thanksgiving table of your life who wants to see you succeed? And those are the people you invest your energy and care about the opinions of. You shouldn't care about the opinions of people who'd rather see you fail.

Lara Schmoisman

And absolutely, there are some people that and I found this in my life changing chill that is like they enjoy when you fall and they will be there when you fall but they cannot be there. We do when you succeed. Yeah, it was the same thing. I lost 80 pounds at some point, when and it was very strange people that they will never be my friends before they wanted to be my friends. And the ones that were my friends were Look at her now. And it was why I'm still the same person.

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

And it's always interesting to when it's people who've never met you making the comments. It's like, you'll never even talked one word with me like, how are you forming your opinion?

Lara Schmoisman

This is what I love about podcasts. And it's very intriguing for me how this clubhouse is going to work out too, because it's all about what people have to say, though, I found a lot of people talking without knowing what they say. You ask the doctor, people come to you. And of course, everyone diagnosis, you know that and everyone knows what to do and what they want. How did they come with the patient that they say I know what I need? I know, would you take anything?

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

No, I don't take any patient. I'm always, I always do a virtual consult first. Like every Wednesday, my day is filled with virtual consults. And it's interesting because the patients pretty much 80% know that I'm their doctor. But I'm basically interviewing them to see if they're capable of happiness, or if they have realistic expectations, or they're, you know, just anatomically a good candidate for the procedure that they're seeking. But I rarely have patients coming to me asking me, you know, telling me I need this anymore. They basically come to me and the trust and the credentialing has already been done on social media with the show. And so really, it's kind of whatever I tell them, they need, they want to do that. And at that point, it's kind of like what's their budget?

Lara Schmoisman

Okay, because I feel like so many people have, I wouldn't say even body dysmorphia, but expectations of having a nose that it doesn't fit their factions,

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

Right. I mean, that's part of my job. And that's part of my interview process. So when I'm doing those Virtual Console, I'm seeing where their brain space is at mostly, because I can improve something on everyone, right? We can improve the skin, we can improve the eyelids, the breasts, whatever it is, even the labia, the vagina, whatever I mean, it really the question is, is this person's brain space ready to receive? are they capable Venus that those are the things that I'm constantly evaluating? And if the answer's no, I don't take them on as a patient

Lara Schmoisman

And what about when it's for the right reasons? Because

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

If it's for the right reasons, I'm here to help.

Lara Schmoisman

Yeah, cuz there's so many people that feel like they're, they're doing all these treatments, because they're 1000 treatments out there. And they just ruin it because of how they think that there will be perceived. And perception is important than Don't get me wrong. But it's not everything if that perception is there, but your heart and your mind are not in the right place. I mean, you're not going to become smarter by having a surgery

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

And what's interesting is also I think, with the branding that we've done, and with the digital marketing that we've done, we have very intentionally and strategically put out a voice to that strong established man or woman who's just looking to optimize, and that's who we attract. We're not everyone's doctor, we're not looking to attract the people that think plastic surgery is going to make them happier, or, you know, save their relationship or things like that.

Lara Schmoisman

I love that. It's more like a maintenance program,

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

like working out. Yeah, it's like working out or eating healthy. It's part of that.

Lara Schmoisman

And what I love is study show a lot of things that you do to yours. Yeah. No, I love that you're so open that you say, Hey, I get this treatment. There are a lot of people that they show how great they are. They look in the beginning. I know, I don't know anything. I do it for my patients only.

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

Yeah, no, no, no, that's when you can speak from, you know, personal experience. And you say, Oh, this really doesn't hurt or this one hurts a little, but it's totally worth it. Trust me, you know?

Lara Schmoisman

Well, we all have different tolerance. But it's it's worth to share experience. I learned early on that there are so many things that people won't talk about, that they have to be secretive. And I learned early on that sometimes if you open about those things, you find out that many people are going through the same problem. Something that you I mean, I always tell the story that they told me basically my son was down syndrome, because I got a false positive. I cried for two weeks. And if I would have talk, probably I would have learned a lot of people will. We're having this rubbish.

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

Yeah, it's really difficult I think as immigrants to it's very difficult because a lot of things are very secretive. You know, for immigrants, I think our kids aren't going to have the same baggage.

Lara Schmoisman

I really hope so. I really hope so because this is something I, it fascinates me the psychology of the, the, the cultural because up to our generation, most of them This country where we were immigrants mostly, or sons or daughters of immigrants. And there is such a big factor of what it's okay for a woman or a man to do by a roll of culture. And that's what it brings me again, to what you do have you made you think that there are cultural effects in what women or men want to do to their body?

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

I mean, a lot, especially, you know, 50% of our patients fly in to see us so there could be flying in from Utah, they could be flying in from Miami, they could be flying in from Dubai, they could be flying in from Alaska. I mean, to know Canada, like everywhere. So I think culturally, it matters. It might even they might even be flying in from the Middle East because they only want a woman doctor and they'll ask for a completely female Oh, RT, female anesthesiologist, female nurse, female tech because of their cultural restrictions and who can see them naked, you know. But, again, I will tell you, I think that we've niched ourselves to that natural result result, our hashtag is natural bind is Ariane. So our whole goal is so no one knows you had anything done. And I will tell you that in and of itself gets rid of a lot of unstable people.

Lara Schmoisman

Yeah, but you feel like there are certain for example, there are certain I will say Jewish woman, there are certain things that the Jewish woman will never do, because they're Jewish.

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

Like, what?

Lara Schmoisman

I don't know, I was just wondering, that is if it's a cultural thing as a social thing.

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

I know, I'll tell you, I think it's I think it's more of like, like, I'll tell you something. It's not that a particular procedure, but I've had tons of women get in my chair and be like, I feel so guilty for being here. Like I shouldn't be spending money on and time on myself. I feel so narcissistic, but you know, it's my lawyer, I just called them like, do you want your daughter to feel that way when they're an adult? And they're always like, No, I don't want my daughter to feel that way. Well, you have to model that behavior.

Lara Schmoisman

Absolutely, I believe that we are the prime examples to our kids. If you are what we were talking earlier today, that's no matter how many times you fall, you get up and try again. And that's what your kids are going to be remembering about, you know, that he the some Botox or some nose job

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

no, not at all. I mean, it's interesting, my daughter had her Bat Mitzvah, this year, zoom Bar Mitzvah. But the rabbi, you know, got on the thing with her, and he said, you know, what is it what is something you admire about your parents? And she said, You know, I admire that my mom sets goals and accomplish them. And she said, You know, I admire about my dad, his storytelling, and his job, and his, you know, his his humor. And the rabbi was so cute. He told her, you know, usually when I asked that about bar and bar mitzvahs, they say, I admire how they take care of me. You know, they always say that they bring it back to something that their parents have done for them, rather than thinking of their parents as individuals that have accomplished things for themselves. Yeah, so I think they're seeing that I think they're, I think they're seeing that behavior that like, you are your own person. You can have kids, you can have a husband, but you matter as an individual and your goals and accomplishments are seen.

Lara Schmoisman

Yeah, I mean, I seen it very early on was since I was volunteering, my kids call that I didn't want to be called, like Owen's mom, or Mrs. Schmoisman, no, I have a name. I'm Lara. And that's okay. You can still respect me if you call me by my name, but I'm a person beyond my son. Even though my son is here. I always faced them with those values. So you're a mother of three. How do you handle?

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

I think they're pretty independent. I think that's how I do it. I had them all during residency. So I had to during general surgery and wondering plastic surgery. And you know, we had housekeepers, and nannies and stuff, to take care of them basically keep them alive until we got home. But, you know, they

still make their own breakfast, they cook dinner for themselves. Sometimes they make breakfast for me. And, you know, they kind of have to fend for themselves and be independent and problem solve. Because we weren't, you know, even if I was home, and maybe I was exhausted, or I was sleeping

Lara Schmoisman

in one hand, as long as you can make those spaces for them, which I know you do.

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

Yes, I do. I mean, it goes with a caveat. But I will tell you micromanaging your kids and solving all their problems for them is not beneficial, I think in the long term. Because, you know, eventually you have to make an independent adult who is capable of keeping a job and following some direction, at least for a certain part of their lives. So I see a lot of times, you know, on Instagram, it'll be like, quit your nine to five, follow your dreams and your passions, you know, but they'll help you be successful later in your 30s you know,

Lara Schmoisman

exactly, is the same in a team. I mean, I will I'm asked a lot about how I live My team because it's a large team. And same for you, and my team is all there tall. Man, we're a huge family, but at the same time is my philosophy is that I treat each person, my team like I would like my kids to be treated. And that doesn't mean fixing all the problems. It's about mentoring them to be better. And yes, of course, they can come to me with questions or problems. But first, they need to come back to me with solution too

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

I love that.

Lara Schmoisman

So tell me about your team. How do you pick your team? How do you choose?

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

I know my strengths and my weaknesses. We discussed that in the beginning. And one of my weaknesses is I always assume people are hardworking, and that they're going to do what they said they're going to do. Because in residency and unethical school, in order to go up that level of academics, you have to be a certain way, and you're surrounded by people who are the same way. So you just think everyone is honest, you know, going to get the job done, go that extra mile. And that's just not true. So I realized very early on, I probably shouldn't be the one interviewing. So I have my team interview, because they've been out there in the real world. They've done a lot of interviews, and probably they can choose someone better than I can. So they decide on someone I shake their hand, their first day of work, and I say welcome, but I'll fire next week, if it doesn't work out. So I don't let things fester. If it's not the right fit, I'm very quick to fire. I fired two people last week.

Lara Schmoisman

Oh my God, we are sisters from another, another mother. You're really twins. Everyone were very similar and in workout and they need to be a team worker.

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

Yeah. And also like I the way I think, you know, I was very non confrontational. And I hated doing that I would feel super guilty about it, especially if they were single mother, or you know if they were the primary breadwinner. But I think what you have to do is if somebody's unhappy, you have to set them free to go find their joy. And that made me feel better about firing people.

Lara Schmoisman

Not only that, the fact is that many people that are not teamplayers, they don't realize that this is a domino effect.

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

Yeah, it is a domino effect. Right here you

Lara Schmoisman

and if he affects you, I will affect sometimes to say you're not even doing it to me. You're the winner to your team.

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

Yeah, exactly. That matters too

Lara Schmoisman

and that matters a lot. Because that is in in the team feelings and how they feel yourself and we only grow as a team. I don't grow together, I can... I mean by myself. I can be my, my brand, but I will be nothing without my team.

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

Yeah, I agree with you. 100%.

Lara Schmoisman

Okay, Sheila, thank you so much for sharing your story. And we feel like very, very touched that you share that story with me.

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

Thank you, Lara.

Lara Schmoisman

And all your wisdom

Dr. Sheila Nazarian

Thanks for having me on. Appreciate it.

Lara Schmoisman

Thank you for joining us. If you like the show, remember to leave a review. I will really appreciate it. If you want to know more about marketing and and myself, follow me on Instagram. My handle is Lara Shmoisman. Was so good to have you here today. See you next time. catch you on the flip side. Ciao ciao.