

No matter a girl's age, background, or experiences, I believe they have the power to change the world. Let me show you how.

Imagine a girl who at five is an entrepreneurial wonder. She scores at the genius level for thinking outside the box, collaborates beautifully with her friends to solve problems, and spends her time making new toys with whatever resources she has. She's visionary, creative, innovative, persistent and most importantly—unafraid to take risks to get what she wants. This kind of person is in desperate demand across the global economy and in our own society that wants to keep its leadership in a hyper-competitive world. And the most amazing thing is, we're describing nearly every girl. At an age when, according to experts, 98 percent of children are naturally brilliant in these remarkable traits.

But then something terrible happens. The genius takes a precipitous dive. The bold, imaginative powers are conditioned-out by societal pressure and educated-out by a system designed to create the boundaries valued by the old world, not the new.

What if that didn't happen to girls? What if there was a window in a girl's life when just the right dose of learning at the just right time could snap the downward spiral, and produce girls whose gifts were available for the rest of their lives? What could this new kind of girl—an undiminished girl—become?

This is what I discovered and work to accomplish at VentureLab. I've created a unique and fun, early entrepreneurship training—the perfect vehicle to show girls a mindset and 'heartset' they already possess. An entrepreneurial outlook that girls can use for a lifetime, no matter what they choose to become.

I founded VentureLab in 2013 to get girls interested in STEM careers. I began by teaching them simple, practical entrepreneurial steps that I taught at the university. I let the girls come up with their own problem to solve, create a product, test it in a market, refine it, price it and produce it. But as I took dozens of girls through the program, I realized something much deeper was happening. These girls and their parents were telling me about all kinds of positive emotional and behavioral changes that were taking place. They were happier and more confident in school. They were less vulnerable to negative influences saying they shouldn't, couldn't or can't. They were self-directed. They were excited to become a new kind of girl: a VentureGirl.

Every girl should have a chance to learn the incredible lessons of entrepreneurship and how to hold onto their 5 year old genius and confidence and never let it go. Early entrepreneur training should be a part of every child's education, and especially for girls.

People sometimes say there should be a simpler, less clunky word for all this than 'entrepreneurship.' But to me, it is a short, amazing word that says everything it's about: vision, creativity, innovation, initiative, persistence, risk and fear tolerance, collaboration, resilience and determination—in just five syllables.

For me, entrepreneurship education provides the missing toolset and mindset needed to create future female innovators and changemakers. Because women are still underrepresented in entrepreneurship and STEM fields, VentureLab's programs are designed with girls' learning in mind. I believe amazing things happen in all-girl's settings: girls become more engaged, expressive and confident. They ask more questions and take more risks. Beyond equipping girls with the confidence to be engaged and active learners, our mission is to inspire girls to dream, dare and do.

I also believe entrepreneurship is for everyone. By creating an entrepreneurial program powerful enough to work for our girls, I realized that I created a great program for everyone. Any child (boy or girl) can experience the power and reap the benefits of entrepreneurial training.

VentureLab was started by a girl, for girls, and now we lead the way with everyone. Today, thousands of kids have taken part in VentureLab programs at their schools and at summer camps across the country. And we've only just begun.

Join us today to create the next generation of young innovators and entrepreneurs!

*Luz Cristal Mangchai*