

Who Inspires You?

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Lisa here. We all know parenting doesn't happen in a vacuum. When your child arrives, you don't suddenly know everything there is to know about parenting. But you do know some things. Some of it you remember learning, looking up, or being directly taught in some way. But there are other things that you know that you have no idea where you learned them.

Just like with anything else, we're influenced by what we learn from observing and interacting with other people. Your parenting has been influenced by a number of people. Just off the top of your head, who first comes to mind when you consider who has influenced your parenting?



Your first thoughts were probably of people who were close to you- your own parents or caregivers, aunts and uncles, parents of friends, friends who have kids of their own, etc. Sometimes people influence you in positive ways. For instance, you may like the way your friend handled a difficult interaction with their kids and file that away for a time when you may face a similar situation. Other times, you take away things you plan to avoid. You may have that list of things that your parents said or did that you swear you will never do ("Because I said so." Sound familiar?).

But, what about other, more subtle influences? Do you have some parenting role models from pop culture, television, books, or movies? Do you remember watching something and thinking that when you have kids, you want to be a parent like so-and-so from your favorite TV show? When working with parents, Sarah and I will often use examples from TV shows to illustrate a point. Those examples resonate with parents and will often spark their own recollections of fictional parents who influence their own parenting behaviors.



Knowing who has influenced you can help you gain clarity about your own parenting. If you are noticing yourself saying or doing things that are inconsistent with your true parenting values, take a minute to think about where those specific behaviors came from. Are you saying some of those things your parents said to you? Are you trying to force yourself into an image you've seen on TV? If so, it's probably time to make some adjustments.

The good news is you can always pick new role models. Are there people in your life who make you feel inspired as a parent? Are there people whose parenting style matches well with your parenting values? Spend some time talking with them about how and why they parent the way they do. You'll likely find some new ideas that resonate with your parenting values or figure out how to implement parenting behaviors you've wanted to try but were unsure of how to make them work.

Also, it's always great to look back on the role models you've collected along the way. See what still works for you. As with most things, take what you need and leave the rest. You've got this!