

## Your children are watching you.

### 6 questions to assess your role modelling

Children learn by observing their parents and how they do life. If you are a single parent then you are 'the' role model – no pressure! You have no control over the other parent, but you have power over how you think and how you act. You choose the role model your children will see.

If you type in 'parents as role models' as an internet search, you will bring up lots of hits discussing the important role parents have in being a role model for their children. Research is being conducted into parent's role modelling affecting:

- eating habits
- teenage drinking behaviour
- teenage violence
- fitness
- teenage driving habits
- children's friendships

Parents are considered the foremost role models for their children, even with the increasing effects of peer pressure in teenage years.

#### What can I model?

Role modelling includes:

- showing children love, understanding and respect
- being aware and taking an interest in children's activities
- communicating well including how you manage conflict
- valuing your health
- being positive (about yourself, learning etc)
- using problem solving skills when confronted with a challenge
- practicing forgiveness and apologising when you weren't the perfect parent

Children will learn from how you relate to others and manage your emotions. For example, Johnny Lee Clary, a former leader of the Ku Klux Klan, describes how he learnt racist hate from his father.



## Practice what you preach

Parents need to practice what they preach, otherwise it creates confusion in children. Do you remember as a child the pain and confusion of being told off by a parent for swearing, then been overwhelmed by the injustice when the parent did the same thing. Parents need to model the kind of behavior they want in their children, not just talk about it.

As a parent, writing that scares me! That's a lot of pressure to have my stuff together so I can lead by example.

I know, by my personal example, the difference it makes in the lives of my kids. Since I've put time into improving my emotional health with counseling, practicing boundaries, taking steps towards fulfilling my dreams – my kids have noticed the difference. They comment that I am happier, more calm and that's translates into a happier, calmer household.

Previously, when I was overloaded, I would take it out on the kids, and the tone of our house was set by the kind of day I had experienced: bad day – spaghetti on toast for tea, little communication except for the inevitable temper tantrum (by me!!!!), and pushing the kids away emotionally.

## Be your best

It's scary as a single parent to realise how much of the role modeling will come from us, so we need to work on ourselves to be the best parent we can be. That's the reason I created 'One Together'; to help single parents be their best, give their best and grow their best family.

## Putting legs on it

*Do the following quiz which is designed for single parents to identify any areas that need attention by answering yes or no to the questions.*

1. Are your actions and your words aligned? Do you act out what you are speaking to your children?
2. Are your words and actions towards yourself positive? Answer **no** if you put yourself down in your speech by saying you are stupid, clumsy or no-one likes you.



3. Are you dealing with your emotional baggage?  
Answer **no** if you struggle with anger, guilt, shame, fear, envy?
4. Are you pursuing your passions and purpose?
5. Do you relate to others in a healthy way? Break this down into:
  - Do you practice forgiveness towards others? Answer **no** if you want revenge.
  - Do you have strong boundaries? Answer **no** if you have problems with either being a door mat or people pleasing.
  - Do you have the support of safe people? Safe people love unconditionally, no matter what. They show grace while speaking the truth. Their support encourages and comforts you, while holding you accountable. Your safe people may include family, friends or even a professional counsellor.  
Answer **yes** if you have this network.
6. Do you solve problems with healthy strategies? Answer **no** if you are burying them under work (workaholic), alcohol, drugs or rescuing other people?

**No** answers identify areas you may need to work on to parent well and be a better role model for your children. Choose one area you have identified to start changing your attitudes or behaviour. You can find more information on these areas on the website and in future blogs.

### Resources and references

The Australian Parenting Network: Being a role model for your child

<http://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/role-modelling.html>

SCAN: Parents as role models <https://www.scanva.org/support-for-parents/parent-resource-center-2/parents-as-role-models/>

Huff Post Parents: 10 ways to become the parent - and role model- your kids really need

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-suzanne-gelb/want-to-raise-awesome-kids-10-ways-to-become-a-b\\_5734918.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr-suzanne-gelb/want-to-raise-awesome-kids-10-ways-to-become-a-b_5734918.html)

