

Role Models Are Not In The Stars They May Be In Your Backyard

Don't just look to the "Stars" for role models...
look in your "Backyard"

By: Daniella

Jennifer, a fourth grader is listening to her new Britany Spears C.D., "Oops I did it Again". Like many kids her age, she deeply admires Britany Spears. Jennifer watches her every moment she can on television, she listens to her on the radio, she dresses up like her and she even tries singing like her. In fact, Jennifer wants to be just like her. Jennifer sees Britany Spears as her role model.

"Role models are important to have," says Valerie the guidance counselor at the Manhattan New School. The problem begins she says, "when kids choose the wrong role models, choose role models for the wrong reasons or when role models behave inappropriately and cause big disappointments to those who believe in them."

"I used to adore Britany Spears," says Julie, a fifth grader who goes to school in Queens, New York, "until one morning when I dropped everything I was doing and ran as fast as I could to see Britany singing my favorite song on television." Julie described how shocked she was when she saw Britany Spears. "My idol was on stage wearing barely any clothing. I was so disappointed."

When asked why she adored Britany, Julie said that Britany was beautiful, popular and successful so she wanted to be like her. When she saw her

on television with barely any clothing on, Julie wondered about the message Britany was sending to young kids like her. The message that you had to wear as little clothing as possible in order to be beautiful, popular or successful. Julie did not like that message.

Like Julie, many kids look up to famous people for role models, but they should be careful about which role models they pick and why they pick them. Some famous people are great to be picked as role models because of the things they do or because of what they have accomplished. If we choose role models, we have to pick the qualities about the person that are good and not pick the person just because they are famous and popular.

"Role models don't have to be perfect..." says George Brett, a baseball player. We can't forget that they are humans too and they should not become our idols. But after all, role models can be as mystifying as an undiscovered disease. So, it was not wrong for Julie to have chosen Britany Spears as a role model. But what she should have done was to find out more about her. If she did a little research, she might have found out that Britany wanted to be a singer since she was a very small girl. She worked towards her dream and was successful. Julie should admire that quality instead of just wanting to be beautiful like Britany.

Do all role models have to be people whom you may never have met like rock stars, movie stars, sports personalities, famous people on television or in magazines? Absolutely not! Sometimes famous people can be disappointing because not all famous people feel the same way as George Brett. He recognizes the need for role models more than ever in these troubled times, and if he can help the game's image with his behavior, he'll gladly accept the role as a goodwill ambassador.

Some famous people don't really care about the fact that kids are looking up to them as role models. So instead of looking for role models in the stars you don't know, you might want to find role models in your "backyard"...the people you see everyday. How about your teacher, your coach, your parents, your neighbor, your family doctor or a friend in school? Sometimes the best role models can be people you know very well.

"One of my favorite role models is Rob, my swimming coach," says Melissa, a team member of the Flushing Flyers in Queens, N.Y., "because he doesn't go crazy over one kid doing something wrong and he doesn't curse. He has a lot of patience with me and other kids when he is helping us perfect our strokes, and he is always there come rain or shine."

So think carefully about the people you choose as role models. It's not a crime to flip backwards over the Backstreet Boys or scream and clap and sing along with Christina Aguilera. But from what Julie has experienced, we can say maybe the best role models are those you know and love in your everyday lives. So take a good look at the good qualities your mom, your dad, your

teacher, your coach or your neighbor have, and let them be the role models for you.

And, if you choose a star or famous person, make sure you find out about them – what are the qualities that make them successful or admirable? Then be free to love them and let those qualities be the reason why you would choose them as role models.