

Be like me! Wait, don't be like me!

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Every third-grader at my daughter's school has to take part in a mock "Wax Museum" they have in the gym. My eight-year-old has to pick a character from history, dress up like them, and, as the kids from the school shuffle past, she tells about who she is and what she did to become famous. The only caveat is that the person they portray has to be deceased; besides that, they should just pick someone they admire.

Over dinner, my daughter, Emily, and I started to discuss who she wanted to be, "I want to be someone who did something good for animals," she said over her fried calamari. "And of course a girl," she added. Sipping my Chardonnay, I said, "Let's see a girl who loved animals...How about Jane Goodall?!" Then I remembered and smirked as I said, "Oh, no wait, too bad, she's not dead."

Emily picked right up on it and, with a smile, said, "Oh. man! She's so awesome. I wish she were dead!" My son Ben chomped on his pizza and smiled as he looked back and forth at us. He

didn't understand what we were talking about, but dead people always get a five-year-old's attention.

"Rats! Well, when do you have to decide?" I encouraged her, "Maybe you'll get lucky and she'll qualify by that time." Then in mocked defeat she said, "Yeah, maybe."

We both giggled when my husband, Larry, came and joined us at the table. We filled him in on the conversation up until then, Emily and I both cracking up at our own jokes. He started rattling off perfectly acceptable dead people, right off the top of his head: Dian Fossey, Amelia Earhart, Sacajawea. Emily and I just laughed as we shot down all sensible suggestions and tried to get him to join in.

Here's the thing: my daughter is like me in a lot of ways. At eight, I can see her silly, nonsensical side start to bloom and I love it. But then, sometimes I think with complete dread, "Oh, man, she's just like me in a lot of ways." Because no one knows the downside of being like me better than...well...me.

I surely can't be the only parent who has sat in a parent-teacher conference and as the teacher starts to describe the child's "challenges," you realize she could be talking about you. Anyone? There you are, crammed into a tiny chair, nodding knowingly as the teacher goes down her list and you can just feel your spouse's stare in your direction. He knows. You know. She's just like you.

I always thought I wanted my daughter to be like me. But all the good stuff only, thank you. I never thought about bad habits and frustrating struggles that, as an adult, I'm still trying to overcome. I didn't order those. But, it's just like everything else in parenting, not all good, but not all that bad either.

And that night, as Emily and I tried to make Larry & Ben laugh, it was pretty good. "I know!" I said triumphantly, "I

have the perfect person for you, she loved animals and she is dead—Leona Helmsly.” That was it, Larry burst out laughing while my daughter just looked at me eagerly, “Who’s she?”

The photo above is my me.

To see more of my photos with script, head over to my Flickr page.