

## How Did My Kid Get Like This?

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As parents, we all want what is best for our children. When there are problems, most parents want to address them immediately. This might mean going to a medical specialist, getting a tutor, arranging a meeting with teachers, or seeking psychological help. This is typically instinctual, so many parents appropriately address these concerns as they arise. However, a more insightful parent may consider other aspects of what could be causing a problem. Considering a biopsychosocial conceptual framework where biological, psychological, and social factors influence who we are as a person can be helpful. To take a symbolic/metaphorical 'step back' and get the perspective to see the forest from the trees requires some awareness and objectivity.

The biological/genetic loading that we pass onto our children is legitimately powerful. However, sometimes I think we either consciously forget that or want to unconsciously forget it. There is certainly lots to say about the environmental and nurturing influence on our offspring, as well. Some combination of nature and nurture loading and many other variables help to create what we create. It is sometimes more obvious to see the physical similarities between parents and their kids rather than the psychological contribution.

These ideas have been around for a long time. Phrases like, "An apple or acorn doesn't fall far from the tree" or s/he is "a chip off the old block" or reference to, "like mother, like daughter" or "like father, like son" suggest a child has the same or similar traits as his/her parents. In other words, if you plant a potato, then you get a potato. This is important to keep in mind when you see positive and negative attributes in your child, including when you beam with pride or scream in anger or frustration. To some extent, your children are destined to be like you. Sometimes, when parents are feeling stressed or angry that their child is acting out or doing poorly in school, I say, "How were you as a child in terms of your behavior and grades?" Often, this leaves the parent with a smile and maybe some frustration; it also imposes perspective taking and can neutralize their upset. Some parents who are extremely motivated to be a different parent to their children than their parents were to them can change, and therapy can be the conduit for parents to make these changes.