

A role model can be helpful

Think of a particular person who seems to have the kind of beliefs we respect. Then imagine what they would do in a situation that angers you. For some people, imagining it makes it a lot easier to mimic. And mimicking the behaviour effectively consolidates the new beliefs.

The role model can be somebody you know, like a friend or relative, or it can be somebody you've never actually met — someone you've seen on television, perhaps. One important point if you choose the latter: it doesn't particularly matter if the person resembles their screen persona in real life or not. For example, my two favourite role models are the television business troubleshooter Marius Harvey-Jones and ace cricket commentator Brian Johnston. Now, I've never met either of these good people, and for all I know they might have been quite different in private life from the genial characters they presented on television and radio. As a matter of fact, both gentlemen are, or were by all accounts much the same in private life as they appeared in public. But my point here is that it doesn't matter; for the purpose of a role model, it is the persona you recognise that is important.

Nor do your role models have to match you in age or gender, or anything else. All that is important is that you can ask yourself: 'What perspective would they have taken on this?' and 'How would they have behaved in this situation?' and so on. The fact that I never quite live up to either of my models doesn't matter either; they certainly have a good effect. The key thing is that if you find yourself a good role model they can lead you into behaving just how you would wish to.