Am I becoming my parents?



Even if we have wonderful relationships with our parents, the thought of turning into them can strike fear in our hearts. But the older we get, the more we catch ourselves saying and doing things our parents said and did.

Early days

During early childhood, our brains become programmed by those caring for us – in most cases, our parents. Through them we learn how to interact with the world. As our brains develop, neuropathways are formed – pathways we automatically take in certain situations. This is why we catch ourselves sounding like our mothers or acting like our fathers – which is great if we're mirroring positive traits, not so great if they're negative ones.

Forging new paths

It is possible to change negative or destructive behaviours we learned as children. Here are some ways to begin forging a new path in life:

- **Make peace with the past.** This doesn't mean the past never happened, it means understanding and forgiving your parents and recognizing their good qualities. It also means realizing that your mother or father's less than perfect parenting was learned from *their* parents.
- **Make a list** of your parents' characteristics or behaviours you want to avoid as well as a list of positive values for yourself.
- **Recognize your individuality.** People may say you're just like your mother or father, but you're not. You are your own person. Think about the things that make you unique. Whether it's your sense of humour, your artistic talent or ability to make friends, celebrate these differences.
- **Recognize that you've also inherited or learned positive things from your parents.** It's not so bad turning into your parents when you realize that they are responsible for many of your great qualities, such as strong work ethic or athleticism. It also helps to maintain – or develop – a close relationship across generations.
- **Ask your friends or relatives** to help you become more aware of how you react in certain situations.

If you feel completely helpless in identifying and changing your own behaviour, consider seeking professional help. **Contact us** for more information.