

**Tips for Parents** by Susie Kohl

## *Lessons from the Children We Once Were*

“**Y**OU WERE A CHILD ONCE TOO.” This was a truth Fred Rogers of *Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood* famously conveyed to parents tuning into his program with their children. The power of this phrase has long intrigued me. In 1998 I found an article by a man named Lloyd Vogel detailing how interviewing Rogers for *Esquire* magazine had transformed his life, because Rogers had so sincerely helped him to remember the child he once was. They developed a friendship, and their relationship is the basis of a new movie called *A Beautiful Day in the Neighborhood*.

Recently Vogel wrote about his hero, “He (Rogers) wanted us to remember what it was like to be a child so that he could talk to us; he wanted to talk to us so we could remember what it was like to be a child.” Reflecting on our childhood selves often provides the most powerful wisdom we can access when learning how to love and support our children.

This week a father told me that he and his wife had recently playfully exchanged roles with their two young daughters. The idea popped up when he and his wife were lying on their bed and the girls started acting like they were babies. This dad enthusiastically agreed and started holding his arms up, yelling “Uppie, uppie” as if he was desperate to be picked up. The girls laughed uproariously. One of the girls took on an adult posture and pretended to be furiously cleaning the mirror and complaining, “I have so much to do!”

He reported that after this fantasy role reversal, everyone was a good mood. Wouldn’t it be helpful if we all took time to step out of our points of view with each other to achieve more compassion and empathy?

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