

Amy Winehouse won a few grammies this week including best song for a number about being in rehab. She has a fabulous voice, but is struggling with a life-threatening addiction to drink and drugs, and I'd hate to think she might be a role mode for our youngsters.

In the same week, a look-alike agency in Glasgow admitted it can no longer find work for their 'Britney Spears' who, until the recent demise of her doppelganger, was a popular option for children's parties. Unfortunately, they haven't told us who the celebrity of choice is now for the under fives, although I'm pretty sure it's not Wendy Alexander.

There used to be a fashion for positive discrimination, and some places continue to practise it. The idea being that children – and other adults - can see people like them in roles that they may then aspire to. The reason, so the theory goes, that few men teach at primary school, is that boys and girls grow up with female primary teachers, and so, deep in their subconscious, they think that primary teaching is a woman's job. So it is with nursing and cleaning, or with perceived male jobs like farming or running large corporations. If the USA was to elect a black or a female president, then this heralds to other black people or women that such roles as possible for them too.

Sadly, the reverse also seems to be true. Young boys growing up without fathers or other men in their lives, look elsewhere for guidance in how men behave. If there are no teachers or leaders that they can admire, the argument is that they then seek to emulate the men they see on television or games machines.

Miss Wilson was my role model as a child. She was my glamorous red-haired, mini-skirted teacher. I hung on her every word, and even now, more than thirty years later, can recall her mannerisms, her occasional pronouncements on

the state of the world and our classroom. She left us to marry a submariner. Then there was Valerie Singleton, Blue Peter's greatest and later on Siouxsie Souix and Maddona.

The thing about role models is if you find the right one, you can single out aspects of them to justify your own little idiosyncrasies. I'm sure you know the American TV series, Friends? It's about three women and three men, all white and straight who share flats and friendships over a number of years. They are all 'ordinary' - largely likeable and of course attractive, but the programme is scripted so that you can suspend reality and feel that actually they are just like you.

And I have adopted one of them, Monica, as my new role model. She is obsessed with order and cleanliness and bullies the others into using her little telephone messaging notes or to eat their biscuits over the sink to avoid 'crumbies'.

Unlike me - or should I say the old me? - Monica makes no attempt to hide her compulsions. She is not ashamed that she numbers her mugs to better keep track of them, and her cross-filing indexing system for family photographs is plain genius.

Until now, I hid my fixations, but Monica has allowed me to emerge from the obsessive closet. I confess to having an ordered system to manage my knickers drawer and an evening routine that I follow last thing at night to ensure a good sleep. My habits do not impinge on my life, and are a long way from the condition known as obsessive compulsive disorder that prevents sufferers from leading a normal life or even leaving their own homes. They even provide some amusement for my family and work colleagues.

Every so often, I deliberately deviate from my routine, just to prove to myself that I can (which is probably weirder than the original routine), but what Monica has allowed me to do is, if not be proud, then at least not be ashamed of myself. When I re-arrange my mother-in-law's cutlery drawer, or re-load my sister's dishwasher I am doing it in the full confidence that my way is right. And it's a whole lot less dangerous than if I had latched on to Ms Winehouse for guidance.

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