

# It Was Fun to Be a Stage Mom. Until the Day It Wasn't



By *Jonna Jerome*



You may have seen my son on screen—including, once, in a scene I wish hadn't happened, at least at the time.

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When a friend suggested I get my toddler into acting and commercials, I never dreamed we would still be at it years later. Bullies and hormones have made school challenging for my reserved son, but acting has provided an outlet for him and bolstered his confidence. I continue to support the endeavor, even though I spend a heck of lot of time driving him around.

My son was just having fun, and I felt I had a handle on it—until he was called to audition for an anonymous pop star's music video. It had been a long dry spell, so when the call came that he got the job, he was ecstatic.

I asked to see scene breakdowns or a storyboard, to no avail. I had two choices: Decline and take my son home, or stay and monitor the situation as best I could. Usually a backup child is available when working with young actors, but my son was the only minor on set. I knew if we left, he would likely be released from his agency and risk not being hired again.

### “Don't worry mom,” he said. “It'll be fine.”

As the day wore on and on, I realized he was in no imminent danger of being scarred for life. His segment was shot separately, and he was told to focus on a guy in a red T-shirt. There was no interaction with the pop star.

It was an impressive set, complete with the director perched atop a huge crane yelling, “Action!” We enjoyed catered food, a private [tutor](#), and my son even learned to juggle between takes. We left that night not much wealthier monetarily, but richer for having had a positive experience—or so I thought.



Then the video came out.

It was a mother's worst nightmare, and it was all over YouTube. What appears to millions of people is that my then-12-year-old son is being flashed by the female singer. My inner stage mom burst into tears, and I called my husband. He struggled to put a positive spin on it. “Well, when we show this clip at his wedding someday, we'll all have a good laugh.”

I hung up on him and called the agency.

Their response to my distress was, “It will make him the coolest kid in middle school.” That so irritated me because it was true.

My son's street cred soared, but mine suffered serious damage. I had many painful conversations with curious parents explaining what had actually transpired and how it all came about. Ironically, their kids watching the video saw far more than we did on set.

Ultimately, I managed to use the situation to broach otherwise seriously [awkward topics](#) with my son. I was able to check in with him about what he was watching when he thought I wasn't watching, the music he was listening to, and puberty-related issues.

### While this train wreck somehow turned out to be a win, I knew I had to make some changes.

We signed with a new agency, one that understood my concerns and confirmed we would never be asked to commit to an audition or job prior to having a script, storyboard, or compensation information. True to their word, they sent over a scene for my son in a major studio film with a warning it contained some pretty raw language. I read the entire script and decided to ask my son how he felt about swearing in a feature film. I must have done something right, because he said he was not comfortable with it. While the agency likely wasn't as ecstatic as I was, they took the news with good grace.

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I still cringe when I view this infamous video, but I learned from the experience and it has guided my parenting decisions, on and off the stage. Before having firsthand experience in the industry, I believed “stage mom” meant parents pushing their children to succeed at any cost. But there are those of us stage moms who just want to be involved parents, and ensure other people don't put our children in situations they are not ready for. There will be situations in life that we don't anticipate and can't control. But just like other parents, I'm doing my best to watch out for my son, protect him from what I can, and help him make it through when things don't go as planned.

**Jonna Jerome**

*Jonna Jerome is a digital content writer, writing tales based on life experiences and observations. She has three kids, a husband, a dog, and an obese cat – along with a tiny graveyard of fish in the back yard. The flowers grow beautifully there. Jonna can be found at [jangler.com](#), weaving tales of love and loss; and musing why the internet goes down when the toilet is flushed – or writing masterful digital campaigns at [wordswerk.com](#).*

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