

My mother named me Tara Jo Lindsey. Tara--not to be confused with 'Tah-rah' or Terra-- was inspired by a heroine from the highly acclaimed Young and the Restless, but she likes to tell people that the name Tara was also inspired by the plantation in Gone With the Wind. In Irish, it means a tower or hill. Some interpretations say it's the 'hill where the kings meet.' In Indian sanskrit, it means 'star.' In Buddhist culture, Tara is the goddess of compassion and forgiveness.

Jo was for my father, whose name was J.O. J.O. does not stand for anything in particular, just J-O. He was named after his father, my grandfather. I have no connection to my father, as he remained absent throughout the majority of my life, but I do like my middle name. I have taken ownership of it and think that in general, it has a nice ring to it. When she was pregnant, my mom went back and forth between Tara Jo and Tara Lou, which I am not that crazy about. Jo means, "God is gracious." It was gracious of my mother to rethink the middle name "Lou." And, if God is gracious, then I can be too.

My last name, Lindsey, is also a remnant of my father. It is an English name, which according to "The House of Names.com," carries the motto 'endure with strength.' My son and I have different last names, as he carries the last name of his own absent father. In my adult life, I have decided to change my last name to 'West,' which was my grandfather's name. He recently passed away, leaving two married daughters. West is the name for those who migrated to the new world, which I will take as a sign to bravely charge into new terrain. If I change both mine and my son's name to West, then we carry on my grandfather's legacy and clear ourselves of our absent father's names in one swift move. The motto for "West" is 'the most glorious day of my life.'

I do like my name and feel it tells a story. Altogether, my name may mean "a hill where the kings meet, protected by compassion, forgiveness, and the graciousness of God, to endure with strength as they charge forward into new terrain."