

Preserving and Nurturing Cultural Connections for Children

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Session Goals

- Understand
 - Understand the importance of culture in shaping values, beliefs, self-awareness, and value for others.
- Explore
 - Explore the cultural connections that are important in forming a healthy identity in children.
- Incorporate
 - Incorporate cultural humility to promote relationships built on trust and respect for differences that make it safe for sensitive issues to be addressed.
- Explore
 - Explore issues that may be challenging for families with diverse ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds.



- Share your culture.
- Share what it means to you in 30 seconds.

Definition of *culture*

- The customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group *also* : the characteristic features of everyday existence (such as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time.
- The set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization.
- The set of values, conventions, or social practices associated with a particular field, activity, or societal characteristic.
- The integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations.



Cultural Connections


1. Race
 2. Culture
 3. Ethnicity
 4. Geographical Location
 5. Economic Level
 6. Religion
 7. Sexual Orientation
 8. Family Values & Traditions
- ETC...



Cultural Humility

- To maintain a willingness to suspend what you know, or what you think you know, about a person based on generalizations about their culture.
- What you learn about other's culture stems from being open to what they themselves have determined is their personal expression of their heritage and culture.





Foster and adoptive parents have the same task of encouraging the healthy development of their children's ethnic and cultural identities. Parents whose race/culture differs from their children face additional challenges with nurturing healthy ethnic and cultural identities.

Incorporating Respect for Diversity as a Family Value

Identity Research

- Cultural identity and ethnic identity are created through healthy connection with others who share similar traditions, values, and history (Spencer & Markstrom-Adams, 1990).
- Ultimately, social acceptance and connection with primary caregivers and peers lead to feelings of individual and social power in children (Rohner, 1975). From childcare through secondary education, there are individual relationships and relationships with groups that impact the developmental experiences of the growing child. Through identity formation, an individual child “belongs”—first to a family, then to an extended family, then to a community or neighborhood, and, finally, to a society.
- Racial phenotype and dark skin color remain a consistent worry for young children growing up in an increasingly multicultural world. Childhood experiences of racial acceptance and rejection by significant attachment figures become intertwined with memories of the quality of their emotional relationships (Lewis et al., 2013).
- In the larger context of families, neighborhoods, and social groups, the caregiver's and social message in response to a child's skin color and trauma is an unrecognized area of vulnerability for children.

Value Diversity and Resist Prejudice and Discrimination

- Teach children to be critical thinkers about prejudice and discrimination.
- Respond to children's questions and comments about differences even if you're not sure what to say.
- Listen carefully to what children are saying. Ask a few questions before answering to get a clearer idea of what they really want to know and the ideas they already have on the subject.

Value Diversity and Resist Prejudice and Discrimination

- If children are nonverbal, observe and respond to their curiosity.
- Model the behaviors and attitudes you want children to develop.
- Pay particular attention to situations that can either promote prejudice or inhibit a child's openness to diversity.
- Make sure your home reflects diversity in books, magazines, dolls, puzzles, paintings, music, and so on.
- Don't let racist and prejudicial remarks go by without intervening.
- Create opportunities for children to interact and make friends with people who are different from them. Children learn best from concrete experiences.

Value Diversity and Resist Prejudice and Discrimination

- Involve families in sharing their traditions. In fact, instead of deciding yourself which tradition you would like to expose children to, ask families what they would like to share.
- Try to expose children to role models from their own culture as well as to those from other cultures.
- Shape your response to the child's age and personality. Generally, children want to know why people are different, what this means, and how those differences relate to them.
- Discuss with other families, ideas for responding to children's questions. You'll gain new ideas and insights as you exchange experiences, and you can clarify what works best for you and your children.



As early as age 2, according to research, children begin to take note of differences in other people.

What age did you become aware?

THE PRESCHOOL YEARS

- **Be honest.** Don't encourage children not to "see" color or tell children we are all the same. Rather, discuss differences openly and highlight diversity by choosing picture books, toys, games and videos that feature diverse characters in positive, non-stereotypical roles.
- **Embrace curiosity.** Be careful not to ignore or discourage your youngster's questions about differences among people, even if the questions make you uncomfortable. Not being open to such questions sends the message that difference is negative.



THE PRESCHOOL YEARS

- **Broaden choices.** Be careful not to promote stereotypical gender roles, suggesting that there are certain games, sports or activities that only girls can do or only boys can do.
- **Foster pride.** Talk to your child about your family heritage to encourage self-knowledge and a positive self-concept.
- **Lead by example.** Widen your circle of friends and acquaintances to include people from different backgrounds, cultures and experiences.





Ages 0 to 6

In these early years, your task is to lay positive groundwork, addressing hate by cultivating its opposite—compassion and tolerance.

Tolerance & Respect: ELEMENTARY & PRETEEN YEARS

Model it. Talking to your child about the importance of embracing difference and treating others with respect is essential, but it's not enough.

Acknowledge difference. Rather than teaching children that we are all the same, acknowledge the many ways people are different, and emphasize some of the positive aspects of our differences. Encourage your child to talk about what makes him different and discuss ways that may have helped or hurt him at times. After that, finding similarities becomes even more powerful.



Tolerance & Respect: ELEMENTARY & PRETEEN YEARS



- **Challenge intolerance.** If your child says or does something indicating bias or prejudice, don't meet the action with silence. Silence indicates acceptance. Find the root of the action or comment then explain why it was unacceptable.
- **Seize teachable moments.** Look for everyday activities that can serve as springboards for discussion. School-age children respond better to lessons that involve real-life examples than to artificial or staged discussions about issues.
- **Emphasize the positive.** Just as you should challenge your child's actions if they indicate bias or prejudice, it's important to praise him for behavior that shows respect and empathy for others.

Ages 9 – PRE-TEEN

- At this age, your child may also start to pick up on biased views among those he knows and loves. Your child may rightly be confused: He cares for this person, but her beliefs differ from his family's. Address these disparities.
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THE TEEN YEARS



- As kids prepare to exit childhood, they cement their **sense of identity**, laying a foundation for who they will become. As we've seen in the news, this age can be a tipping point.
- If you witness your child engaging in **biased thinking or hate speech**, whether online or in life—and yes, even kids of socially aware, justice-minded parents do so—speak up.
- **Keep talking.** Use current issues from the news, such as the immigration debate or same-sex marriage, as a springboard for discussion. Ask your teen what she thinks about the issues.
- **Stay involved.** Messages about differences exist all around your teen: the Internet, songs, music videos, reality shows, ads and commercials, social cliques at school. Discuss the messages they send.

THE TEEN YEARS



- **Live congruently.** Discussing the importance of valuing difference is essential, but modeling this message is even more vital. Evaluate your own circle of friends or the beliefs you hold about certain groups of people.
- **Broaden opportunities.** It may be natural for teens to stick to groups they feel most comfortable with during the school day. Provide other opportunities for your teen to interact with peers from different backgrounds.
- **Encourage activism.** Promote ways for your teen to get involved in causes he cares about.

Issues Specific to Children and Parents Connected through Foster Care

- Foster Parents have the responsibility to help their children define themselves as a member of their own genetic racial and cultural community.
- When the family feels comfortable enough, begin to talk to the child about how their family may look different or be perceived differently and how the child feels about that.
- Assist the child in developing responses to common questions and situations that may surface because of these differences.
- Consider the home environment and include culturally diverse books, pictures and toys.
- Include each child's favorite and familiar foods, music, TV shows, church, etc. and maintain these connections.



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- Share your strategies for increasing cultural sensitivity, cultural humility, and respect for differences in your own family.

Current Guidelines – Antiracism and Justice Strategies for Families



- Speak clearly about your position on current issues. State what you value and believe about race and equality.
- Be available for conversations.
- Resist getting sidetracked by defensiveness, denial, anger, and guilt.
- Develop family action steps to take.
- Create a family antiracism plan.
- Limit the amount of sensationalized tv and social media.
- Take notice of authentic signs of positive growth and change.
- Pay attention to good news some of the time without downplaying other events.
- Resist colorblind analogies and expressions.
- Remember that skin color is a beautiful part of a person's identity.

Children Deserve to:

- Live in a home that views diversity as a positive resource and valuable asset to be celebrated.
- Remain connected to peers and mentors.
- Live in a home that allows them to feel racial and ethnic pride; and provides them with survival skills.
- Have parents who allow them to explore their culture in different ways; and who value and recognize the differences between the child's birth families' culture and their own family culture.
- Have parents who recognize and understand what they will experience in a race-conscious society.
- Have parents who can care for their skin and hair care needs, along with dietary and medical needs.
- Feel a sense of belonging to their current family culture as well as to their culture of origin.



Create Your
Own
DIVERSITY
Model

Melting Pot vs Tossed Salad

Additional Resources:

- Friends, Family, Colleagues
- <https://coolmompicks.com/blog/2015/07/07/12-childrens-book-help-talk-to-kids-about-prejudice/>
- We Need Diverse Books: <https://diversebooks.org/resources-for-race-equity-and-inclusion/>
- Southern Poverty Law Center: www.tolerance.org/parents
- Center for the Improvement of Child Caring: www.ciccparenting.org
- Anti-Defamation League: www.adl.org
- Beyond the Golden Rule: A Parent's Guide to Preventing and Responding to Prejudice -free, downloadable at: <http://www.tolerance.org/parents/index.jsp>
- How to Be an Anti-Racist Parent: Real-Life Parents Share Real-Life Tips (free e-book at the following website: <http://www.antiracistparent.com/2007/06/20/free-e-book-how-to-be-an-anti-racist-parent/>)
- Responding to Hate At School: A Guide for Teachers, Counselors, and Administrators published by Teaching Tolerance – free e-book at www.teachingtolerance.org
- Speak Up! Responding to Everyday Bigotry (free e-book) at <http://www.tolerance.org/speakup/>
- Scholastic – Early Childhood Today: <https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/articles/teaching-content/teaching-diversity-place-begin-o/>
- <https://www.pbs.org/parents/talking-about-racism>
- 2009. Racial Identity development during childhood. Swanson, Dena Phillips; Cunningham, Michael; Youngblood, Joseph, II; Spencer, Margaret Beale. In Handbook of African American Psychology. Neville, Helen A.; Tynes, Brendesha M.; Utsey, Shawn O., eds. Thousand Oaks, CA, US: Sage Publications. pp. 269-281