

# We're All Different, We're All the Same

It is never too early to start teaching children about cultural awareness, diversity, and respect. During the preschool years, children become increasingly aware of the world around them. They notice physical attributes, such as hair texture and skin color and become aware of race and racial differences. As children develop ideas about their own identity and the identity of others, it is important to teach them the importance of inclusion and mutual respect. Below are valuable tips and activities that help children celebrate diversity and foster pride in their own background and culture, encouraging them to embrace the similarities we all share and to celebrate the differences that make us special and unique!



## **Expose your child to diversity as early as possible.**

Create a diverse environment at home by choosing toys, books, and dolls that reflect people and families from different backgrounds. Include skin tone crayons in your child's art supplies. Talk about how skin color isn't usually yellow, pink or white, but different shades of brown. Expose children to shows and media that represent people of all sizes, races, classes, and abilities. By creating a diverse environment, you can help your child respect and value people from all backgrounds as well as be proud of his own background and culture.

## **Help your child learn about different celebrations.**

Start by learning about different holidays celebrated around the world. Take your child to the library and help her find books about holidays that are celebrated in different countries. Encourage your child to think about how those celebrations are similar to and different from celebrations in your family. Are there special foods people eat? Or unique traditions? What do all these celebrations have in common, and how are they different? Remind her that although people are different, there are many things everyone has in common.

### **Listen to music from around the world.**

Introduce your child to songs and dances from different countries. Point out different musical elements, such as if the music is slow or fast (tempo), high or soft (pitch), or if there are musical instruments. Point out that all people like to sing and dance, but every culture has its own special way of celebrating. Then have a dance party listening to a favorite song from a country other than your own!

### **Introduce new foods.**

Model eating new foods from various regions, and encourage your child to try new foods as well. By exposing your child to different foods, it will familiarize him with different cultures from around the world. Remember, for some children it may take multiple tastes to like a food, so if your child is reluctant at first, keep trying.



### **We can all be friends.**

Help your child understand that friends can look different and have different likes and dislikes. People can be friends despite differences in how they dress, what they eat or celebrate, what music they listen to, or what language they speak. Encourage your child to value the things that make people the same, while also exploring differences together. Model what it means to be kind and how to be kind to others. You can also foster compassion and empathy by giving her the words to describe and label her own feelings. When she has language to describe her own feelings, she is better able to understand the feelings of others. Perspective taking builds empathy skills. Empathetic children are more sensitive to others, compassionate, respectful, and inclusive.

Every child wants to feel loved and included. It is important to start modeling how to be respectful, kind, and inclusive of others and embrace the diversity that makes us all unique. By instilling these values early on, your child learns to celebrate the human connection that we all share. Remember, you are your child's first teacher. You can help your child grow smarter, stronger, and kinder!