



Did You Know?



FAMILY SERVICES NEWSLETTER
Mandala Children's House • Anne Kangas, L.C.S.W.

Teaching Tolerance

“Its Seat Is in the He♥rt.”

At Mandala, we are committed to reflecting the diversity of our world in our classrooms. We feel very fortunate to have so many children and families from different cultures. In Small Group every March, we focus on how we are both “different and the same.” We use this concept to begin teaching children about tolerance and respect for cultural and ethnic differences. In our quest to reduce all types of violence for children, we want to help children discover that “difference” is not to be feared and that violence is not inevitable.

We believe we can teach nonviolence and respect for others at every level, even in the smallest daily interactions. Beginning at the preschool level, we are helping each child to appreciate his or her own uniqueness. We encourage our children to learn about and value their color, their history, their family heritage, their religion, and their cultural traditions.

The United Nations declared the first decade of the new millennium as the Decade for the Culture of Non-violence. We believe is that by continuing this mission and working together, we can built a new culture of nonviolence for humankind which will give hope to all humanity. It must start with us.

“Nonviolence is not a garment to be put on and off at will. Its seat is in the heart, and it must be an inseparable part of our being.”

Mahatma Gandhi,
Prophet of Non-violence

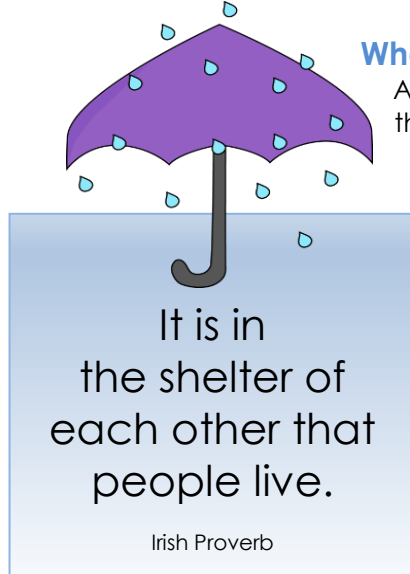
It is not too soon to begin thinking about this. Children learn attitudes about diversity by OBSERVATION. They watch us as parents and teachers, and they listen to what we say and what we do not say. They notice what we value and respect. At a very young age, children become aware of what is different and what is similar. Our similarities mean that we all share the same human connection. Our differences give us our uniqueness and make us interesting and varied. Let's look at what we can do to help build a better world for our children.

What Do We Want For Our Children?

- ❖ We want children to experience satisfying relationships with children and caring adults.
- ❖ We want children to feel connected to their heritage.
- ❖ We want children to have open access to opportunities.
- ❖ We want children to be free to go anywhere without fearing racist attacks.
- ❖ We want children to feel valued by their elders and to value those older than them.
- ❖ We want children to feel loved and to love others.
- ❖ We want children to know how to face challenges and cope with disappointments.
- ❖ We want children to be fair, honest and caring.
- ❖ We want children to believe that life has meaning and they have something to contribute!

Why Is Culture Important To A Child?

All families are imbedded in a culture. This culture or heritage is often a source of pride and strength. It gives a child self-esteem and connection. It provides a "holding environment" for him that grounds him and gives him a sense of belonging. It gives a child his place in the world. It gives him his identity. We want to encourage this positive experience for all our children.



What Is a "Culturally Competent Child"?

As children grow up in this diverse society, it is absolutely essential that they be "culturally competent." But what does this really mean?

- **They are proud of their own traditions and background.** They value their heritage and feel grounded in their own culture. They are proud of who they are. They have a positive sense of their own identity within their culture. This means they feel good about themselves as being a member of their "tribe."
- **They are able to accept and value the culture of others.** They notice differences in people, what they eat, what they look like, and how they celebrate. But they accept these differences without rejecting them or putting others down. A child who is culturally competent remains open to differences and is less likely to stereotype.
- **They are able to move easily between groups of peoples and negotiate cultural conflicts.** They are able to play with other children whose experiences are different from their own. They are able to talk comfortably with people from different cultures.
- **They have a beginning understanding of the unfairness of stereotypes.** When they are small, they start to understand that it is not okay to be rude or unfriendly to someone because he or she looks different. As they get older, they are able to develop critical thinking about bias. They even become able to challenge stereotypes when they see them on the media or in books.
- **They are able to stand up for themselves and others in the face of bias.** This last is the most difficult for children, and is something that grows with time and experience. Ideally, as they move into their teens and young adulthood, they are able to stand up for others who are targets of prejudice and violence.

How Children Develop Racial Identity & Awareness

What Is Normal?

Two Year-Olds

What are the central tasks for a two year-old? Two year olds are beginning to understand that they are separate individuals, and they are busy developing language and building the early forms of friendship and empathy. Two's are especially interested in noticing and naming. They have a beginning awareness of gender, race, ethnicity and physical abilities as a part of this process.

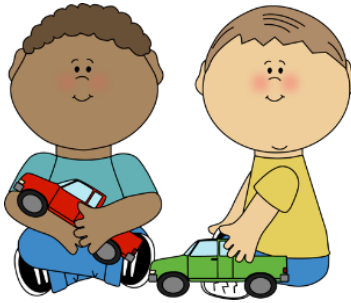
Two Year-olds notice physical aspects of identity first. Two year-olds are extremely curious. First, they are curious about their own anatomy—learning about the parts of their body and their genitals. This is the beginning of their understanding about their identity as "a boy" or "a girl." Initially, two year-olds may get confused and think that they can have both male and female body parts. Just provide brief, matter-of-fact feedback: "Eddie, you don't have a vagina. Only girls have a vagina. You are a boy and boys have a penis." You are not doing sex education at this

age. You are helping your child to master the developmental task of learning about his body and what makes him a boy, and not a girl.

Awareness of skin color also begins after a child turns two. Twos are curious about hair texture, too.

Children are starting to learn the names of all colors at this age. So why does it surprise us--and often make us feel a little uncomfortable--when they suddenly point out the color of someone's skin? They are just noticing differences, which is very age-appropriate. Again, children need simple feedback that supports their observations.

Give them words to name and that boy has peach skin and you child is drawing with a brown using a beautiful chocolate (or hair/or eyes)." You might go your child's family and friends and that match the color of their skin etc.) Place a full-length mirror frequently. Ask him or her him identify what makes him



Beautiful children
come in ALL colors!

validate their experience. "Yes, have brown skin." When your crayon, you might say, "You are brown color. It matches your skin one step further and talk about ask him to find concrete objects or eyes or hair (coffee with milk, where your child can use it questions about himself and help unique and special.

Two's love to feel each other's color. We can validate their discovery of difference by saying: "It's fun to touch each other's hair. Each of our hair feels different. Kim's is straight and long. Shauna's is short and curly." You might also think of adding skin color, hair texture and color, and eye color to the children's songs you sing with your child about body parts.

hair. They notice texture as well as

Pay attention to two's non-verbal cues. This is as important as addressing their verbal comments. When you acknowledge and give words to their observations, it helps them develop a comfortable awareness of others. For example, Mario watches Sesame Street and says to his mother, "That's Mikey and Juliette" (two African-American children in his preschool). His mother might say, "Mikey and Juliette have brown skin just like those children, but they are not the same children. Mikey is a boy and Juliette is a girl." This is a very common "error" in two-year-old thinking. Children over-generalize or explain the connection they see in the best way they know how. They need their parents to support their observation of what similar, but also help them see what is different.

As early as 2 ½ years, signs of "pre-prejudice" (discomfort with physical differences) may appear and should be addressed. For example, a child may indicate that he does not want to hold another child's hand, because it is "dirty." Or he may be fearful of a child who has a physical disability. It is not uncommon for children of this age to misunderstand skin color and think that it is dirt that can be washed off. Children need experiences that show them differently. When you wash your child's hands, especially after painting, occasionally point out, "Look at what happens to our skin color when we wash off the paint. See, our skin color stays the same. It doesn't come off. Only the paint comes off." We want to address pre-prejudice with children, but the best way is to intervene with a teaching experience.

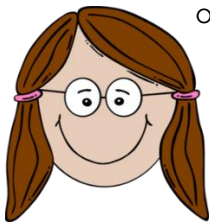
By age 2 1/2, children are beginning to be aware of cultural aspects of gender and ethnic identity and they generalize. Young children are acute observers of gender behavior. Two year-olds make generalizations based on what they know and what they have experienced thus far. A child might ask, "Why are you wearing men's shoes?" when she sees her teacher wearing brown loafers. Perhaps her father always wears brown loafers. Or we commonly hear a child say, "He's a boy, not a girl!" in reference to a new student who is a girl with very short hair. This child thinks only boys have short hair because all the boys he knows, including himself, have short hair.

Two year-olds use the only experiences they have available to them to make sense of their world. We can help them by expanding their thinking. For example, when Joshua says to Elena, "I'm going on a whale. I can go a whale because I'm a man." and he blocks her from climbing up the

outdoor structure and says "Girls can't! Girls can't!" then it's important that we intervene. We might step in and ask, "Elena, can you go on this whale?" When she says "yes," we can support her by saying, "Joshua, Elena says she can, and I think she can too. Girls can climb just like boys. There is room for two people on the whale. You find a place for yourself and Elena will find a place for herself." Early on, we can begin to challenge gender-based thinking. By countering his statement, we can clarify Joshua's ideas and give Elena words for helping her stand up for herself later.

Encourage children to explore non-stereotyped gender roles. Allow boys to participate in dramatic play activities. Encourage girls in taking on assertive roles. Expand ideas in common children's songs, such as *The Wheels on the Bus* by asking, "Could the daddy on the bus say 'shush, shush shush'?" When reading stories, we can interchange male and female pronouns, such as in *Runaway Bunny* and other books.

Awareness of disabilities tends to come later than gender and race. However, some two year-olds may begin noticing more obvious differences in physical abilities, especially someone with glasses or using a wheelchair, a brace, or crutches to move around. It is not uncommon for children to stare, point, or ask questions. If your child stares at someone in a wheelchair, for example, stay low-key and say, "Benjamin, you are looking at a person who is using a wheelchair. Sometimes a person's legs can't walk, so they have to use a wheelchair to move around. Let's go finish our shopping now."



It is also very common for children of this age to imitate people with disabilities.

They are not teasing or making fun. Imitation is one of the major ways two's learn. Children may try to imitate a child who walks with a brace or walks with a limp, for example. All we need to do is offer simple words of explanation: "Jennie's foot is not strong enough to move by itself. Her brace helps her to walk." Allowing young children to use their senses by touching and feeling is very helpful and can reduce their fear of the unknown. Allow your child touch a wheelchair, brace, or hearing aid to help him understand. Know that some young children mistakenly think that they can "catch" a physical disability like an illness. This can be at the core of some of their fears. Read books with pictures to open up dialogue with your child about physical disabilities.



Preschoolers (3-5 Year-olds)

What are the central tasks for a preschooler? Figuring out who I am...and who you are. Figuring out how I feel about me...and how I feel about you. Learning how to make friends, play cooperatively, and negotiate differences. Gender, race and culture are important pieces of this puzzle. Three and Four year-olds continue the study of physical characteristics that they began in their second year. Their observations of differences expand, and they become interested in more than noticing and naming. Preschoolers need special guidance in sorting out their ideas and feelings about skin color, hair texture, and eye shape so that racism cannot harm their self-concept or teach them to reject others.

Preschoolers are aware of variations and wonder where they fit in. Skin color is a frequent focus of interest. For instance, it is very common for a child to be coloring with a brown crayon and to hear her announce, "I'm brown too. I'm about as brown as this crayon." She is looking for direct feedback, such as, "Yes, your skin is a beautiful brown." Positively acknowledging a child's skin color is an important step in a child's developing concept of who she is and how she feels about herself. This is important. At such a moment, it's not at all helpful to say something general to a preschooler, such as "It doesn't matter what color you are. We are all people just the same." That kind of comment would be based on the mistaken notion that noticing skin color causes prejudice. In fact, that response could actually teach this young child that there is something wrong with her skin color. What she needs most is a simple, but positive, validation of her observation about

herself. Preschoolers wonder about skin shades and how they are different and the same. They ask questions like: *“If I’m Black and White and Tiffany is Black and White, then how come her skin is darker?”* or *“How come I’m different? My brown skin is darker than everyone in our family.”* This may cause preschoolers to wonder if they belong or not. Give facts and clarification: *“Your skin color comes from Mommy and Daddy. When the colors mix together, it doesn’t always look the same. Sometimes it is lighter brown and sometimes it is darker brown. All the colors are beautiful. I love you just how you are!”*

Hair and eyes are also frequently the subject of preschooler’s comments. *“I like Jenika’s hair,”* says Kim. *“It’s bouncy and cuddly.”* Jenika is African American, and Kim, who is Asian, loves to pat her hair. This deserves an adult comment: *“I’m glad you like Jenika’s hair. It’s different than yours. Yours is straight and Jenika’s is curly. Maybe you could ask Jenika first if it’s okay with her if you touch her hair.”* This teaches another important lesson: respecting the rights of others.

Preschool children can make unintentional, hurtful, remarks.

“Craig’s eyes go like this,” says four year-old Rachel, pulling her eyes up. *“They look funny.”* Rachel is trying to understand differences, even imitating the difference to try it out. She needs feedback to correct her perceptions that this eye shape difference is a negative characteristic. She also needs guidance in becoming aware of how others feel. An adult might intercede, *“Craig’s eyes are not funny. They have a different shape than yours. Craig’s eyes are the same shape as his family’s eyes. Your eye shape is fine. Craig’s eye shape is fine. Both of your eye shapes are good for seeing. It is okay to ask questions about how people look. It is not okay to say they look funny—that hurts their feelings.”* (Note: If Craig were adopted, it would be helpful to say, *“Craig’s eyes are shaped like the millions of people who live in China, the country he came from.”*)



CAUTION!

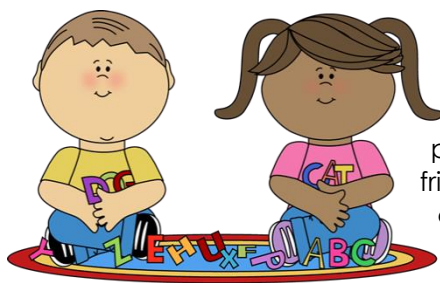
When children ask questions about racial physical characteristics:

- **Do not ignore!**
- **Do not change the subject**
- **Do not answer indirectly.**

If you’re uncomfortable—then figure out why!

Children need you to respond:

- **directly**
- **simply, and**
- **matter-of-factly.**



Preschoolers are sensitive to other children’s attitudes toward their skin color.

They are already becoming aware of the societal bias against darker skin. We must intervene here to help children sort this out. This is particularly important in the preschool years because making friends and negotiating friendships is one of the skills they are building. We can listen carefully to children’s dialogues and watch their actions in play. Then we can step in and ask questions when we see children having difficulty.

Preschoolers want to know how they got their color, hair, and eyes. Sometimes, they verbalize interesting theories of their own: *“I think I got my skin color from marking pens. See how it colors my skin?”* Sometimes children think they can make their physical characteristics change, like their skin color or their eye shape. *“If I learn to speak Japanese, will I have eyes like Miyoko’s?”* You can respect children’s ideas, while also giving them accurate information. *“No, we get our eyes from how our parents look. We learn to talk the way our parents talk. No matter how hard you pull on your eyes, or even if you learn to speak Japanese, your eyes will still look like Mommy and Daddy’s. I’m glad Miyoko is your special friend. Can you ask her to teach you to say hello in Japanese?”*

Preschoolers wonder if skin color, hair, and eyes remain constant. They have an increasing awareness that getting older brings physical changes, so they must figure out which parts of us change and which do not. This is not an easy task. *“If I eat this melon, will my skin get darker?”* asks a four year-old who had a book read to him about skin color and melanin, which sounded like “melon” to him. Children may wonder about their skin color changing when they play in the sun.

"Last summer I got to be as dark as Maria. So, then I was Mexican, and now I'm not." We can see how easily children make misinterpretations. They need to hear: "Our mommies and daddies give us our skin color when they make us. Once we are born, we don't change our skin color, no matter what."

Children of color, more often than Caucasian children, may verbalize not liking the color, texture or shape of their skin, hair or eyes.

This is very sad. It happens because racism attacks the physical characteristics of children of color. Sometimes we can pinpoint the incident that precipitated the remark. Most young children are not able to verbalize how or why something was said. It is very important to address a child's feelings and assure him that he is "just right" and that his family and his teachers and his friends "love you just the way you are." A child needs to be told that "People who think your looks are not okay are wrong!" Help him understand that there are millions of people who have the same skin color (or hair, or eye shape) as he does, even if he is numerically a minority here. We want to help children understand that they are part of a larger group with similar characteristics. We want them to understand that they are not, in fact, "different." We want to support children's desire to be exactly who they are.



Children Who Are Adopted

Preschoolers who have been adopted by families from a different ethnic group may find it more difficult to understand how they got their "racial" physical characteristics which make them look different from their parents. As they get older, and the more they understand adoption and hear their own adoption "story" told to them over and over again, the more they will understand.

It is important to give an adopted child pictures, stories, and sensory experiences from his "birth culture" to help ground him and give him a positive identity. Pictures of an adopted child's birth parents are especially helpful, if adoptive parents can obtain them. Making a Life Book that chronicles a child's history is a true gift. It is easy to see that without a sense of one's personal history, adopted children have often felt ungrounded, "alone" and "different," as though drifting in space, unanchored to a past.

You are part of the White or Caucasian group because your family once came from the continent of Europe. Let's go look at a map and see where Europe is."

▪ *"Rashi is brown just like you are brown, Nikarita, even though the shades of your skin are different. You are both part of a big family called Indo-Americans whose ancestors came from the sub-continent of Asia. Let's go look at the globe and see where Asia is."*

As parents, it is important to think about what terms you use and how you are teaching your child about his or her racial identity. Remember that children this age are very literal and concrete, so keep in mind how children may interpret what you say. Talk with your child's teacher if you support.

Preschoolers get confused about racial group names and the actual color of their skin.

They wonder why two people with different skin tones are considered part of the same group:

- "Why am I called Black? My skin is brown."
- "I'm not yellow. I'm tan."
- "I don't look white like the piece of paper."
- "Is Mexican my color?"
- "I'm not Indian. I'm Pakistani."

These are examples of questions that reflect children's puzzlement about racial labels. It is easy to understand their difficulties. It's not so easy to explain. As preschooler's classification ability expands, so will their further understanding.

Here are a few ideas for responses:

- *"Maria, you are Mexican because your family is Mexican-American. Do you know that Mexican is not a color? Mexican people have many different skin colors, from dark brown to very light. All those are good colors to be."*
- *"Johnny, it's true your skin doesn't look white like a piece of paper. It does look pink. When grown-ups say 'White,' they mean Caucasian. This means people whose families once came from a place called Europe."*

Maybe we just shouldn't talk about it? Some adults suggest not talking about ethnic labels with young children. However, this does not work because children have already begun to ask questions about the meaning of such labels. Just because we don't talk about it doesn't mean it doesn't exist. Even if children don't bring it up, silence doesn't mean they haven't wondered about the questions other children have verbalized. Young children need help in sorting out their ideas and they need accurate feedback. Otherwise, their misperceptions could easily develop into prejudice. Even though it may be embarrassing for us as parents when our children blurt out honest questions in front of the very people they are talking about, it is really important that we be teachers for our children. These are teachable moments.

What Can Parents Do To Help Their Children?

There are many things parents can do. You can help children to be proud of who they are. You can help children to appreciate the differences they notice. You can help them explore similarities and differences. Then you can answer their questions and point out the bias they encounter.

IDEAS...

Create an atmosphere of acceptance in your home where all people feel welcome and valued.

- Be a role model for your child. Show respect and tolerance in your daily actions. Model patience with people who speak a language that is different from your own. Guard against hurtful comments.
- Make sure that the books you read to your children show children from a variety of ethnic groups and cultures.
- Buy your child a doll and doll family that look like him/her. (Children need to see themselves reflected back in this positive way.)
- Include a spectrum of flesh tones in your art supplies at home. (Crayons and markers that reflect diversity allow children to accurately depict themselves and feel valued.)
- Make a friend from a different ethnic group. Encourage your child to do the same.
- Children love music and dance. Take your child to a cultural event that is new to him or her.
- Read books about children with different abilities and disabilities. Talk about physical differences.
- Read folk tales and stories from different parts of the world.
- Have books that show different kinds of families. Talk about how children come to families in different ways. (Ex: Foster, adoptive, interracial, single, gay or lesbian parents, extended family, etc.)
- Show pride for your own culture.
- Teach your child to use a few words in the language of his heritage—even if you have to have someone help you learn them first.
- Encourage both boys and girls to try similar experiences. Allow boys be nurturing and encourage girls to be strong and daring and adventurous.

What if you see bias in children?

1. **Set Limits**
Make a rule that it is never acceptable to reject or tease someone because of their identity or appearance.
2. **Intervene immediately** and remind the children of the rule.
3. **Comfort and support the target of the aggression**, and help the target child to verbalize his or her feelings to the other child: "I don't want you to do that—it hurts my feelings."

Teachable Moments

How to Handle Difficult Situations

Respond to a child's questions about differences with simple, matter-of-fact information. Always try to model comfort and openness in talking about differences. If you are unwilling to talk about something your child notices, you may convey the message that there is something embarrassing or shameful about differences. For example, when a child asks, "Why doesn't he have any fingers on that hand?" you can respond, "He was born that way. It's a little harder for him to catch a ball, but he has found a way to do it. Watch him."

Intervene when children reject others because of race, gender, ethnicity, or disability. Respond the same way you would when one child physically hurts another. Stop the behavior, comfort the child whose feelings have been hurt, and then problem-solve the situation. "It was unfair for Marcus to say you couldn't play because you are brown. I bet that hurt your feelings. Come with me, I want you to tell him: "I don't like that. It hurts my feelings'."

Tell a child who rejects others that it is not okay to say you won't play because skin color, gender, ability, or language. Say: "It's not fair to say you won't play because his skin is brown. It hurts his feelings and you're missing out on a great friend."

Challenge the thinking of your child or other children who describe stereotypes. Diversity experts agree that children learn stereotypes and biases from media, peers, parents, and teachers. If you observe bias in a television program, say something to your child. If you see stereotypic thinking in play, enter in and interrupt the game. For instance, if a boy says: "She can't be a firefighter with us. Firefighters are men." you might respond by asking, "Have all the firefighters you've seen been men? Women are firefighters, too. I know one myself." Or, if your child says, "Boys can't play in this game." you might ask, "Why not? Let's think about it. I think Gabriel can have a part, too."

Say What You Think. When you see intolerance or injustice, talk to your children about what you think. "I am angry that Johnny doesn't want to play with you. He is missing out on a great friend. I do not like what he is saying, and I am going to help him change his ideas about playing with you. Now, let's find someone else to play with you." Share your values. If you observe an interaction in a public place, and it offends you, speak up. Let your child know that you don't agree with the way someone treats a salesperson because her English is poor, or you don't like it when people call each other unkind names. "I didn't like the way that man called that lady a mean name just because she was old and driving slowly. That was unkind."

Build Heart

Help your children to see children around the world as being very much like them in basic ways. Help them see the commonalities. Talk about the concrete things kids understand at this age. For instance, we all eat bread of some kind, we all wear clothes, we all have families, we all go to sleep at bedtime, we all play games, etc. Use books and pictures to point out "same and different." You may want to talk about children who have less than they do (less food, no shoes) and encourage your child to participate in some form of humanitarian aid. It is not too early to build heart & compassion in this way.



Celebrate!

Keep your family's traditions alive. Talk about your family history and culture. Tell your family stories. Encourage grandparents and elders to be part of your child's life. Make time to celebrate the rituals that are important to your culture or religion. Children love rituals and traditions. When they are older, these are what they will remember. Traditions are the "glue" that holds families together. Invite your child's friends to join you and make it a real teachable moment.

Create Peace in Your Own Life

Embrace Hope and Healing



"I must fight till I have conquered in myself what causes war."

-Marianne Moore, American Poet, 1887-1972



Ever more so today, we are called to search our hearts and make wise choices. It is up to us to work for peace—each in our own way—to make the world a better place for our children.

Take time to reflect on your life. Think about what you do have—and be thankful. Convey this to your children. Use words ("*I'm so glad we're a family.*") and family rituals (*thanksgiving at meals, night-time prayers or reflections*) to impart this to your children.

Appreciate your unique attributes—your background, your culture, your faith. Give that appreciation to your child. Spend time with those who support you and reinforce what you consider special about yourself and your family.

Look into your own heart. Explore your own areas of bias. Ask yourself: "Where is the war I need to conquer within myself?" None of us is immune from assumptions, suspicions, and prejudice. We may have learned some biases from our parents and teachers, and we may have carried some of these stereotypes into our adult thinking. Hopefully, those of us who learned prejudices growing up are now working to unlearn them. Beliefs are not behaviors, and regardless of our beliefs, we can still ACT justly. We can be models of tolerance, patience, and compassion.

Give support to others. It has long been known that people who give to others actually feel better about themselves. Their own enjoyment of life improves because they "contribute" to life in some larger sense. This gives meaning and purpose to their lives. Children need to feel valuable also. Studies have shown that children who are regularly expected to help others, volunteer their time, or do acts of kindness (without reward) gain tremendously. They grow up to be people of good character with a strong inner moral compass.

From Mother Teresa of Calcutta

...who worked tirelessly for peace and compassion in the world.

People are often unreasonable, illogical, and self-centered.

Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse you of selfish, ulterior motives.

Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win some false friends and some true enemies.

Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and frank, people may cheat you.

Be honest and frank anyway.

What you spend years building, someone could destroy overnight.

Build anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness, they may be jealous.

Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, people will forget tomorrow.

Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have, and it may never be enough.

Give the world the best you have anyway...

Carved into the wall of her home for children in Calcutta

SOURCES

S.C. Co. Violence Prevention Program Newsletter, Winter 2001 (Geoff Paulson, Director)

Teaching Tolerance Magazine, No. 19, Spring 2001

Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools For Empowering Young Children. Louise Derman-Sparks, NAEYC, 1991.

The Optimistic Classroom: Creative Ways to Give Children Hope. D. Hewitt & S. Heidemann, Redleaf Press, 1998

Diversity Resources for You and Your Child

A rich assortment of books showing differences and similarities in cultures, traditions, ethnicity & families.

Multicultural Sites for Books and Educational Items

Asia For Kids www.afk.com Books, videos, crafts, dolls, and music for children about Asia. Children's books in Arabic, Vietnamese, Thai, Korean, Hawaiian, Hindi, and more. An excellent resource.

Celebrate The Child www.celebratethechild.com Books, beautiful dolls, paper dolls, crafts, children's toys & music from around the world. Another excellent resource.

Chinaberry www.chinaberry.com A beautiful catalog of children's books that is simply a delight to read!

Redleaf Press www.redleafpress.org Many good books and resources for early childhood.

Teaching Tolerance www.tolerance.org A magazine + site devoted to fighting hate and teaching tolerance.

Children's Books

Families

The Family Book by Todd Parr, 2010 (family love and family differences by our favorite author)

Families Are Different by Nina Pellwgrini, 1991 (all kinds of families)

Horace by Holly Keller, 1992 (looking different in a family/belonging)

I Love You Like Crazy Cakes by Rose Lewis, 2000 (charming story of adoption from China)

Beginnings: How Families Come to Be by Virginia Kroll, 1994 (different family constellations)

Who's In a Family? by Robert Sketch, 1997 (diversity of families/"a family is those who love you")

All Together Now by Anita Jeram, 1999 (Mama rabbit & her 3 different "honeys"-how families come to be)

Through Moon and Stars and Night Sky by Ann Turner, 1992 (lovely adoption story/child from Asia)

Happy Adoption Day by Julie Pachkis, 2001 (perfect for preschoolers-joy of adoption)

Individual Differences and Similarities

It's OK to Be Different by Todd Parr, 2010 (celebrates individual differences with cute illustrations)

The Skin You Live In by Michael Tyler, 2005 (clever book about skin, also noting skin tone differences)

Wherever You Are by Mem Fox, 1997 ("wherever you are there are little ones just like you...")

Happy in Our Skin by Fran Manushkin, 2015 (celebrating children w/ a variety of skin colors)

The Colors of Us by Karen Katz, 1999 (talks about skin color as "pizza crust, cinnamon, honey," etc.)

All the Colors of the Earth by Sheila Hamanaka, 1994 (colors of children and colors of love)

We Are All Alike, We Are All Different by the Cheltenham Elementary School Kindergarten, 1991 (photos)

Brown Like Me by Noelle Camperti, 1999 (skin color)

Why Am I Different? by Norma Simon, 1993 (differences/what makes us unique)

All the Colors We Are: The Story of How We Get Our Skin Color by K. Kissinger, 1994 (skin color)

I'm Like You, You're Like Me by Cindy Gainer, 1998 (many ways children are alike/different)

Two Eyes, A Nose and A Mouth by Roberta Intrater (facial differences)

All About You by Catherine and Laurence Anholt, 1991 (different routines and favorite foods)

Elmer by David McKee, 1989 (Colorful patchwork elephant doesn't look like the rest of his friends)

Hats Off To Hair by Virginia Kroll, 1995 (children with different hair styles, textures, cultures)

Different Just Like Me by Lori Mitchell, 1999 (people come in many different shapes and sizes—lovely)

To Be A Kid by Maya Ajmera and John Ivanko, 1999 (Beautiful photos "just being kids")

Elmer by David McKee, 1989 (patchwork elephant doesn't like looking different)

Cultural Differences and Similarities

Whoever You Are by Mem Fox, 2006 (BEAUTIFUL--Shows the common connection of children around the world)

We All Have a Heritage by Sandy Lynne Holman, The Culture C.O.O.P, 2002 (intro to diversity for PS kids)

All Kinds of Beliefs by Emma Damon, 2000 (pop-up book of children practicing different faiths)

All Kinds of Children by Norma Simon, 1999 (children all over the world growing up)

Many Ways by Shelley Rotner & Sheila Kelly, 2006 (beautiful - how families practice their beliefs)

Faith by Maya Ajmera, Magda Nakassis, and Cynthia Pon, 2009 (A stunningly beautiful book of pictures, with simple words, showing children practicing different faiths around the world)

Wish: Wishing Traditions Around the World by Roseanne Thong, 2008 (Beautiful! A tour of cultures around the World and 15 different ways children can make a wish)

Children Just Like Me: A Unique Celebration of Children Around the World by Barabab and Anabel Kindersley, 1995 (Beautiful UNICEF book)

Children Just Like Me: Celebrations! by Barabai and Anabel Kindersley, 1997 (IUNICEF book showing children of different cultures celebrating their traditions with lovely large pictures)

Hello World! by Manja Stojic, 2011 (Greetings in 42 Languages Around the World)

Everybody Cooks Rice by Norah Dooley, 1991 (how families are similar)

Everybody Eats Rice by Norah Dooley, 1992 (family foods)

Hot Hot Roti for Da Da-Ji by Ken Min, 2017 (grandpa comes to visit and weaves story telling with roti-making)

Let's Eat: What Children Eat Around the World by Ana Zamorano, 2004 (family eating together)

Cleversticks by Ashley Bernard, 1991 (cultural differences/boy is special for using chopsticks)

What Is Your Language? by Debra Leventhal, 1999 (introduces different languages)

Yoko by Rosemary Wells, 1998 (children Tease Yoko for bringing sushi to lunch)

How the Children Became Stars: A Family Treasury of Stories, Prayers, and Blessings from Around the World by Aaron Zerah, 2000 (the wisdom of other cultures)

Celebrating by Gwennyth Swain, 2000 - English and Vietnamese (Photographs of children and families celebrating around the world)

Carrying by Gwennyth Swain, 2000 - English and Arabic (Photographs of children and families carrying things around the world)

Smiling by Gwennyth Swain, 2000 - English and Urdu (Photographs of children and families smiling around the world)

Eating by Gwennyth Swain, 2000 - English and Chinese (Photographs of children and families eating around the world)

Hush by Minfong Ho, 1996 (lovely Thailand lullaby-Caldecott Honor)

The Golden Sandal by Rebecca Hickox, 1998 (a Middle Eastern Cinderella story)

Thanksgiving at Obaachan's by Janet Mitsui Brown, 1994 (a Japanese American girl describes Thanksgiving at grandmother's home)

The Little Brown Jay by Elizabeth Claire, 1994 (folk tale from India for preschoolers about kindness and helping others bringing unexpected rewards)

My Hands by Aiki, 1990 (simple book with lovely multicultural illustrations)

I Hate English! By Ellen Levine, 1989 (young girl from Hong Kong learns to communicate in two languages)

A Country Far Away by Nigel Gray, 1988 (Two boys share same experiences in two different parts of the world)

On The Same Day in March by Marilyn Singer, 2000 (a lovely book for PS children taking them through the weather in different parts of the world, from India to Antarctica)

Our Big Home by Linda Glasser, 2002 (caring for our one big home, showing our interconnection)

Shoes, Shoes, Shoes by Anne Morris, 1998 (same and different shoes around the world)

Bread, Bread, Bread by Anne Morris, 1993 (children eat bread around the world)

Everybody Bakes Bread by Norah Dooley, 1996 (families from different cultures baking bread)

On the Go by Ann Morris, 1994 (various forms of travel around the world)

Children Just Like Me: Our Favorite Stores from Around the World by Anabel Kindersley and B Kindersley, 1997 (another beautiful book from UNICEF rich with photographs)

Japanese Picture Dictionary by Marlene Goodman, 1993 (pictures with Japanese words)

The Usborne First Thousand Words in Spanish by Heather Amery, 2014 (classic word book in Spanish for children)

Physical Differences and Special Needs

Mama Zooms by Jane Cowen-Fletcher, 1995 (mother in wheelchair)

Someone Special, Just Like You by Tricia Brown, 1995 (special needs/differences, simple photographs)

See the Ocean by Estelle Condra, 1994 (beautiful book/young blind girl "sees" the ocean)

Dad and Me in the Morning by Patricia Lakin, 1994 (lovely/dad and hearing impaired son visit the beach)

Seal Surfer by Michael Forman, 2006 (boy with braces/wheelchair learns to surf)

I Have a Sister, My Sister Is Deaf by Jean Peterson, 1984 (explores sibling relationship and being deaf)

Arnie and the New Kid by Nancy Carlson. Puffin, 1990 (physical differences/ student in wheel-chair)

We'll Paint The Octopus Red by Stephanie Stuve-Bodeen, 1998 (new baby has Down Syndrome)

Friends at School by Rochelle Bunnett, 2006 (preschool class, includes child with Down Syndrome)

Silent Lotus by Jeanne Lee, 1994 (deaf/mute young Cambodian girl becomes a dancer)

Where's Chimpy? by Bernice Rabe, 1988 (child w/ Down syndrome can't find her monkey)

No Fair to Tigercap by Eric Hoffman, 2002 (physical handicap)

Paul and Sebastian by Rene Escudie, 1994 (Two boys from very different living situations have mothers who don't want them to play together; great for preschoolers and learning about differences)

Play Lady by Eric Hoffman, 2002 (Japanese neighbor lady's home is vandalized/children who love her help her)