

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Teaching Tolerance: Modeling Respectful Behaviour for Your Child in a Diverse World

The recent protests against police brutality and systemic racism after the death of George Floyd and other black Americans at the hands of police officers has many parents asking themselves about how to raise tolerant children.

In many neighbourhoods today, families come from different backgrounds and reflect a wide variety of cultures, languages, life experiences, and lifestyles. In order to prepare children for life in a diverse society, it is important to lead by example and to foster an understanding and acceptance of differing beliefs, values, and traditions.

Examining your own biases

Before speaking to your kids about discrimination against people of a different race, religion, gender identity, sexuality, or ability, it's important to look at your own beliefs, behaviours, and actions. Take the time to listen to those who have different experiences in life; then you can take time to evaluate what is being shared. Other ways to examine diversity are by reading books, watching movies and documentaries, and listening to podcasts. Then ask yourself what you are doing to help make a change.

The article Ways to Educate Yourself About Anti-Racism and Race goes into more depth about race, and the article Being an LGBTQ+ Ally can give you more information about sexuality and gender identity.

Strategies for helping your child build positive attitudes

You can help your child learn about people's similarities and differences beginning in their toddler years. As your child continues to grow and mature, your words and actions in support of diversity will need to develop in different, age-appropriate ways. However, some common principles and strategies apply no matter the age of your child.

Encouragement. Help children feel good about themselves. Give them positive encouragement about who they are, what they look like, and what skills they are learning. Show them that this can be done without making comparisons to or denigrating others who don't look like them. Positive self-identity does not have to be at someone else's expense.

Embracing diversity. When discussing diversity, focus on our similarities first. Then help children appreciate people's differences as valuable parts of who they are.

Make the most of teachable moments. Discussing current affairs can be a good way to help enlighten your older child's worldview about diversity and equality. If you are struggling with how to create a safe platform, draw on events in the news—such as peaceful protests or marches for justice—to strike up a conversation.

Providing examples. Families and teachers can give children lots of positive examples of human diversity from an early age. Select books, pictures, toys, and games that exhibit people of different races, ages, genders, and abilities—including mental capacities—as capable and involved in all types of

© 2026 Morneau Shepell Ltd.

activities. Always consider modeling, through your words and deeds, by showing an interest in and having a respect for people with differing beliefs, behaviours, and customs.

Continue to support anti-bias learning. As with all other learning, repetition is important. Children will need many opportunities to explore similarities and differences. Encourage them to try out new experiences from different traditions, to meet and get to know people from different backgrounds, and to ask questions—even ones that might not have easy answers. And while your child is learning, be sure that you are also expanding your own knowledge by continuing to educate yourself and take meaningful action to support diversity and inclusion in your work and personal lives.

Adults don't need to have all the answers ready before discussing anti-bias topics. Our own positive self-identity, our interest in and curiosity about others, and even acknowledging where we lack information, are all part of the journey toward honoring diversity. As children first watch and then join you on this journey, they will gain attitudes, knowledge and abilities for respecting and appreciating diversity. These are essential skills for us all—for today and into the future.