Helping Children Understand Other Cultures

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Our world's survival may depend on better understanding of both the interconnectedness and diversity of its people. Parents have the best opportunity to help their children develop respect for other cultures, and to teach their children how to deal with the prejudice of others. Recognizing diversity of families becomes more important as family roles and expectations are being transformed worldwide. While people are experiencing these changes, they are struggling to retain their traditions and heritage.

What can you, the parent, do to help your children understand and respect other cultures? Telling children that prejudice is bad is not enough. Through your own attitudes and actions, show that cultural diversity is a positive and natural part of life. Although you have customs and values that are important to you, acknowledge that others' customs and values are valid for them.

Here are some ways to promote tolerance for others, suggested by family psychologist John Rosemond and others:

- Talk about differences among people with your child. Don't say, "People are all the same." Although we share some of the same needs and drives, people are different.
- Remind your children that what's important about a person is what's inside, not outside. Help them look beyond the surface in understanding others.
- Point out prejudice when it happens and discuss it with your children. Encourage them to speak up when they see someone, especially another child, being treated unfairly.
- Discuss how certain cultural patterns have developed or have been influenced by such things as climate, history, condition of the land, inventions, language, literature, and art.
- Take pride in your cultural heritage and share it with your children. Music is a good place to begin.
- Visit museums, festivals, ethnic restaurants, and other places that expose your family to different customs and lifestyles.
- Try to have direct contact with people whose cultures or lifestyles are different from your own. Children are less likely to fear what they know.
- Introduce children to good books. Libraries have sensitively written books on topics that their classmates cope with daily.
- Avoid stereotypes within your own family. Expect sons as well as daughters to help with household chores, such as laundry and dishes. Encourage daughters to excel at subjects, such as science and math, and to participate in sports.
- Help your children develop self-confidence. Insecure people are more likely to be obsessed with conformity. Self-worth will also help children handle insults and bias from others.
• Share with your children how you coped when treated unfairly. They need to understand there are some mean people in this world, but this meanness and ignorance has nothing to do with your child's worth.
• Using a world map, play games such as "Name that Country."
• You and your child might volunteer at a community center for another culture.

Celebrate Black History Month with these inspirational children's books.

*Nappy Hair*, by Carolivia Herron
Recommended Ages: 4-8
The gospel rhythm of this lovely children's book is matched only by the bold, color-saturated illustrations of little nappy-haired Brenda.

*Cassie's Colorful Day*, by Faith Ringgold
Recommended Ages: 0-4
Join Cassie on a colorful day with her dad. Young children will follow Cassie as she dresses up in her yellow-and-red polka dot dress, purple shoes, and green pocketbook, then heads to the ice cream parlor for her favorite treat--a pink strawberry sundae!

*Counting to Tar Beach*, by Faith Ringgold
Recommended Ages: 0-4
Your kids will count from 1 to 10 all the good things that Cassie and her family take to the rooftop for their mouth-watering picnic.

Black History Month Link for children: [http://www.kathimitchell.com/blackhist](http://www.kathimitchell.com/blackhist)

**Sesame Cookies**

In Africa, sesame seeds, or benne, symbolize good luck. During African-American History Month, invite your kids to help make these crunchy sesame cookies.

2/3 cup sesame seeds
1/2 cup butter
1/2 cup sugar
1/2 cup brown sugar
1 egg
1 tsp. vanilla extract
1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour
1/2 tsp. baking powder
1/4 tsp. cinnamon
1/4 tsp. salt

Toast the sesame seeds on a baking sheet in a preheated 350-degree oven for about 10 minutes. Stir occasionally to keep the seeds from burning. Set them aside to cool.

In a mixing bowl, cream together the butter and sugars. Beat in the egg and vanilla extract. Stir in the flour, baking powder, cinnamon and salt. Beat until well mixed. Fold in half of the sesame seeds. Shape the dough into 1-inch balls and roll them in the remaining sesame seeds. Place on a greased cookie sheet and flatten with the palm of your hand. Bake until golden brown (about 10 minutes). Makes 2 dozen.
**UHCCC Parent Handbook Highlight**

**BIRTHDAYS/ CELEBRATIONS/ HOLIDAYS**

The Center celebrates the children’s birthdays in age-appropriate ways in the classroom. The birthday celebration, however, is purposefully kept simple and child-centered. Parents may bring cake/cookies/cupcakes that are store-bought and labeled with the ingredients (this is a Texas Child Care Licensing Minimum Standard Rule [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us)). These will be served during afternoon snack and parents are welcome to join the children. **The child’s birthday observance at the Center is not intended to take the place of each family’s special observance at home.** If you do decide to provide a birthday treat for the class, be mindful that:

- No gifts will be exchanged
- No treat bags or party favors are to be distributed in the classroom.

Birthday party invitations for parties away from the Center may be distributed at school **only** through the classroom teacher. If you do not want your child’s birthday celebrated, please notify the Center in advance in writing.

UHCCC does observe traditional, national, cultural and seasonal holidays with activities that are child-centered, educationally oriented and developmentally appropriate. Every effort is made to be culturally sensitive. Please share with the Center staff any celebrations that are important to your family, so that these too may be included in our classroom planning.

The Center does enforce a no candy rule in the classrooms. Our goal is to maintain the quality of the child’s daily nutrition and we ask that parents join us in this effort to promote healthy children.

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**A Note from the Editor**

Greetings! This is the 2nd installment of the Child Care Center’s E-News for 2006. For your convenience, an archive of all CCC E-News is now available online at [www.uh.edu/ccc](http://www.uh.edu/ccc). If you know of other parents or members of the UHCCC community who are currently not on our distribution list or if you would like to be removed, please e-mail your name and e-mail address to Jennifer Skopal at ccenter@mail.uh.edu and you will be added/removed at once. Thank You - and enjoy reading!

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**Be My Valentine**
Sung to Mary Had A Little Lamb

You're a special  
Friend of mine  
Friend of mine  
Friend of mine  
You're a special  
Friend of mine  
Be my valentine!

**Puffy Valentines Day Hearts**

**What You Need:**  
Shaving Cream, Elmer’s glue, Red Tempera  
Paint, Poster Board or Thick Paper, Paint Brushes

**What You Do:**  
Mix shaving cream, Elmer’s glue, and red tempera paint to make a puffy paint texture. Give children paint brushes and let them paint onto poster board hearts. The paint dries puffy and makes a beautiful valentine.