

Counseling Connection Newsletter

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How Can Parents Teach Tolerance?

Parents can teach tolerance by example—and in other ways, too. Talking together about tolerance and respect helps kids learn more about the values you want them to have. Giving them opportunities to play and work with others is important as well. This lets kids learn firsthand that everyone has something to contribute and to experience differences and similarities.

Things parents can do to help kids learn tolerance include:

- Notice your own attitudes. Parents who want to help their kids value diversity can be sensitive to cultural stereotypes they may have learned and make an effort to correct them. Demonstrate an attitude of respect for others.
- Remember that kids are always listening. Be aware of the way you talk about people who are different from yourself. Do not make jokes that perpetuate stereotypes. Although some of these might seem like harmless fun, they can undo attitudes of tolerance and respect.
- Select books, toys, music, art, and videos carefully. Keep in mind the powerful effect the media and pop culture have on shaping attitudes.
- Point out and [talk about](#) unfair stereotypes that may be portrayed in [media](#).
- Answer kids' questions about differences honestly and respectfully. This teaches that it is acceptable to notice and discuss differences as long as it is done with respect.
- Acknowledge and respect differences within your own family. Demonstrate acceptance of your children's differing abilities, interests, and styles. Value the uniqueness of each member of your family.
- Remember that tolerance does not mean tolerating unacceptable behavior. It means that everyone deserves to be treated with respect—and should treat others with respect as well.
- Help your children feel good about themselves. Kids who feel badly about themselves often treat others badly. Kids with strong [self-esteem](#) value and respect themselves and are more likely to treat others with respect, too. Help your child to feel accepted, respected, and valued.
- Give kids opportunities to work and play with others who are different from them. When choosing a school, day camp, or child-care facility for your child, find one with a diverse population.
- Learn together about holiday and religious celebrations that are not part of your own tradition.
- Honor your family's traditions and teach them to your kids—and to someone outside the family who wants to learn about the diversity *you* have to offer.

When parents encourage a tolerant attitude in their children, talk about their values, and model the behavior they would like to see by treating others well, kids will follow in their footsteps.

Reviewed by: [D'Arcy Lyness, PhD](#)

Date reviewed: March 2014

[Teaching Your Child Tolerance](#)