

INSIGHTS

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Tolerance: a vital ingredient for your child's success

Kids who accept differences in others are setting themselves up for success in the world of diversity that they will enter.



Want your child to be successful way past the confines of the school gate?

Then you need to make sure your child is tolerant of individual differences and accepting of children and adults who look and act differently to them.

There's no doubt that success in today's world depends on the ability to understand, appreciate and work with others. The child who is open to differences is likely to have more opportunities in school, in business and in life in general.

Schools are diverse places

Walk into any school ground in Australia and you'll witness diversity firsthand. You're likely to see children from many different cultural, racial and family backgrounds. You'll also see kids with different needs and diverse ways of expressing themselves. Some kids will wear their hearts on their sleeves, while others will be taciturn and quiet. Tolerant kids are accepting of these differences. They make friends with children and young people who may look and act differently to them.

Intolerance breeds bullying

Intolerance, or prejudice, is at the heart of a great deal of the bullying that occurs among children and young people. Kids who look and act differently or who are more isolated often experience bullying for no apparent reason other than the fact that they are 'different'. Whole-hearted acceptance and even appreciation

of differences is a preventative bullying measure that we can all support.

Tolerance starts at home

Kids learn attitudes such as tolerance from those around them. Children in primary school usually reflect the attitudes of their parents. While adolescents are strongly influenced by their peers, parental attitudes still have a significant impact on their attitudes to other people. In short, if you want your child to be accepting of differences – whether they are racial, cultural, behavioural or in sexual orientation – then make tolerance a family trait. Here's how:

- ✓ **Help your child feel accepted, respected, and valued.** When your child feels good about himself, he is more able to treat others respectfully.
- ✓ **Model acceptance.** Kids learn what they live so make sure you welcome differences in others, and be sensitive to cultural or racial stereotypes. It also helps on a practical level to discuss prejudice and stereotypes when they occur in the media.
- ✓ **Challenge prejudice or narrow-minded views.** Sometimes kids, knowingly or unknowingly, can say the cruellest things about others. As a parent respectfully remind your child or young person about the impact that a narrow view can have on his or her own behaviour as well as on those it may be directed towards. Intolerance of diversity is an attitude that parents should make a stand against.
- ✓ **Answer kids' questions about differences honestly and respectfully.** Teach your kids that it is acceptable to notice and discuss differences as long as it is done with respect.
- ✓ **Respect individual differences within your own family.** Your ability to accept your children's differing abilities, interests and styles will go a long way towards establishing an attitude of tolerance in the children themselves. By valuing the uniqueness of each member of your family you are teaching your kids to value the strengths in others, no matter how diverse.

Modern Australia is such a wonderful culturally-rich place. This diversity is part of its magic. One way to make sure our children fully appreciate this richness is to fully embrace tolerance in everything we do.