

FOCUS TOPIC:



Respecting diversity:

Early childhood is the time when children first become aware of differences among people and start to form opinions and attitudes about these differences.

Young children are naturally curious about differences.

One of the ways they make sense of their world is to sort things into different categories and focus on one thing at a time - for example, whether another child has the same or different skin colour to them. Children do this to organise their experiences.

Awareness of differences also means young children are sensitive to experiences of racism and prejudice. This can impact on their social and emotional wellbeing, their learning and their social relationships. Their ideas about and responses to diversity are influenced by what they see and hear around them.

Helping all children and young people understand difference encourages them to feel good about who they are, where they fit in the world and appreciate diversity in others. It helps to build strong, inclusive communities where everyone enjoys a sense of being valued and belonging, which supports positive mental health.

How can you promote respect for diversity with children?

Babies and young children learn and develop through their early experiences and relationships.

When children develop positive relationships with other children and educators, it helps them to feel that they belong. This early learning about themselves and others lays the foundation for their future health and wellbeing.

In your early learning service or primary school, you can:

- provide opportunities for children to listen to people from a range of backgrounds and their perspectives
- respect individual differences and acknowledge that membership of a particular group doesn't mean everyone from that group has the same values, beliefs, rituals and needs
- promote and model inclusive behaviour - such as having notices or information available in a number of relevant languages for families
- expand children's awareness of difference through social events, books, songs or play materials
- research biographical stories of local people and people from around the world and introduce these stories to children
- encourage children to recognise and appreciate people for the things that make them unique and special
- encourage children to view differences as something that makes a person interesting
- support children to understand that just because somebody looks or sounds different, or does things in a different way, doesn't mean that this person is any less worthy of respect or friendship
- support all children to develop the skills necessary to form positive friendships regardless of differences in practices, languages and ethnic backgrounds.

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Feedback:

As a team, all feedback goes to helping us work on areas of improvement, extend on areas we are doing well in and most importantly work towards giving children the best quality care possible.