



TAKE-HOME SKILL: NURTURE A VALUE DIVERSITY MINDSET IN TEENS

"It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength."

-Maya Angelou

OVERVIEW

Parents/caregivers and their teens discuss a series of questions to help them recognize how valuing diversity can help their teens have positive interactions with people who seem different from them and be prepared to recognize and act against injustice.

LEVELS

- Middle School
- High School
- College

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- To help your teen nurture the value of diversity and how diversity contributes to social good.
- To help your teen reflect on how appreciating differences in our cultural and social identities can be a first step toward noticing inequity and injustice related to identity, which can lead to action toward promoting equity and justice.

TIME REQUIRED

- Multiple sessions

MATERIALS

- N/A

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Youth will:

- Reflect on how diversity is valued in their classrooms and their communities.
- Reflect on how a lack of awareness or recognition of diverse identities (e.g., “color evasion” or “not seeing color”) can keep them from noticing inequity and injustice.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS

- [Making Practices Culturally Responsive](#)
- [Adapting Practices for Students with Special Needs](#)
- [Making a Practice Trauma-Informed](#)

CHARACTER STRENGTHS

- Creativity
- Empathy
- Humility
- Justice

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Social awareness
- Relationship skills
- Responsible decision-making

MINDFULNESS COMPONENTS

- Open awareness

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

Take a moment to think about the first moment you learned about the word “diversity.”

- What are the first images that came to your mind?
- How did you learn about diversity? Did it come up in a conversation or during the exploration of your identity?
- Think about how your child might be experiencing related circumstances. What type of support do you wish you had during these similar experiences?
- Have you become more aware of and have placed more value on diversity? If so, how and why?
- How has the importance of diversity changed over your lifetime?
- What cultural and social backgrounds (e.g., identities like race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic class, religion, age, national origin, ability, or political orientation) did you notice and care about as a teen?
- Has your awareness of diverse identities helped you better recognize inequities based on cultural or social identities? Why? Has valuing diversity helped you to bridge differences with people who seem different? How so?

INSTRUCTIONS

Overview: One strategy that can help teens be open to bridging differences with people who seem different is nurturing an underlying belief that it's worthwhile to notice and appreciate cultural and social diversity. Talking to teens about times when different perspectives and lived experiences have helped solve both small and large problems can be a way to build up their awareness of why diversity is valuable.

Activity: While you're driving, doing dishes, or taking a walk together with your teen, you can begin a conversation about the value of recognizing and celebrating differences by sharing examples of diversity in movies (e.g., [We Grown Now](#)), music (e.g., [Recording Artists And Music Professionals With Disabilities \(RAMPD\)](#)), or podcasts (e.g., [Tell Them I Am](#)). You can also talk about the challenges that arise from a lack of diversity (e.g., [race and gender](#), and [religion](#) in movies). Alternatively, while you're watching a movie or listening to music with your teen, you can ask questions to provoke curiosity around whose voices are amplified and what types of stereotypes show up. You can take inspiration from and adapt the following prompts using a familiar conversational style that feels natural for you.

- First, talk about what diversity means to each of you, in general.
- How is diversity an important value for your family? Why?
- How can a lack of diversity lead to inequity and injustice?
- Referencing the movie or music as an example, what have you noticed about which [identities](#) are represented and which ones are absent?

Share with your teen how you've been thinking about recognizing and valuing diversity in everyday places like your workplace or your neighborhood. You can also share the story of your own personal experience with diversity.

- How have people of diverse identities in these settings shown an openness toward one another?
- How have their diverse perspectives helped them to work on shared goals in these settings?
- Who has leadership positions in these settings. Who doesn't? Why?
- How have their different perspectives enriched the workplace and the broader community?
- In what ways do these settings promote valuing diversity?
- How has valuing diversity helped you with making friends?

Invite your teen to share about their own experiences being with people of different cultural or social backgrounds in school, for example. You can adapt the language in the following questions using a conversational style that's familiar for you and your teen.

- How are different identities recognized and valued in your classrooms?
- How do your friends show they value diversity at school?
- How has valuing diversity helped you to get to know and talk to people of different identities at school?
- Do student clubs have representation from diverse cultural and social backgrounds?
- Are students of different identities represented in leadership roles? If not, why?
- How can you advocate so that students with a broad range of identities are included and feel a sense of belonging in student groups at school?

Beyond their school, invite your teen to share what diverse cultural and social identities they notice in other settings within their communities such as their city councils, parks and recreation programs, and volunteer settings.

- How have you seen our community demonstrate that it values diversity? In what areas is there room for improvement?
- What do you notice about who often has their voice amplified in conversations in our community?
- What might you do to advocate for appreciating people of different social and cultural identities within our community?
- What can we do together to promote valuing diversity in our community?
- How can valuing diversity be clearly visible and embedded in all aspects of our community rather than merely symbolic, performative, or superficial one-off efforts?
- How can valuing diversity open the door to bridging differences with people who seem different?
- How can noticing cultural and social identities help you to become aware of inequity and injustice?
- How might a lack of awareness or recognition of diverse identities (e.g., “color evasion” or “not seeing color”) keep you from noticing inequity and injustice?
- What can you do to act for justice for people who experience discrimination based on their cultural or social identities?

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

- How did your teen respond to this exercise?
- What can you do together that builds off of this conversation to promote valuing diversity at school or in your community? For example, how can you help your teen [expand what’s culturally familiar](#) to them?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND IT

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

[Researchers](#) compared two different approaches to diversity with 60 fourth and fifth graders at a public school in the United States (51 White, 9 Asian). One approach cultivated a *value diversity* mindset (e.g., “That means we need to recognize how we are different from our neighbors and appreciate those differences,” “We want to show everyone that race is important because our racial differences make each of us special”). The other approach minimized an awareness of distinct identities (e.g., “That means that we need to focus on how we are similar to our neighbors rather than how we are different,” “We want to show everyone that race is not important and that we’re all the same”).

The results? Students in the *value diversity* mindset group were better able to recognize both clear instances as well as ambiguous instances of discrimination as compared to students in the group that minimized distinct identities. What’s more, students in the group that minimized distinct identities less often described overt instances of discrimination events in a way that would lead a teacher to intervene. The researchers explain that these findings suggest that an approach to diversity that does not nurture its value can contribute to underreporting of injustices and permit clear instances of bias

based on cultural and social identity to persist.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

[Researchers](#) have identified valuing diversity as one of seven primary indicators of teen well-being. Valuing diversity is a marker of adolescent thriving because teens who care about and feel a sense of responsibility to people beyond themselves can contribute to efforts that are useful to all of society. What's more, teens who value diversity tend to place a high value on equality and justice, like acting to reduce hunger and poverty.

Interacting in a group with people of different cultural and social identities can bring up challenges around communication and belonging. But [research](#) also finds that groups that value both the differences in cultural and social identities within the group as well as share a broader team identity are more creative. What's more, diverse groups tend to engage in greater [responsible decision-making](#).

REFERENCES

Apfelbaum, E. P., Pauker, K., Sommers, S. R., & Ambady, N. (2010). In blind pursuit of racial equality? *Psychological Science, 21*(11), 1587-1592. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797610384741>

Salazar, M. R., Feitosa, J., & Salas, E. (2017). Diversity and team creativity: Exploring underlying mechanisms. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice, 21*(4), 187-206. <https://doi.org/10.1037/gdn0000073>

Scales, P. C., Benson, P. L., Leffert, N., & Blyth, D. A. (2000). Contribution of developmental assets to the prediction of thriving among adolescents. *Applied Developmental Science, 4*(1), 27-46. https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532480XADS0401_3

Sommers, S. R. (2006). On racial diversity and group decision making: Identifying multiple effects of racial composition on jury deliberations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 90*(4), 597-612. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.90.4.597>

TERMS OF USE

Thank you for downloading this resource! Please feel free to share it with friends, teachers, colleagues, and anyone else who might benefit from it.

Greater Good in Education is a free online resource produced by UC Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center. Visit our website at ggie.berkeley.edu to choose from more than 300 practices that can be incorporated into all aspects of a school community, from academic instruction to staff meetings to engagement with parents.

Please email us at ggsceducation@berkeley.edu with any questions about our programs and resources for educators.

With gratitude,
Greater Good in Education