



Multicultural Awareness



The foundation of self-awareness is laid when children are infants and toddlers. At these stages, children learn "what is me" and "what is not me." Toddlers are sensitive to the feelings of the adults around them, and they begin to mimic adult behavior. By age two, children recognize and explore physical differences. They are also learning the names of colors, and they begin to apply this to skin color. Natural curiosity will lead to questions about differences.

THE PRESCHOOL YEARS (age 3 and 4). Children of this age are better at noticing differences among people. They have learned to classify, and they tend to sort based on color and size. They can't yet deal with multiple classifications, so they get confused about the names of racial groups and the actual color of their skin. They wonder why two people with different skin tones are considered part of the same racial group. Many preschool children will comment - in words or through actions - on hair texture, eye shape, and other physical characteristics. They want to know how people got their color, hair texture, and eye shape. Children at this age believe that because other parts of their body grow and change, skin color and other physical traits could also change.

KINDERGARTEN (age 5 and 6) Kindergartners continue to ask questions about physical differences, and they can begin to understand the explanations for these differences. They can now make distinctions between members of the same racial or cultural group. At this age, children are developing social skills and becoming more group-oriented. They enjoy exploring the culture of their friends. By age six, most children understand the concept of fair and unfair, and they often use these concepts as they try to deal with issues.

We want to help all children develop a positive self-concept and feel proud of who they are...If this positive sense of self is allowed to flourish, today's children will become adults who accept and affirm differences, identify unfair situations, and strive to eliminate racism of any sort.



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This is a finger play to do with your children:

I am different from my head to my toes
(point to self then to head and toes)

I am different from my eyes to my nose
(point to self then eyes and nose)

I come from a place that is far and wide
(point to self then spread arms wide open)

A place where we all smile instead of cry
(act like you are tracing your lips into a smile
and bring hands down eyes as if you were crying)

I am very different as you can see
(point to self then at a friend)

But I still have a lot of love in me!
(point to self place hand over the heart
then hug yourself)