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How to Teach to Your Children That ALL Families are Beautiful

Easy Tips, Inclusive Language, & Conversation Starters

There are so many kinds of families, isn't that beautiful?

It is good for ALL kids when we use inclusive language. It opens the door to possibilities, potential, healthy identity development, perspective taking, compassion and equity.

So how do we do this? The resource below includes tips, language and conversation starters.



3 Easy Actions You Can Take as a Parent

1. Notice without judgment

Start by noticing your own assumptions and biases, perhaps assuming the other parent of a child is the dad after meeting the mom, or that a grandparent is just babysitting instead of being the primary caregiver. Perhaps you comment on how different siblings look, not considering whether they share the same genetics, or meet a dad's girlfriend and assume they are the mom or that there is just one household. Noticing without judgment is the first step to awareness and change.

2. Read Books About Different Kinds of Families

Exposure helps kids create a broader expression of "normal" in their mind through text-self connections. "Oh yeah, I have seen that before..." One of my favorites is *A Family Is a Family Is a Family*, by Sara O' Leary. Even better, broaden your social circle to model and include diversity. Shows like *Look, Listen, & Learn*, Sesame Street, and Daniel Tiger offer inclusive language as well.

Check out Stork's list of favorite children's books here for even more options!

3. Consider the Words You're Using

When reading books or singing songs that do not have inclusive language, consider changing the words. **For example:**

- When reading a book about a mom or dad, you can add in "or any loving adult", or you can add "or grandparent, aunt, uncle, caregiver".
- When singing songs like "The Wheels on the Bus", consider changing words like "the mommies on the bus" to "the adults on the bus", etc.



Options for Inclusive Language

It can be hard to know what to say. If you're not sure how to broaden your language at home, here are some suggestive swaps you can make.

Some of the easiest swaps you can make are: Grown Up (instead of parent), Partner (instead of husband or wife), and they/them pronouns (instead of assuming.)

Better yet, **just ask!**

CONSIDER USING:

Adult or Caregiver vs. *Mom/Dad*

Child vs *Son/Daughter*

Person vs *Man/Woman*

Partner vs *Husband/Wife*

Sibling vs *Sister/Brother*

OTHER HELPFUL VOCABULARY:

They/them

Y'all

Everyone

Folx

Friend

Neighbor

Grandparent



Conversation Starter Examples

In addition to taking the actions above and using some of the suggestive language, you may want to engage in dialogue with the kids and adults in your life.

Below are some options to get the conversation started.

1. Conversation Starters to Consider with your Kids:

- “What do you notice about this family?”
- “What do you think makes them special and beautiful?”
- “What does this family remind you of?”
- “What do you notice about this family and how it’s similar, different, etc. from ours?”

2. Conversation Starters to Consider with the Adults in the Other Family:

You may be on the playground and finding yourself curious about another family, or meeting another parent in your child’s classroom for the first time. As you build a relationship, you may want to learn more about how that person’s family is structured.

**Be mindful about context. Someone may not want to share details early in the relationship building phase.*

Consider starting the dialogue with:

- “Who is in your parenting support circle?”
- “How would you like me to refer to that person?”
- “Do you have other parenting partners?”
- “How is your family composed? Who is in your family?”
- “Who are your child’s loved ones?”





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