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How to Seek Out and Celebrate Diversity In and Out of Your Community

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We talk about diversity, but many Americans still live in primarily homogeneous communities. Is it possible to foster inclusiveness in situations that are not as diverse?

Inclusiveness is about more than geography and location. It is an attitude and perspective that values each human being as someone who is innately deserving of our respect and attention. No matter what our circumstance or where we live, we can cultivate a desire to understand another's life and heart.

5 Ways to Embrace Diversity

Whether we live in a homogeneous suburb, an isolated rural community, or an urban melting pot, we can consciously work to be inclusive and embrace diversity through the following ideas:

Read broadly. Beautifully written prose allows us to step into someone's shoes, even if only momentarily. Read books from varying perspectives and time periods. Introduce your children to a wide [variety of literature](https://www.brighthorizons.com/resources/Article/Our-Favorite-Books-for-Children) (<https://www.brighthorizons.com/resources/Article/Our-Favorite-Books-for-Children>), as well. Look for authors who can write engaging, informative books without being preachy. For example, children's author Eve Bunting regularly tackles complex issues, such as immigration, homelessness, and [family dynamics](https://www.brighthorizons.com/resources/Article/how-to-help-children-understand-diverse-families) (<https://www.brighthorizons.com/resources/Article/how-to-help-children-understand-diverse-families>). Her characters are authentically formed and her writing is always respectful of both her readers and subjects.

Choose media wisely. With web surfing and media streaming, the world is just a click away. In minutes, we can connect with a group on Facebook, follow a blog, or watch a television show. Choose media that reflects your values of inclusiveness. Avoid programming that makes broad generalizations about specific religious, ethnic, cultural, or social groups, especially when the generalizations are negative. Instead, look for programming that increases understanding and builds empathy. Try to find news programming that includes more than one perspective and even challenges your own.

Lend a hand. Look for opportunities to get to know people outside your immediate circle. This might include [volunteer work](https://www.brighthorizons.com/resources/Article/teaching-children-to-help-others) (<https://www.brighthorizons.com/resources/Article/teaching-children-to-help-others>), such as serving food at a homeless shelter or making regular visits to a nursing home. Perhaps it's as simple as getting to know your neighbors on a deeper level. Embracing diversity is about getting to know and appreciate people of different religions, cultures, ethnic groups, socio-economic groups, or ages.

Try something new. Anytime we step outside our comfort zone, we build understanding. Visit a play, concert, or religious service that is outside your norm. As you travel, try to plan activities that take you away from tourist destinations and instead, immerse you in local culture. Ask locals where they eat. Attend community events, volunteer at a local charity, or dedicate one day of any vacation to helping in the area you're visiting.

Challenge stereotypes. Be aware of the language you use to describe specific groups. Is it accurate? Is it fair? If not, perhaps it's time to challenge and change it. We all have biases. These biases often have their roots in our own upbringing and experiences, but they're usually inaccurate or incomplete. They limit our own growth and can also prevent us from developing enriching relationships with others.

Too often, inclusiveness sounds like something we should do for someone else, but [cultivating an attitude of inclusiveness](https://www.brighthorizons.com/resources/Article/how-to-raise-inclusive-child) (<https://www.brighthorizons.com/resources/Article/how-to-raise-inclusive-child>), has major gains for us. When we embrace differences, we approach the world with generous, open hearts. We see people as people, rather than groups or demographics—and that benefits everyone.

More on Embracing Diversity:

- Learn at what age children start to develop empathy (<https://blogs.brighthorizons.com/familyroom/at-what-age-does-a-child-start-to-learn-empathy/>), and how you can encourage this from the start.
- Discover three everyday ways that you can teach your child tolerance and compassion (<https://www.brighthorizons.com/Resources/Article/teaching-empathy-to-children>).
- Tune into our kindness webinar (<https://www.brighthorizons.com/family-resources/parenting-tips-webinar/developing-empathy-in-your-child>), at home or on the go for tips on how to help your child grow into a respectful, empathetic adult.



About the Author

Bright Horizons

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