



# Celebrating difference when your child is out of the ordinary

Ways parents can celebrate their child's difference and help them find their way in the world



So often we are encouraged to look and act in a certain way which can make life hard for people who don't 'fit the mould'. If your child's interests are out of the ordinary or if they are someone who struggles to fit in, they will need you on their side to help them navigate the world around them and become the person they are meant to be. Here are six things you can do to celebrate your child's difference and help them find their way in the world.

## 1. Let them share their feelings and reassure them

Give your child the space to talk about how they feel about being different. Let them know it's normal to feel this way and that you can help them. Point out to them the positive differences among your family and friends, and encourage them towards a broader perspective on the value of being unique – without discounting their anxiety. Share with them stories about things that happened to you when you were a child that made you feel the same way and how it helped you grow stronger and better able to cope with life's ups

and downs. Remind them that they are loved and that it won't always be this hard.

## 2. Show them that their difference is their strength

Sometimes being different can be hard. Let your child know that you appreciate this. But no matter how hard things feel, especially at school, encourage them to think about the benefits of focusing on their education. Explain to them that sticking with school will give them many more choices and enable them to enjoy much more of what the world has to offer. Talk to them about how they will develop inner strength from coping with difficult situations and how this strength will help them overcome other challenges in their lives. And remind them that being true to themselves – whatever that looks like – is essential for their future happiness and success.

## 3. Value your own difference

Your child will watch you and model their own thoughts and behaviour based on what they see. That's why it's important for you to talk about those things that make you different and how being different has helped you in your life. Your difference could be your quirky sense of humour or the way you approach solving problems. Whatever it is, let your child know that your differences give you strength as this will help them feel positive about their own differences.

## 4. Help them find people who share the same interests

Help your child seek out safe relationships with people who share their same interests or way of viewing the world. This will connect them with like-minded people who enjoy the same activities, help them feel less isolated, and encourage them to develop a deeper passion for what they enjoy doing. Seek out trusted adults who can also help mentor your child and encourage their spark.

## 5. Share stories of people whose difference is their strength

History shows that creativity and innovation come from uniqueness and in every walk of life, there are people who have changed the world for the better, achieved success of some kind, or brought their unique perspective to solving a problem. So often these people are different in some way or had to overcome

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obstacles to achieve their success. Share stories about people like these to help your child see what is possible and to inspire them to keep going.

## 6. Teach them to appreciate difference in others

Encourage your child to appreciate difference in other people. Your influence is very important here, so let them see you being respectful of difference in other people. Talk about the differences in people in a positive way and help your child see that when they value difference in other people, not only is life much more interesting, they can learn so much from other people.

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