



Diversity and Mental Health

Learning about diversity can benefit your children in the following ways:

- Increased empathy
- Increased understanding of people
- More open-mindedness
- Increased feelings of confidence and safety in their own diversity
- More prepared to join the workforce and become a good citizen

Along with these benefits, as your children become aware of and learn about the diversity found in an individual's background, opinions, beliefs, and heritage, they can also learn that an individual's mental health is diverse. Because a goal of diversity is to be aware, to be respectful, and to include others despite differences, the following ideas are ways your children could become more aware and respectful of the diversity of mental health in others.

- End the stigma of mental illness. By becoming educated, using correct terminology (e.g., saying someone has a bipolar disorder instead of saying someone is bipolar), and showing compassion to peers who have a mental illness, your children can become allies in ending the stigma of mental illness.
- Avoid harmful language. Phrases such as "He's such a schizo" are not respectful to someone's diversity of mental health.
- Find common ground. Although your children may not understand their peers' mental illnesses, they can still find something in common. Use the common ground to help give a sense of belonging to those who feel ostracized because of their mental illness.
- Learn something new. By becoming aware of the diversity of mental health, your children can learn from someone else's different experience or perspective of having a mental illness.

How to Support Your Children with Mental Illness

The American Psychological Association estimates that 15 million young people in the United States are diagnosed with a mental health disorder. If your children are included in that statistic, you can support them by:

- Showing unconditional love
- Become educated on the mental illness and any warning signs that accompany it
- Give praise for their good character traits
- Communicate and spend time together
- Build trust and help them feel safe
- Be a good example by modeling positive coping skills and good self-care habits
 - Remember, you need to take care of your needs so that you are able to effectively take care of your children's needs
- Be proactive about turning to professional help, if needed
 - If you don't know whether your children need extra help, watch for these signs that they may need help.

