

Many people would agree: parenting is one of the hardest jobs in the world. It's an endless 24/7 cycle that requires attention, maturity, resourcefulness, and patience. For some of us, learning the ABCs, the 50 states, and multiplication tables is enough to call it a day when it comes to schooling. However, the lessons of life and everyday situations persist beyond the classroom. Ultimately, it's the parent's responsibility to talk about what's happening in the news, to introduce new concepts, to teach diversity, and to broaden one's outlook on the world. Parents must take it upon themselves to raise global citizens.

As a first-generation Korean-Japanese American married to a fifth-generation Californian of German and Swedish ancestry, we are raising an ethnically mixed daughter. With immigrant parents, I grew up in between cultures. As a child, trying to identify with my cultural heritage while assimilating among my American peers was confusing. I am compelled to raise my daughter with self-awareness and intercultural understanding of who she is and an appreciation for the differences her parents, friends, and even strangers possess. Below are eight practices that I use in our home to instill global competency in my daughter.

### **Be a Global Citizen Role Model in Your Child's Life**

The best way to teach is to do. Our children are impressionable and look up to us for guidance, approval, and nurturing. Modeling openness toward and curiosity about other cultures and customs or learning a world language will show them that we place importance on being a citizen of the world. Being a global citizen is being a model citizen and what better role models are there for our children than ourselves.

### **Share Your Stories**

I don't remember everything my parents told me, but some of the most memorable stories are the personal anecdotes of their own childhood. These stories of family customs helped me see my parents as real people, and not just as authority figures who were seeking their own cultural identities. Tell a story of your own childhood, even if it's embarrassing or shocking. Speak to your child as if you were telling a friend about a time when you saw differences in yourself or others and how it made you feel. Relate the story at an age-appropriate level and make it relevant to his or her situation. In elementary school, I once attended a Korean Kids summer camp, and it was the first time I was surrounded by a group of others who looked like me and had parents with similar accents. We learned to make kimchi, the basics of taekwondo, and how to write basic Hangeul, Korean alphabet letters. For that one week, I wasn't ashamed of my heritage. It was a shared sense of community and history. We are our children's first storytellers. What better way for children to learn about their heritage than through a parent's personal point of view.

### **Demonstrate Empathy**

The best way for a child to learn empathy is to see it modeled by a parent. It's difficult to walk in someone else's shoes, so relate everyday examples to your child's personal experiences and emotions. Remind Tommy how badly it hurt when Jack grabbed the toy out of his hands. Ask Sally if she recalls how upset she was when she wasn't selected to be on the cheerleading squad. Asking children and youth to tap into similar feelings can strike a chord of empathy. Express your disappointment when someone rejected you because had freckles..., or a parent who didn't speak English. I was teased with stinging words and gestures on the playground. Those instances stayed with me

and made me feel like the odd one. Sharing incidents like this one with our children can help them understand that people may not appreciate physical or cultural differences. Be honest with them about your feelings when it comes to injustice, disparity, or politics. Speak to them candidly about your passions or frustrations.

### **Speak Multiple Languages**

Americans speak fewer foreign languages than any other country. Many [studies show](#) the significance of being multilingual for future success. Even if you are not bilingual yourself, learn a language with your child. I'm looking forward to dusting off my French textbooks from college and revisiting the Korean alphabet. Sometimes the effort is all it takes to prove the importance of learning another language.

### **Multicultural Media**

There are many more books about diversity and multiculturalism than when I was growing up. There are still not enough. Today's media is still primarily homogeneous, and the visual cultural impact of repetitive images can impact a child's outlook on what's accepted and revered in society. What's missing from mainstream media and the absence of diversity is also damaging. If you grow up seeing things the same way all the time, you learn to accept them as the cultural norm. There weren't enough Asian American role models on the TV screen or in print when I was growing up. This glaring absence led me to believe I would never fit in to mainstream society or that I would have to work harder to prove myself as someone who fits in. Sharing our personal stories is so important to help younger people acknowledge and accept differences.

### **Explore Cultures**

Personally, I am a believer in making change for ourselves rather than waiting for things to change on their own. One way to promote global competency among our children is to spend our free time seeking out diverse cultural activities. Museums such as the [World Awareness Children's Museum](#) or [P.L.A.C.E. Multicultural Children's Museum and Creative Arts Center](#) are great ways to engage kids. Virtual field trips through [Discovery Education](#) or [Google Lit Trips](#) are easy ways to learn about the world from the comfort of home. Starting a culture club among a few friends with different ethnicities or backgrounds could be an enriching way to experience hands-on cultural activities, enjoy different foods, or learn fun customs. I like to invite different friends into our home, which conveys our hospitality, provides a sense of community, and teaches our daughter the importance of meeting new people and learning from them.

**Holidays** Showing children how Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, or other holidays are celebrated around the world is a valuable way to learn about different customs. You could adapt your own version of the holiday season by blending customs from each celebration. The purpose is to teach your children that not everyone has the same beliefs and to engender respect for other people's customs. Recently, we celebrated the Lunar New Year together at home by inviting friends over, including a family from my daughter's school. We feasted on Asian dumplings, noodles, and spicy chicken; decorated the house with colorful paper dragons; and all the children opened up red envelopes filled with chocolate coins. It was a simple but meaningful gathering and a special memory with our daughter.

### **Technology**

While children's use of technology is a heated topic, there's no escaping the reality of its prevalence in our society. However, there's an increasing number of useful apps with intercultural aspects. Apps like [One Globe Kids](#) or [Wee You-Things](#) teach inclusion and

diversity. You can open up a dialogue with your child through an app's interactions and engagement.

We have an opportunity to teach diversity and respect. If we instill a core intercultural understanding within our children, they will be more equipped to have an open dialogue in the future among their communities, leaders, and their own families.

#### Additional Resources

- Bringing the World Home by Dr. Jessie Voigts and Lillie Forteau and their site
- *Raising Global Children* by Stacie Nevadomski Berdan and Marshall Berdan; published by the American Council on Teaching of Foreign Languages
- InCulture Parent, an online magazine for parents raising global citizens
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