



Growing and nurturing relationships for life



CULTURAL DIVERSITY: HOW CAN I CELEBRATE MY FRIENDS?

Groups with members from culturally diverse backgrounds tend to be more welcoming of new members and provide individual members with increased opportunities to develop friendships with people from a more diverse and varied social network.

See

- **What is happening?**
Cultural diversity is such a gift, though can be tricky when people come together from very different experiences and worldviews.
- **Who are the people involved?**
Everyone, and teenagers in a particular way, especially starting in a new school.
- **Who gains from this situation? Who loses?**
The power and fear of others who are different to us. Everyone loses when diversity is rejected, especially those who are isolated or shunned because of their background, looks, dress, beliefs, unique and individual choices.
- **What is the situation doing to people?**
Some people are being isolated or shunned because of their background, looks, dress, beliefs, choice. Where narrow, judgemental, 'suspicious of the other' views prevail, this can feed racism, bigotry, suspicion and intolerance.
- **Why is it happening? Why does it continue?**
'One thing I would have appreciated knowing as a teenager is the process of brain development. These insights would have really helped me.' Try to be open minded, curious and open to others, rather than threatened by or intolerant of difference.

Act

- **What can we do to bridge the gap between what is happening (the reality) and what should be happening (the ideal/what our faith says)?**
Assist my teenager to see people who are different as interesting, as unique, as someone to embrace in their difference. No one is better or worse, all are different. Listen to them and offer welcome and a smile, offer love-the love we enjoy in, from and with God. Explore whether there are options to be involved in supportive communities, including Parish youth groups.
- **What action are we going to take?**
As an adult, engage with my teenager to help them to be the bigger person, to go out of their way to include others, make them feel welcome. Seek friendship, be curious and bring empathy, not judgement. Diversify cooking at home to embrace other cuisines, and use this as an entry point to conversation about the richness of other cultures and faiths.
- **Who can we involve in our action?**
Everyone! Smile at people, make an effort to get to know others, and especially things that others don't know about another. Get to know parents/carers of my teenager's friends-try to be connected with them, know who they are... Together form the 'village' required to raise/form a child, a teenager, an adult...

Judge

- **How do you feel about this situation?**
As a parent/adult, I can be both understanding from personal experience, and concerned when teenagers judge, reject or ostracize others.
- **Have you ever behaved or acted like anyone in the situation? If so, what happened? Why? How did you and/or those involved feel?**
As an adult, I can identify with the behaviour and experience. I have experienced acceptance and rejection from others, and know how difficult this can be.
- **What do you think should be happening?**
Throw the idea of 'normal' in the bin. Perhaps go easy on the questions, or at least ask them out of interest for and of the individual, not what they do or how they look.
- **What does our faith say about it?**
Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' (Matt 22: 37-39) Every person is created in love, created unique and equal. 'Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven'.