

Overcoming Discrimination: Building Productive Lives

Discrimination is a prevalent problem in today's society. Ignorance is the most common cause of racism and discrimination. This ignorance is passed on from generation to generation. Parents who are supposed to provide direction for their children are often the culprits to a child's misunderstanding. Adults who use stereotypes perpetuate ignorance by categorizing others into a set of characteristics. Usually stereotypes have negative connotations and children often will incorporate these ideas into their own repertoire of thoughts. Once these ideas are held the child begins to believe that others may be inferior to themselves. Negative behavior such as name calling, violence and hate crimes are easily justified in the child's eyes and further serve to strengthen hateful beliefs.

Parents have the responsibility to educate their children. The following suggestions may be useful in educating your child to be a part of this culturally diverse area:

- Emphasize through your actions the equality of all people.
- Explain to your child the significance of respecting everybody regardless of their cultural background.
- Refrain from using speech that can be construed as stereotypical.
- Do not accept children's use of stereotypes, racial slurs, etc. Implement consequences for unacceptable behavior.
- Support children's friendships with people of different races and cultural backgrounds.
- Educate and support your child's desires to learn about various cultures, customs and traditions.

A child that is respectful and tolerant of others has a much better chance of being able to interact into today's culturally diverse society.

Recognizing equality is significant to building more productive relations

with others. Though we all have limitations it is important to realize that we all have gifts and talents. Discrimination and hate not only serve to ignore those contributions but perpetuate violence and ignorance.