

## 4 Tools & techniques to make diversity a fun topic to teach kids at home

*By Wa'qaar Mirza, CEO of Safi Ideas, creator of Zayn & Zayna's Little Farm.*

Over the past year we have seen movements & protests highlighting how the racism that is ingrained in our society and history, is still present today. There's no doubt that diversity needs to be taught both in our classrooms and at home in a bid to tackle racism and create a more inclusive generation. As the UK continues through the third lockdown, children are not exposed to learning diversity organically through school topics and group discussions, nor are they able to see friends from various cultures and backgrounds, meaning it's more important than ever to continue the teaching of diversity and cultural awareness at home.

In 2019 there was an 11% rise in hate crimes aimed towards minorities in the UK compared to 2018 (According to The [Home Office](#).) Educating children that diversity is a positive aspect of life, could be part of the solution to help reduce issues like this in the future, as well as increasing creativity, encouraging open-mindedness and providing a counter-argument to racism, laying down the foundations for an inclusive society that embraces differences. This education really needs to start early. [Studies](#) show that babies recognise differences in skin colour and hair textures and children as young as four years old begin to learn stereotypes about themselves and others. It all reinforces the importance to give children an alternative view on harmful stereotyping as soon as possible.

Since the start of the pandemic, many parents have had to take on the difficult task of educating at home, often feeling ill-equipped to help their child with remote learning. Teaching children about diversity can feel daunting as resources for parents are often quite limited. This is why Zayn and Zayna's Little Farm was created, a truly diverse animation that encourages inclusive behaviour and supplies parents and teachers with worksheets and tips to go along with each episode. It's important parents know how to teach their child about diversity as it is a subject not to be feared but celebrated, and if you know how, teaching your child about diversity can be fun and educational for everyone.

Here are four easy ways to help teach children about diversity in a fun way:

### **1. Explore the world in new ways.**

Travelling is a great way to learn about other cultures, cuisines, religions and ways of life. This can be recreated at home! Use a globe or atlas to travel all over the world, picking new countries and continents to explore and research together. Encourage your child to be more accepting of those different from themselves and demonstrate diversity as a normal fact of life by learning about different cultures; you can cook dishes from around the world or learn how to use chopsticks for example.

### **2. Choose content rich in diversity.**

Mainstream TV often lacks truly diverse content, showcasing diversity in tokenistic forms, using different coloured animals, rather than authentic complex human characters of varying race, religion, sexual orientation and other backgrounds. However, educational diverse children's TV shows are emerging, take Zayn and Zayna's Little Farm for example. This children's animation was created to be a fun and educational resource for teaching children about diversity and inclusion through the adventures of Muslim brother and sister, Zayn and Zayna on their family's British farm. The show tackles subjects such as respect, kindness, sustainability and diversity in digestible 15-minute episodes available on YouTube.

### **3. Host celebrations**

Celebrate different occasions from different religions, cultures and countries. Choosing to celebrate a whole host of events like Chinese new year, Diwali, Eid or Ramadan ensures you are encouraging your child to be inclusive and tolerant. It also gives you the opportunity to teach them about different ways of celebrating and religions. You can also use this as an opportunity to tell stories from around the world, for example, Aboriginal Dreamtime stories. Or, listen to music from different places, learning about instruments that you may not have heard or seen before.

### **4. Choose varied role models.**

When talking to your child about influential people in history choose role models, photos or videos that demonstrate diversity in ability, race, religion. This presents diversity as not just the norm but a positive aspect of life.

With most mainstream TV and books still failing to provide truly diverse non-tokenistic representations to children, parents can step in and learn alongside their children to embrace diversity and be inclusive. I believe these teaching tools combined with improving resources and parents open-mindedness children will learn to be inclusive and consequently make our future society a more welcoming and accepting place, where everyone can feel valued, listened to and respected.

There is still a lack of truly diverse content and role models for children, but parents can help bridge this gap. By tapping into culturally rich content that is available, bringing cultural awareness into the home, we can help our children learn to be inclusive, consequently making our future society a more welcoming and accepting place, where everyone can feel valued, listened to and respected.

### **About Wa'qaar A Mirza**

*Wa'qaar A Mirza is co-founder and global CEO of Safi Ideas. An accomplished British entrepreneur with over 30 years experience in direct response marketing strategy, Mirza has held senior executive positions at leading global media, financial and consumer brands including PWC, British Telecom and HSBC.*

*An accomplished author, speaker, producer and director, much of Mirza's work has been in cultural and religious production with a focus on content working towards greater equality and visibility for marginalised groups. Mirza has produced programmes for National Geographic and the Discovery Channel.*

*In 2020 Safi Productions launched Zayn and Zayna's Little Farm, an inclusive pre-school animated show dedicated to seeding inclusive ideas and teachable moments in kindness, mindfulness, family, and community to all children.*