

# BUILDING SOCIAL AWARENESS IN YOUR CHILD

A child's future ability to succeed in school, in college, in the workplace, and to achieve long-term happiness will, in part, depend on their ability to develop social awareness. Successful individuals learn to take the perspective of, to empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. They understand social and ethical norms for behavior and recognize and access family, school, and community resources and supports as needed.

For example, in school we teach students how to be productive members of a group and give them opportunities to work in diverse groups. Students are learning content, standards, while learning to be socially aware. How do we work together? How do we take the perspective of another? What if we do not agree with someone? How do we navigate that in a way that is respectful of one another?

Parents and families are critical partners in helping their children develop relationship skills. This resource offers guidance, tools, and activities for parents and families to help their children in developing social awareness at home.

## OPPORTUNITIES TO DISCUSS SOCIAL AWARENESS SKILLS

- **Talk to your child about how kindness and gratitude are connected.** Example: "What are you grateful for today? I am grateful because my co-worker helped me with my project today. Was someone kind to you today? Did you help someone or brighten their day by doing something nice?"
- **Share your family values with your child.** Example: "In our family, we value honesty, loyalty, generosity and kindness. We also respect others, and we always try to value their feelings and ideas. What are some ways you can apply these values to your own friendships?"
- **Discuss the importance of being polite.** Example: "When you are talking or interacting with anyone, be polite by listening patiently and not interrupting people when they speak. If your friend does something nice for you, do not forget to say 'thank you', and if you do something wrong, try to apologize."



### FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT

#### **Dolphin Tale (2011, rated PG)**

Character Traits: Compassion, Empathy, Persistence, Acceptance, Advocacy

After losing her tail in a crab trap, Winter the dolphin (who plays herself!) is sent to a marine rehabilitation center. Friends and family save the one-of-a-kind dolphin by convincing a pioneering doctor to create a unique prosthetic attachment to restore Winter's ability to swim.

#### **Zootopia (2016, rated PG)**

Character Traits: Acceptance, Empathy, Persistence

In a world where animals can talk, a rabbit named Judy and a fox named Nick are unlikely partners who team up to solve a kidnapping case. This exciting crime mystery can be a great tool for helping kids learn about tolerance and the danger of stereotypes.

#### **Wonder (2017, rated PG)**

Character Traits: Empathy, Compassion, Acceptance

This inspirational movie tells the story of a young boy named Auggie with a facial deformity. He decides in fifth grade to go to a traditional school after being home-schooled by his mother. The lessons in this movie are the power of kindness, accepting others, being yourself and how we are all connected to one another.

#### **Remember the Titans (2009, rated PG-13)**

Character Traits: Integrity, Respect, Responsibility, Teamwork, Empathy

This movie tells the story of integration by spotlighting a high school football team. It dives into the broader issues of race and class while also honing in on the personal relationships and dynamics at play in the newly integrated team.



# DISCUSSION STARTERS

## TEACHING SOCIAL AWARENESS THROUGH LITERATURE

### ELEMENTARY

#### ***I'm a Different Butterfly* by Sherri O**

This book expands empathy and explores what questions arise in an individual about their own self-perception and how others react when one looks different than others. Written for ages 4-8, the story of Lulu Noire, a black butterfly who feels unsure at first about looking different from other butterflies. Lulu comes to realize, through interactions with other animals, that she is beautiful the way she is. This playful book offers opportunities to explore issues with young children of friendship and of learning from and embracing differences.

1. How would you feel if other kids said they did not like you because they thought you were different?
2. What does the saying "Nature made me," mean to you?
3. What does it mean to appreciate others?
4. How are you and your best friend different?
5. How are you and your best friend the same?

#### ***One Day, So Many Ways* by Laura Hall**

Discover what daily life is like for kids all around the world! Meet children from over 40 countries and explore the differences and similarities between their daily routines. Over 24 hours, follow a wide variety of children as they wake up, eat, go to school, play, talk, learn, and go about their everyday routine in this stunning retro-style illustrated picture book.

1. What was different about the places these children lived?
2. Why do you think children who live in different countries might dress differently?
3. What were some of the different types of food eaten in other places?
4. How were these students lives and routines different from yours? Similar to yours?
5. What would you share about your life and routine with these children to tell them about how we live?

#### ***The Skin You Live In* by Michael Tyler**

With the ease and simplicity of a nursery rhyme, this story delivers an important message of social acceptance to young readers. Themes associated with child development and social harmony, such as friendship, acceptance, self-esteem, and diversity are promoted in a simple and straightforward manner.

1. What kinds of skin are there?
2. What can you do if someone makes fun of you because of the color of your skin?
3. Is it more important to focus on the outside or inside of a person?
4. What can you do if someone makes fun of your clothes, the foods you eat, or your cultural activities?
5. How can you help if a friend or classmate is being teased?

### SECONDARY

#### ***Amina's Voice* by Hena Khan**

Amina has never been comfortable in the spotlight. She is happy just hanging out with her best friend, Soojin. Except now that she is in middle school everything feels different. Soojin is suddenly hanging out with Emily, one of the "cool" girls in the class, and even talking about changing her name to something more "American." Does Amina need to start changing too? Or hiding who she is to fit in?

1. In the beginning Emily is not friends with Amina and Soojin, but by the end of the book they are all friends, what happened and why?
2. Have you ever changed friend groups? How did the old or new friends react? Were they kind or mean?
3. Do you keep secrets from friends or family members? Is it hard to keep secrets from people who are close to you? When should you not keep a secret?
4. Have you ever been bullied or watched someone else being bullied? What was your reaction, and how did you feel?

#### ***Operation Redwood* by S. Terrell French**

Julian is sent to stay with his disinterested aunt and uncle for four months where he discovers that his Uncle's corporation plans to cut down a group of redwood trees at Big Tree Grove and decides to take a stand to save the trees. This is an adventurous and gripping tale as Julian and his friends hatch scheme after scheme to save these giants of nature.

1. Have you ever discovered someone's hidden feelings about you (good or bad)? How did it make you feel?
2. How did it change your relationship with that person?
3. Is there something in your school or community that you wish you could change?
4. How has Julian and his relationship with his friends and family evolved? How have your relationships with family and friends changed and evolved?
5. What were the factors that caused these changes?

#### ***The Breadwinner* by Deborah Ellis**

Eleven year-old Parvana lives under Taliban rule in Afghanistan. When her father is arrested and her family is left without someone who can work or even shop for food, Parvana, forbidden to earn money as a girl, disguises herself as a boy to help her family survive.

1. What are the similarities between Parvana and Shauzia? What are the differences?
2. How do Mother and Mrs. Weera differ in the way in which they get through the hardships they have suffered under the Taliban regime?
3. How does Parvana change throughout the story?
4. What are some of the conflicts and challenges faced?