



Strengthening Children's Identity and Core Values to Overcome Hurdles

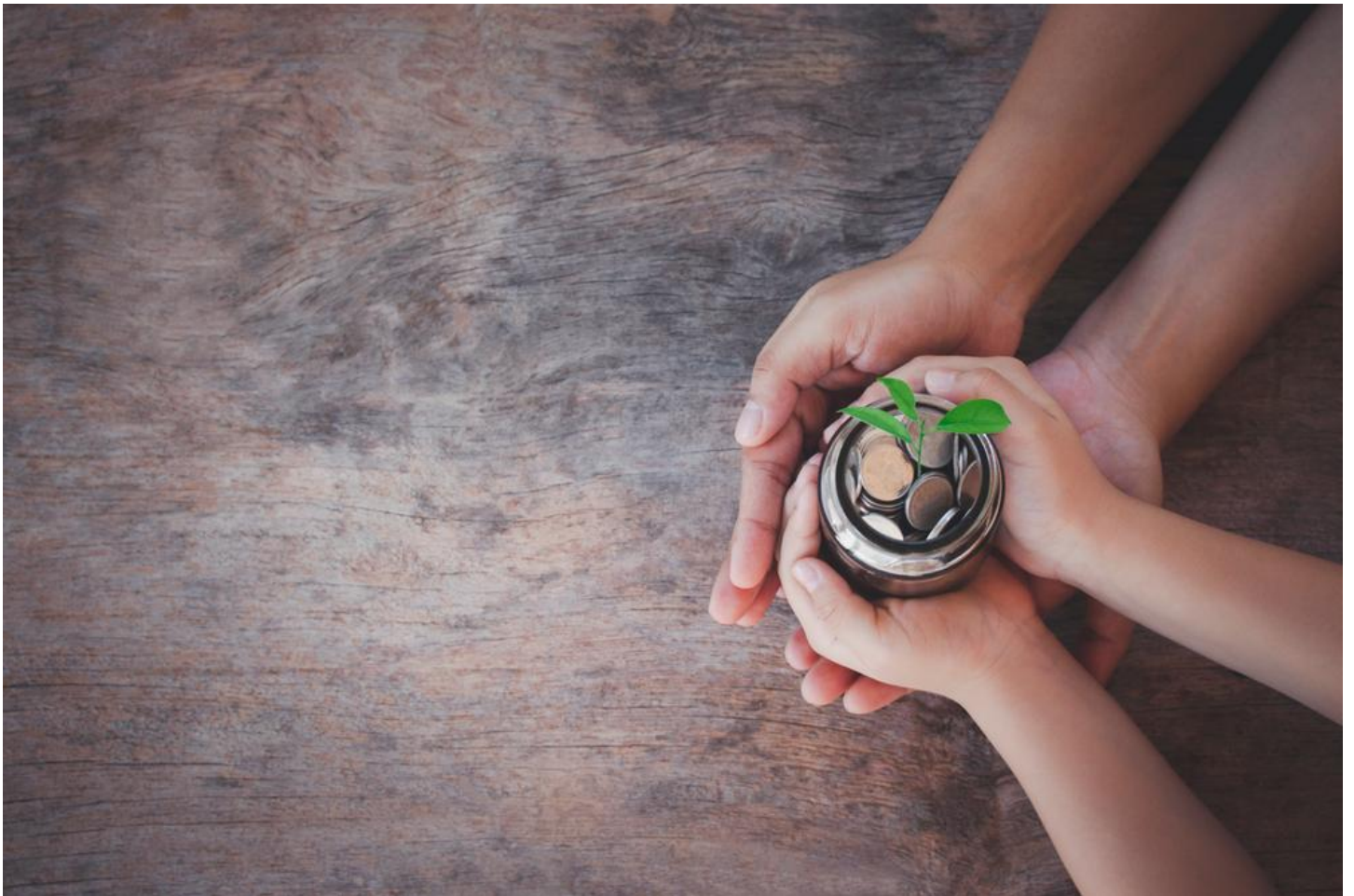
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Ensuring a child knows who they are, is comfortable with themselves and is well equipped to deal with life's difficulties is very important. Although wanting to protect your child from all of life's ups and downs is natural, it is important to recognise that as individuals we all have to experience both the hardships and the enjoyable parts of being a human. Therefore, shielding children from everything, in the long term, isn't helpful.

The [UK's NSPCC charity](#) says that the effects of bullying can have a profound impact on mental health and can last into adulthood. It can affect individuals' friendships, peer acceptance and make them wary and suspicious of those around them. It can also affect the way they adapt to changing environments, such as school or college. The UK charity emphasises how all children, whether they are bullied, they bully others or they witness bullying, should be appropriately supported before, during and after harmful incidents in their childhood.

Focusing on establishing a strong sense of identity at an early age allows children to be more robust and resilient throughout their lives. Figures from the [National Center for Educational Statistics](#) show that one out of every five (20.2%) students in the USA are [being bullied](#). Figures like these are disappointing however, as caregivers it is important to give our children the toolkit to counter intolerance, instead of to fear it. This toolkit can help them overcome hurdles, such as other people's negativity, instead of being entirely floored by it.

Building Core Values and Internal Resilience



A lot of advice about the best ways to 'deal with bullying', centers on what action the parents and children should take in the event of a bullying incident. This is very important and we will look at this shortly.

However, I believe preventative action is also important. When speaking to children about intolerance, bullying and unkind behaviour, the focus shouldn't be placed upon 'when you get bullied' - this isn't helpful for children and can instil fear. Instead it is necessary to explore what boundaries are, what is kind and unkind behaviour, offer examples of intolerance and cruelty, and introduce [learning games](#) and activities to build self-esteem, so that children are prepared if they encounter unkind behaviour.

A holistic and self-esteem-based approach to children's welfare looks at nurturing the whole child, and how to build them up as an individual, instead of just waiting to react to a harmful situation.

Education About Diversity and Inclusion Is Key

According to the [NSPCC](#) children tend to encounter bullying and unkind behaviour due to their race or ethnic background, gender, disability and sexual orientation. They also state it could be because they are anxious or have low self-esteem, lack assertiveness, or are


shy or introverted. However the UK charity also says that children who are popular and successful also deal with unkind behaviour due to jealousy.

Irrespective of the reason, children need to understand that bullying is wrong and should be educated on diversity, inclusion, tolerance and the importance of respect for everyone as a human being.

Educating children about events in the past where individuals have overcome intolerance and bullying, is a great way to provide hope about how people have tackled issues that stem from unkindness in the past. Utilising Kid's Academy [3rd grade math worksheets](#), such as the one below that focuses on Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus boycott during the American Civil Rights Movement, is a great way to highlight the bravery and resilience of those throughout history who have dealt with intolerance.


Multiplying 9's Montgomery Bus Boycott

Help Rosa Parks inspire others to boycott the bus route by solving each 9's fact. Draw a line through all of the correct products to help Rosa get home.

START 



$9 \times 2 = 18$
 $9 \times 4 = 36$ $9 \times 1 = 9$

$9 \times 3 = 27$ $9 \times 2 = 19$ $9 \times 6 = 57$

$9 \times 6 = 54$  $9 \times 7 = 64$

$9 \times 7 = 63$ $9 \times 3 = 24$

$9 \times 8 = 72$ $9 \times 1 = 12$ $9 \times 4 = 39$

 $9 \times 5 = 45$ $9 \times 10 = 90$ 

FINISH

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As well as highlighting the ways in which individuals can experience prejudice due to racism, educators and caregivers can also explain to children about the other ways intolerance can take shape. From sexism and homophobia to ageism, gender and disability discrimination - all of these elements of cruelty can be explored in class and at home.

This education can help to prepare your child for the signs of intolerance from others and form a crucial framework for them to understand what these behaviours look and sound like.

Toolkit for Self-Esteem Boosting

As well as educating children about the ways people can be bullied due to their identity, it is important to focus on the ways their identity makes them unique. By teaching children that their uniqueness, identity and core values are something to be celebrated, the emphasis is shifted to a more beneficial place. What a child focuses on grows, and so it is always important to water the seeds of creativity, individuality, possibility, curiosity and honesty that each of us possess, in order to help children thrive into self-confident and grounded individuals.



There are lots of activities that can serve to solidify a child's identity and core values. Get creative with your little one by giving them a large piece of card and lots of bright materials, such as crayons, feathers, glitter, cardboard, tissue paper and ribbon. Ask them to write their name in big letters in the middle and decorate it in the most bright and beautiful way. Next up, tell them to write around their name, in a mind-map format, all the things they enjoy and to create patterns, drawings and doodles that emphasise these things.

Next up tell them to write in different places on the page where they come from, their religion and heritage and what they love about their background. Another step to this

process can be to add descriptive words that display their personality, from honest, curious and funny, to intelligent, excited and thoughtful.

These types of activities help children get to know themselves, what they like and who they are and solidifies their sense of self. This is important in terms of encountering bullying, because this preparatory work makes them more comfortable with who they are and therefore makes them less concerned about other people's points of view, especially if they are unkind and intolerant.

Parents can help to solidify family values and heritage by undertaking similar creative activities at home, as well as answering children's questions about their background and family in an honest, yet age-appropriate way as they grow.

Practical actions to take for adults and children when incidents occur

The US organisation [Stop Bullying](#) offers lots of resources for adults and children in the event of a bullying incident and offers lots of helpful next steps to follow. The organisation advises children to practice assertiveness in the event of others being unkind, by telling [the person bullying them](#) to stop in a calm, clear voice. If the environment is unsafe and speaking up seems too hard or not safe, then children should walk away and stay away. They should find an adult to talk to that they trust, and share their feelings.

Stop Bullying also offers advice for [adults and schools](#) about ways to safeguard pupils from bullying and offers specific curricula, resources and information to implement this within educational environments.

Fostering Individuality

Building a strong sense of self from an early age is very important, to provide children with the tenacity to face the challenges of life. Unfortunately criticism, bullying and negativity are hurdles that many children will face, and it is important for them to know that they have the tools to deal with whatever comes their way, and that there are adults close by to support them.



Introducing education to help them understand what intolerance and bullying is, as well as offering practical guidance for them to implement if a bullying incident occurs, is vital. Ultimately children should be encouraged to be themselves, irrespective of their background, beliefs and ethnicity. By nurturing their uniqueness and building their self-esteem children can flourish and be comfortable in their skin, even in the face of difficulties.

About the author

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References

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4. <https://www.stopbullying.gov/resources/kids>