

— DECEMBER NEWSLETTER —

Embracing Your Culture & Traditions This Holiday Season

*Counseling Partners of
Los Angeles*

The holidays may bring up different things for many people. In addition to the usual stress that holiday festivities bring, many families face the added weight of depression, anxiety and grief. Encouraging your family to embrace cultural identity and participate in traditions may help with holiday stress and act as a protective factor against mental health problems. In this issue, we will explore ways you can lean into your culture and traditions as a way to make it through the darkest of these winter nights.

About CPLA

The mission of Counseling Partners of Los Angeles is to support at-risk and underserved students living in Los Angeles by providing a low-cost, school-based program that delivers essential counseling and support services students and teachers need in order to grow toward their full potential emotionally, intellectually, morally and socially.

Interested in Services for Your Child?

CPLA's counseling services are FREE to all students attending one of our partner schools! Reach out to the school principal or your child's teacher. You can also request a CPLA referral form from the school.

C O U N S E L I N G P A R T N E R S O F L A . O R G

Children and Cultural Identity

Cultural identity is a facet of your personal identity that is based on characteristics of ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, and gender. It is malleable and can change over time.

HOW TO CELEBRATE YOUR CHILDREN'S CULTURE

Support Exploration - Children start to identify with their cultural or racial identity by ages 3-4. Around ages 7-9, they are able to understand group dynamics and the history behind their culture. Supporting your children as they explore their identities will strengthen your relationship and help buffer against the negative effects of discrimination.

Talk about culture identity - Cultural identity is a multifaceted construct, made up of race, language, food, profession, hobbies, music, family role, and so forth. You can help children understand their culture by exposing them to music, food, and language that are cultural staples. You can also encourage exploration by having children visually depict their identity with a list or picture. They can draw their favorite food, words, music, and games from their culture.

Acknowledge Differences - Children are naturally inquisitive and are constantly learning about the world. Help them make sense of their surroundings by explaining similarities and differences they may see in cultural identity. Note that the differences exist and explain why. Are the differences they see because of religion? Food preference? Social roles? This helps children avoid thinking that differences are ALL bad.

Dealing with Discrimination - Covert or overt racial discrimination can happen to your child despite your best intentions. You can help buffer your child against the effects of racial discrimination by helping them build up a strong cultural identity and pride in their traditions and customs.

<https://www.onoursleeves.org/mental-health-resources/minority-mental-health/protecting-kids-against-racism>

<https://www.maginationpressfamily.org/mindfulness-kids-teens/helping-your-child-embrace-their-cultural-identity/>



Other ideas

- Read picture books with your children that highlight their culture's sights and peoples.
- Watch movies with characters who look like your family.
- Share personal stories from your family that make you proud.
- Play music from your culture to your children.



Traditions

TRADITIONS GROUND US

Engaging in traditions and rituals centers us and reminds us of what matters. Often centered around family and friends, the holidays can be a time to reflect on the year and plan for the next. However, the holidays are not always a happy time for families, as many are coping with loss and hardships. Holding onto traditions during this time can help restore a sense of normalcy and center children in chaos. If you feel that your child is unready to re-engage in old traditions due to loss or sadness, or feels overwhelmed by the holidays, consider asking them who they want to be around during the season. Focusing less on the what and more on the who will help children feel supported.

TRADITIONS GIVE A SENSE OF SELF-MASTERY

A lot of life happens outside of our control, and this is even more true for children. Allowing children to participate in a reliable activity or tradition each year is like the northern star - it points them back to what matters while offering a sense of agency. In this confusing world, giving children a task they can complete on fosters self-mastery and independence, which allows them to feel like they can conquer the world.

TRADITIONS ENCOURAGE CONNECTION AND COMMUNITY

Children need social connection, so participating in traditions together as a family or friend group may help meet this need. Focus on the quality of traditions rather than the quantity. Children often become overwhelmed and tired of endless activities, so choosing to do 1 or 2 meaningful activities that bring joy is more helpful than doing many.

Examples of Traditions:

1. Honor your family's history - Talk with your children about your ancestors one night. See how far back in your family history you can go.
2. Holiday Game Day
3. Cookie Potluck
4. Find a treat your child can help make
5. Volunteer for a cause
6. Toast lost loved ones. Go around the table and share one memory you have of your loved one who has passed.
7. Make a gratitude jar

<https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2002/12/rituals>
<https://www.betterup.com/blog/family-traditions>
<https://healthtalk.unchealthcare.org/3-ways-holiday-traditions-can-improve-mental-health/>