



DEALING WITH DIVERSITY AS A MOTHER AND A TEACHER

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I am a mother of seven kids. Although they all have sprung from me, those seven lives that I have been entrusted with still differ in ways that I, despite being their mother, have never been and will probably never will be able to comprehend. One child is different from another within my brood, but one thing's for sure: I will never love any of them any less for being different from any of their siblings.

My former boss once remarked that one of the main reasons I got hired by her to teach foreign students was the fact that I had survived with seven different children with varying personalities, idiosyncrasies and pet peeves. It somehow signified my "uncanny" (Ahem, ahem!) ability to adopt myself to whatever circumstances that dealing with such diversity brings. I took that as a compliment then and I still consider it one of my strongest suits. However, that hasn't made my job as a mother and a teacher any easier. In fact, it has merely driven home the fact that students---just like my kids--- will always be different no matter what.

The journey through a diverse world with highly-diverse children and students has been anything but boring, though. There have been times when I have been able to take it easy because the diversity in my own kids and my students has made them quite easier to 'predict'. For instance, when one of my children shows signs of an impending tantrum, the best way for me to handle it is to cuddle her and show her there's no need to throw a temper. Another child requires a simple but firm reminder. When one of my former students started to show signs of a tantrum coming, I would just switch to a simple English song for children on a music channel that demonstrated the concepts she had gotten bored at studying, so she could find that learning could also be fun. The older ones who had seemed a little uncommunicative at certain times were easily engaged with out-of-the-blue questions that encouraged them to think of the lessons in a more out-of-the-box manner. The travails of being a teacher and a mother have both been enjoyable and delightfully refreshing at the same time.

As a mother and a teacher who has been taking the journey for some time now, I have also discovered that what has made my work more interesting is the fact that I do not have to deal with the same type of personality all the time. I have always embraced diversity in my children and former students as a blessing because it has given me a lot more to work on and a lot more to look forward to.

Now tell me, how boring can that be?

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. How different are you from your own brother/s or sister/s?
2. Why do you think diversity in people should be respected by teachers? In children by their parents?
3. Is it easy to see how diverse people are? Why or why not?
4. How can diversity cause problems?
5. Why is diversity important?