



Accept your differences

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا

O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another.

[49:13]

From this Ayah, it is evident that Allah ﷻ has created each person as a distinct individual. While you may be going through an experience similar to many others, you will still have a different nature and background compared to them. Acceptance means valuing and embracing these differences between you and others, because our survival, as a community, is dependent on these differences.

We need bees and ants just as much as goats and sheep; pretty flowers as much as thorns; snow as much as autumn. In order to meet all our needs, we all need to be different. Mashaikh, scholars, doctors, teachers, farmers, auxiliary workers, engineers, homemakers, computer whizzes and all others play a key role in our lives.

Once you embrace your differences, you are able to accept them and see the good in them. Then, you don't feel uneasy about the ways you stand out from others. You recognize our uniqueness and special place in this planet. Rather than feeling embarrassed about yourself because of the ways in which we are different, you celebrate those differences and focus on leaving trails of kindness everywhere we go. This is what builds a healthy self-esteem.

Remind yourself

Tell yourself, "My differences are precious and worthy. They contribute something important to my family and the rest of the world."

Imagine

Imagine yourself at a restaurant. You see different types of foods, colors, shapes, sizes, textures and tastes. Now imagine all those



choices disappear and you only have one type of food in the restaurant. Only one choice for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Only one look to pick from.

This is how the world would be without differences.

If everyone had the same skin tone, color, body size, intelligence, wealth, house, family, do you think life would be interesting? Do you think there would be any color left in life?

Take that step

On a piece of paper, jot down a list of the features that make you different or unique.

For example, “I make people laugh,” “I love adventures,” “I like to savor the silence”.

Next, write down the ways in which these differences benefit you and your family. The ability to see your differences positively will help create a healthy self-esteem.

Case study

Amana disliked her personality. While most of her friends liked sleepover parties, fun filled days out, adventurous holidays, she preferred to stay home and read a book. She took things to heart easily and she felt for others very fast. However, her self-esteem suffered because she thought she was different. She felt she should be like everyone else.

One day, as Amana was having an emotional breakdown, her brother explained to her that her differences are what make her kindhearted and lovable.

“Your personality is why you are going to be such a good poet. You notice subtle details, you feel deeply below the surface and you recognize other feelings. Don't wish to be like everyone else. We value and love your differences!”