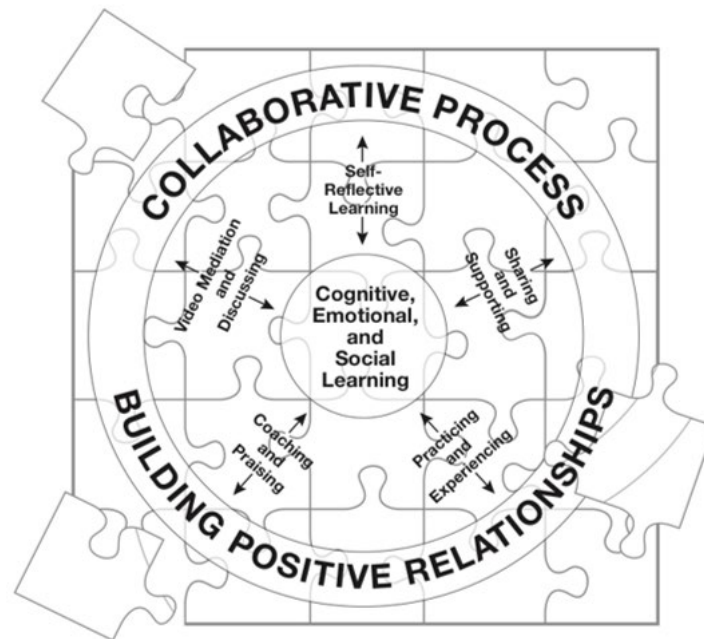




## Affirming Diversity and Achieving Cultural Sensitivity While Maintaining Program Fidelity When Delivering the Incredible Years® Programs

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### The Collaborative Learning Process

Over the past 2 decades we have seen many research reports showing the effectiveness of the Incredible Years (IY) programs with culturally diverse populations. Randomized control group studies (RCTs) using IY Parent Programs with multicultural groups have been conducted in Finland, Ireland, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, and with new immigrant Head Start families in United States. These studies attest to the ability to of the IY programs to be transported in culturally sensitive ways to achieve positive outcomes such as more nurturing parent-child interactions, increased child social and emotional competence, and reduced child behavior problems. Pre/post data showing positive results has also been reported by Estonia (with both Estonian and Russian speaking families), Slovenia, and New Zealand Maori and Pacific Island populations ([see the Incredible Years library of research on our website at:](#)

<https://incredibleyears.com/for-researchers/research-library/>)

It is noteworthy that in a diverse sample of 634 families with children enrolled in Head Start (19% African American 11% Latino, 12% Asian, 50% Caucasian), ethnicity analyses with an RCT design revealed few differences across ethnic groups according to observed parent behavior at home. All groups made significant improvements in hypothesized directions with high levels of satisfaction with the program and similar attendance.

It is an immensely rewarding opportunity to bring new perspectives about effective child management parenting practices and child development principles to parents from different cultural backgrounds. IY group leaders who have a multicultural perspective are caring and collaborative in their approach, take the time to listen and understand parents' perspectives and try to make the material relevant for each parents' goals and family circumstances. They recognize the importance of native language, family traditions, rituals and religious holidays, and make the parents' culture visible by calling on them to share their cultural experiences during discussions. Collaborating with parents in this way acknowledges parents' dignity, self-respect, and self-control. This is especially important if parents are feeling low self-confidence, stress, and uncertainty about the appropriateness of the IY Program for their family and culture.

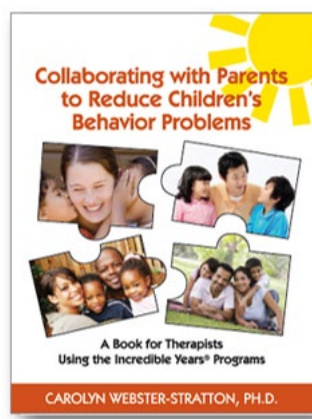
*Affirming diversity means that cultural, linguistic, and other family differences are acknowledged, accepted, respected, and used as a basis for learning and teaching.* The collaborative culturally sensitive approach has the added advantage of reducing participant attrition rates, increasing motivation and commitment, and reducing resistance. Working together with families in this partnership way will enhance parents' confidence, build family support systems, and strengthen communities by highlighting that parents' goals for their children and families transcend culture, thereby providing mutual understanding and supportive community networks.

**Here are a few tips about IY group leaders affirming diversity and being culturally responsive when delivering the IY programs.**

- Respect and affirm cultural differences and promote a supportive, non-judgmental & culturally sensitive group atmosphere.

- Collaborate with each group to individualize the group rules they want to adopt.
- Acknowledge and affirm each parent's individual goals for themselves, their children, and their families. Be careful not to make assumptions that entire cultures have a homogenous set of values. Recognize the heterogeneity of experiences and beliefs that exists within any given culture.
- Acknowledge that you bring your own bias to the group and be willing to listen to parents and learn from them.
- Make culture visible and invite discussion and sharing of cultural identity and recognize its importance in relationship building. Acknowledge celebrations, and traditions from different cultures.
- When possible, select video vignettes that represent diverse populations, family structures and the cultural background of your groups.
- Understand that cultural responsiveness is more important than the surface level cultural adaptations of showing vignettes that represent the particular families in your group. Rather it is the "deeper structural" principles that guide the collaborative delivery of the program that ensure its cultural sensitivity and relevance for families. For example, use the vignettes to help parents discover key behavior management principles of parent interactions and then to apply these strategies to each parents' individual goals for themselves and their children.
- Make culturally relevant metaphors to explain developmental theories and concepts.
- Use multi-cultural puppets and select a realistic selection of toys as well as diverse books, songs, games, and food snacks that represent the cultural and socio-economic background and experiences of the participants in your groups.
- Respond flexibly about number of sessions shown and add more than the minimum required number of required group sessions for families who find the content new and need more time to understand, process, practice, and integrate the new approaches.

- When possible, have group leaders who represent the dominant culture of the group.
- Give parents the message that linguistic diversity is a resource. Learn to say parents' names correctly, check in to be sure they understand the meaning of words, and encourage practice using the newly learned coaching skills in their own language. Avoid correcting parents' English. Use phrases from their own language yourself and write them on flip chart.
- Use trained interpreters in the IY program and work collaboratively with them so that the meaning of the program content and vignettes is understood and that they translate in a collaborative manner. Translate handouts, home activities, and key points into participants' own languages.
- Understand socioeconomic and educational and reading barriers.
- Review weekly evaluations and make adjustments according to learning needs and parents' personal goals.
- Empower parents to help their children to develop a healthy ethnic and cultural identity.
- Advocate for and with parents so they can support their children's learning at school also at home.



See chapter 11 **“Affirming Diversity: Maintaining Program Fidelity While Achieving Cultural Sensitivity,”** In *Collaborating with Parents to Reduce Behavior Problems* by Carolyn Webster-Stratton.