

Melting Pot to Salada Mista!

In our country's earliest days, pioneers from many countries came together to form the great American "melting pot." Today our country is less a melting pot and more a *salada mista* – or mixed salad. In a mixed salad every ingredient is important for its special contribution to the whole. Read on to learn how diversity is one of our country's most valued traits.

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[Beyond the Melting Pot](#)



How Much is that Doggy in the Window?

It is easy for children to fall in love with a pet they see confined in a crate in a pet shop, or one offered for adoption in a pet supply store. Before purchasing or adopting a pet, there is much to consider in the care and expense of an animal.

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Happiness is Learning to Accept Ourselves

Diversity means accepting and appreciating others and their differences. But what about accepting ourselves? Many mental health experts maintain unconditional acceptance of the self is the path to lasting happiness.

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A Fun Project and a Quick and Easy Appetizer

To recognize Earth Day and the importance of conserving our planet's resources, try a quick and easy project to keep those grocery bags out of the landfills. Also, check out a simple yet tasty recipe for get-togethers.

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Melting Pot to Salada Mista!

In our country's earliest days, pioneers from many countries came together to form the great American "melting pot." In spite of the challenges such diversity can pose, they were able to work shoulder-to-shoulder in many cases to reach common goals. Today our country is less a melting pot and more a *salada mista* – or mixed salad. In a mixed salad every ingredient is important for its special contribution to the whole. This shift is symbolic of our progress toward a society that flourishes because of our diversity.

DIVERSITY DEFINED

Diversity is the acceptance and respect for each others' unique personal and cultural differences in a setting that is safe and supportive. If diversity is the goal, then inclusion – including everyone – is critical to achieving it. Today's workplace is a good example of inclusion in action:

- Many ethnicities, races, religions, and age groups now collaborate across the country and around the globe.
- Jobs once stereotyped by gender are now performed by both men and women without a second thought.
- Skills and talents previously untapped are now enriching work environments as jobs are being made available to those with disabilities.

When so many different people work together, there is a depth and richness of experience that contributes to the whole, enhancing the quality of life for all.

CHALLENGES OF DIVERSITY

Diversity can also create significant challenges and responsibilities in understanding and accepting people who are different from us. Individual boundaries are stretched in learning to value others' traditions and ideas, and in coming to celebrate the opportunities that come with differences.

FOSTERING DIVERSITY

Valuing diversity is critical to the viability of our communities, the workplace, and indeed our nation and the world.



It starts with the message that valuing our differences is the gold standard – and that we all play a part. Here are several ideas for fostering an attitude of appreciation for diversity:

- For parents or teachers, watch programs with your children which portray multicultural characters and life situations, and talk about the ways in which diversity can add to our lives.
- Throw a neighborhood block party or an office potluck and ask everyone to bring a dish that reflects their own heritage.
- Open up conversations with people who come from different nations or cultures. Ask about their backgrounds, experiences, and challenges - as well as what they value most about their heritage.
- As you move through your day, become aware of the many ways you encounter – and benefit from – diversity. From frappuccinos to Thai noodles at the take-out counter – you just may be surprised!

GETTING HELP

The professional counselors at Work & Family Benefits can provide information and resources for all of your WorkLife challenges. Contact us for free, prompt, and confidential assistance. We're always here to help.

How Much is that Doggy in the Window?

It is easy for a child to fall in love with a pet s/he sees confined in a crate in a pet shop, or one offered for adoption in a pet supply store. Before purchasing or adopting a pet, consider factors such as length of commitment, how much time and energy will be consumed, and whether the inevitable vet's bills and other expenses will be affordable. To prevent the return or abandonment of pets, it's important to explore the reasons for wanting a pet. Whether the pet you want is a dog, cat, bird, rabbit, hamster or horse, owning a pet is a tremendous responsibility. Following are critical questions to consider before getting a pet.

- **Why do I want a pet?** Possible reasons may include: "I want a loving companion who will be an integral part of the family," or "I need the extra security a dog will provide," or "It is an effective way to teach older children responsibility."
- **Will my home support the presence of a pet?** Do you have sufficient space to accommodate the type of pet you are looking for? Are you prepared to purchase a pet that will be compatible with your living arrangements?
- **How will I look after this pet?** Important considerations are: adequate exercise, providing a good diet, appointments with the vet as appropriate, bathing/grooming, and providing the necessary attention and affection.
- **Can I afford vet's bills?** All pets, just like humans, need to receive regular medical check-ups as well as shots and up-to-date tags. If you purchase or adopt a younger pet, you may want to consider purchasing animal health insurance.
- **Am I prepared to commit the time necessary?** Some pets need more attention and exercise than others. It is important to consider your lifestyle when choosing a pet. Remember that pets can be with us for 10 or 15 years.



- **Who will look after the pet in my absence?** If using a kennel or boarding with your veterinarian is out of the question, soliciting the services of a good friend or a helpful neighbor in order to care for your pet is a must.

PET SEARCH OPTIONS

For smaller pets such as hamsters, guinea pigs, gerbils and fish, pet stores can accommodate your needs. However, for dogs and cats, consider a local shelter or a pet rescue organization. Sometimes local vets are aware of pets that need homes. For people who want purebred animals, options include rescue programs for the specific breed you desire, or private breeders.

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Happiness is Learning to Accept Ourselves

Diversity means accepting and appreciating others and their differences. But what about accepting ourselves? Many mental health experts maintain unconditional acceptance of the self is the path to lasting happiness.

While it's not unusual to see the terms "self-esteem" and "self-acceptance" used interchangeably, they are different. If you have a healthy level of self-esteem, you feel valuable and worthwhile as a person. This is not egotism but believing oneself to be "esteem-able." Self-acceptance is broader. It refers to an unqualified acceptance of all parts of ourselves, including our limitations. "Ahhhhh," says the wise old sage, "this is much trickier!"

THE UNIVERSAL PROBLEM

We grow up with many negative messages: "Don't do that." "You shouldn't be that way." Consequently, we may learn to accept ourselves only when we meet certain conditions. Many of us carry around a severe critic in our heads who constantly evaluates everything, continuously highlighting our shortcomings.

THE ANTIDOTE

Self-acceptance starts with ditching judgmentalism and adopting an attitude of compassion toward the self. We need to see ourselves as representative of all humans, simply trying to find our niche and make it through life. We're all trying to do our best in the moment.

GETTING STARTED

Self-criticism doesn't surrender without a fight. It takes conscious, constant monitoring of one's self-talk, intercepting the negatives, and replacing them with accepting, affirming thoughts. Here are two ways to begin:



- First, if a negative thought pops into your head, imagine yourself flicking that thought off your shoulder and quickly replacing it with a positive.
- Second, describe, don't evaluate. Instead of "Darn, I botched my whole presentation when Tom made that negative comment," substitute "I struggled a bit when Tom made that remark, but I was able to keep going and finish – saying what I had to say."

WHAT ABOUT SELF-IMPROVEMENT?

Does self-acceptance rule out efforts at self-improvement? Not at all! Self-acceptance means affirming who we are in the moment - with all our strengths and weaknesses. Self-improvement shifts to being about enriching our lives and becoming more effective as human beings. And the best way to start is by giving ourselves the stamp of approval each moment along the way.

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A Fun Project and a Quick and Easy Appetizer

Canvas Grocery Tote

To recognize Earth Day and the importance of conserving our planet's resources, here's a quick and easy project to keep those grocery bags out of the landfills by making reusable bags with your own touch! Suitable for children aged five and above, you can involve the whole family!

WHAT YOU'LL NEED:

- Canvas tote bag
- Fruit (or other) themed foam stamps
- Fabric paints to coordinate with your selected stamps
- Light blue fabric spray paint

HOW TO MAKE IT:

1. Insert cardboard into the canvas tote bag and lay on a flat surface.
2. Liberally coat each stamp one by one with the desired paint colors.
3. Press stamp onto tote bag, using gentle – but firm – pressure.
4. Lift stamp off the bag, lifting straight up into the air.
5. Once all stamps have been applied, spray the edges of their imprints on the tote with the blue fabric spray paint.
6. Let dry completely, ideally overnight.



TIPS:

- Personalize bags with your name, the word "groceries," or the name of your grocery store across the top.
- You can substitute acrylic craft paint for fabric paint if desired. Simply mix with textile medium (available at craft shops) and follow instructions.
- Canvas tote bags are available in craft stores or the craft department of your local discount store.
- Create more than one tote bag for when you have a longer grocery list. Try different foam stamps like leaves or flowers.

Baked Brie with Quebec Maple Syrup

In honor of the Vancouver Olympic Winter Games and Canada's success in the gold medal category, try this tasty appetizer. It's ready in 15 minutes by warming a wheel of Brie cheese, adding a sprinkle of walnuts, and a drizzle of maple syrup. Serve with a sliced baguette and enjoy!

Cut along the dashed line to add this recipe to your collection!

Baked Brie with Quebec Maple Syrup



- 1 14-oz. round Brie cheese
- 1 cup chopped walnuts
- 2 cups real maple syrup (fine light grade)
- 1 18-inch French baguette, cut into ¾ inch slices or crackers

Preheat oven to 200 degrees. Place unwrapped Brie cheese into a baking dish, sprinkle with walnuts, and pour maple syrup over the nuts and cheese.

Bake about 10 minutes, or until the cheese warms and softens. Serve cheese with slices of baguette or crackers.

