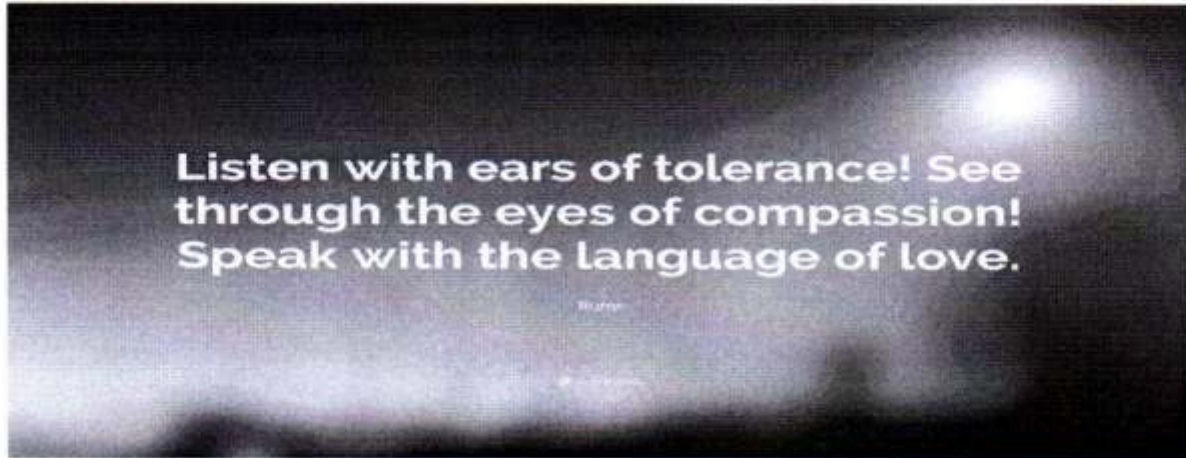


NEWSLETTER FOR JULY, 2017

Marie Curie said, "Nothing in life is to be feared, it is only to be understood. Now is the time to understand more, so that we may fear less."



Dear Parents,

For some time now, every morning, we are greeted with news of violence, aggression and death from all around the world. Most terrifying are reports of young men and women who randomly walk into public places and open fire, leading to the tragic loss of the lives of so many innocent young people. All of a sudden, the world is rife with intolerance.

Tolerance is not just a buzzword exploited by the media in today's society, but is a core social value of any democratic nation. India has always been a beacon of tolerance, given the great diversity of cultures, religions and races that populate our sub-continent. But we are seeing a growing unrest and rising intolerance among people who have, till now, lived in peace and harmony. As parents, teachers and more importantly, as concerned adults, it is our moral responsibility to root out the seeds of intolerance before they take root in the young minds in our care.

Children, at very young age, are very aware and honest about differences they observe between themselves and others, but rarely attach judgments to those candid observations. We adults are the ones that pass such judgements. Children voice their observations in form of a question like, "Why does that man have such dark skin?" "Why does that lady wear that long robe?" "Why is that boy in a wheel chair?" Such questions create the perfect opportunities to teach the child about tolerance. In such vital moments, the message we relay to the young child is crucial in the development of his or her understanding about differences. Being willing to put off the awkwardness and to talk openly and honestly with our children about their questions, is just the tip of the iceberg of how we can teach them tolerance and understanding.

Tolerance refers to an attitude of openness and respect for the differences that exist among people. Tolerance means respecting and learning from others, valuing differences, bridging cultural gaps, rejecting unfair stereotypes, discovering common ground, and creating new bonds. Tolerance, in many ways, is the opposite of prejudice.

But does tolerance mean that all behaviors have to be accepted? Of course not. Behaviors that disrespect or hurt others, like being mean or bullying, or behaviors that break social rules, like lying or stealing, should not be tolerated. Tolerance is about *accepting people* for who they are — not about accepting bad behavior. Tolerance also means treating others the way you would like to be treated.

Like all attitudes, tolerance is often taught in subtle ways. It is a known fact that even before a child learns to speak, they closely observe and imitate the behaviour of their caregivers, primarily their parents. In this way, children develop their own values, by reflecting the values and attitudes of those they care about.

Our attitudes about respecting others are such an integral part of our personalities that often we rarely even think about it. We teach these attitudes simply by being ourselves and living according to our belief systems and our values. Parents who demonstrate (or model) tolerance in their everyday lives send a powerful message. As a result, children learn to appreciate differences, too.

Of course, celebrating differences of others doesn't mean giving up your own heritage. Your family may have its own longstanding cultural and religious traditions that are something to be proud of. Families can find ways to celebrate differences of others while continuing to honor and pass down their own cultural heritage.

Parents can teach tolerance by example — and in other ways, too. Talking together about tolerance and respect allows a child to learn more about the values you want them to have. Giving them opportunities to play and work with others is important as well. This lets them experience differences and similarities in social situations, and helps them to learn that everyone has something positive to contribute.

Some suggestions that can help children learn tolerance:

- Demonstrate an attitude of respect for others.
- Remember that children are always watching and listening. Be aware of the way you talk about people who are different from yourself. Do not make jokes that perpetuate stereotypes. Although some of these might seem like harmless fun, they can undo attitudes of tolerance and respect.
- Select books, toys, music, art, and videos carefully. Keep in mind the powerful effect media and the internet culture have on shaping young minds.
- Point out and talk about unfair stereotypes that may be portrayed in media.
- Answer children's questions about differences honestly and respectfully. This teaches that it is acceptable to notice and discuss differences as long as it is done with respect.
- Acknowledge and respect differences within your own family. Demonstrate acceptance of your children's differing abilities, interests, and styles. Value the uniqueness of each member of your family.
- Remember that tolerance does not mean tolerating unacceptable behavior. It means that everyone deserves to be treated with respect — and should treat others with respect as well.
- Help your children feel good about themselves. Children with strong self-esteem value and respect themselves and are more likely to treat others with respect, too. Help your child to feel accepted, respected, and valued.
- Give children opportunities to work and play with others who are different from them.
- The internet is not a scary place – go online with your child and explore and learn together about culture, heritage, holidays and religious celebrations that are not part of your own tradition.
- Honor your family's traditions and teach them to your children — encourage your child to share this information with someone outside the family, maybe a friend, who wants to learn about the diversity *you* have to offer.

When adults encourage a tolerant attitude in children, talk about their values, and model the behavior they would like to see by treating others well, children will follow in their footsteps. Through these efforts, we hope to raise a generation of tolerant and well-adjusted children in the days to come.

With Best Wishes,
The School Counsellors at La Martiniere, Kolkata

Should you wish to discuss any issue regarding your child, with the school counsellors, kindly contact the following numbers:

La Martiniere for Girls: 033 4040 6663 / La Martiniere for Boys : 033 4040 6612