CELEBRATING OUR DIFFERENCES

Read about the kinds of things that make every kid unique, then answer the questions.

Did you know there are more than 7 billion people on Earth? Even though there are so many of us, no two people are exactly the same. We all have differences that make us who we are.

Some differences are visible and easy to notice. For example, some kids in your class are tall and some are short. Some may wear glasses to see, or use a wheelchair to get around. Other differences are invisible. A child may speak two languages at home or have a less common family structure, for instance. Some kids have learning differences like dyslexia or psychological differences like anxiety—you can't see them from the outside, but they are there.

Differences can be tough for a kid to handle, especially when other people don't take the time to understand them. "If other kids notice what I am doing, they might think it is weird," explains Roman Hathaway, a 9-year-old who has an invisible difference called obsessive-compulsive disorder (or OCD). "My OCD makes my body feel like something is always wrong, out of balance, needs to be fixed. If someone touches me, I have to touch them back."

Our differences can also make us strong. Shona Karp, who is 10 years old, was born with one eye. "Having one eye has made me tough!" she says. "It means having many surgeries. But I don't get down on myself. I still go to field hockey practice! I love being unique!" Being different can also help you learn how to speak up for yourself and teach you creative ways to solve problems.

No matter what your differences are, you never need to hide them from other people. Instead, you can flaunt them proudly! And you can help your friends and classmates celebrate the things that make them unique too! ■

Reflection Questions

Write your answers on a separate sheet.

1. How have your visible and invisible differences shaped who you are?

2. What advice would you give to a friend who is worried about a visible or invisible difference?