Understanding Children's Experiences of Identity and Belonging

Life Tales

A companion to Kirrah's Play Date

This factsheet supports adults to better understand children's experiences of identity and belonging, using Kirrah's Play Date as a shared reference point. It does not replace professional support. Instead, it offers insight, reassurance, and practical understanding to help adults respond with calm, connection, and emotional safety.

What This Can Look Like in Children

As children grow, they naturally begin to notice differences — in families, culture, routines, and ways of living.
For some children, these differences can raise questions they don't yet have words for.

Why This Can Feel So Big

Belonging is a core emotional need.
When children are asked questions they don't yet understand themselves, it can create uncertainty or self-doubt. Even well-intended curiosity from others can feel exposing.
In Kirrah's Play Date, Kirrah is still learning how to understand her own story — she doesn't need to explain it before she's ready.

Why This Often Comes Out as Behaviour

When children feel unsure about belonging, behaviour often communicates what words can't.
A child may:

- Withdraw socially
- Become defensive or avoidant
- Cling to familiar people
- Hesitate to engage with new peers

Behaviour reflects a need for reassurance, not correction.

What Children Need Most

Children need:

- Reassurance that their story is enough
- Adults who speak respectfully about family and culture
- Permission not to explain themselves
- Pride modelled without pressure
- Kirrah's sense of safety grows through connection, not answers.

Find more resources at
www.ourlifetales.com.au

Children navigating identity and belonging may:

- Ask questions about family or culture
- Feel unsure how to explain their story
- Become quiet in new social settings
- Feel different or "other"
- Seek reassuranc e about where they belong

These experiences are part of identity development, not confusion or insecurity.

Helpful responses include:

- Affirming belonging without comparison
- Responding calmly to questions
- Modelling respectful language
- Letting children lead conversations about their story

Belonging grows when children feel held, not defined.

A Gentle Reminder

- Children do not owe explanations for who they are.
- Identity is not fixed; it constantly evolves through new experiences and relationships.
- Affirm a child's specific strengths, interests, and quirks.
- Identity is shaped by family, background, culture, and experiences.
- Identity is something children grow into — not something they must justify.

Some amazing resources to check out!

Beyond Blue

- **https://www.beyondblue.org.au/**

Reach Out

- **https://schools.au.reachout.com/**

Kids Help line

- **https://kidshelpline.com.au/**



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