7.1: Differences and Conflict

Working in an early education setting, with children, family and coworkers from varying backgrounds, conflict is inevitable. However, if managed correctly, conflict can be a learning and growing experience for all.

In her book Diversity in Early Care and Education: Honoring Differences, Janet Gonzalez-Mena discusses the need to honor, learn about and explore not only other cultures different than ours, but acknowledge how our own beliefs play a role in our professional caretaking roles. She shares her own process, “They say we teach what we need most to learn. I am a good example. I’m working on my dialoguing skills. The problem is that when I have a strong reaction to something that doesn’t fit my system, I usually consider it a problem…..My natural reaction is to become defensive and start arguing.” This is a common response for many because our upbringing has taught us that our way is the ‘right’ way, so anything different simply doesn’t feel right.

As professionals, it is imperative we build relationships with families and create a classroom of inclusiveness that celebrates diversity.