

nights of the week as “Dinner Nights”. This way everyone knows to keep their schedule free on these days!

**CREATE MEMORIES:** Set apart time for the family to have fun together, such as playing board games, biking, camping, or going to the playground. Allow your children to choose the activity the family is going to partake in. Look for activities that the whole family can participate in, and create special moments where everyone can feel acceptance and unconditional love. As your children get older, it may become more difficult to have time together as a family. Designating a day like Sunday as Family Day, is great way to keep the family activities going. It will also create a topic of conversation during the week to decide, as a family, what activities will be done on Family Day of that week. Your child will grow up remembering Family Day and may continue this practice even in adulthood!

**SHARE YOUR STORY:** It is a good idea for your children to know some of your life experiences and your childhood stories. This will help them to feel as if they are if they know you are not perfect and that you too have made mistakes, they will feel more comfortable sharing their problems and situations. Sharing photos of yourself and your family can open the door to many enriching conversations. Not only will you be sharing some of your family traditions and stories, but doing so will make your child feel like they really know you.

**BE AN EXAMPLE:** Bonds of trust tend to break when parents do the contrary of what they say and teach their children. If this happens, chances are that your children could lose some of their trust in you. The way to correct this is to apologize to your children and show them that you make mistakes as well and allow yourself to be vulnerable with them. This act can often open the door to friendship with your child.

Having a family can be a fulfilling and an exciting experience especially when we know how to keep a strong relationship with each one of its members. If these bonds should break, we always have time to heal and rebuild our relationship: all we need is love, patience and perseverance.

*Jeannette Blanca Egozi M.A., CCC-SLP, CMHP, CSMC is a Bilingual Speech Language Pathologist, Certified Mental Health Professional and Stress Management Consultant, and the Founder of Playing the Game of Lifesm (PGLsm) in Miami Beach. She specializes in developing social skills, building positive character attributes, and promoting life-long wellness through arts based prevention programs. Call (305) 864-5237 or [www.PlayingTheGameOfLife.com](http://www.PlayingTheGameOfLife.com). TPN*

## Lessons from Exploring Family Heritage

BY DEANNA BUFO NOVAK

We are at a time when most parents would like some disconnect from media, the internet and cell phones, not only for their children, but also for themselves...at least for a little while anyway. Disconnecting provides the perfect opportunity to reconnect with family, traditions and values by exploring your family's heritage with your child. It's time to share part of your story!

Heritage is a major part of who we all are. It follows us through our lifetimes and for much further beyond—it will touch upon and influence our children's, grandchildren's, and great-grandchildren's lives as well. Teaching children about their heritage can bridge generational gaps, promote family values and bonding, increase self-esteem and develop tolerance.

The path of self-discovery can be frightening and somewhat overwhelming for a child. As parents, teaching them about their heritage is a very important tool through this process. A strong family tree makes a child feel protected, as if the branches, like their ancestors' arms, are being wrapped lovingly around them. As a child learns about his or her heritage, they tend to develop a sense of pride in who they are and where they come from, helping them to feel good about themselves.

A broader implication of giving a child a sense of pride in 'who' they are is that the child learns tolerance. A child with a strong sense of identity, self-esteem and respect will be much more likely to treat others with respect. A solid sense of pride and security in his or her own 'heritage' shoes will make it easier to accept cultural diversity that surrounds them daily.

An increasing number of schools are now incorporating cultural and heritage into their curriculums, enabling children to learn about diversity. Some schools hold Heritage or International Festivals, make international cookbooks, hold multi-cultural fashion shows and even taste multi-cultural foods.

Understandably, schools use students' own heritage as the starting point for understanding and accepting others by having them interview parents and/or grandparents, learn all about his or her own heritage and then share the information with the rest of the class.

As parents, there are many ways to teach children about their own heritage, even if you didn't travel across the seas to the United States. There are increased resources to help you on our quest, including the internet. Make it an exciting journey for your child. Exploring heritage is very much like detective work and your child will love uncovering clues from the past. In fact, many parents learn that they get equally as wrapped up in the project as their children, proving the most important lesson learned—heritage is not a mere history lesson, but a chance to bond with your children over the most important thing in the world to most of us...family.

*Deanna Bufo Novak is a mother of two young Italian-, Polish-American children, an attorney, the creator and author of a personalized children's book celebrating heritage called *My Heritage Book*, and founder of its publisher kidsHeritage, Inc. TPN*

