



THE REAL VALUE OF HERITAGE DAY (24 SEPTEMBER)

Heritage Day is not just a chance to celebrate your own traditions; it's a golden opportunity to learn more about other cultures and build social cohesion.

On 24 September, South Africans pause to celebrate Heritage Day. In a country built by the efforts of people from diverse backgrounds, this should be a singular moment of pride in the diversity of our unique nation.

The concept behind the holiday is for each person to remember their culture, traditions and history that make up their past, while also taking the chance to learn about and celebrate the heritages of fellow citizens. Unofficially, it's also celebrated in South Africa as 'Braai Day'.

What can we do to appreciate the unique contributions of our diverse cultures to the Rainbow Nation?

LEARN



Divisions in any society come from a lack of knowledge about others, and South Africa's sad history of Apartheid is one where division was actively encouraged. That's why the first step to building an inclusive nation should be one of learning.

On a personal level, reading books, listening to podcasts, or watching movies set in South African cultures other than your own offer a wonderful way to learn about the customs of other cultures and our shared humanity. Enveloping yourself in these stories can give you insight into the people behind the outward symbols – such as food, dress and religion – and allow you to see the similarities we have when it comes to hopes, dreams, heartbreak and love.

ENGAGE

Speak to those around you who come from diverse backgrounds, and invite them to share their treasured traditions and cultural practices. Ask neighbours, colleagues or school mates to tell you more about their culture. What are their favourite traditional foods? What happens on a particular holy day? What makes their wedding customs different?

With Heritage Day coming up, now is the time to break the ice and have a coffee after work, invite participants from your exercise class to lunch or host people at your Braai Day event. This will give you a great chance to get to know them. Because reaching out to others can make you feel vulnerable, we often avoid it. Feeling afraid to chat to others about their culture? First try to imagine how pleased you would be if someone asked you to explain what your family and culture mean to you.



TEACH



A crucial step to building a genuinely inclusive society is teaching children to appreciate the positives of other heritages, and nurturing an understanding for the people and places around them. Too often the only time we hear about cultures other than our own is through the media. Why not read bedtime stories about people outside your community? Have an evening trying traditional foods from local bakeries or takeaways. Or learn to greet one another in various languages new to you.

Let's help make each and every one of us feel more at home in this beautiful country of ours. Contact your employee health and wellness programme for counselling, advice and support.

References

MindTools®

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South African Government

▶ Education department toll free:
0800 111 011

▶ Send a USSD to:
***134*664*38#**

▶ Email:
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**Let us stay mindful of caring for
one another and ourselves**