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The year 2020 is only halfway through, yet it has already made such a significant impact on our communities, nation, and the world as a whole. This year, a pandemic swept across the world turning life as we knew it upside down, and it continues to put the lives of many at great risk. In addition, a movement/revolution/network has continued to work diligently to shed light on the racial injustices engraved in our history for so many years. The topics discussed during the ACLP Child Life Conference could not have come at a more appropriate time. The virtual platform provided attendees with a much-needed space for reflection, healing, and growth amid such trying times. Of all the topics discussed during this year's conference, two in particular seemed to have 'struck a chord': diversity and inclusion. While these are not necessarily new focal points within the realm of child life practice, specialists have a duty to participate in those challenging conversations, acknowledge personal biases/experiences, and advocate for children/youth/families.

During James Burroughs' opening session, one particular quote stuck with me and held true as a theme for the remainder of the conference: "*nobody can be culturally competent; you can only be culturally proficient and learn.*" We cannot possibly expect to be perfectly skilled in something with so much fluidity and variation; the word itself says it all, *diversity*. Every child/family/person has their own thoughts, experiences, biases, and feelings, which have brought them to where they are today. We cannot possibly assume there is a box we check off

at the end of our workday, indicating “competence” in working with those of a particular culture, religion, etc. Instead, we should be looking at diversity as a fluctuating spectrum, unique to each day, patient, and/or experience. As child life specialists, we cannot assume we are culturally competent but work to be ‘culturally proficient’. We must immerse ourselves in the history and tribulations of the past, in order to learn from and lead the next generation into the future.

One ethics session in particular, described a similar notion, of moving from “*cultural competency, to cultural consciousness*” and a need for “*demystifying*” diversity training within child life practice. I found this to tie in quite well with the quote from Burroughs’ opening session, as it described how we should make the transition from viewing diversity so rigidly. Working in such a densely populated area of NYC, I find this to be especially relatable, given my constant exposure to people of various backgrounds. Elmhurst is known as one of the most ethnically and linguistically diverse areas of the US; patients here come from all over the world, bringing their own set of beliefs, customs, and languages with them. As a child life specialist here, much of my role as a liaison within the interdisciplinary team, is to encourage cultural proficiency. In order to provide culturally conscious family-centered care, I need to increase my knowledge and understanding of cultural barriers. It is my duty to immerse myself in relevant conversations, seek guidance, and acknowledge any personal experiences/biases I bring to the table. If there’s anything this conference has taught me, it’s that learning starts within and I cannot learn about others without learning about myself too. Our personal growth is in the information we seek and the reflections we make; only then, will we truly improve our culturally responsive practice.

The takeaway is quite simple: we will never (and should never), stop educating

ourselves and learning from others. Diversity is a topic vital to the work we've done in the past, the work we do today, and the work we will do tomorrow. Regardless of race, creed, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, gender identity, etc., patients all deserve dignified, comprehensive care. Child life specialists are advocates for patients and families, and that advocacy is not confined by hospital walls. I am a proud member of the ACLP community, who through initiatives like this 2020 conference, demonstrates their commitment to improving the lives of all children and their families and defends the core values of our child life practice.