

Kamalah and her family moved from Pakistan to the United States in August. As they walked out of the airport, her father made her a promise.



“We’ll walk around our new community and take you to the park!
Soon you’ll make new friends before it gets dark.”



In a few days Kamalah will start her first day in an American school.
She felt so nervously excited that her smile shone like a jewel.



But she harbored a worry within,
“If I’m not from the U.S, could I possibly fit in?”



They walked to the park and found that many kids were running about.
A few stared at her scarf and Kamalah worried whether she stuck out.
The children seemed like they all knew each other,
so Kamalah thought that making new friends would be tougher.





Kamalah felt shy, so she approached a swing.
But that changed when a friendly smile came toward her skipping.

“Hi, my name is Minho!” said the boy. “Are you new here?”
“My name is Kamalah, I just moved from Pakistan,”
she said with a bit of fear.
“Would you like to play with me and my friends?” he offered.
“Sure!” Kamalah replied, no longer feeling awkward.



They walked to the slide and Minho introduced her to all his pals:
Wolfie, Ja'kyla, Ines, and Sal.



As they took turns climbing up,
Wolfie made a comment that was a bit abrupt.
He scrunched up his face and said, “Your name is weird,”
making Kamalah want to instantly disappear.



Though they played and had fun,
Wolfie's comment made grey clouds replace the sun.
Kamalah wanted to give her name a change
because she felt small, different, and strange.



The first day of school arrived,
and it became harder for Kamalah's worry to be disguised.
"Welcome to your first day of school!"
their teacher Ms. Tang said with a smile.
"Let's get to know each other for a while!"





One by one, names were said.
As Kamalah's turn came closer, she was filled with dread.
When Kamalah's turn came,
she decided to use her new name.
"Um, my name is Katie," Kamalah claimed.
"What?!" Kamalah's friends exclaimed.



“But your name is Kamalah!” Ja’kyla reported.

“I don’t see a Katie on this list, but I do see a Kamalah,”
Ms.Tang noted.



“Why did you change your name Kamalah?” Minho questioned.
“Well, I thought my name was too Pakistani, too different,” Kamalah shared her confession.
“Someone told me that my name was weird, and I felt like I didn’t fit in.”

“But Kamalah, we’re all different!” Ines said with a grin.





“That’s right! Each one of us has something that makes us unique!”
Ms.Tang replied.

“Let’s share something that makes us different,
that we regard with pride!”



Minho showed the class a photo:
“No one looks the same in my family!
My two moms adopted me and my sisters,
and despite the differences in our backgrounds,
we all live together happily!”





“The patches on my skin are a result from a condition called vitiligo,”
Ja’kyla shared.

“I used to try to cover the patches, but I learned to accept and love them, and not worry if other people cared.”

“I have a condition called ADHD,
or attention deficit hyperactive disorder,”
Sal stated.

“It’s hard for me to sit still or concentrate for a long time,
but I can express myself in ways that are creative.”



Ines joined in, “My mom is Catholic and my dad is Buddhist. Although they believe in different things, they’ve taught me that I shouldn’t be prejudiced.”



It was now Wolfie’s turn, and Kamalah was worried what he might say.

But he surprised her today.





“I’m sorry for making you feel bad Kamalah,”
Wolfie said genuinely.

“But the truth is, I was insecure about my name too,”
he continued delicately.

“I shortened Wolfgang to Wolfie,
because I thought it was too German
and people would make fun of me.
But I realized there’s nothing weird about our ethnic names,
and what I said to you makes me a bully.”

“Will you forgive me and be my friend?”
he requested.
“Of course!” Kamalah accepted.
“Should we call you Wolfie or Wolfgang?”
Ms. Tang said with a happy note.
Wolfie said: “I’ll go by both!”



No two of her friends were exactly the same, it was clear,
And Kamalah learned to be herself without fear.





Our differences is what makes us, *us*.

It's a crucial part of our identity that we shouldn't change or be afraid to discuss.

Shaming someone about their differences is detrimental to their self esteem.

So, we should always try to uplift each other and keep an open mind, instead of being mean.

We're all unique from the languages we speak, the names we own, and how we appear.

And these things make us awesome, not weird!

