FAMILY ACTIVITY: ANIMALS & IDENTITY

In this activity, youth and family members will think about animals and what characteristics define them. Then we will shift the focus to what characteristics or skills define us and we will relate them to an animal. As we discuss these characteristics or skills that we are proud of, we take the opportunity to strengthen our own identification with these positive aspects of our identities. Positive identity development is an important resilience factor. Having pride in yourself and knowledge of your worth is a powerful buffer against negative influences and messages.

MATERIALS AND INSTRUCTIONS

Materials
● None needed

Instructions
1. Reflect on animals and their characteristics
   a. Ask “how would you describe a [insert animal from list below here]?”
   b. Everyone then should act like the animal that was just described.
   c. Summarize that animal. For example, “You just helped describe a dog’s identity. Dogs are furry friendly and loyal. Dogs walk on 4 legs and bark. These are all pieces of what a dog is.”
   d. Repeat with more of the animals below
2. Connect the animal’s characteristics and identities to yourselves. Each family member should choose and share which animal they are most like and why.

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE

1. How would you describe yourself?
2. What description/part of you are you most proud of?
3. What Animal has similar characteristics?

IDEAS FOR ANIMALS TO IMITATE

● Dog
● Turtle
● Shark
● Cat
● Eagle
● Deer
● Kangaroo
● Cheetah
● Any other that you think the youth may have fun discussing or imitating

IDEAS TO INCLUDE YOUNGER SIBLINGS! (ADAPTATIONS FOR 0-5 YEAR OLDS)

● Preschoolers can easily join in the discussion but you might expect them to need more support with identifying different characteristics of the animals you discuss and imitate. They may also struggle to describe themselves in ways other than the more concrete, physical characteristics.
You might invite others to describe things they admire/appreciate about their younger siblings. Try being more specific in guiding the imitation (walk like a dog, sprint like a cheetah, swim like a shark). While materials are not needed for the older children, having some pictures of the animals would be helpful for the younger children to follow along. Infants, toddlers and preschoolers will enjoy moving with you or following older siblings along. Don’t expect them to sit still for too long for engaging in the discussion portion of this activity.