

### Unpack Your Perceptions About Diversity: Anshula

Describe your early perceptions about diversity in terms of one of the following: disabilities, race/ethnicity, language, or family structure.

1. What are your earliest experiences/memories of someone with this difference?

Every Sunday, we went downtown to buy hot tamales from Señor Martinez, who had a little stand under an oak tree. He had the whitest teeth, and he smiled real big each time he saw us. We saw him so often that he began teaching Spanish words and phrases to me and my siblings.

2. Were the experiences positive or negative? What were the messages given to you about someone who has this difference?

Both the experiences and messages were positive. My parents would rehearse new Spanish words with us before we arrived to pick up our hot tamales, and we would practice at dinner, too. "Me gustan los tamales. ¿Te gustan los tamales?"

3. Who gave you these messages and how were the messages delivered?

Both of my parents learned to say simple phrases with us. Our family later traveled to Mexico. To prepare for the trip, we went to Mexican restaurants so we could order food in Spanish.

4. How did those messages affect your early perceptions of individuals who were different from you? How did you think, feel, and act?

Meeting people who spoke other languages and then learning from them made me feel proud and boosted my own confidence. I thought it was cool! I also remember thinking that people who speak more than one language must be pretty smart.

5. Do you still have those same ideas and feelings or engage in those same behaviors? If yes, how have your original perceptions been reinforced? If no, what happened to change them?

Yes! I went on to study Spanish and work in countries where Spanish was spoken. I later studied sign language and became a speech therapist. I think my career path was influenced by these early experiences.

**Figure 3.9.** Anshula's early perceptions about language differences.