

Talking with Children About Race: Cultivating an Anti-Racist Generation

Talking to children about race and how to be anti-racist should start early and continue throughout their lives. Young children take notice of racial differences as early as 6 months old and can start including and excluding play partners based on race as early as two and three years old (Tatum, 2003; Winkler, 2009). Embracing each opportunity to educate and converse around topics of race helps children develop an understanding and appreciation of their own racial identity and the identity of others. This foundation will support their confidence as they process the events and behaviors that take place around them. Talking about race early and often also teaches children that they can and should ask questions about race and how to be anti-racist. This will help children learn to recognize opportunities to advocate for racial justice and support anti-racist ideas and actions.

BUILD A POSITIVE AWARENESS OF DIVERSITY:

- Celebrate your family's racial identity
- Emphasize to your child that people may identify as one or many different racial categories
- Expose your child to a wider range of media
 - Consider whether the books, shows, and toys your child is exposed to positively reflect diversity

BREAK IT DOWN:

- Race is not fixed or biological but rather it is a social construct that changes by location or culture
- Talk clearly about the physical difference between people and the reasons behind the differences (ex: varying amounts of melanin in our skin)
- Look for and seize opportunities to answer questions and discuss race as it relates to the events around you

WHEN RACISM SHOWS UP:

- Take care of your child's feelings
- Use the situation as a teaching opportunity by pushing back against stereotypes and injustice
- Give them the facts in an age appropriate way by focusing on the unfairness and identifying ways to disrupt and dismantle the systems that oppress others
- Highlight and celebrate anti-racist ideas and actions
- Reframe or counter racist ideas or actions they see or hear to be anti-racist using concepts they can understand

WHEN CHILDREN ASK HARD QUESTIONS:

- Be prepared to talk about race-based events and the emotions they bring out
 - This may involve telling your child you don't quite know the answer and providing emotional support
- Talk about the people who have taken a stand and fought for freedom to ground what you are saying

The information in this infographic was adapted from "Talking Race with Young Children" on NPR.