

ACTIVELY ANTI-RACIST

# WHEN CHILDREN ASK HARD QUESTIONS

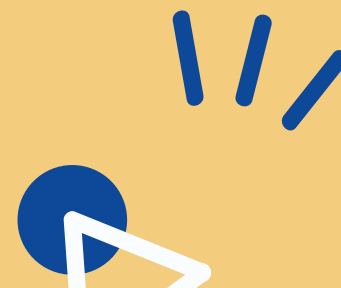
Suggestions to help you navigate hard  
questions about race and diversity in  
productive ways

# Children are going to ask hard questions...

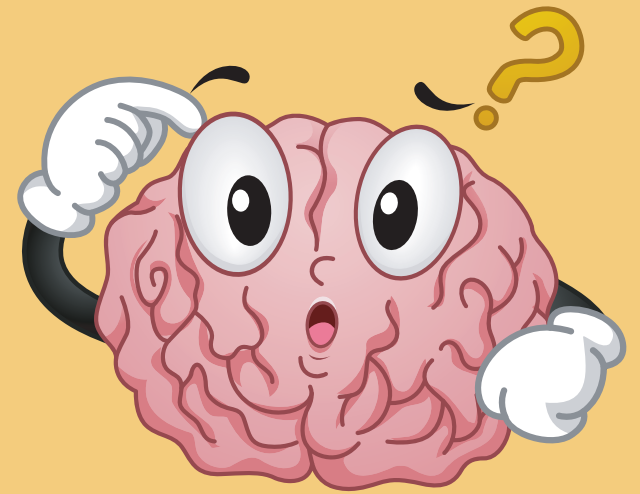
**Children learn prejudice from prejudice, not from learning about human diversity**  
(Derman-Sparks & Edwards 2014)



We should not shy away from children's questions- use them as opportunities to build awareness and acceptance of diversity as well as advocating for justice



# When children ask hard questions...



## **LISTEN**

Stay calm, interested, and nonjudgmental

## **FIGURE OUT WHAT THE CHILD IS ASKING**

Sometimes what the child says is not actually what they want to know

## **ACKNOWLEDGE FEELINGS**

Is there any discomfort? Anger? Sadness?

## **ACKNOWLEDGE THE QUESTION**

Make sure children know they can come to you with questions and that you will always answer as best you can



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# Answering Children's Questions

## **ANSWER SIMPLY AND MATTER-OF-FACTLY**

Use developmentally appropriate language

## **ALWAYS RESPOND**

Even if you do not know what to say, let them know you will find the answers later (and actually find the answers!)

## **FOLLOW UP**

The child may have more questions or thoughts, so set a time to continue talking

## **REFLECT ON YOUR ROLE AND ACTIONS**

Help the child think of their role and talk about action steps you both can take

## **AVOID VAGUE ANSWERS**

Always try to give a truthful answer, and avoid dismissing questions (ex: "that's just the way it is")

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Sometimes it's hard for people to accept and respect others who look and think differently than they do. Some people want everyone to think the same way they do. It can be sad and scary to see them being so mean. I'm glad that so many kind and caring people are saying, "Hey, it's not ok to be mean and hurtful to others."

Why are people being mean and hurting others?



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Families are made in lots of different ways. Do you remember when Jordan told us that he is adopted? Jordan and his parents have different skin colors because Jordan is adopted. Jordan's skin is white because his birthmother has white skin. Jordan and his parents have different color skin, but they have hearts that beat the same. They love each other just like I love you and you love me.

Why do Jordan's parents have black skin but he has white skin?



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# Action Steps and Additional Resources

Diversify your media

Talk openly and often about  
diversity.

Support your child's  
development of their identity.

Encourage your child to  
fight against injustice

## References

Derman-Sparks, Louise. Edwards, Julie Olsen. (2014)  
*Anti-bias education for young children and ourselves.*  
Washington, DC : National Association for the  
Education of Young Children