

5 Tips to Raise Racially Conscious Kids

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The Mecca of Black Wellness



We are seeing protests for racial justice across the nation. These protests are prompting increased conversation about racism, police brutality, and the ugly long history of racial and social injustices aimed at Black Americans. This increased discussion is likely having parents from all racial backgrounds ask themselves, “how do I talk to my kids about this?” or “are my kids ready to hear about these ugly truths?” More specifically, if you are a White parent you may also ask yourself, “how do I raise a racially conscious child?” While these discussions with your child may be difficult and uncomfortable, it is actually better to begin having them earlier vs. later, because as we know, children are always paying attention, and we rather help and assist them in understanding the discussions that are happening around them.

While not an exhaustive list, below are tips for how parents can work to raise racially conscious children, who are proactive against perpetuating systems or experiences embedded in racism.

5 Tips to Raise Racially Conscious Children

- 1.) Be the model.** Whether you are the caregiver to a little one, or a late adolescent, your children are watching you as their primary source of guidance. They look to you for not only what you can provide for them and teach them, but they pay attention to how you do or don't respond to discussions specific to racism. Be intentional about the modeling you are giving them. Are you being mindful of the language you use? It is important that if even seemingly harmless stereotypes are presented, you can stop and ask, “what did you think about that?” or use it a time and space to talk about the importance of seeking understanding of diverse groups instead of stereotyping or judging. Model different ways you and your family can support individuals who may experience things like discrimination and racism (e.g., through volunteering, donating, showing support).
- 2.) Name the emotions.** Are you feeling sad about the current state of events around racial injustice? Name it. Are you feeling frustrated? Maybe confused? Name it. It is important to show children that it is ok to be aware of your emotions, it is ok to name your emotions, and it is ok to talk about your emotions – even if you do not feel like you have all the answers. We want to teach children the importance of having difficult conversations. Talking with your child about your feelings about the nationwide protests could even be a place to start.

- 3.) Educate yourself, even on the things that may seem “small.”** Continuously educating yourself on racism and the factors that contribute to racist acts and systems will only enhance your experience with educating your child. Specifically, further examining a range of topics related to racism such as the role of microaggressions or understanding privilege can enhance discussions with your child. Buy them books with images of people from diverse backgrounds, read them books specific to the history of Black people, and use this as a way to discuss the big and small ways someone can be harmful. Watch television programs that talk about race and discrimination. For example, a CNN and Sesame Street Townhall for Kids and Families. There are also a range of book resources that are aimed at a range of developmental levels (see the resource listed below).
- 4.) Create the experiences, give them the gift of exposure.** Learn with them, make it fun. Be intentional about providing your child exposure to Black history and the opportunity to engage with a diverse set of peers. Talk about Black history is celebrated for many positive reasons, and the realities of how Black people have experienced a range of injustices, that still influence today. For example, a fun family activity could include an investigation of the history of Black people in your city. You and your child could think visit landmarks and museums that celebrate the history and culture of Black people.
- 5.) Celebrate the differences instead of minimizing or ignoring them.** While enhancing the ideal of a global community, and the importance of the “human race” may feel like an appropriate method, actually celebrating the fact that people are different and come from a range of backgrounds and experiences can be more beneficial. Help our child identify all the ways a space is enhanced when we able to be inclusive and celebratory of each person, and the unique experiences, beliefs, and perspectives they may have.

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Resources

RESilience

Uplifting youth through healthy communication about race.

<https://www.apa.org/res>

One Talk at a Time

Providing support for Latinx American, Asian American, African American, and Black youth and their families to have conversations about race and ethnicity.

<https://www.caminoslab.org/onetalk>

Embrace Race

A multiracial community of parents, teachers, experts, and other caring adults who support each other to meet the challenges that race poses to our children, families, and communities.

<https://www.embracerace.org/>

Books and Videos

Sesame Street: Song -- I Love My Hair

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=enpFde5rgmw&feature=youtu.be>

Helping Your Child Cope with Media Coverage of Community Racial Trauma: Tips for Parents

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Qtn2ZFx6ZM&feature=share>

Read Aloud: The Colors Of Us By

Karen Katz

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O58brpCvmRs>

37 Children's Books to help talk about Racism and Discrimination

<https://coloursofus.com/37-childrens-books-to-help-talk-about-racism-discrimination/>

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