

# Talking to Your Children about Race, Racism, and the Current Social Movement: Preschool

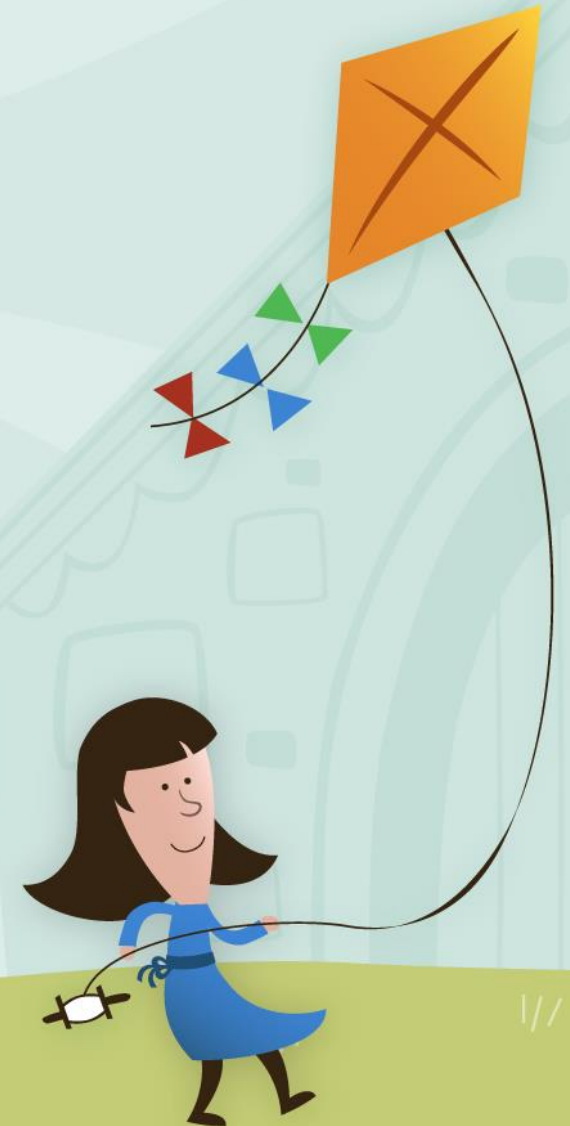
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# Objectives

- Understand the importance of talking about race and racism
- Learn about the development of racial awareness and racist beliefs
- Identify ways to start raising an antiracist child
- Learn how to start conversations about race, racism, protests, and the social movement
- Know if/when/how you should discuss topics of riots, police brutality, and publicized murders



*“Antiracist baby is bred, not born”*

Ibram X. Kendi (2020)



# They're not too young to talk about race!



At birth, babies look equally at faces of all races. At 3 months, babies look more at faces that match the race of their caregivers. (Kelly et al. 2005)

Children as young as two years use race to reason about people's behaviors. (Hirschfeld, 2008)

By 30 months, most children use race to choose playmates. (Katz & Kofkin, 1997)

Expressions of racial prejudice often peak at ages 4 and 5. (Aboud, 2008)

By five, Black and Latinx children in research settings show no preference toward their own groups compared to Whites; White children at this age remain strongly biased in favor of whiteness. (Dunham et al, 2008)

By kindergarten, children show many of the same racial attitudes that adults in our culture hold—they have already learned to associate some groups with higher status than others. (Kinzler, 2016)

Explicit conversations with 5–7 year olds about interracial friendship can dramatically improve their racial attitudes in as little as a single week. (Bronson & Merryman, 2009)

Young children notice and think about race. Adults often worry that talking about race will encourage racial bias in children, but the opposite is true. **Silence about race reinforces racism** by letting children draw their own conclusions based on what they see. Teachers and families can play a powerful role in helping children of all ages develop positive attitudes about race and diversity and skills to promote a more just future—but only if we talk about it!

**Do some learning of your own** to get ready for conversations with children.

Here are some good places to seek *information* and *training*:

- Teaching Tolerance — [tolerance.org](http://tolerance.org)
- Raising Race Conscious Children — [raceconscious.org](http://raceconscious.org)
- Embrace Race — [embracerace.org](http://embracerace.org)
- Teaching for Change — [teachingforchange.org](http://teachingforchange.org)
- AORTA Cooperative — [aorta.coop](http://aorta.coop)
- Fortify Community Health (CA) — [fortifycommunityhealth@gmail.com](mailto:fortifycommunityhealth@gmail.com)
- Delaware Valley Assoc. for the Education of Young Children (PA) — [dvaevc.org](http://dvaevc.org)



© 2018 • Updated Feb 28 2018  
The Children's Community School  
1212 South 47th Street, Philadelphia PA 19143  
[childrenscommunityschool.org](http://childrenscommunityschool.org)



# The Doll Test (Clark & Clark)

- 1940s study on the psychological effects of segregation on Black children
- Findings helped win Brown vs. Board of Education → desegregation of schools
- Read about it here: <https://www.naacpldf.org/ldf-celebrates-60th-anniversary-brown-v-board-education/significance-doll-test/>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PZryE2bqwdk>





# Developmentally, preschool-aged children...

- Typically know more than we think they do
- Will pick up on your stress levels and changes in routine
- See and recognize racial differences
- Categorize based on racial differences
- Understand right and wrong, fair and unfair, and hierarchy
- Starting to understand concepts like *some*
- Are interested in science
- Learn through observation, repetition, and your explanations



# Talking about Race and Racism

Start with this video (search for 'Let's Talk About Race' on YouTube)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1vHymutysWU&t=243s>

- “There have been stories about White people being mean to Black people. What have you heard/What do you know?”
- “When someone is mean or unfair to someone because of the color of their skin, that’s called racism.”
- “Tell me what you know about White people being mean to Black people.”
- “Have you ever seen someone be mean to someone else because of the color of their skin?”
- “What questions do you have about what you just heard?”
- “What feelings do you have about racism?”
- “When you see someone being picked on because of the color of their skin, you can choose to say ‘That’s wrong!’”
- “It’s important to tell me or another grown-up when you see racism happening.”
- Role-play scenarios (‘Ready, set, action!’)



# Talking about Race and Racism

- Have conversations about racial discrimination and social injustices
  - “It’s not fair that people with darker skin are treated differently/unfairly.”
- Teach that words and actions can hurt and that racism hurts
- Use naturally occurring experiences as teaching moments
  - “There are so many more White people than people of color on the magazine covers on this rack. That’s not fair. I wonder why people of color weren’t included.”
- Point out systemic racism and say it’s unfair
- Talk about the history of segregation in schools
  - “It used to be that Black children weren’t allowed to go to school with White children.”
- Tell them they can always come to you with questions





# Other Ways to Teach Race and Racism

- Read books and watch videos that positively portray diverse characters
- Avoid exposure to material that stereotype people of color
- Have dolls and figurines with diverse faces
- Be an antiracist consumer
- Talk about differences as things that make us special and unique
- Do things with your child that focus on positive aspects of their racial identity
- Celebrate differences
- Identify ways to be allies as individuals and as a family
- Role-play responding to instances of racism
- Be a **model**



# Be a Model

- Body language
- Ways you interact with others
- Social groups
- Talk about race and racism
- Call out/point out racism
- Vote for antiracist policies and politicians
- Don't be a bystander!
- Openly acknowledge when you make a mistake
- Be receptive to feedback
- Keep learning



# Talking about the Social Movement and Protests

- It's okay to share images of peaceful protests
- “Right now, the whole world is coming together to say racism is wrong”
- “When people come together and use their voices to say something is wrong, that’s called a protest. They are protesting.”
- “They’re saying Black Lives Matter, because a lot of people think that Black lives don’t matter, and that’s not true. They want everyone to know the truth.”
- “They’re saying the names of Black people who have been hurt by White people”
- Point out things in the imagery like the diverse representation, signage, the helpers, etc.
- “What questions do you have about the protests?”
- “How do you think the people protesting are feeling?”
- “How do you feel about the protests?”



# How Can Your Child Be an Ally?

- “How do you think we can help?”
- “What do you think we can do to help people understand that Black Lives Matter?”

Some activist activities might include:

- Making Black Lives Matter signs for your lawn and/or windows
- Drawing pictures for yourselves and/or others
- Writing a letter in your child’s words to their daycare, favorite toy company, local business, etc.
- And so many more!



# Discussing Violence Associated with the Movement

## CAUTION

- Information on the following slides provides a guide for talking about riots, police brutality, and publicized murders
- **For preschool-aged children, only go into these topics if you know they have been exposed to the information and/or their follow-up questions indicate a need for such information**





## Let the following be your guide:

- Developmental level
- Personality
- Knowledge they already have
- Their questions

Give honest, factual, and specific information that does not overwhelm nor underwhelm your child.



# Talking about Riots

“People have been saying that racism is wrong for a very long time, but it is still here!”

- “What do you think you would do if you were trying to tell someone something and they didn’t look at you or answer you?”
- “What do you think you would do if you told lots of people that something unfair was happening and no one listened to you?”
- “How would you feel if people were ignoring you when you had something important to say?”
- “Black people have been saying for a very long time that racism is wrong, that racism is unfair, but not enough people have been listening.”
- “Lots of people are mad about racism right now.”
- “They’re trying to get attention because no one has been listening to them”
- “A riot happens when people who are protesting get so mad that they destroy things.”
- ”What questions do you have about riots?”
- “How do you feel about the riots?”



# Talking about Police Brutality

- “There have been stories about White police officers hurting Black people. What have you heard about it?”
- “Some police officers have hurt/killed Black people just because they’re Black. That’s racist, and it’s wrong.”
- “Only some police officers have hurt/killed Black people, not all police officers have been hurtful.”
- “When a police officer hurts someone, that’s called police brutality.”
- “People are protesting about White policemen who hurt/kill Black people. They are protesting against police brutality.”
- “That police officer pushed that man because he was speaking out against racism. That’s police brutality, and that’s wrong. Everyone is allowed to protest and use their voice.”
- “What do you think/feel about police officers hurting/killing Black people?”
- Show footage of peaceful protests chanting out against racist police



# Talking about Publicized Murders

- “They were killed because they were Black. That is racist, and that’s wrong.”
- Say their names
- “A White policeman killed George while arresting him”
- “A White man shot Ahmaud while he was jogging”
- “A White policeman shot Breonna in her home”
- “If they were White, they wouldn’t have been killed. That’s one way racism hurts people, and it’s wrong.”
- “What do you think/feel about Black people being killed because they are Black?”
- Show footage of protests where people are chanting names of victims



# Warning Signs

- Regression
- Nightmares
- Changes in sleep and/or eating patterns
- Traumatic themes in play
- Excessive discussion of current events
- Avoidance of material/reminders related to current events
- Changes in mood (irritable, anxious, sad)
- More 'clingy'
- Somatic complaints

If you have any concerns about your child, reach out to your pediatrician to see if further evaluation is warranted.





# Crisis Numbers

- Dauphin: 717-232-7511
- Cumberland: 717-763-2222
- Lancaster: 717-394-2631
- Schuylkill: 877-993-4357
- Lebanon: 717-274-3363
- Juniata: 800-929-9583
- Perry: 866-350-4357
- Snyder: 800-222-9016
- York: 717-851-5320
- Berks: 610-236-0530

## National Suicide Prevention Line

Phone: 800-273-8255

Text: 741741

## Trevor Project

866-488-7386



# Books

- Antiracist Baby, by Ibram X. Kendi
- Beautiful Beautiful Me, by Ashley Sirah
- A is for Activist, by Innosanto Nagara
- Let's Talk About Race, by Julius Lester
- <https://www.babylist.com/hello-baby/antiracist-books>

## Antiracist Parenting

- 40 Ways to Raise a Nonracist Child, by Barbara Mathias and Mary Ann French



# Websites with Excellent Resources

- <https://www.readbrightly.com/anti-racist-resources-for-kids/>
- <https://mashable.com/article/raising-an-antiracist-child-resources/>
- <https://www.pbssocal.org/education/at-home-learning/talk-kids-anti-racism-list-resources/>
- <https://parentinfantcenter.org/news/anti-racism-resources-families>
- <https://www.mother.ly/child/talking-to-kids-about-racism-age-by-age/>
- <http://www.raceconscious.org/2016/06/100-race-conscious-things-to-say-to-your-child-to-advance-racial-justice/>

