

Parent Tip Sheet: Raising Anti-Racist Kids

When is the right time to start?

It is never too early to talk about race and racism. Infants recognize race as early as 3 months old and by 2.5 they begin to show racial bias, which peaks around 4-5 years old.

What can I do?

- First, do your own work and education on racism, bias, and privilege.
- Understand that racism isn't just about oppression from one individual to another; it is systemic and historic.
- Know that children learn from watching your behavior. (In fact, they learn about racism *before* you begin to talk about it.)
- Consider your own biases and work to match your beliefs to your actions.
- Consider the following:
 - What do the characters in their books and movies look like?
 - Who comes to the house?
 - When do you decide to lock your car?
 - What music do your children hear?
 - Who do they see in the neighborhood?
 - What race is their doctor and teacher?
 - What news do you discuss at home and how?
- Uplift and celebrate BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and people of color) musicians, artists, actors, scientists, business-owners, etc. We don't want to *only* focus on the pain of racism and diminish BIPOC identities to suffering.
- Find ways your child can engage in activism.

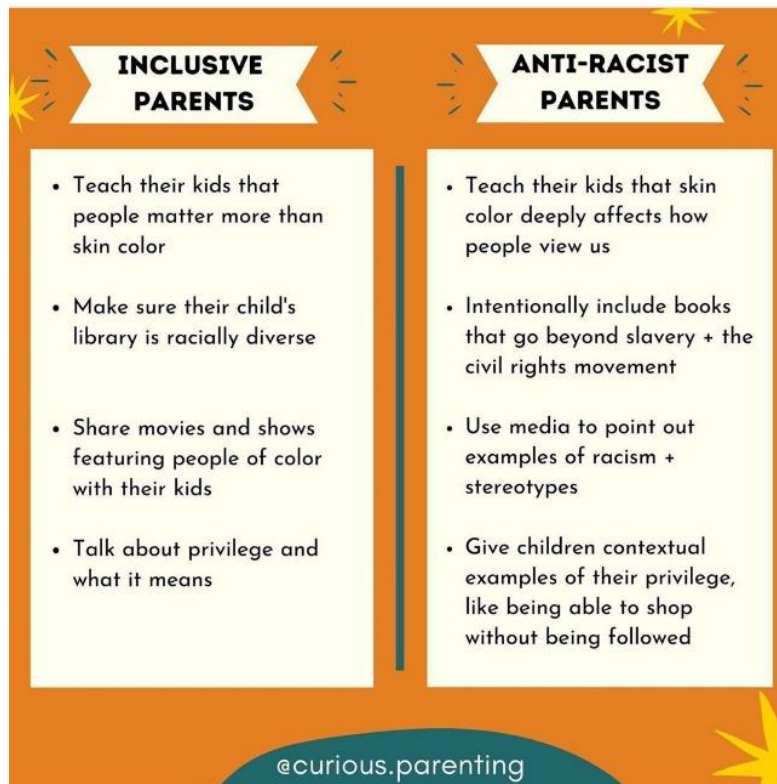
What do I say?

- Conversation starters:
 - Current events (the Anti Defamation League has [Table Talk](#) conversation starters)
 - Examples from your or your child's everyday life
 - A movie you watch together
- Think about what you want to say *beforehand*.
- Ask your child about their thoughts and feelings. (This helps gauge what their understanding already is.) Use open-ended questions and listen non-judgementally.
- Choose familiar words that your family already uses together.
- For white families, name whiteness. We often only racialize those who aren't white, and don't consider our own race, culture, and what it means to us.
- Be explicit and honest.

Tips and Techniques:

- Use books and other resources. Seek out sources by Black academics and activists.
- Be imperfect. There is no ideal way to discuss systemic racism. We will make mistakes. Model this, "I don't know the answer, let's find out together," "Oops, I misspoke, I'm sorry," "I'm not sure how to talk about this, but I'm going to try..."

- These conversations should be fluid and ongoing; it is not a one-off.
- **Be anti-racist, not just inclusive:**



Educate Yourself.

Learn about white privilege, systemic racism, and raising anti-racist kids.

- [#DoTheWork](#): Rachel Cargle's free 30-day course on racism.
- [SURJ Boston](#) has resources, action steps, workshops, and dialogues.
- [White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#) by Peggy McIntosh.
- [Anti-racism resources for white people](#): articles, podcasts, books, and movies.
- [ADL](#) has parent resources on historical information, definitions, discussions, and tips.
- [Teaching Tolerance](#) has free online resources for parents on teaching children racial justice.

Learn Together.

We are life-long learners in anti-racism and allyship. Learn with your child!

- [The Conscious Kid](#) has book recommendations, resources on key terms and concepts, and guides on how to talk to your kid about racism.
- [Watertown Free Public Library](#) provides anti-racist book lists by age.
- [PBS What is Race](#) is an interactive model to learn about race, racism, and its history.
- [Race Forward](#) has short video clips on systemic racism.
- [1619](#): New York Time's Podcast on the history of systemic racism.

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Main references

Child development: <https://www.prettygooddesign.org/>

Talking about race: <https://www.npr.org/2019/04/24/716700866/talking-race-with-young-children>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2018/10/05/white-parents-teach-their-children-be-colorblind-heres-why-thats-bad-everyone/>

<https://www.pbs.org/parents/thrive/how-to-talk-honestly-with-children-about-racism>