



Transforming Toddlerhood

Talking to Toddlers About Racism



A resource guide for parents and caregivers

A Note from Devon

It's time to take a stand against racism. Part of me wanted to stay silent. It would be so much easier and more comfortable. I have been allowing myself to live in that bubble like so many others I know.

I am not black. I do not experience racism due to the color of my skin. I will not pretend to know what it is like to grow up Black in America - a country deeply rooted in black suppression, structural racism and white supremacy.

It's time to burst that bubble. It's time to open our minds and hearts, to listen deeply. It's time to acknowledge the shadow that slavery created and its negative impact that's been felt for generations and is still felt today. It's time to own the impact of our words, actions and silence. It's time to be anti-racist and talk about racism, diversity and inclusion with our little ones.

I'm choosing to burst my bubble and no longer be silent. Thank you for being with me as I do.

I created this guide to share with you what I am learning. Its intention is to support parents and caregivers in their own journey in being anti-racist and in teaching their children to be anti-racist. There is a lot of work to be done and we can all do better.

As an ICF certified coach and the leader of the Transforming Toddlerhood community, I am committed to;

- listening to and amplifying Black voices
- educating myself and being in the conversation even when it's uncomfortable
- standing in solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement and BIPOC voices
- taking action against racism
- creating a safe and inclusive for everyone in the Transforming Toddlerhood community.

I am not an expert. I am a human who is learning along with everyone else. I am not perfect. I have made missteps and will make more. That's part of the process of learning and unlearning. I will continue to own my impact and apologize when I do.



Growth is uncomfortable. Yet, it's being with that discomfort and taking action anyways that leads to change. And we desperately need change.

This is not a comprehensive guide nor the only way to develop learning in yourself and your family about being anti-racist. This is a compilation of what I have been learning and I will continue to update as I learn and grow.

Not everyone is committed to doing this work and learning and unlearning, yet, this work is vital. I am calling you forward to take a deeper look, find your voice and create change in yourself, your family and your community.

We are raising the next generation. We need to talk about racism. We need to celebrate the beauty in our differences. We need to set an example for children by being anti-racist. The most effective way to do this is by doing the work within ourselves.

*With gratitude,
Devon*

Toddler Parenting & Life Design
ICF Certified
Founder, Transforming Toddlerhood

What is Racism?

Here are some core definitions to support our collective learning and creating common ground in this conversation.

Racism: Prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism that is fear-based and directed against a person or people on the basis of their membership in a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized based on the belief that one's own race is superior.

Structural Racism: A system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity. It identifies dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with “whiteness” and disadvantages associated with “color” to endure and adapt over time.

White Supremacy: The belief that white people are superior to those of all other races, especially the black race, and should therefore dominate society. For example, Black people must be hindered so White people can succeed.

White Privilege: Historical and contemporary advantages that people with white skin have regarding access to quality education, decent jobs and livable wages, home ownership, retirement benefits, wealth and so on due to the color of their skin. White privilege is not the suggestion that white people have never struggled. Many white people do not enjoy the privileges that come with relative affluence, such as food security.

Many do not experience the privileges that come with access, such as nearby hospitals. And white privilege is not the assumption that everything a white person has accomplished is unearned. Instead, white privilege should be viewed as a built-in advantage, separate from one's level of income or effort. For example, it is being able to walk down any street and not have fear because of your skin color. It's the opportunity to live a life where you never have to think about skin color.

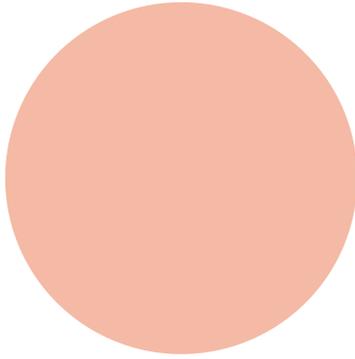
Biases: Prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair.

White Fragility: Discomfort and defensiveness on the part of a white person when confronted by information about racial inequality and injustice.

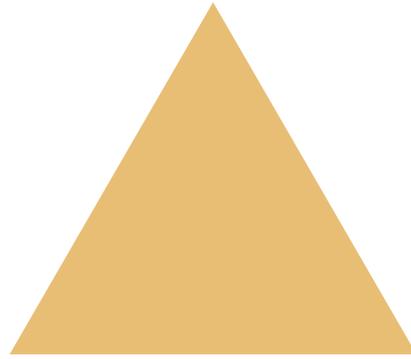
Diversity: Diversity has come to refer to the various backgrounds and races that comprise a community, nation or another grouping. In many cases, the term diversity does not just acknowledge the existence of diversity of background, race, gender, religion, sexual orientation and so on, but implies an appreciation of these differences.

BIPOC: Acronym that stands for Black, Indigenous, People of Color

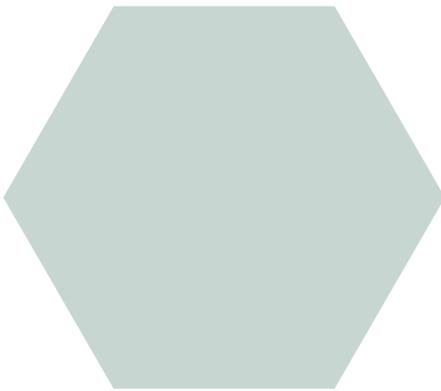
Types of Racism



Individual Racism



Interpersonal Racism



Institutional Racism



Structural Racism

Individual Racism refers to the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of individuals that support or perpetuate racism in conscious and unconscious ways.

Interpersonal Racism occurs between individuals. These are public expressions of racism, often involving slurs, biases, or hateful words or actions.

Institutional Racism occurs in an organization. These are discriminatory treatments, unfair policies, or biased practices based on race that result in inequitable outcomes for whites over people of color and extend considerably beyond prejudice.

Structural Racism is the overarching system of racial bias across institutions and society. These systems give privileges to white people resulting in disadvantages to people of color.

What Does It Mean To Be Anti-Racist?

It's the practice of identifying, challenging, and changing the values, structures and behaviors that perpetuate all types of racism; including structural and institutional racism. Anti-racism is an active way of seeing and being in the world, in order to transform it. Being anti-racist means to understanding what racism is, where it is found, how people knowingly and unknowingly contribute to it as well as knowing how to identify racism our selves and others, what actions to take to create change and then taking action.

“No one is born racist or anti-racist; these result from the choices we make. Being anti-racist results from a conscious decision to make frequent, consistent, equitable choices daily. These choices require ongoing self-awareness and self-reflection as we move through life. In the absence of making anti-racist choices, we (un)consciously uphold aspects of white supremacy, white-dominant culture, and unequal institutions and society. Being racist or anti-racist is not about who you are; it is about what you do.”

Sources: [National Museum of African American History and Culture](#) + [The Aspen Institute](#)
+ Oxford dictionary + [ACLRC](#) + [Tolerance.org](#)

Are Your Kids Too Young to Talk to About Race?

Not

at

all!

Silence on race can unintentionally reinforce racism by letting our children draw their own conclusions.

It's never too early to talk about race. "Adults often think they should avoid talking with young children about race or racism because doing so would cause them to notice race or make them racist. In fact, when adults are silent about race or use "colorblind" rhetoric, they actually reinforce racial prejudice in children. Start at a very young age, children see patterns - who seems to live where; what kinds of home they see as they ride or walk through different neighborhoods; who is the most desirable character in the movies they watch; who seems to have particular jobs or roles at the doctor's office, at school, at the grocery store; and so on - and try to assign "rules" to explain what they see. Adults' silence about these patterns and the structural racism that causes them, combined with the false but ubiquitous "American Dream" narrative that everyone can achieve anything that they want through hard work, results in children concluding that the patterns they see "must have been caused by meaningful inherent difference between groups." In other words, young children infer that the racial inequalities they see are natural and justified. So despite good intentions, when we fail to talk openly with our children about racial inequality in our society, we are in fact contributing to the development of their racial biases, which studies show are already in place" (Dr. Winkler, 2017).

Ideas continued on page 6.

Source: [The Children's Community School](#)

0-1 years

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).

2 years

Children as young as 2 use race to reason about people's behaviors. By 30 months, most children use race to choose playmates (Hirschfeld, 2008 + Katz & Kofkin, 1997).

4-5 years

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

5 years

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

5-7 years

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

The Dangers of “I don’t see color”

- You can’t be an ally with someone you can’t see
- You can’t fix something you can’t see
- It limits your ability to appreciate individualism
- It minimizes the struggle of BIPOC communities

The goal is not to be color-blind. We all see color. The goal is actually to see and recognize skin color. The goal is to NOT make decisions based on skin color.

Where to Start?

Ready to start this conversation but you aren't sure where to begin?

As parents and caregivers, it's always our job to start with ourselves. **WHY?**

During the toddler and preschool years, you have more impact on your children's perceptions and attitudes about race and diversity than at any other time in their childhood! The manner in which you treat and discuss others based on similarities and differences as well as the manner in which you respond to your child's natural curiosity — provides the blueprint for your child's reactions.

- **ACKNOWLEDGE** white privilege. To start you may want to ask, "What societal privileges or benefits have you or people you know experienced around education, jobs and wealth, that is beyond what is commonly experienced by people of color under the same social, political and economic circumstance?" [Please read this article to fully understand white privilege.](#)
 - **CHECK-IN** with your own biases and stereotypes. Do this on a regular basis to continue discovering your biases. We all have biases. If you don't see any, then it's a signal to take a closer look. [Please read this article to learn more about biases.](#)
 - **EDUCATE** yourself. Take ownership of doing your own research educating yourself about racism, the history of America, white supremacy, white privilege, white fragility and systemic oppression.
- Read books, visit websites, listen to podcasts and have conversations. (please see the resource section)
- **LISTEN** to Black voices sharing their experiences. Get curious. Hold space. Validate feelings.
 - **STOP** saying "I'm not racist." Be anti-racist. Commit yourself to continual learning and take action on what you learn.
 - **LEARN** about black history and culture as well as the history and culture of other races.
 - **SPEAK UP** when family, friends or community members make racist or stereotypical comments or jokes. Don't make excuses for them or defend them. Hold them accountable. Let your voice be heard even when you are uncomfortable. Call it out at home, online and in public.

Continued on page 8.

- **STAND UP** against injustice, discrimination and inaction, for black people in your circle and your community. Get out and protest. Sign petitions. [Petitions to sign.](#)
- **AMPLIFY BIPOC** voices doing diversity work.
- **SUPPORT BIPOC** businesses, leaders, activists, organizations and artists by sharing their work with people in your network.
- **LOWER** your defenses. Choose to be open and listen carefully when someone calls you out. Work to understand their point of view and why what they say could be true.
- **DIVERSIFY** your friend group and network. Interact with people who are different from you.
- **OFFER** yourself and others compassion. There is hurt, anger and fear present in this conversation. This work isn't easy but it's vital.
- **OWN** your words. Consider how your words affect others. Don't be afraid to apologize when you get it wrong. Don't be afraid to be vulnerable and be seen.
- **SHARE** what you learn with other in your personal and social networks.
- **DONATE** to organizations that fight racism and promote diversity. [Here are some ideas.](#)

- **VOTE** in local, state and national elections. Write or call your state and local representatives.

There are a lot of ways that you can do the inner work and outer work of being anti-racist. Choose one and get started today!



Sources: [National Museum of African American History and Culture](#) + [@polished_playhouse](#) + [@themompsychologist](#) + [@soyouwanttotalkabout](#) + [@crazyheadcomics](#) + [Embrace.org](#)

Talking With Your Toddler

Ready to get started with your children?

I know it can feel scary to talk about racism with your little ones. It's ok to feel that fear. You also have the power to take action in the face of fear. Below are some ideas of how you can start the conversation with your toddler.

- **START** early. You can start these conversations with your child as soon as 6 months old.
- **GET** clear on what you want your children to know and learn. Look 10 years into the future. What do you want your child to say and do when it comes to being anti-racist. Work backwards from there to the present moment.
- **DEFINE** kindness and respect in terms of being anti-racist. Let your children know your stand about treating people of all races and cultures with kindness, respect and equity.
- **READ** books with your child that are age-appropriate and include people of different races and ethnicities. Choose books that feature diverse characters and authors that are “own voices” (books about diverse characters that have been written by authors from that same diverse group). For suggestions, please follow these accounts on Instagram:
[@hereweeread](#)
[@thebrownbookcase](#)
[@booksfordiversity](#)
[@inclusivestorytime](#)
[@littleblackbooknook](#)
[@blackbabybooks](#)
[@readwithmochabooks](#)
[@bebombbookclub](#)
- **TEACH** your children about black history and culture as well as the history and culture of other racial and ethnic groups.
- **CREATE** diverse experiences for your children by intentionally exposing them to the beauty of other racial and ethnic groups and cultures.

Continued on page 10.

Talking With Your Toddler

You can do this by diversifying your children's

- home library and supporting your children's school in doing the same.
- toys
- playgroups and after school activities (BIPOC dolls do not take the place of actual children).
- **ATTEND** cultural fairs to expose your children to different cultural opportunities.
- **CELEBRATE** Black artists, musicians, inventors and leaders as much as you discuss oppression, social injustice and slavery.
- **IDENTIFY** and **TALK** about racism that shows up in media and books including classic children's literature. [Use this checklist to support you in having an anti biased lens with children's literature.](#)
- **TALK** about differences and similarities. Our skin and hair may look different but we are all humans. See color. Celebrate diversity.
- **CREATE SAFETY** by turning off the news and keeping conversations age-appropriate so your little one has a sense of safety. Toddlers can easily overhear adult conversations. Reassure your child you are here to keep them safe.
- **ENCOURAGE CONVERSATION** Create an open environment where your child feels comfortable asking questions and sharing their observations and experiences.
- **MODEL** anti-racist behavior with both your words and actions. This is the best way for your children to learn.
- **BE CONSISTENT** Parenting as well as teaching your children about racism and diversity is a marathon. Have these conversations again and again. Add to them as your children grow and develop.

Sources: [@polished_playhouse](#) + [Embrace.org](#)

Resources

Here are several resources to support you and your family along the way.



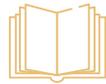
Websites

- [Teaching Tolerance](#)
- [Raising Race Conscious Children](#)
- [Embrace Race](#)
- [Teaching for Change](#)
- [National Museum of African American History and Culture](#)
- [Alberta Civil Liberties Research Centre](#)



Podcast

- [NPR- How white parents can talk to their children about race](#)
- [NPR: Talking Race with Young Children](#)
- [Parenting Through a Critical Race Lens](#)



Articles

- [How to Talk to Your Kids About Race](#)
- [Talking to Kids About Racism Often and Early](#)
- [Talking with Children About Racism, Police Brutality and Protests.](#)
- [How to Talk to Your Children About Protests and Racism](#)
- [Talking Race with Young Children](#)
- [10 Tips for Teaching and Talking to Kids about Race](#)
- [Talking to Children about Racial Bias](#)
- [6 Things White Parents Can Do to Raise Racially Conscious Children](#)
- [The Anatomy of a Diverse Book Shelf](#)
- [Anti-Racism for Kids 101: Starting to Talk about Race](#)
- [What is White Privilege, Really?](#)
- [What Black Lives Matters Means](#)
- [A Year of Anti-Racist Work](#)



Instagram Accounts

to support you in educating your children

- [@hereweeread](#)
- [@theconsciouskid](#)
- [@thebrownbookcase](#)
- [@booksfordiversity](#)
- [@inclusivestorytime](#)
- [@puzzlehuddle](#)
- [@littlelikeskids](#)
- [@readwithmochabooks](#)
- [@blackbabybooks](#)
- [@bebombbookclub](#)
- [@thetinyactivist](#)
- [@littleblackbooknook](#)
- [@blackmomsblog](#)
- [@latinxparenting](#)
- [@biracialbookworm](#)
- [@readlikearockstar](#)
- [@apron_education](#)
- [@nmaahc](#)
- [@thefablabhq](#)
- [@firstname_basis](#)

Resources: Educate Yourself

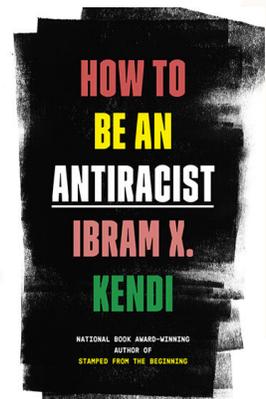
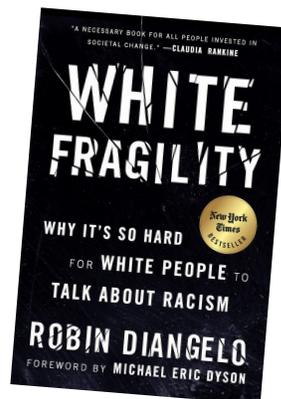
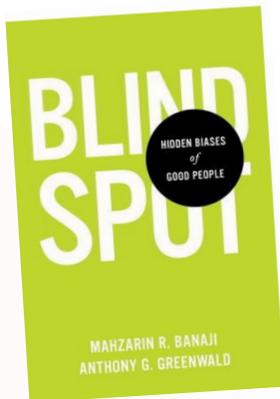


Instagram Accounts

to support you in educating yourself

- [@ohhappydani](#)
- [@rachel.cargle](#)
- [@moemotivate](#)
- [@ckyourprivilege](#)
- [@soyouwanttotalkabout](#)
- [@thegreatunlearn](#)
- [@nicoleacardoza](#)
- [@bexlife](#)
- [@themompsychologist](#)
- [@laylafsaad](#)
- [@readlikearockstar](#)
- [@iamrachelricketts](#)
- [@thelovelandfoundation](#)
- [@campaignzero](#)
- [@tiffanymjewell](#)
- [@britthawthorne](#)
- [@ogorchukwu](#)
- [@shiftingtheculture](#)
- [@ericachidi](#)

Book and Resources for Adults:



[Click here for a more comprehensive list of books and media.](#)

[NY Times Anti-Racist Reading List](#)

[Book and Film list from Racial Equity Tools](#)

[Ted Talks on Racism](#)

A Closing Note from Devon

Thank you for taking the time to read this guide. I honor the effort you are making and the action you are taking.

My hope is that this guide has provided you with information to support your learning and unlearning process, inspired you to take action within yourself and with your family to be anti-racist and given you the confidence to be the loving leader in guide for your family and our world.

We are all at different places in our racial justice journey. Acknowledge and honor where you are at. Take the time to listen and educate yourself. Allow yourself to feel uncomfortable. The discomfort is a signal that you are in the unknown and growing. Use your voice. Be committed to taking steps forward from courage and love.

Consistent action is vital. There isn't a quick fix. Just like parenting, it's a marathon. Consistent action is what creates change inside and outside of ourselves.

Let us come together and fight racism so all children know and live in a better world.

*In solidarity,
Devon*

Toddler Parenting & Life Design
ICF Certified
Founder, Transforming Toddlerhood



**“No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite.”
- Nelson Mandela**