

A Family For Every Child Matching Assistance



*"We should not be asking who this child belongs to,
but who belongs to this child."*

Talking About Race



If you are a racially-blended family, there is no doubt the subject of "race" and "identity" have come up at least once in your house. Whether it was a stranger's comment or a child's question, children who are adopted into families who are of another race or ethnicity than them face extra scrutiny from the public. Being open to having these discussions of race - no matter how painful - is key to helping your child develop his/her identity and learn how to navigate the real world.

Talking About Color

There are many different ways to describe a person's skin color, and often we use the words interchangeably. For someone who is Caucasian, we use the term "white". For someone who is African-American, we use the term "black". Describing people's skin using colors may be a little

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10 Ways to Help Your Child Deal With Racism

1. Admit that racism exists in daily life, and will factor in to how your child is treated by others.
2. Acknowledge racism is not fair, and that you will never tolerate it.
3. Help your child develop problem-solving skills to deal with negative situations

too literal for children. African-American individuals are not really "black" - the color of their skin ranges from light to dark brown - while Caucasian individuals are not really "white" - the color of their skin can range from pale to deep beige. People who are Latino have skin of varying shades of brown, and may also be of European, Asian or African descent, adding to the mix.

In addition to being used to describe someone's skin color, there are many connotations associated with the names of the colors. Some of these connotations are good, while others are not. Be prepared to discuss with your child the various connotations and stigmas surrounding the "colors" of skin, and encourage them to use terms such as "Caucasian", "African-American" or "Latino" to describe people of other ethnicities. Talk to your child about what these terms mean, and how it relates to their culture.

Talking About Racial Bias

Discussing racism with your child may be a very uncomfortable topic. As your child's parent it is in your nature to protect your child from anything that may hurt their feelings. But discussing racism and racial biases will help your child recognize when they are happening, and will teach them to respond appropriately.

Whenever you witness racism or a racial bias together - either out in public, at a family gathering, or on T.V. - take some time either right then or later on to discuss it. Ask your child how she/he felt about the incident, and why they think the person may have said that. Discuss ways they would respond if they were in that situation.

If a child tells you about an incident that happened in school or somewhere else where they were the target of racism, don't brush it off by telling them that it was unintentional. Find out what was said, and focus more on the impact it had on your child, rather than the intent of the individual(s) who said it. This will give your child the skills to recognize racism, even if the particular incident wasn't actually racist. It is better for your child to be over-aware than not at all.

surrounding their race, like teasing, exclusions, etc.

4. Offer your help. Even if your child does not take you up on it, just knowing you are there if they need it means a lot.

5. Take any opportunity available to discuss his/her ethnic heritage, and all of the unique and wonderful things about it. This will help your child combat negative racial stereotypes.

6. Help your child mesh contradictory ideas about their race and culture. Acknowledge that people of all races have positive and negative historical figures, and that they have made good and bad contributions to society.

7. Provide opportunities for your child to spend time with people of their race or culture, giving them positive role models.

8. Be aware of any biased messages you may be unintentionally sending.

9. Encourage your child to participate in activities with people of his/her race, even if he/she is not comfortable due to lack of exposure.

10. Show your

Positive Messages

The following are some messages you may want to instill in your child:

- Race is something a person is born with; it cannot be chosen.
- Nobody can limit him/her solely on their race.
- He/she has all the tools they need to be successful and do great things in life.
- Sometimes people are rude and mean, but it has nothing to do with who she is.
- It's ok to be angry when someone is racist; it's how you choose to respond that matters.
- He/she is encouraged to talk to you anytime about race, biases and racism, no matter how insignificant it may seem.

For more positive messages and suggestions for talking about race with your child, please see the *Adoptive Families'* article "Breaking the Racial Sound Barrier" in the **Additional Information & Resources** section.

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acceptance of all kinds of diversity, not just racial or ethnic.

Additional Information & Resources

Adoption Advocate No. 65 - [My Story of Foster Care and Transracial Adoption](#) by Lucas Boyce

Adoptive Families - [Books and Articles for Introducing Race and Racism to Children](#)

Adoptive Families - [Breaking the Racial Sound Barrier](#) by Beth Hall and Gail Steinberg

Adoptive Families - [Primer for Talking About Race and Racism](#)

Adoptive Families - [Transracial Adoption Resource Page](#)

Adoptive Families webinar - [Inside Transracial Adoption](#)

[Inside Transracial Adoption](#) by Beth Hall and Gail Steinberg

Iowa Foster and Adoptive Parent Association - [Transracial Parenting in Foster Care and Adoption: Strengthening Your Bi-Cultural Family](#)

NACAC -
[Transracial/Transcultural Parenting](#)

PBS Parents - [How To Teach Kids About Race](#)
by Madeline Rogin

Slate - [Teaching Tolerance: How white parents should talk to their young kids about race](#) by Melinda Wenner Moyer