

4 Starting Points for Conversations about Race

Many caregivers feel overwhelmed by the idea of having conversations about race and racism with kids because they don't know where to start. Here are four simple ideas to help you dip your toes in.



Character illustrations by
Tyler Mishá Barnett

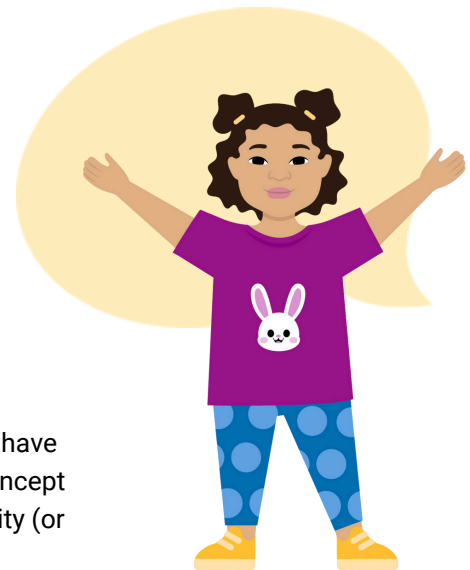


1 Normalize talking about race.

Young children notice racial differences. By addressing race directly, we can help empower them to love themselves, be inclusive toward others, and stand up for equity and justice. And just like any other skill, the more we practice talking about race, racism, and racial inequity, the more comfortable it will become! So start early, and do it often.

2 Follow children's leads.

Children will often give us clues about how they are thinking about race. Listen to kids. Understand their questions. Ask them questions in return ("What makes you ask that?" "Why do you think that?").



3 Use the concept of fairness.

Young kids are very attuned to what is "fair" and "unfair" — who gets to have more, who gets to go somewhere, and who doesn't. We can use this concept to explain racism and connect past events in history with racial inequality (or rules or situations that are unfair) in the present.

4 Model thought processes and behaviors.



Children learn from what they see and hear others do. Empower children through modeling thought processes ("Hmm, I wonder why..." or "What I'm noticing about this story is...") and behaviors (including warm relationships across racial lines, and openness to learning about others!)

Modeling not knowing is powerful, too. Don't be afraid to say "I don't know" or "That's a great question. I need to think about that. Can we talk about it a little later?" and then model how you can find out more!