

HOW DO I...

Help my child with difficult experiences such as encountering and responding to racism and discrimination?

Advice for Parents and Caregivers

- **Be proactive in celebrating diversity**, opening your child's eyes to the beauty of embracing your culture and being unique. Start conversations about race and identity early.
- Racism disadvantages people based on their race, often deeply embedded in society through prejudice, stereotypes, institutional policies, and unequal power dynamics. It's crucial to acknowledge and understand that both individual acts of discrimination and the larger system of racism exist and must be addressed. **Have an open and honest conversation with your child about racism and discrimination**, using tools such as documentaries or age-appropriate books to help.
- **Equip your child with the skills to recognize and speak out against microaggressions and racism** — like intervening when someone makes a racist joke or refusing to tolerate discriminatory behavior — when they feel safe to do so.
- If your child experiences racism, they can feel hurt, isolated, and confused. **Acknowledge the harm of racism and its emotional impact.** Let your child know that it's okay to feel angry,



Scan to watch our video on this topic.

sad, or frustrated when they encounter racism. Encourage the child to talk about what has happened and how it made them feel, validating their emotions and providing comfort and support.

- **In some situations, you might encourage your child to report racism or discrimination they experience to a trusted school official or counselor.** Provide the right amount of support throughout the process based on the level of distress that the child has experienced.

7 Tips for Helping Kids Respond to Racism and Discrimination

To learn more, check out these helpful resources:

[Uplifting Youth Through Healthy Communication about Race](#)
American Psychological Association

[Talking to Kids About Discrimination](#)
American Psychological Association

[Racial Trauma Guide](#)
Dr. Isha Metzger

The Child Mind Institute is dedicated to transforming the lives of children and families struggling with mental health and learning disorders by giving them the help they need to thrive. We've become the leading independent nonprofit in children's mental health by providing gold-standard care, delivering educational resources to millions of families each year, training educators in underserved communities, and developing tomorrow's breakthrough treatments.

1. **Talk about it.** Kids are likely to encounter racism and discrimination at a young age. Put aside any discomfort and talk about these topics with your kids early and often.
2. **Be direct and factual.** When you're explaining racism for the first time, it's important to use clear, straightforward language.
3. **It's ok to show emotion.** When talking with your children about racism or specific events that have happened due to racism, it's okay to express your own feelings of anger, hurt, or sadness. This helps normalize these reactions and validate what your child may already be feeling.
4. **Take a multimedia approach.** Share books, movies, TV shows, YouTube channels or anything else with age-appropriate content related to the issues you are trying to tackle. These can provide additional information, context and characters for kids to relate to.
5. **Listen and validate.** Even young children are perceptive and may be scared or confused by things they've seen or heard. Ask open-ended questions and give them plenty of space to answer. Little kids can also express themselves through drawings or acting things out with toys.
6. **Teach advocacy.** Just as you may have encouraged your child to stand up for friends who are treated unkindly, teach them to speak out if they witness or experience discrimination firsthand – if it is safe to do so.
7. **Plan a course of action.** There's nothing worse than feeling helpless, so if your child comes to you with a troubling experience or concern, help them develop a response. Remind them that it's not always on them to respond, and depending on the situation, there may be reason to make a report with the school or authorities.