

Age-Appropriateness: Talking about Race and Racism with Young People

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AGE OF CHILD	STAGES OF IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT ¹	STAGES OF COGNITIVE-SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ²	RACIAL AWARENESS ³	AGE-APPROPRIATE TASKS IN TALKING ABOUT RACE & RACISM	ACTIVITIES AND CURRICULUM POSSIBILITIES ⁴
Ages 3-5	Individual: -Initiative vs. Guilt -Am I good or am I bad? ¹ Group: - Is my group good or bad?	- Me-self emerges - Child initiates activities to meet larger goals - Lacks awareness of other people’s perspectives - Classifies objects by single feature	- Aware of differences in people’s physical characteristics - Does not understand constancy of skin color - May have already taken in negative stereotypes	- Discuss differences in body types without communicating social preferences - Speak positively about all racial features - Begin to give appropriate racial language	- Use multi-colored paints or crayons to have children find the match with their skin color, and draw a self-portrait - Cut pieces of hair and observe texture and color
Ages 6-9	Individual: - Industry vs. Inferiority - “Am I competent or am I worthless?” ¹ Group: - Is my group competent or worthless?	- Realizes other people can have different social or cognitive perspectives than self - Unable to accurately determine other’s perspectives - Begins to ask “Where did I come from?” - Classifies objects by multiple features	- Understands constancy of skin color - Begins to understand that skin color has social significance - May over-generalize racial categories	- Explain racial identity as connected to continent of origin and phenotypes - Teach about heroes from racial groups - Begin discussion about different kinds of prejudice and bias, including racism.	- Use map of the world or globe to mark family members and ancestors place of origin - Video: “That’s a Family: A film for kids about family diversity” by Women’s Educational Media

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AGE OF CHILD	STAGES OF PSYCHO-SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ¹	STAGES OF COGNITIVE-SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ²	RACIAL AWARENESS ³	AGE-APPROPRIATE TASKS IN TALKING ABOUT RACE & RACISM	ACTIVITIES AND CURRICULUM POSSIBILITIES ⁴
Ages 10 – Puberty	<p>Individual: - Industry vs. Inferiority - Am I competent or am I worthless? ¹</p> <p>Group: - Is my group competent or worthless?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can take the perspective of another person. - Can reflect about own behavior and motivation from other’s perspective - Concentrates on comparisons with peers - Difficulty in integrating positive and negative qualities of self and others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comprehends constancy of racial identity - Increasingly aware of society’s racial stereotypes - Children of color may begin to be treated through the “adult stereotypes” of their race. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Begin to teach about history of racism and civil rights movement - Teach role models of social justice advocates and allies rather than victim and oppressor - Encourage dialogue about their observations of race and racism - Teach activism and about their potential to impact society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role play of alternative Constitutional Convention that includes disenfranchised groups - Model local campaign (i.e. challenging media bias)
Adolescence	<p>Individual: - Identity vs. Role Confusion - Who am I and where am I going?” ¹</p> <p>Group: -What is my peer group, and where is it headed? - Identity crisis may emerge. Identity will be diffused, foreclosed, moratorium or achieved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can think logically about abstract ideas - Able to take neutral third party perspective on self and others - Loyalty to group means willingness to contribute - Social comparisons decrease, inner values increase in importance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Search for identity intensifies, including racial and ethnic components - Importance of peer group in forming racial and ethnic identity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Help young people develop an observant eye for identifying racism in society - Encourage anti-racism activism - Partner with teenager in making life decisions about issues affected by race and racism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Create new U.S. Bill of Rights - Record oral histories of social justice activists in student’s community - Identity group caucuses - Video: “PBS – Race: The Power of an Illusion” Produced by California Newsreel

¹ Erikson 1959; Cook & Cook; 2005, Muuss, 1962.

² Muuss 1962., Roffman, 2001,

³ Wright 1998; Tatum 2003.

⁴ Derman-Sparks 1989; Peterson 1996; Miller 1996.