

A Parent's Guide: Preventing and Responding to Prejudice

Adapted from "Beyond the Golden Rule" published by Teaching Tolerance

Preschool Years:

Your Influence as a parent

- Most significant time for you to impact your child's life in terms of perceptions and attitudes about difference
- How you respond to your child's natural curiosity provides the blueprint for how your child will react to differences
- Take advantage of every teachable moment-be brave and don't ignore conversations that need to happen
- Remember that children don't associate positive or negative qualities about race or ethnicity...the influence of parents, other adults, media convey these ideas
- Take into account not only what you say to your children about race, but also what your actions are saying
- Teaching your children about inclusion (in terms of race, gender, ethnicity, disability, etc) is ESSENTIAL

5 Tips for Parents During These Years

- **Be honest:** Discuss differences openly and highlight diversity by sharing books, toys, games, and videos that feature diverse characters in positive roles
- **Embrace curiosity:** Be open to your child's questions and make the time to discuss them
- **Broaden choices:** Think about ways to make the world bigger for your child
- **Lead by example:** Make sure your life includes people from different backgrounds, cultures, and experiences
- **Foster pride:** Help your child develop a positive self-concept about your family heritage (while also acknowledging positives about other heritages/backgrounds)

Elementary and Pre-Teen Years:

Influences Broaden

- Outside sources have a much more significant impact on your child during these years
- Continue to emphasize your value for diversity and inclusion-keep ongoing dialogue and model what you believe
- Children become very aware during these years of belonging and not belonging; they start comparing themselves to others
- Discern carefully what you provide for your child to read and watch; be aware of what they see and hear-continue to share your values when opposing views are witnessed
- Engage your children in activities in and out of school that provide more diversity of experiences

5 Tips for Parents During These Years

- **Model It:** Make sure your actions, subtle and overt, model the value of embracing differences and inclusion
- **Acknowledge Difference:** Teach your children the many ways people are different. Be honest about instances when and where people have been mistreated because of their differences.
- **Challenge Intolerance:** If your child says or does something indicating prejudice, try to find the reason for the comment or action. Then, explain why it was unacceptable. Silence indicates acceptance.
- **Seize Teachable Moments:** Look for everyday activities that can provide opportunities for discussion. Real life examples will be more engaging than hypotheticals for school-age children.
- **Emphasize the Positive:** Praise your child for behavior that shows respect and empathy for others. Let your child know why this is a desirable behavior.

Teen Years:

Influences Revolve Around Belonging

- Teens are keenly aware of outside influences (media, peers, adults, social media, etc)
- Consider how your values of inclusion and diversity may be tested as your teen has more independent experiences
- Social status and belonging are significant for teens; help them understand empathy through their own sense of not being left out
- Be aware of the mindset in many adults that adolescents are dangerous, untrustworthy, and threatening
- Teens will function at their maximum comfort level with friends and activities; make sure opportunities are provided for your teen to have experiences outside of this comfort zone

5 Tips for Parents During These Years

- **Keep Talking:** Find ways to engage in conversation with your teen to maintain an ongoing dialogue
- **Stay Involved:** Know who your child is spending time with in and out of school, monitor and discuss social media presence, talk about music, tv, movies and these influences on them
- **Live Congruently:** Now more than ever, your teen will be watching to see if what you say you value is actually modeled by your actions
- **Broaden Opportunities:** Look for service and volunteer opportunities that will provide your teen with a broader world view
- **Encourage Activism:** Promote ways for your teen to get involved in causes they care about, even on a very small scale.

“I’ve learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.” Maya Angelou

“I would love to see an America where race is understood in the same way that the ethnic diversity of the white population is understood.” Barack Obama

“It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength.” Maya Angelou