

## Talking to your Children about Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

As Parents, Grandparents and Community leaders it is our responsibility to be examples, lead by example, teach, and have conversations with our children about diversity, equity and inclusion. Our nation today is a very complicated and trying place. Our children are hearing and fearing day-to-day life. Whether they hear things at school, TV, or on their computers they are having to grow up very quickly. They are faced with racial divide, gender stigma, poverty and possible death of loved ones from the pandemic. We must be prepared for their questions by educating ourselves and answering questions honestly. Let's not avoid tough these conversations, and teach them to use their voice for good.

### Here are 13 tips to talk to your children by Alden E. Habacon:

1. Talk openly about diversity in the same way you would talk about safety.
2. It's ok to be afraid but get over it.
3. Intentionally look for teachable moments.
4. Match your message to your audience - simplifying it for your preschooler, compared to talking to your middle schooler or high schooler.
5. Accept that your child will say discriminatory things. Does it mean your child is racist? No! But don't ignore it and respond in a non-judgmental way.  
**Some Key phrases that will help :**
  - "Let's talk about this..."
  - "What made you notice that?"
  - "What made you say that?"Explain to your child, "Our family does not use language like that."
6. Teach your children how to use inclusive language by discouraging and avoiding labeling. This will take practice for you and your family. Use people's names or use the most neutral descriptors possible. Be specific! Tell your child that labels cause us to lose sight of the person and their individuality. Focus on the person's uniqueness. It's what makes us all special.
7. Use respectful language,  
This is especially true when referring to ethnicity, gender identity & expression, indigenous people, and when talking about disabilities. Children pick up what they hear from their friends. If you hear your children using a derogatory term, stop them, and make it a teachable moment.
8. Break down "them and us" by pointing out similarities. When setting the stage for cross-cultural interaction or dialogue, the goal is to establish a strong sense of commonality, build empathy by pointing out similarities and talking about cultural or personal differences in a non-judgmental way. Take the time to make it a teachable moment.
9. When talking to children about disabilities, emphasize strengths. Don't ignore the disabilities. Children notice physical and intellectual disabilities in other children and adults. What they don't automatically do is judge them as a weakness or strength. We must build a non-judgmental response to differences.
10. Filter television, media, and talk about what your children see. It is important to make sure the programs your children are watching are more visually diverse, and not transmitting stereotypes or distorting race or cultures. If you see a program that shows stereotypes take the time to make it a teachable movement.
11. Seek out diversity in media. According to researchers on unconscious bias, exposure to counter-stereotypical images is the most impactful intervention of unconscious bias.
12. Don't overdo it. Talking too much about anything can actually cause adults and children to tune out. Keep it casual and resort to children's books.

13. Model inclusive behavior and language. Children learn through observational learning or imitation before they can even speak. Learn to use inclusive language, and most of all, be prepared to be rebuked by your children. It's ok to let them know they're right when they catch you doing or saying something racist, sexist, or homophobic. Stop, apologize and change the behavior.

It is important to have a resource to help start the conversation with our children. Here are some interesting books that may also help:

\*I'm Chocolate, You're Vanilla: Raising Healthy Black and Biracial Children by Marguerite Wright

\*Talking to Children about Racism, Prejudice and Diversity by Susan Linn

- This website has endless resources that reinforce multiculturalism & pluralism  
Colours of Us  
<https://coloursofus.com>

Sources:

<http://www.aldenhabacon.com/13-tips-how-to-talk-to-children-about-diversity>

<https://coloursofus.com>