

Diversity, Privilege and Prejudice – what are our children learning?

As parents, we all know that our children are sponges, soaking up the environment around them and the impact it's having on other people as well as themselves. So, what are our children learning about diversity, privilege and prejudice?

Children learn by observing the attitudes and behaviour of other people, especially their parents and members of their family. As adults in children's lives we are modelling our responses all the time, whether to news reports or to others who are different from us in some way.

We can model respectful curiosity and a genuine interest in finding out more about other cultures, religions and races. We can challenge stereotypes and encourage empathy, trying to understand the emotional view point and lived experience of others. Children have a strong sense of fairness and can readily understand the unfairness of assumptions about others based on ethnicity, race or class.

Children may be struggling with their own feelings about difference and what they are seeing and hearing. You can help them by:

- **Reflecting on what you know** - you're not an expert on everything, it's okay to acknowledge what you don't know, and be willing to explore more with them.
- **Correcting misinformation** - challenge biased reporting or social media, or racist views expressed by others. Question a single view of historical events.
- **Monitoring children's responses** - be guided by how much they know and understand and keep information age appropriate.
- **Limiting exposure** to damaging stories or coverage - while it's important for children to understand what's happening, images in the news and social media are often designed to shock, and can provoke fear and anxiety.

- **Showing empathy** – acknowledge what children are feeling and encourage discussion that enables them to express themselves freely.
- **Being willing to learn from children and young people** – young people often have experience, views and understanding that we can all learn from.

Being silent is not an option. Take every opportunity to challenge racism, strive to become more self-aware and encourage kindness and respect for others, whether within your family, school, workplace or community.

“Hate, it has caused a lot of problems in the world, but has not solved one yet.”

Maya Angelou

Useful Resources

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/family/in-the-news/talking-about-race/>

<https://www.unicef.org/parenting/talking-to-your-kids-about-racism>

<https://www.instagram.com/happytoddlerplaytime/>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnaltG5N8nE> - A Kids Book About Racism by
Jelani Memory