

Anti-Bias Parenting Framework

Thank you for considering this anti-bias parenting framework. Continued familiarity and practice with this framework will help you better align your parenting practices with anti-bias work. The use of this framework **is not** separate from your family's core values or your personal beliefs about respect and inclusion that likely already inform how you parent. Understanding and using the framework will provide another tool for you to rely on when you are wanting to support your child's racial and emotional literacy.

Building your child's racial and emotional literacy skills will help them do the following:

- Spend time with loved ones to process and learn more about their experiences with identity differences;
- Develop positive self-talk and other actionable things to boost their self-esteem;
- Help them apply their family and personal values of inclusion to their everyday lives; and
- Find many opportunities to engage in pro-social skills.

Adults engage in identity related conversations daily (even adult silence communicates values about if, when and how identity dialogue happens). Facilitating a conversation with your child will vary based on their developmental benchmarks, their current emotional and identity-related literacies, and past dialogues at home and in school. Parents can use the anti-bias framework as an entry point to responding to children's inquiries related to U.S. history, or when interpersonal interactions involve bias and exclusion, or even when a heightened racial or identity-related bias or event occurs in society.

Children develop at different paces and are exposed to, and aware of, varying forms of explicit and implicit bias in their environment. A child's chronological age is not the same as their developmental age. All children, regardless of learning needs or social environments, differ in the ways they interpret identity differences, play and work with others. These differences will have an impact on how one approaches conversations about identity differences. The goal is to create adaptive learning environments as children move through stages of growth so that you may positively influence social development and, when possible, intervene and interrupt when a child demonstrates unhealthy development or pre-judicial thoughts. All children will thrive in safe and nurturing environments, where adults are responsive to their individual needs and can scaffold learning to help each child reach their full potential.

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Many adults were socialized to be **colorblind** (teachings that explicitly communicate silence about racial, skin color, or other identity differences) and **colormute** (teachings that explicitly shame those who do speak of the differences they see). Engaging in discussions about race and other social identities can be emotionally draining. While practicing ways to break this silence with children, we must recognize that we carry with us all that we have learned about how to, or whether to, talk about race and identity. This can cause us to have a range of new, and unexamined, emotions.

In the heat of the moment you may not have time to grapple with your emotions, assess the child's developmental stage of racial and identity awareness, and recall the steps for co-creating an action plan (see the two grids below). These roadblocks, while temporary, may get in the way of making space for the child(ren)'s statements, emotions and inquiries. The goal is to **practice now** in order to use your skills to help children remove negative patterns of thinking and behaving towards others and to replace them with positive thinking and behavior.

It is important to prioritize listening to the information and questions the child has and then building on their understanding with accurate information. Do not feel pressured to fit all the learning into one conversation. The **one and done** conversations can lead the child to fill in their own gaps or to have their pre-prejudicial thoughts or unfounded stereotypes confirmed by society. While the elements of the action plan below do not correspond to particular ages, each habit builds upon the prior. How you respond during racialized encounters will be based on your family's use of these habits, the amount of time you have to respond, and you and your child's own identity awareness.

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Foundations that Support Action Planning with Children

	Children Experience	Loving Grownups Do	Begin with...
Perceiving	Children see differences and absorb negative and positive messages from familiar factors (elders, siblings, peers) and unfamiliar factors (school, media, environments).	Anti-bias parenting involves helping children talk about identity, notice injustice (in literature, in the media, or when delivered by someone) and discuss the impact these injustices have on them and others.	I noticed that ...
Broadening	Children have a range of emotional and racial literacy skills. Silencing discussions about identity and bias limits their ability to grow less identity anxious as their awareness of society grows.	Anti-bias parenting involves helping young children develop positive self-esteem and talk openly about how they feel when injustice occurs towards their group (in-group) or others (out-group).	I feel _____ when you say that. How might [other person] feel?
Categorizing	Children are social beings who create categories for their in- and out-groups in an effort to place themselves in the world.	Anti-bias parenting involves explicit conversations with children about the value of cross-racial friendships and discouragement from aligning with in-group members who engage in bias or teasing behavior.	In our family we believe and value ... I know you and [this person] are friends who share many identities, however, in our family we believe...
Engaging	Children learn about differences and similarities through personal and societal interactions.	Anti-bias parenting involves being in conversations with people from diverse communities who have diverse perspectives and helping children unlearn biases and stereotypes about their in-group and the out-group.	I have learned from some of my friends who are [this identity] that ...
Activity	Children are socialized by people, stories, and their environments.	Anti-bias parenting involves access to role models of people who work towards justice and helping children make and deliver actionable positive behavioral changes in their communities.	I am thinking that we [you] can ...

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Action Planning with Children when Identity-Related Harm is Experienced/Delivered

Prejudice Reduction	
<p style="text-align: center;">Identity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What questions can you ask to learn about the identity that is at play? • <u>Target</u> (<i>person or persons harmed by the statement or behavior</i>): What statements can you make to affirm the child’s identity & culture? • <u>Agent</u> (<i>person or persons who harmed another with a statement or behavior</i>): What are examples of counter-stereotypic images you can share? Ask open-ended questions that offer you more information about the child’s thinking. “Where did you hear/see/learn this?” “Do you believe what you said or did is true or ok, if so why?” • Generate other questions to ask your child given what you know about their developmental benchmarks and prior conversations. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Diversity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What statements can you make to teach respect for diversity? • How can you use this as an opportunity to strengthen family values around embracing and celebrating diversity? • <u>Direct intervention</u>: Talk about the diverse people in your family’s circle. Invite them to your home. • <u>Indirect intervention</u>: Share a story for a time when someone of a different identity embraced you, your child, or your family. Visit museums, read books and watch movies that affirm people’s stories, histories, and accomplishments.
Collective Action	
<p style="text-align: center;">Justice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the stereotypes and biases at play? • How might you connect what happened to historical bias or systemic issues? • What is a short phrase you can remind your child or create that centers your family’s values on justice for all, equity for all, and inclusion for all. See examples below. <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“In our home all are welcome!”</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“Our family believes in justice for all!”</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Target</u>: What affirming action or statement can your child practice? Run through a similar situation (where you play the role of the target) and have them practice what they will say. • <u>Agent</u>: What is a decision or action you can help your child make to help the other child heal and feel affirmed? How might you use this opportunity to increase contact with people from diverse groups? <p style="text-align: center;"><i>“It is too bad you feel that way about me. I can’t be friends with someone who treats me that way (or believes that about me or my group).”</i></p>

adapted from Teaching Tolerance / Southern Poverty Law Center Anti-Bias Framework

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“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies but the silence of our friends.”
Martin Luther King, Jr.

Resources

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- Kotler, J. Haider, T., Levin, M. H. at Sesame Street (2019). Identity matters: Parents’ and educators’ perceptions of children’s social identity development
- Petty, K. (2016). *Developmental milestones of young children*. Redleaf Press.
- Wood, C. (2017). *Yardsticks: Child and adolescent development Ages 4 - 14*, 4th Ed. Center for Responsive Schools.
- Zero to Three Journal: Identity and belonging in early childhood settings. ZERO TO THREE:
National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families
- Zero to Three Competencies for Prenatal to Age 5 Professionals