

# HOW TO TALK TO KIDS ABOUT RACISM

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# WHY WE NEED TO HAVE THE CONVERSATION...

- As early as 2.5 years old, signs of prejudice can appear;
- During the preschool years (3-5), children may want to know how they got their skin color, hair and eye characteristics;
- Early elementary ages (5-8 year olds) show greater interest in cultural characteristics; individual identity evolves into group identity;



# WHY WE NEED TO HAVE THE CONVERSATION...

- Pre-adolescent students (9-12 year olds) deepen their understanding of various factors defining race/cultural identity. They are aware of personal prejudices others may hold and begin to confront their own;
- Older adolescents (ages 12 and up) begin to understand the negative implications of racism and other forms of oppression;



# DID YOU KNOW...

*"The period of our children's lives when we imagine it's most important to not talk about race is **the very developmental period** when children's minds are forming their first conclusions about race."* (Bronson & Merryman, 2009)

*"To be effective, conversations about race have to be explicit, in unmistakable terms that children understand."* (Bronson & Merryman, 2009)

*"Diverse Schools don't automatically produce cross racial friendships. Dr. Moody's research found that the more diverse the school, the more the kids self-segregate by race and ethnicity within the school."* (Bronson & Merryman, 2009)

***Kids need us to reinforce the importance of diversity!***



WE NEED TO HAVE CONVERSATIONS WITH OUR YOUNG CHILDREN...

*Turn and Talk*

*What stood out for you?*

*How does this inform your  
parenting?*



# 10 THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN TALKING WITH KIDS ABOUT RACISM

## Challenge stereotypes:

Point out stereotypes when you see them. Use simple, concrete language to explain why you do not like when stereotypes are reinforced.

## Consider feelings:

Explore your child's feelings. Share your own feelings.

## Explore through play:

Use play, whether role-playing or pretend play, to engage your child in many of the strategies. As a parent, use play to model for your child.

## Acknowledge the difference between public and private spaces:

Allow yourself to bring conversations with your child about race into the privacy of your living room.



## 10 THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN TALKING WITH KIDS ABOUT RACISM

### Name race/Whiteness:

Use children's books, media, and advertisements to proactively "see" Whiteness with our youngest children.

### Affirm children's questions/comments about race:

When children bring questions/comments about race to you, make sure they know that you value their questions/comments and encourage future conversations.

### Speak to images/words that make you uncomfortable:

This might be as simple as saying, "I don't like this" or "That makes me feel uncomfortable."



## 10 THINGS TO REMEMBER WHEN TALKING WITH KIDS ABOUT RACISM

### *Talk about fairness/unfairness:*

*Be honest you see something in the world that isn't fair. Inspire your child to want to work towards "fairness."*

### *Show your children how they can be activists and how they can create change:*

*De-mystify what it means to be a social activist and try to change something your child finds unfair in the world.*

### *Pare down the various issues:*

*It is helpful to separate issues to arrive at a conclusion about what exactly we want to say (and don't want to say) about real world events.*





# TURN & TALK: WHAT WILL YOU NEXT DO DIFFERENTLY?

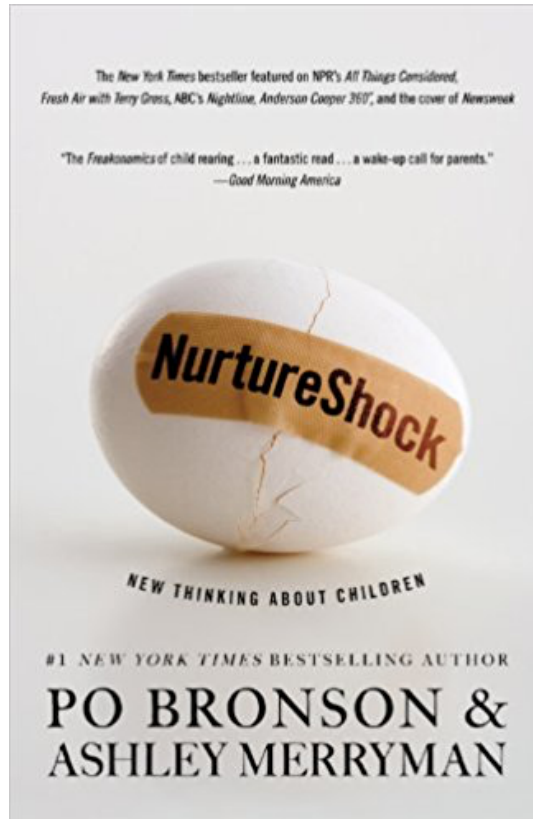


# WHAT ELSE YOU CAN DO?

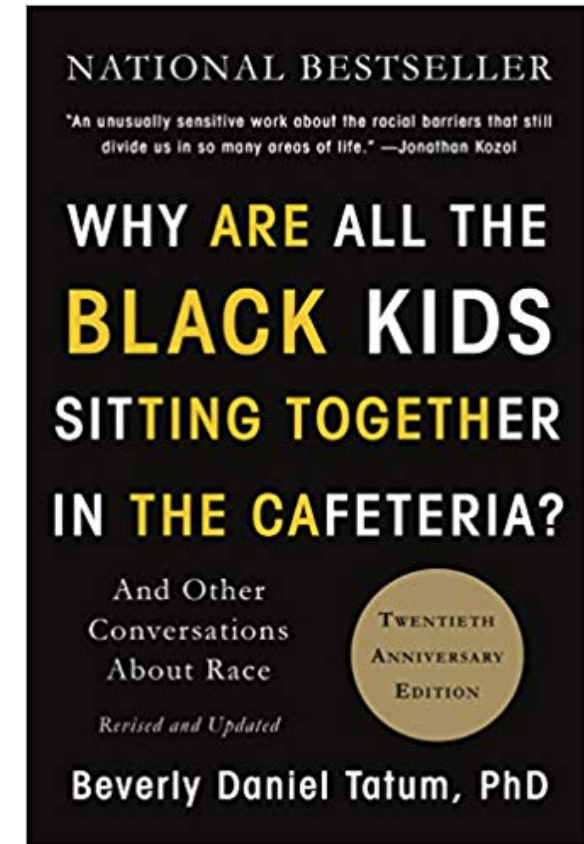
- Surround your child with diversity.
- Be proactive about teasing and excluding.
- Promote anti-bullying and anti-racism.
- Encourage diverse and cross-racial friendships at school.
- Expand what you know. Read. Engage in courageous conversations.
- Examine your own preconceptions. Are they based on stereotypical views?
- Learn about your own racial identity and consider how it may impact your values and beliefs.



# RESOURCES



<http://www.raceconscious.org>



Chapter 3:  
*Why White Parents  
Don't Talk About Race*

