



early risers

Waking up to racial equity
in early childhood.

Discussion Guide

Season 2, Episode 2: *Race Matters: A Conversation about Transracial Adoption and Multiracial Families*, released November 3, 2021

Learning Goal: Discuss how to talk about race within multiracial families.

Suggested Conversation Length: 60 minutes



Early Risers is a podcast focused on how to talk with young children about race. Hosted by Dianne Haulcy, the podcast invites early childhood experts into conversations about how parents, caregivers and early childhood educators can tackle this big topic with the little ones in their lives.

Background

Being able to talk about race is an important life skill for all parents, but especially for parents raising multiracial families. When a family adopts a child of a different race, questions about race and racism cannot be avoided. The ability to talk directly and honestly with transracial adoptees about race from a young age is a critical life skill for their families and caregivers. Transracial adoption is one form of a multiracial family, and this gives us insights on how parents and caregivers of a different race can talk to their children about race, including issues of race within a family.

Guest Bio

Beth Hall is the co-author of “Inside Transracial Adoption” and executive director of Pact, An Adoption Alliance in Oakland, California. Hall also has personal experience with transracial adoption, as the white adoptive parent of two adult children both born in the United States—a son who is African American and a daughter with roots in Guatemala. Through her personal and professional experiences, Hall has gathered valuable insights and advice for anyone who wants to talk about race with young children.

Facilitator Tip

As you open your discussion, allow time for everyone to describe the racial makeup of their immediate family. Identify if there are any multiracial families in your discussion group that can relate to Beth Hall’s family. Be sensitive to those people in your group that might be transracially adopted or have a multiracial family. Allow them space to talk about their personal experience—and also recognize they are not representing all transracially adoptive families or multiracial families.

General Facilitator Tips

- Read through all the questions first.
- Reiterate that the purpose of the discussion is to learn from each other.
- Create an agreement with everyone in the discussion group that helps create a safe, nonjudgmental atmosphere—talking about race can be difficult.
- Be sensitive as to how people identify.
- Be prepared for a response to any remarks that might be offensive. The person saying it may not be aware that it is offensive, so be gentle in pointing it out.

Group Agreements

Ground rules and group agreements are a way to respect safety. Ask members to brainstorm and collectively determine group agreements. Here is some information you can reference:

- [Group agreement information from Seeds for Change](#)
- [Community Agreements tool from Just Lead Washington](#)
- [Sample group agreement from GSAFE](#)

Questions for Discussion

- What are your hopes and fears about participating in this conversation?
- What are your hopes and fears for your young children or the children in your care? What do you hope they will learn?
- Discuss your experiences talking with children about multiracial families. Do you ignore questions about differing races between a parent and child? How do you explain a child that is of a different race than their parent?
- Hall said that if you were to ask her before she adopted her children if she cared about the race of her children, she would have said something like, "I do not care if they are blue, green, purple or orange, I will love them." She said she now recognizes that statement as racist. Do you agree that is a racist statement? Would you imagine yourself saying something like that? Why or why not?
- Beth talks about a realization she had when her children are young: She needed to recognize that race matters—and it matters to her children. What do you think brought her to that realization? Do you think race matters to your children or the children in your care? Why or why not?
- Hall talks about the Clark doll test that is later described during the episode. How do you think your children or children you know would respond to that doll test? How would you respond?
- As Hall is responding to the clip about Haulcy's interview with a person who adopted a child from Central America, she said there may be times you need to approach family members about making racist remarks and telling them to stop. Do you think you would need to do that within your extended family? Would you be able to if you needed to? Do you think that racist remarks should only be addressed if your children are BIPOC?
- In the interview, Hall talks about a time when her African American son saw a young man walking and referred to him as a "dangerous stranger." Hall's husband then explained to him that the young man looked a lot like he would in 10 years. This opened a conversation within their family that lasted for several years. Do you have similar examples that opened a conversation about race with your young children? What was that conversation like?
- In this episode, Hall and Haulcy discuss fear—specifically, the fear parents have around talking about race because they think it will scare their children. However, Hall said that as parents, we do not worry about scaring our children when we warn them about being careful near a busy street. How would you describe talking about race as being the same or different than talking to your child about safety?

Closing the Discussion

As you are closing your discussion, encourage people to continue learning about transracial adoption and multiracial families, and about the importance of talking about race and racism within family structures. Acknowledge key points and lessons learned during the discussion. Finally, share additional resources they can use to continue learning.

Additional Resources

- Hall is co-author of "[Inside Transracial Adoption](#)," originally published in 2000 and revised in 2013. The book was specifically written for the parents of transracially adopted children.
- Pact has a [comprehensive resource library](#) with links to articles and videos covering a wide range of topics addressing transracial adoption, including language and strategies for talking about race.
- Hall talks about the importance of lifting up the voices of transracial adoptees. Pact produced a 20-minute video documentary, "[Adoptees Speak](#)," featuring the personal stories and reflections of transracially adopted youth.

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