



early risers

Waking up to racial equity
in early childhood.

Discussion Guide

Season 5, Episode 1: *Making Space for Teachers on Race* – released January 10, 2024

Learning Goal: For early childhood educators to reflect on how they are working towards an anti-bias environment in their classroom or programs.

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

If we adults want to work with young children on issues related to race and racism, we first need to work with ourselves. Marie Lister describes the learning communities she facilitates with teachers to help them become aware of, and address, their own biases. She discusses how the work adults do in these communal learning spaces can benefit young children immeasurably for years to come.

Guest Bio

Marie Lister is an instructor in the University of Minnesota Early Childhood Program and a teacher at the University of Minnesota's Child Development Laboratory School. She also works with the St. Paul nonprofit Before Racism, where she coaches other teachers on how to practice anti-racism in their lives and their classrooms.

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 are some agreements tools to use as a reference:

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

Questions for Discussion

- Marie talks about the first conversation she had with her mother about race after the family moved from New York to Minnesota. In retrospect, if you were Marie's mother, what would you have wished you would have said to Marie?
- Marie says that curiosity and empathy have served her well in the work she does as a Before Racism coach with other early childhood educators. How do you think curiosity and empathy can be helpful in conversations about race with your peers? With children?
- Marie says that many of the educators she works with have had a moment when working with young children where they have frozen and did not know what to say about race. Has that ever happened to you? If so, please share with the group.
- Dianne discusses an online interaction she had with a parent who mentioned his son did not notice race because he had never said anything about the only Black man that lived in their small community. What do you think that child is learning about race? What are the implicit messages they are receiving about the Black man that lives in their community?
- Marie talks about the difference between guilt and shame: Shame is where you get stuck, while guilt is not internalized and can lead to action. (Marie references [Brene Brown](#).) When you are confronted with issues of race do you feel guilt or shame? If you feel shame, what can you do to move it towards guilt?
- Marie talks about three things that are important to build an anti-bias classroom: history, activism and understanding what you can do today. Talk about how you have already implemented these things in your classroom or family.
- Marie and Dianne talk about how to do repair with children when your first response to an issue related to race did not go well. Is this a practice that you use in your classroom? If not, how could you implement it?
- Talk about a time that you had an interaction with a young child or children about race and you did not respond well. What do you wish you would have done differently? How can you go back and do repair?
- Marie talks a lot about the importance of early childhood educators having a safe place to talk about issues of race. If you are an early childhood educator or administrator, how important do you think it is to have a community of people, a safe space, to discuss issues of race?
- If you are an early childhood educator, do you have at least one person with whom you can discuss issues of race that is nonjudgmental? If not, where and how do you think you could find this person?

Closing the Discussion

As you close your discussion, encourage people to notice where there may be tightness in their body. Take some time to take deep breaths together and end on an upbeat note. Acknowledge key points and lessons learned during the discussion. Finally, share additional resources participants can use to continue learning.

Additional Resources

- Marie coaches early childhood teachers through the nonprofit [Before Racism](#).
- Marie mentioned Brene Brown's work on guilt and shame from the book *Daring Greatly*.
- [Viewpoint. Creating Anti-Racist Early Childhood Spaces | NAEYC](#)

Early Risers is a podcast from Little Moments Count, produced by Minnesota Public Radio (MPR). This discussion guide was created by Little Moments Count and MPR, 2024.

