



early risers

Waking up to racial equity
in early childhood.

Discussion Guide

Season Four - parent voices episodes - released March 22, April 19, and May 3, 2023

Learning Goal: To discuss experiences as a parent or caregiver in talking to children about race and racism, so you know you are not alone in this journey.

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

Early Risers listeners have appreciated the tips and tools and actual language from our guests on how to have conversations about race and racism with young children. We have also heard many parents feel uncertain and worry they might make a mistake when having these conversations. In Season Four, we are talking to parents about their experiences discussing race and racism with their children. These experiences are not always ones that make us feel good or comfortable, but they are necessary in raising children that can have conversations about race.

Guest Bios

The first three episodes of Early Risers Season Four features host Dianne Haulcy as she speaks with three different parents from diverse backgrounds. Ellen Guettler, a white parent from Minneapolis, Minnesota, discusses her journey of practicing anti-racist parenting in a diverse community. Kai and James Miller, an African American couple from Rochester, Minnesota, share their challenges of ensuring positive representations of their daughters in a racially changing landscape. Acacia Ward, a young Black and biracial single mother from Rochester, Minnesota, discusses how she navigates conversations about race and identity with her children.

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

- Take 5 minutes and journal about the first time an adult or parent talked to you about race or racism. Was it a positive or negative experience?
- Think about the first time you talked to your child about race and or racism. Was that a positive or negative experience? Did you plan for it, or did it just happen?
- Ellen Guettler spoke about feeling racism in her body when she was a child but not knowing how to talk about it. What do you think it felt like? When do you think she felt it? Have you ever felt racism in your body? Were you able to talk about it with someone?
- Ellen talked about being raised in the 1990s by progressive ideals that promoted being colorblind. How do you think that affected her? How do you think it affected the children of color around her? Who do you think the colorblind philosophy benefits?
- Ellen spoke about “retreating into whiteness” after attending a very ethnically diverse high school, because she was not able to process with anyone the racism and racialized environment she was living in. What do you think she meant by this? Have you seen people “retreat into whiteness?” What does that look like?
- What do you think might be specific issues that families of color living in small rural, majority white communities might experience?
- How do you talk about skin color to your children or the children in your care? Is it a positive and joyful conversation? Do you feel uncomfortable having this conversation?
- Kai and James speak about how representation matters and how the lack of representation of African Americans in their community negatively affected their daughters. What are some creative ways you can think of to empower children of color that are in majority white environments?
- How would you answer Acacia Ward’s question, “How do I empower my children to love their skin and be who they are and not belittle other people?” Do you think most parents and caregivers are successful at doing this?
- Name at least one non-judgmental person you can talk to about your experiences discussing race with your children. (This person may or may not be a family member or close friend—it must be someone nonjudgmental and accessible to have open conversations.)

Closing the Discussion

As you are closing your discussion, encourage people to share their own stories of talking about race and racism with the young children in their lives. Acknowledge key points and lessons learned during the discussion. Finally, share additional resources participants can use to continue learning.

Additional Resources

Season Four of Early Risers provides a candid and thought-provoking platform for parents to share their experiences of navigating parenthood and race. Listeners can learn from the insights and experiences of Ellen, Kai and James, and Acacia as they discuss anti-racist parenting, building confidence and self-esteem in children, and appreciating cultural heritage. To further explore these topics and gain more valuable resources on parenting and race, visit the following educational links:

From Ellen's episode:

[Teaching Tolerance](#) - A website with free resources for educators and parents to promote social justice and anti-bias education. It has a variety of articles, lesson plans, and activities that can help parents understand how to talk about race and racism with their children.

[Raising Race Conscious Children](#) - A blog that provides resources, tips, and insights on how to talk about race with young children. It offers specific advice for parents of different races and backgrounds, including white parents.

[EmbraceRace](#) - A nonprofit organization that aims to educate and support caregivers to raise children who are "thoughtful, informed, and brave about race." They offer webinars, resources, and a supportive community to help parents navigate conversations about race and racism with their children.

From Kai and James' episode:

["Talking to Children About Racial Bias"](#) is a guide created by the American Psychological Association that offers tips for how parents can talk to their children about race and racism.

[The National Black Child Development Institute](#) is an organization that provides resources and advocacy for Black children and families. Their website includes articles, resources, and events related to parenting and education.

From Acacia's episode:

[Raising Race Conscious Children](#) - This website offers resources and tools for parents on how to talk to children about race and racism. It includes articles, book recommendations, and a podcast.

[Parenting for Liberation](#) - This website offers resources and support for parents of color, including workshops, webinars, and coaching. It focuses on empowering parents to raise socially conscious and confident children.

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, 2023.

