



# early risers

Waking up to racial equity  
in early childhood.

## Discussion Guide

Season Four - parent voices episodes - released May 17, May 31, and June 14, 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 from many parents who 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 who are able to have conversations about race.

## Guest Bios

In Episode Four, we visit with Cecilia Amadou, a Ghanaian mother raising her son in the Fargo-Moorhead area of Minnesota. Cecilia shares her experiences navigating parenthood and conversations about race and racism in a community that is over 90% white. In Episode Five, Dianne talks with Ayan Omar, a Somali American mother living in St. Cloud, Minnesota, with her husband and two young daughters. As an interracial and interfaith couple, Ayan and her husband have faced unique challenges raising their children. In our final episode this season, we visit with guest Dr. Richard Lee, a distinguished professor of psychology and director of the Asian American Studies program at the University of Minnesota. Together, Dianne and Dr. Lee explore some of the parenting stories featured in Season Four of Early Risers.

## 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

- Cecilia Amadou grew up in Ghana and talks about how differences were celebrated. She did not really experience racism until she moved to America and her family tried to purchase a house in a majority white neighborhood. Do you think that experience changed the way she viewed America? What do you think it was like for her as a Black child to grow up in an environment where she was the majority?
- Cecelia talks about her fear as a parent that her son's dreams might be shattered due to race. She talks about how her husband will ask their son to move out of the way on the playground, referencing the episode with Dr. Rosemarie Allen when she mentioned a similar experience with her son. Why do you think Cecilia and Dr. Allen's husbands were asking their sons to move out of the way of white children? Have you ever noticed Black or brown children moving out of the way of white children on the playground or in other social settings? What message does this send to white children when this happens?
- When Cecilia Amadou's four-year-old son said he wanted to play tennis with "people that look like him," what do you think he meant by that? Why do you think he said that? What do you think he might be experiencing in his rural town as a four-year-old Black boy that would prompt him to say that?
- Ayan Omar says she tries to stay "one step ahead of the conversation" about race with her children. She says she does this by outlining ways her child could respond to different scenarios – a backpack full of responses. What are the scenarios you might outline for your child or the children in your care if they are white? If they are Black or brown? If they speak a language other than English?
- Ayan talks about an incident that happened when her daughter was three years old, and she was giving her a bath. Her biracial daughter tried to scrub the dark skin off her mother's hand so Ayan could look like her daughter and Ayan's husband. In hearing this story, were you surprised that her three-year-old said this? Does that sound too young to you? What prompted her daughter to want her mother's skin not to be a lighter color?
- Ellen Guettler (featured guest on March 22, 2023 episode: *White Parents Navigating Anti-Racist Parenting in Minneapolis*) talks in this episode about how she and her husband made an intentional decision to send their white children to a school where the majority of students are African American. Why do you think they made this decision? What do you think they were hoping their children would receive from attending a school in Minnesota where they are the racial minority?
- Dianne says that Ellen and her husband are giving their children a gift by giving them the experience of attending a school where they are a racial minority. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
- Dr. Lee wonders if Ellen's family is processing what her children are experiencing. When their children become adults, how do you think they will reflect on their time attending a school where they were the racial minority?
- Dr. Lee reflects on a conversation between Kai and James Miller (featured guests on April 19, 2023 episode: *Navigating Parenthood as Black Parents in a Growing Minnesota City*). They discussed moving from their small city, where their family is in the racial minority, to a place where there is more representation. Has your family ever had this conversation? Have you ever thought about

these things and not had a conversation? If you have never thought about these issues, why do you think that is?

- Dr. Lee says that when people typically experience racism we do not know how to respond because we are not taught how to respond. He says we need to practice – it is OK to get it wrong sometimes, but you need to try, and you will get better. What are ways you practice responding to racialized incidents? If this has not been a practice of yours, create a plan for how you can start.

### 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 navigating parenthood and race. Listeners can learn from the insights and experiences of the parents featured 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:

[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.

[Parenting for Liberation](#) - This online community offers resources and support for parents of color who are seeking to raise socially conscious and empowered children.

["Raising Multiracial Children"](#) by Farzana Nayani - This book offers practical guidance and advice for parents raising children with multiple racial identities, including how to navigate conversations about race, cultural identity, and discrimination.

["Mothering While Black: Boundaries and Burdens of Middle-Class Parenthood"](#) by Dawn Marie Dow - This book examines the complex lives of the African American middle class—in particular, black mothers and the strategies they use to raise their children to maintain class status while simultaneously defining and protecting their children's "authentically Black" identities. Sociologist Dawn Marie Dow shows how the frameworks typically used to research middle-class families focus on white mothers' experiences, inadequately capturing the experiences of African American middle- and upper-middle-class mothers.

"Raising White Kids: Bringing Up Children in a Racially Unjust America" by Jennifer Harvey - This book offers insights and practical advice for white parents who want to raise their children to be allies in the fight against racism.

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.



*Early Risers Discussion Guide – podcast episodes May 17, May 31, and June 14, 2023*