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Know! To Define Racial Terms for Teens

Conversations on race and racism are not necessarily easy or comfortable, but they are imperative. To have informed, constructive conversations with our children on this subject, we must first lay the foundation. We can do so by discussing some key terms with them, as shared in the previous Know! Tip. While some of the words and definitions may seem basic, it is important children (and adults) understand the differences between them. It is also necessary to catch up on some of the new, more complex terms being used, and share those with our young people as well. If you would like, take a moment now and review the previous tip, [Know! To Define Racial Terms for Teens](#), which has a glossary of terms you'll want to know.

The conversation certainly should not end with definitions. It is imperative to keep talking. If you're at a loss for words, we can help. Here are some things to consider incorporating into your ongoing conversations on this topic with your children.

Tips for Your Conversation

Connect the past to the present: This may or may not require some research on your part. However, it is essential to discuss oppression of people of color in both the past and present. In addition to sharing the tragic and appalling stories of slavery and mistreatment, we must talk about some of the more current incidents that have occurred; like the nine people who were killed by a white supremacist while attending a bible study at a church in South Carolina, or the recent death of a young, innocent man named [Elijah McClain](#) due to police brutality in Colorado.

Help them understand perspective: Perspective is the way an individual looks at or views a situation or occurrence. Two people can have completely different viewpoints or perspectives depending on their racial background and other aspects of their identity, their peers, their family, and life experiences. Specifically, when it comes to racial matters, a person of color and a white person may (or may not) view the same situation in a different light. Keep in mind that within racial groups, there will also be different perspectives.

Teach them to think critically about media: We are talking about all types of media—television, newspapers, magazines, radio, social media, and more. Help children to think critically, to question what they are reading, hearing, and seeing. Encourage them to reflect on an article or interview by answering questions like:

- How do I know what I know?
- What is the perspective of the person writing or speaking?
- What influences their point of view?
- What are their biases?
- What don't I see?

Encourage empathy: Empathy is connecting with another person's pain and trying to understand how they feel. You can encourage empathy in your child by providing them with examples of people most impacted by racism through in-person interviews, videos, photos, and other recordings. Look and listen for how your child responds. Urge them to express their range of emotions while focusing on the feelings of others.

Inspire hope and activism: Uncovering bias, discrimination and injustice can leave our children feeling overwhelmed and hopeless. With all that is happening regarding race and racism currently, there are ample opportunities to get inspired and take action to show support for people of color and to stand up for racial justice. Seek out those opportunities with your child and consider taking part together as a family.

Just as you would with any conversation with your child, remember to ask open-ended questions to deepen the conversation, be mindful not to judge or overreact to their responses, listen carefully to what your child has to say, ask what else they want to know more about, and research it together.

Sources

[Anti-Defamation League, Table Talk: Family Conversations about Current Events.](#)
[Anti-Defamation League, Race Talk: Engaging Young People in Conversations about Race and Racism.](#)

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