

# PREVENTING AND RESPONDING TO PREJUDICE AND RACISM

Tips to help guide parents & navigate difficult conversations

## THE ELEMENTARY AND PRETEEN YEARS (AGES 6–12)

### MODEL IT

Talking to your child about the importance of embracing difference and treating others with respect is essential, but it's not enough. Your actions, both subtle and overt, are what she will emulate.

Rather than teaching children that we are all the same, acknowledge the many ways people are different, and emphasize some of the positive aspects of our differences — language diversity and various music and cooking styles, for example. Likewise, be honest about instances, historical and current, when people have been mistreated because of their differences. Encourage your child to talk about what makes him different, and discuss ways that may have helped or hurt him at times. After that, finding similarities becomes even more powerful, creating a sense of common ground.

### ACKNOWLEDGE DIFFERENCE

### CHALLENGE INTOLERANCE

If your child says or does something indicating bias or prejudice, don't meet the action with silence. Silence indicates acceptance, and a simple command — “Don't say that” — is not enough. First try to find the root of the action or comment: “What made you say that about Sam?” Then, explain why the action or comment was unacceptable.

### SEIZE TEACHABLE MOMENTS

Look for everyday activities that can serve as spring-boards for discussion. School-age children respond better to lessons that involve real-life examples than to artificial or staged discussions about issues. For example, if you're watching TV together, talk about why certain groups often are portrayed in stereotypical roles.

### EMPHASIZE THE POSITIVE

Just as you should challenge your child's actions if they indicate bias or prejudice, it's important to praise him for behavior that shows respect and empathy for others. Catch your child treating people kindly, let her know you noticed, and discuss why it's a desirable behavior

