



TAPESTRY
ONLINE LEARNING
JOURNAL



The Black
Nursery Manager

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO

ANTI-RACISM

This free document has been created to support childminders, nurseries and schools in having necessary conversations about racism.

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WHAT IS RACE?

The idea of "race" is very complex and is much more detailed than anything that I can present here but it is important to note that it was partly informed by a Swedish botanist named Carl Linnaeus. In 1758 he categorised humans into four main types as being from the Americas, Africa, Asia and Europe and that if a human came from these places they could be identified as being red, black, yellow or white. As time developed these categorisations were ordered hierarchically and supported by "science" during a period called the Enlightenment which stated that Europeans were at the top of that hierarchy and that Africans were at the bottom.

WHAT IS RACISM?

Racism is not just about harmful and offensive language used to dehumanise, discriminate, oppress and marginalise people of the Global Majority (Campbell-Stephens, 2003) but it is also about the subtle and explicit ways that prejudice plus social and institutional power is used to normalise this behaviour.

WHAT IS ANTI-RACIST PRACTICE IN EDUCATION?

Anti-racist practice in education is about making consistent, intentional and conscious choices to challenge racism and disrupt the many ways that it shows up in our practice and its presence within the systems and structures of the education sector.

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EXAMPLES OF ANTI-RACIST PRACTICE

Challenging all-white expert panels

We know that neither the sector nor our society in the UK is made up of solely white people. We should always strive to ensure that racial equity is sought in a variety of ways. One way is having a balanced representation of people with different racialised identities on education panels or at education events. This is important for two main reasons:

1. It disrupts the normalising of only white people being represented as being worthy of having a voice.
2. It provides an important mirror of the type of society that we should be valuing within the UK and within the education sector.

Talking about race

The fear around talking about race is often used as an excuse to not talk about race at all. This is a way of prioritising the comfort of white people instead of prioritising the feelings of those who would be on the receiving end of racism. This is dangerous and not helpful for any children or adults as it positions it as a taboo subject. By ignoring race whilst openly discussing with children other protected characteristics such as disability or sex, it transmits a message that race is a bad thing. For example, if a child asks a question about why their skin colour is different to that of another child's, it is important to be equipped to be able to communicate this in a positive and meaningful way that is age, stage and ability appropriate which is not rooted in shame, guilt or embarrassment.

Challenging disparaging comments

No child is born racist, but sadly we do know that some children are raised in households where racist language or racist views are shared. Children absorb these messages and may repeat what they have heard at home in nursery / school. If you hear children make disparaging comments about others or even their own skin colours, cultures, heritages or languages you have a duty of care as a matter of safeguarding, to ensure that this is challenged. It is important to log such incidents as you would any safeguarding matter and then discuss this with the children's parent(s) or carer(s). All Black, Brown, East or Southeast Asian, South Asian and Mixed heritage children should feel emotionally safe and free from the trauma of racism.

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WHITE PRIVILEGE

It is unfortunate that we live in an unequal society that means that we all sit on a spectrum of privilege and oppression based on a wide range of things and how these things may intersect or overlap. For example, we know that because of sexism men are treated differently to women and are often paid more for similar jobs in the UK. Other markers of where we sit on the scale of privilege and oppression could include how much money we have, our gender, our religion, our race, whether we are disabled or able-bodied, our mental health or sexual orientation. White privilege does not mean that you will have never faced any form of discrimination or prejudice, but it does mean that one of the reasons that you won't have faced discrimination or prejudice is because of the colour of your skin. In a society that has racism baked into it, the ways in which racism shows up may not always be obvious to you because if you are white, you may have just always thought of particular things as normal. For example, the entire team of staff at your child's nursery being all white yet the majority of the children who attend being of South Asian heritage.

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IMPACT OVER INTENTION

There might be a time that a person may say that they did not mean to be racist or that it was a joke. It is important to remember that this does not erase the harm to the person on the receiving end just because they said they didn't mean it. If somebody accidentally spilt a hot drink on you, the intention when they made the drink would not have been to spill it on you, but the impact of being burned if they spill it on you will still occur.

We have to be more conscious of not using intention as a way of minimising accountability for racism. The feelings of the person impacted by racism must always be prioritised over the person who "didn't mean to be racist".

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THE 4 E'S OF ANTI-RACIST PRACTICE

The 4 E's of anti-racist practice is a framework that I believe all educators should adopt as a starting point to help them think about how they consider anti-racist practice with intention.



The 4E's of Anti-racist practice

Embrace all children's racial, cultural and religious backgrounds, especially when they differ from your own.

Embed a culture of belonging and value amongst practitioners and children.

Ensure that your practice is culturally sensitive and places the child as the expert of their cultural, racial and religious identity.

Extend learning opportunities for the child by showing interest, expanding conversations and using diverse resources.



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GLOSSARY

As with all language, the language that we use in dialogue about race and anti-racism is always evolving and changing so be aware that an exhaustive list is not realistic. Positioning anti-racist practice as an ongoing lifelong journey means that you are an active participant and not a passive recipient, so the responsibility is yours to update your knowledge in this subject matter. As a starting point there are a few key terms that you can find listed here linked from <https://www.theantiracisteducator.com/glossary> which educators will find helpful; but also consider reframing the question “what can I say / not say?” to “how will I respond if I am corrected?”.

FURTHER READING

- Young Children and Racial Justice by Jane Lane
- Wish We Knew What to Say by Pragya Agarwal
- Raising Antiracist Children by Britt Hawthorne
- Creating an Anti-Racist Culture in the Early Years: An Essential Guide for Practitioners by Sandra Smidt
- Educational Leadership and the Global Majority, Decolonising Narratives by Rosemary M. Campbell-Stephens
- I Heard What You Said by Jeffrey Boakye