

RAISING A BRAVE GENERATION

embracerace

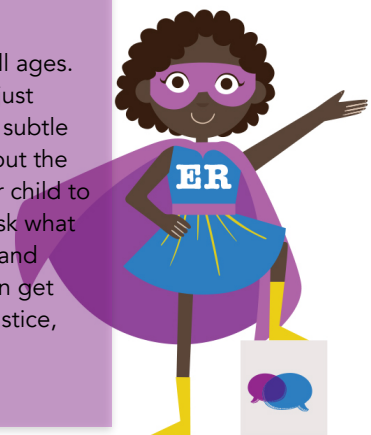
5 Ways Your Child can Enjoy Some Benefits of Diversity Even if you Live in a Racially Isolated Community

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#1

Read books featuring a racially diverse set of characters – and talk about the content

We now have many books that feature various kinds of diversity for children of all ages. The *EmbraceRace* site includes many [book lists](#) with good selections. However, just reading the books is not enough, because often the intended messages are too subtle for children to fully process. Ask your child about the characters in the book, about the experiences of these characters, and what he or she thinks about them. Ask your child to imagine being part of the story, being friends with characters in the book, and ask what he or she might do in some of the situations presented. Whenever stereotypes and biased portrayals occur, discuss these representations with your child. As children get older, they will be able to branch into topics related to social justice and racial justice, both at an individual and a societal level.



#2

Select racially diverse videos and TV programs - and discuss the content

Despite the changing demographics in this country, our television programming remains predominantly white. However, you can still find programs containing quality content and diverse casts. Thoroughly screen these programs before recommending them to your child. Look for programs with more than one or two characters of color, and positive portrayals of minorities. As with books, be sure to discuss any stereotypical and biased representations with your child. Doing so not only helps your child develop media literacy, it also helps create awareness of the experiences of cultural minorities.

#3

Seek out pen pals or use social media as a way for your child to connect with people of different racial and cultural backgrounds

Pen pal networks and social media allow us to reach out and connect with people from all over the world – and possibly even practice foreign language skills. In our technology infused society, many children and young adults have close and meaningful friendships with people they have never met in person. Exchanging letters with pen pals enables your child to practice writing skills, and getting a real letter in the mail is kind of a big deal these days. As a parent, it is of course important that you screen potential pen pals and social media friends to make sure they are appropriate. Reputable pen pal groups include PenPal World and International PenFriends.



#4

Attend events in other areas or neighborhoods

Even if your own neighborhood and immediate area is racially homogenous, there may be areas in other parts of the city, or neighboring cities, that are more diverse. See if they have events and activities of interest for your family (museums, festivals, recreation facilities, holiday celebrations, sporting events, etc.) and consider attending those. At the very least this will give your child visual exposure to people of different backgrounds. You and your child may end up meeting new people and creating new friendships along the way. Importantly, you also will be modeling interest and respectful engagement with these activities, events, and communities for your child.

#5

Encourage candid discussions about race and race-related topics

Do not wait until your children start asking race-related questions to engage them in these conversations. Whether they bring it up with you explicitly or not, from an early age children form ideas about race, and they notice that many people are uncomfortable with the topic. The silence around race and racism leaves children to believe it is a topic that must be avoided. Using any of the resources mentioned above as springboards, introduce race and culture into conversations with your child about life and events in general (school, news, daily events). Be open to your child's comments and questions and respond to them in the best way you can, knowing that sometimes you will have to think about the question for a while or do some research before answering. Once they get used to these conversations, they will likely start asking questions, and you will be able to have substantial, meaningful conversations with them.