

TEACH *a caregiver's guide to prejudice and discrimination*

TALK ABOUT PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION WITH YOUR CHILDREN

Acknowledge that prejudice and discrimination are real issues in our lives and open the lines of communication with your children. This is not always easy to do, but it is important for them to know that you want to work together to learn how to understand and combat these problems. If you are apprehensive or unsure of how to start a conversation, find a book to read together and discuss. You can also start by sharing stories from your own life and encouraging your children to share their personal experiences as well.

Talk about examples of prejudice and discrimination in the news, in the mass media, at school or in your neighborhood. Be honest and open in your discussions. If you are unable to provide answers to questions your children have admit it, and help them find the answers they need at the library or another resource center. Visit our website, www.kidsbridgemuseum.org for additional helpful information. The more you talk about these issues, the more comfortable you and your children will become in discussing them on a regular basis. This is the first step in helping your children respond to prejudice and discrimination in their daily lives.

EMPOWER CHILDREN TO AFFECT CHANGE

Let children know that unjust things can be changed and that they can make a difference. Talk about our country's history as well as relevant current events. Help children see that they can stand up to intolerance and openly question prejudice and discrimination when they experience or witness it. Encourage them to interrupt prejudiced jokes and remarks, to point out stereotypes, and to confront and oppose biased actions. Discuss other ways that they feel they can make a difference.

ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY

In order to raise a tolerant child, you must model tolerant behavior. Children watch adults in their lives for cues on the appropriate way to act and react to different situations and people. Become aware of your own prejudices, confront them and try to overcome them. Then consciously show your child how to treat others fairly based on who they are not how they look or where they come from.

Provide opportunities for your children to interact with others with different backgrounds and abilities – often the best way to foster understanding is through exposure. If these opportunities are not available in your neighborhood, look for them at community centers, museums and cultural events that include and reflect diversity.

CHALLENGE STEREOTYPES

Teach your children to recognize and question stereotypes. Show them how books, greeting cards, movies, comics, newspapers and television often employ exaggerated representations of people of different races, cultures, religions and abilities. Talk about why these unfair images exist and why they are harmful. Most importantly, teach your children to refuse to accept stereotypes. By helping them resist stereotypes, you cultivate respect for others and an understanding that the images in mass media are not always true or fair.

HELP YOUR CHILD DETERMINE STRATEGIES

Children need tools to recognize and confront prejudice and discrimination in their own lives. Help your child identify strategies such as standing up for yourself and responding, walking away, or telling an adult. Discuss those that you are most comfortable advocating and that your child will be at ease using. Work together with your child to determine these strategies and encourage your child to practice using them. Help your child learn to assess a situation and explain that it is always best to walk away or tell an adult when confronted by a bully or the situation is physically threatening.