

Tips for Asian American parents and caregivers: Helping children cope with racism during COVID-19

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These tips were written for the e-book *Young, Proud, and Sung-Jee* (2020), translated into Italian by The Book Initiative. For this reason, they make specific reference to COVID-19 and anti-Asian racism. But they can also be applied to other situations of racism.

1. Know that it is never too early to have a conversation about race and racism with your child. Listen to your child and ask questions. Be attentive to what your child is sharing and use follow-up questions to see what they are hearing, seeing, and feeling.
2. Use developmentally appropriate language to make abstract concepts like racism concrete. For example, preschoolers understand the concept of fairness pretty well. Try describing racism as one group being treated better or worse than another group based on race. You can add that unfair rules, ideas, and behaviors stemming from racism need to be corrected so that everyone is treated fairly.
3. Be proactive, instead of reactive, in talking about racism. Be honest and open with your child. This allows your child to build trust in you and feel secure about coming to you with their concerns and questions.
4. Know that when things about COVID-19 are unsaid, children may fill in the gaps with their own interpretations, which may not always be accurate. Directly share important facts with your child that can help decrease stigma. For example, share that Asians are no more likely than other race groups to catch and spread COVID-19.
5. Describe your child's emotions to help them label what they are feeling inside. For example, you can try saying, "It sounds like you're feeling really sad about what happened to you today."
6. Help your child develop a positive ethnic-racial identity by teaching them about the culture, history, and heritage of their ethnicity and help them feel proud about belonging to their ethnic group. Positive ethnic-racial identity can help buffer against the effects of discrimination. Ethnic-racial identity in Asian American children has been linked with lower levels of behavior problems and depressive symptoms and higher levels of happiness and self-esteem.

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7. Use the Acknowledge, Validate, and Reframe strategy to talk about COVID-19 related discrimination. Acknowledge what happened, Validate your child's feelings, and Reframe the event to prevent your child's internalization of incorrect messages. If you are in the USA, consider reporting the discriminatory incident to Stop AAPI Hate. If you are in Italy, consider reporting the discriminatory incident to Cronache di Ordinario Razzismo (<http://www.cronachediordinariorazzismo.org>)
8. Teach your child to Use Your WITS strategy when faced with COVID-19 related discrimination. This involves Walking away, Ignoring the perpetrator, Talking it out (if it is safe to do so), and Seeking help and support.
9. Be a role model for your child. For example, avoid stereotyping and making generalizations about people groups. Instead, talk about the individual and what they each did. Recognize differences, including skin color, and celebrate diversity while also acknowledging things that are common amongst people.
10. Support your child to do things that will make them feel good and strong. Create ample opportunities for your child to play and relax.