

**HELPING BLACK
CHILDREN AND
PARENTS COPE WITH
RACE RELATED
TRAUMA**

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THE FACTS



Over 90% of Black report experiencing at least 1 incidence of racism in their lifetimes (Gibbons, Gerrard, Cleveland, Wills, & Brody, 2004; Seaton, Caldwell, Sellers, & Jackson, 2008)



Critical Race Theory: Race and racism are the foundational elements of social structures and systems in American society (Landor et al., 2013; Bonilla-Silva, 2003; Delgado, 1995)


Childhood Trauma

An event that a child finds overwhelmingly distressing or emotionally painful, often resulting in lasting mental and physical effects.

2x
more likely to
develop
DEPRESSION

3x
more likely to
develop
**ANXIETY
DISORDERS**

Common causes:

 Child abuse (physical, emotional, sexual)

Grief



Witness/victim
of violence



War/Terrorism



Neglect

Medical
trauma



Substance misuse



Mental illness



Bullying in school

Separation
from loved ones



LONG-TERM IMPACTS:

Affects perception of reality



Wires brain to expect danger

Triggers fight, fright or freeze response



Creates relationship problems



Takes away sense of safety

Increases stress hormones flowing
through the body



Creates a sense of helplessness

Results in serious behaviour
problems



“The initial trauma of a young child may go underground but it will return to haunt us”
James Garbarino

**PREFRONTAL
CORTEX (PFC)**

"Thinking Centre"

Underactivated

Difficulties concentrating
& learning.

A traumatised
brain is
"bottom
heavy"

**ANTERIOR
CINGULATE
CORTEX (ACC)**

"Emotion Regulation Centre"

Underactivated

Difficulties with managing
emotions.

AMYGDALA
"Fear Centre"

Overactivated

Difficulty feeling safe,
calming down, sleeping

**Complex Trauma: a
result of repetitive,
prolonged trauma**



“ ONE STUDY OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND PSYCHOPATHOLOGY... FOUND THAT AFRICAN AMERICANS EXPERIENCED SIGNIFICANTLY MORE INSTANCES OF DISCRIMINATION THAN EITHER ASIAN OR HISPANIC AMERICANS THOSE AFRICAN AMERICANS WHO EXPERIENCED THE MOST RACISM WERE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE LIKELY TO EXPERIENCE SYMPTOMS OF PTSD AS WELL. ”

(Chao, Asnaani, Hofmann, 2012).

THE IMPACT OF RACISM ON BLACK ADULTS

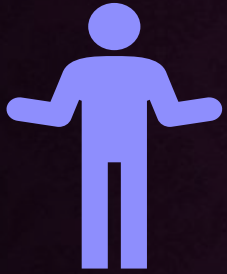
COPING EFFECTIVELY

As individuals, parents & families

RACIAL SOCIALIZATION

The process by which explicit and implicit messages are transmitted regarding the significance and meaning of race and ethnicity (Hughes, Rodriguez, Smith, Johnson, Stevenson, & Spicer, 2006; Landor et al., 2013).

RACIAL SOCIALIZATION



Unintentional

Child Observing Parent's moods and emotions while involved in interaction with someone of a different race

Messages received from the outside world about Blackness (Implicit bias, overhearing Parents conversations or the news)



Intentional

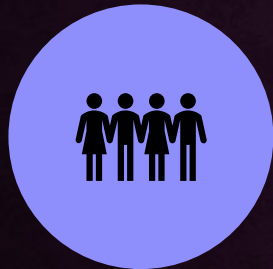
Purchasing Books with same race characters

Buying Black Art

Conversations about what it means to be Black

Conversations about self protection due to racism

RACIAL SOCIALIZATION AS A PROTECTIVE FACTOR



POSITIVE RACIAL
IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT



PROTECTIVE AGAINST
NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF
UNCONTROLLABLE
STRESS



POSITIVE ESTEEM



HISTORICAL, POLITICAL
AND CULTURAL
AWARENESS

MOST COMMON RACIAL SOCIALIZATION MESSAGES



Messages emphasizing pride in being black.



Warnings about racial inequalities.



Messages that de-emphasize the importance of race (sometimes called a “color-blind” approach)



Mistrust of other ethnic groups.



Silence about race and racial issues.

RESPONDING TO TOUGH QUESTIONS AS PARENTS

- Why do they hate us?
- If White people don't think we are as good as them, then how do we know we are as good as them?
- Will someone try to separate me from you because we have different skin color?
- Why are the police harming Black people?

AWARENESS AS PARENTS



Send positive and realistic racial socialization messages



Validate thoughts, feelings, and concerns



Establish safety plans



Be aware of your own implicit and explicit biases (i.e. colorism, over identification with the oppressor, internalized racism, elitism)



Understand your own history of racial socialization history and trauma history and how it impacts your relationship with your children.



Have frequent, short, developmentally appropriate conversations about race with your children.

MOVING FORWARD: HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH AND MANAGE STRESS

- Share developmentally appropriate and accurate information about what happened-briefly and honestly
- Understand that different children cope differently
- Listen to and acknowledge feelings
- It's okay Let children know if you don't have an answer

MOVING FORWARD: HELPING CHILDREN COPE WITH STRESS



MAINTAIN ROUTINES



HELP CHILDREN FIND POSITIVE
WAYS TO DISTRACT THEMSELVES



PREVENT OR LIMIT EXPOSURE TO
NEWS OR MEDIA COVERAGE OR
UPSETTING EVENTS

MOVING FORWARD: HELPING STUDENTS COPE WITH SEVERE STRESS



Death

Memorialize those who have been lost through letters, drawing pictures, planting a tree, sharing stories, or releasing balloons



Traumatic Events

Help others who are impacted by the trauma directly.

Remember the people involved in problem solving and de-escalating the crisis or trauma (American Red Cross workers, law enforcement, doctors, nurses, etc.)

STRESS RELIEF & SELF-CARE FOR PARENTS

- Stress Relief
 - Seek Support from Family or Community
 - Engage in activities that improve your mood
 - Music, Prayer, Meditation, Exercise
 - Rely on Spiritual Beliefs and Practices
 - Talk to other parents or individuals who have experienced working with children exposed to trauma who found ways to move forward

RESOURCES

- Natural Child Traumatic Stress Network www.nctsn.org
- Boykin, A. W., & Toms, F. D. (1985). Black child socialization: A conceptual framework. In H. P. McAdoo, & J. L. McAdoo (Eds.), (pp. 33-51). Thousand Oaks, California, U.S.: Sage Publications, Inc.
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- Gaskin, A (). Racial Socialization: Ways parents can teach their children about race. <https://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/newsletter/2015/08/racial-socialization>