
RACISM

With so many racist incidents reported in the news, it is fundamentally important that we consider what messages our children are getting at home.

If we expect them to show respect for and acceptance of the diversity within our community – then we have to ensure that our family attitudes reflect that stance.

If we are critical and disparaging about other cultures and traditions, then our children will tend to mirror those views within their own peer group.

Helping children to grow up and be respectful doesn't mean we have to accept other people's beliefs. But it does mean that we have to acknowledge their right to live in a way that is their cultural norm – provided it isn't harmful to others.

As parents, we would like to instil a sense of tolerance into our children. And one of the best ways for them to absorb that quality and to learn to embrace diversity is through the attitudes they pick up at home.

Q

My son is 12 and I overheard a conversation between him and two friends about a boy in their class who has just moved here from Africa. His friends were making very nasty comments – and I don't want him to be influenced by them. Our door is open to anyone. Should I say anything ?

A.

I suggest you come clean with your son and tell him you overheard them talking. He may be annoyed by this – but you need to discuss what was said. Ask your son's opinion of what the other boys said. He may be quite torn between his own thinking and being loyal to his friends.

This is part and parcel of children trying to negotiate friendships where there are different values and standards.

Encourage your son to hold to your family's principles. Perhaps suggest to him that he talks to these boys about how *they* would feel if someone were making remarks about them ?

