

Children are...

Adults can...

5 to 6 years

- Rule bound and thinking rigidly.
- Comparing identities.
- Using cues from society to inform what it means to be from one race or another (SES, access to, leadership, resources).
- Identifying stereotypes, real/pretend, and fair/unfair.
- Continuing to develop their sense of self & group identity.
- Internalizing oppression & privilege based on their group identities
- More likely to use verbal aggression (teasing, name-calling, etc) in conflicts.

7 to 8 years

- Seeing themselves as a member of a racial group.
- Understanding they are made up of many parts of identity (gender, race, class, etc.)
- Aware of discrimination against their own groups.
- Understanding consistency of attributes.

By 9 years

- Interested in ancestry & history
- Understanding the emotions ashamed and proud.
- Better able to take someone else's perspective.
- Understanding racism, sexism, etc.
- Solidified in their attitudes. Attitudes tend to stay constant unless the child experiences a life changing event that challenges those beliefs.

- Recognize that external cues (media, social interactions, etc.) affect self-esteem.
- Ensure all children are receiving positive messages about their identity.
- Ensure the environment reflects the child & their community.
- Address discrimination & unkind behavior immediately.
- Teach skills for resolving conflicts and recognizing similarities.
- Discuss fair/unfair behaviors & systems.
- Make clear expectations about the way your community includes diversity and model those behaviors.
- Teach children about their culture and all aspects of their identity.
- Provide accurate information about human diversity & systems of oppression.
- Make curriculum relevant to children's lived experiences.
- Support children in using their skills to take social action.

Identity and Diversity

Development through Early Childhood

Children are...

Adults can...

Infancy



18 months



2 years



3-4 years



- Attending to skin color and gender differences.
- Experiencing emotions and developing an understanding of the world.

- Recognizing themselves as unique individuals.
- Ready to develop forms of self-concept & esteem.
- Imitating play & learning from their environment.
- Experiencing & showing shame.
- Able to sort photos of *themselves* by racial/ethnic group.

- Defining themselves & others by physical appearance.
- Starting to use labels to describe people. (i.e. gender)
- Developing independence.
- Internalizing stereotypes, attitudes & biases about themselves and others.
- Showing discomfort/fear of those different than them.

- Developing a group identity. Seeking labels for identity & making their own theories about what causes difference (disability, skin color, gender).
- Not yet understanding that some attributes stay constant.
- Thinking in a way that makes them susceptible to stereotypes. They are overgeneralizing, and making false associations (one example may represent an entire group).
- Showing fear of difference through avoidance or silliness.

- Increase the diversity of the environment.
- Be responsive caregivers as babies to establish a sense of trust.
- Help develop feelings of comfort around unfamiliar physical attributes.
- Talk positively and provide positive representations of all types of diversity.
- Recognize our responses (verbal & nonverbal) influence children's beliefs about diversity.
- Answer questions openly, honestly, & simply to support children in their understanding of diversity [without information and support they may make their own distorted answers].
- Initiate conversations about diversity with all children