



Tips for Parents: Interracial Families

Racial stereotypes and discrimination persist in our society despite significant advances in equality over the last 50 years. People of minorities, and multiracial couples and children still experience ignorant comments and racist behavior—sometimes even violence.

However, as interracial families continue to expand faster than many other segments of the population, barriers are being broken down and many families are seizing an opportunity to teach their children and others about the value of diversity and respect.

Defying Tradition

Historically, biracial or multiracial children have been forced by peers and others in society to choose only one race of their heritage in which to identify themselves. Typically, it was the race of the minority parent. Children from a Caucasian mother and an African American father were pushed to identify themselves as African American regardless of their preference, the preference of their family, or even how many African American physical traits they displayed.

Today, despite many forms requiring people to choose only one race in which to belong, and stubborn adherence to the idea of “racial purity” in many areas of the country, many interracial families are finding a way to thrive—and to change the minds of people around them. Multiracial families increasingly define themselves, choose to honor all the facets of their racial identity, and honor diversity—both in them and in others.

Tips for Interracial Families

- **Identify yourselves.** All people are a combination of many identity facets: race, gender, national origin, religion, sexual preference, personality, style, their position in any given relationship, etc. You may choose not to use race as your primary identifying factor, or your family’s mixed heritage may be a great source of pride. Help children see that who they are is much more than their race and encourage them to cherish every aspect of who they are.
- **Explore and honor your family’s multiple heritages and cultures.** Celebrate holidays, foods, and customs from all of your backgrounds, and try others that interest you. If you and your partner speak different languages, speak both of them regularly in your home.
- **Educate your children about the negative comments and racial barriers they will most certainly have to face.** Acknowledge that these times can be terribly difficult and frustrating. Help your children prepare how to respond.

Encourage them to share their feelings with you. Share experiences you've had and how you dealt with them. Role play.

- **Help your children develop resilient self-esteems.** Praise their efforts, their good choices and their character traits that you love. Help them learn to value what makes them who they are so that they love themselves and can spring back more easily from adversity they will face.
- **Honor diversity in others.** Learn about other cultures and races. Study other countries together and watch travel shows and specials on PBS. Check out picture books and National Geographic from your library. Help your children learn about the diversity of the world they live in and teach them to respect those that are different from them—and to honor the things they have in common.
- Consider living in a diverse community. The lessons above may be easier for your children to learn in a place where race isn't the primary identifier of people. You'll also likely have an easier time finding multicultural events and activities, books, and other resources your family can enjoy.

For more information:

[What are the Strengths of Interracial Families?](#)
[Families made Interracial by Adoption](#)

There are a number of online support groups that may interest you. Do a search for "interracial support groups" on your favorite search engine. Remember never to give out personal identification information such as your full name, address, phone number, etc.

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