

Our Skin: A First Conversation About Race

by: Megan Madison, Jessical Ralli, & Isabel Roxas



Children show preferences for the faces of people from their own race group as early as 6 months. This book helps parents discuss skin color with their child. It asks questions that help children identify different skin colors in their environment and family. It also explains why skin comes in different colors (different levels of melanin) and encourages children to talk about why they love their skin. In the second half of the book the author makes the connection between skin color and the way that people are treated differently based on their skin color. The authors provide a kid friendly history and definition of racism as well as examples of racism that kids can relate to. In the end it encourages children to do their part to make things better.

When using this book with children between the ages of 0 and 3 you can focus on reading pages 1-8 with them. Whenever a question is asked, answer it for the child. For instance, page 9 says “What do you love about your skin?” After you read this line tell your child all of the things that you love about their skin.

One activity that you can do with young children to extend the learning from this book is to have them color a self portrait. Make sure that you have skin color crayons so that your child can draw himself/herself/themself accurately.

When reading this book with 4-5 year olds, read through the entire book pausing to give your child an opportunity to answer each question. If they cannot think of an answer, use this as a time for discussion where you tell them, for example, what you love about their skin, or what different skin tones exist in your family. As an added activity, have your child draw a self portrait. Make sure that you have skin color crayons so that your child can draw himself/herself/themself accurately.

Almost every page of this book provides an opportunity for discussion. Below are a few suggestions on how to use this book to spark a conversation with your child.

- Page 13 says, “We may use a color word to describe people, like Black and white.” Ask your child if they have heard people described in this way before? Ask your child what different colors they have heard people use to describe people.

- Page 15 and 16 discuss the different groups that people might belong to. Ask your child if they have heard of any of these groups. Discuss who each group refers to.
- After you read the definition of racism and the examples to your child, ask them if they have ever experienced any of these scenarios or seen anyone treat someone else mean because of the color of their skin. If they say yes,
- The end of the book encourages everyone to do their part to make things better. It gives some examples of what people can do to work for racial justice. Discuss these things with your child. Have you done any of the things mentioned in the book? If so, tell your child about your experiences. Work with your child to make a plan for how your family will do your part. Let them know that reading this book together is one way that you are doing your part.