

Engaging in Racial Conversations with People Close to Us – Other Adult Allies

- Begin slowly. Try not to speak out on every new piece of knowledge at once if they are not asking for more. These are our closest relationships, and we have plenty of time to facilitate a different world view for our loved ones. Jumping in too quickly might only push them away.
- Speak from the heart. Refer to recently acquired information and how it has been personally affecting you. Ask only for them to listen and to try to understand why we feel as we do.
- Demonstrate excitement. If we offer some of our new realizations with excitement and interest, we stand a better chance of getting people on board. A sudden shift into anger will likely be alienating and make our journey less appealing.
- Challenge sensitively. Using the previously described strategy of expressing our emotional reaction (“Approaches for Confronting Racism”) can be extremely helpful when we need to challenge something that has been said.
- Be humble. Becoming angry with our families and close friends for not seeing issues of race as we do is a sure way to get shut down and turn them off.
- Pick battles carefully. Some people will just not be ready to hear what we have to say. Reserve energy for moments when our efforts can make a difference. Retreat and come back in a different day, or a different year, depending on the individual.
- Plant seeds. Know that we plant seeds every time we actively address racism. We might not see immediate results, but some new epiphany may be growing in someone that will someday emerge, even if we never see the tangible results.
- Extend the invitation. Invite family and friends to join this journey with you. Give a book on racism or white privilege as a present to someone. Ask someone to watch a movie with you with a diverse cast. Invite someone to attend a culturally/racially diverse art show, musical performance, or other event with you. Ask questions and prompt conversation to see what friends and family are thinking.

My Notes