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Strength-Based, Trauma-Sensitive, Resilience-Building Communication Strategies Rooted in Positive Youth Development

CHAPTER 42

The Traumatic Impact of Racism and Discrimination on Young People and How to Talk About It

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Why This Matters

This chapter describes the pervasive negative effects of racism on youth development, as well as on their health and well-being, and the toll it exacts on families and communities who have been racially marginalized. Approaching the topic of racism may not be easy. It can generate empathy, concern, and compassion as much as it can stir defensiveness, anger, hostility, and a wide host of reactions that lie along this continuum. We each approach racism differently according to our lived experiences, self-awareness and critical consciousness, and position in our stratified society. Approaching racism requires us to bring our most compassionate and mindful selves, to suspend emotional reactivity so that we can remain open to viewing the world from the perspectives of others, and to remember that we belong to each other. This chapter, especially crucial in these times of heightened social division, invites all of us to put ourselves into other's shoes, regardless of who we are, our individual origins, or where we come from. In so doing, we may come to recognize our habits of harm, find our pillars of strength, discover the ways to heal, and come to a deeper understanding of what it means to care for one another. Because we belong to each other.

We belong to each other. Together, regardless of race and beyond race, we must want what is right for each other, aspire for better, and work for greater if we are to leave the generations of youth that will come after us a just and equitable society....

Introduction

Sadly, trauma is a universal experience that occurs in every community, in all economic strata, and within every demographic group. It does not discriminate.

Discrimination is a trauma itself, one that hurts deeply.[1] Our early recognition of trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)[2] centered on exposure to traumatic experiences and adversity primarily within the home, such as various forms of abuse and neglect and exposure to household stressors. Emerging science has established, however, that "Expanded ACEs"—stressful childhood exposures occurring outside the home, which include experiences of discrimination—exert similar negative effects on physical, emotional,

and social health throughout the life course.[3] In fact, they can have an impact even before an individual is conceived. Epigenetics has helped us understand that one's DNA may be altered depending on the stress of the parent's environment.[4]

Children and youth experience distinctly different realities because of the color of their skin. Beyond race, we are multidimensional beings whose lives reflect the intersections of our many social identities: age, gender, sexual orientation, social class, and religion, among others. The cumulative impact of discrimination, including racism, sexism, misogyny, homophobia, and religious discrimination, has significant implications for communities and is especially amplified among individuals and groups who have historically experienced discrimination.[5] A model that integrates discrimination into an overarching framework that describes the pathways through which adversity affects humanity is presented in Box 42.1.

Racism has long been a part of human history. At its extremes, this has included genocide, slavery, and the colonization of indigenous people. While we readily recognize and widely condemn overt acts of racially motivated hate today, racism continues to permeate our society. It is not only seen through personally mediated acts but also embedded into our institutions, disguised in our daily interactions, and etched into our subconscious.[6] Racism is trauma that affects all our youth, especially youth of color who have historically experienced oppression.[7] Considering the tide of nationalism, ethnocentrism, xenophobia, and overt expressions of racism of recent times, addressing racism is a critically urgent need for those of us who care for and about youth.

Throughout this chapter, we call on all, regardless of race and beyond race, to want for other, to aspire for better, and to cultivate what Ruth King defines as a *culture of care,* in which everyone is "in a relationship with humanity with a wise heart. This includes having moral character wrapped in compassion, compassion to ourselves."[8]

Key Concepts to Highlight About Teen Development and Racism in Current Times

1. Adverse Childhood Experiences Are Broader Than Initially Measured

Significant childhood adversity is associated with suboptimal outcomes across the life course. The sentinel ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) Study, published in 1998, demonstrated a graded relationship between childhood exposure to various forms of abuse, neglect, and household stressors and risk for adult health problems, including mental health conditions (substance use, depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder) and physical health conditions (ie, cardiovascular disease, autoimmune disorders, cancer, emphysema, diabetes, fractures). In a replication of the ACE Study among adults in Philadelphia, researchers found that expanded ACEs (stressful childhood exposures occurring outside the home, such as community violence, living in unsafe neighborhoods, and racial discrimination) were more commonly endorsed by respondents than the original ACEs.[3] Also, expanded ACEs were strongly associated with poor adult health outcomes.[9] Given that 14% of study respondents endorsed exposure to the expanded ACEs and not the original ACEs, focusing only on the original narrowly defined adverse experiences within the household may result in missed opportunities to prevent and intervene with youth and families exposed to toxic stress.[3] (See Chapter 36, The Impact of Trauma on Development and Well-being, for more on toxic stress.)

2. Racism Undermines Development and Well-being: Racism Is an Expanded ACE and a Social Determinant of Health

Children and adolescents are especially vulnerable to discrimination because their developmental growth depends on social interaction and support.[10,11] One of the many tasks of adolescence is to establish critical aspects of identity.[12] Identities are not formed in a vacuum but, rather, are shaped from the different spheres, influences, and exposures that surround youth as they develop. These forces can either create tension and deliver toxic levels of stress or build resilience and other strengths.[13]

Box 42.1 Trauma Has No Color, and Discrimination Is Another Trauma to Bear

Embedded within the framework are the following assumptions:

1. Suffering is tragically a theme of the human condition. It has no demographic nor color.
2. When children and adolescents suffer from exposure to trauma or from a lack of the nurturant protective force of connected adults, it may affect their bodies, brains, and behaviors.
3. In low-resource contexts, adult stress is magnified, and they must focus on basic survival issues. This may increase the prevalence of trauma-inducing circumstances and may interfere with adults having internal resources and time to fill their vital role in creating nurturant, secure relationships with their children. Therefore, we must have an intergenerational focus to get to the root of the problem.
4. Social determinants have a pervasive effect on the development, health, and well-being of young lives. Poverty is an ACE and a powerful social determinant. Classism is a group bias against those living in poverty. Once they are born into poverty, whether in urban or rural settings, it is hard to escape.
5. There are many low-resource contexts. However, because of forces of structural racism, our communities of color are more likely to suffer from inequitable distribution of resources. In other words, the likelihood of being poor is higher when you belong to these communities and is caused by biases within our systems. Historically, most of these structural forces over and over again affected the same families of color, so the effects of historical trauma need to be considered, as a risk factor and as a source of resiliency.
6. We must recognize this while simultaneously acknowledging that our communities of color are often more likely to offer children critical protective forces that come from their group identity: extended families, nurturing cultures, and neighborhood-based supports. These strengths must be recognized and magnified. Culture develops resilience and needs to be incorporated into any positive youth development model.
7. The traditional household-based ACEs of abuse, neglect, substance use, mental illness, and family breakdown exist within every community. Similarly, adversity outside of homes and embedded within low-resource communities, also called "Extended ACEs," affects communities of color disproportionally. For example, family breakdown that comes from incarceration affects every community but affects African American, Native American, and Latinx communities in astoundingly higher proportions. Thus, having an ecological lens is vital when supporting youth.
8. Regardless of exposure to other ACEs or their socioeconomic status, children and adolescents of color *all* have exposure to the trauma that comes from navigating a world with implicit biases and structural forces that perpetuate inequities. This means that while any child can be exposed to suffering, the intersectionality of the added force of discrimination and the low expectations associated with implicit biases mean that we need to be intentional about focusing our attention on these negative forces and their impact.
9. The science of trauma reveals that neural circuitry (the "brilliant amygdala") as well as endocrine milieu (eg, increased cortisol level) associated with the need to be hypervigilant leads to many of the harmful biological results associated with trauma. This strongly suggests that while explicit hatred is toxic, so, too, are the ever-present and undermining forces of implicit biases, microaggressions, and structural racism, because they force underrepresented people of color to navigate the world with a constant state of vigilance.
10. Just as we recognize the challenges that people have suffered because of trauma exposure, we must simultaneously recognize all their strengths, including their resilience. Many people who have the hardest lives also possess the deepest levels of compassion and unwavering commitment to lifting others up. We must see people as they deserve to be seen and take great care not to apply labels to them related only to the hardships they have endured. We must celebrate with them all the things that they have conquered despite these external forces and start coaching them to recognize their own experiences and relational strengths as successes.

Abbreviation: ACE, adverse childhood experience.

3. There Are Intergenerational Impacts of the Traumas Associated With Discrimination

The effects of historical trauma are intergenerationally transmitted even as the structural mechanisms that created them remain in place, creating a plurality of disadvantage for present-day generations. Children and youth inherit their family history of institutionalized disadvantage and their sequelae. The persistence of disproportionate impacts of social determinants of health on communities of color and present-day health inequities are products of the historical and ongoing experience of differential treatment.[14] Fortunately, the youth we care for today also have inherited intergenerational strengths and resilience that can be tapped to transform their long-term outcomes.

4. Today's Youth Live in an Increasingly Diverse Society

According to the Pew Research Center,[15] Generation Z (also known as the Postmillennial Generation) who represents our current 6- to 20-year-old segment of the population, is on track to be the most racially diverse generation by far. Of that segment, 48% are diverse or biracial, up from 39% in 2002. Beyond race, there is notably greater visibility of individuals from diverse ethnic, sexual, and religious groups in society. These demographic shifts present an urgent need to address discrimination and bias, especially in the face of marked inequities and disparities along the lines of marginalized social identities. We must strive to build a just, inclusive, and equitable society—one we can proudly leave to our youth.

5. Acts of Intolerance Are on the Rise

In recent years, the world has seen a substantial shift from globalization to nationalism. There has been a sharp increase in racially motivated events globally, alongside the rise of extremist political parties, movements, and groups. The United Nations has called for renewed action against contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance in the face of this troubling trend.[7]

6. Effectively Addressing Discrimination Requires Intersectional Approaches

Youth are multidimensional beings. The concept of intersectionality highlights how the experience of being a person of color is influenced by one's other social identities, such as gender, sexuality, country of origin, immigration status, or socioeconomic status. These multiple social identities are not merely additive but create intricate interactions that, under a broad range of socio-ecological influences, affect adolescents' development processes and their outcomes. To truly understand the full effect of how discrimination harms health and development, there is a need to view discrimination through an intersectional framework.[5]

Culture and Identity

Identity development is a fundamental task of adolescence, and ethnic-racial identities are key components of adolescents' social identities. Racial-ethnic identity is a multidimensional construct that encompasses identification with and feelings of psychological attachment toward a racial or ethnic group that includes the following aspects[16]:

- **Centrality.** The importance of race and ethnicity to one's self-definition.
- **Salience.** The importance of identity at a particular moment.
- **Private regard.** One's own evaluations of one's group.
- **Public regard.** One's evaluations of others' views of one's group.
- **Ideology.** The content of one's beliefs about how one should behave as a group member.

A recent national survey of youth aged 14 to 24 years through the MyVoice project, a text message polling system through which youth sound off on present-day issues, with the goal of lifting their voices and experiences, has demonstrated the profound impact of one's place in our racialized society on youth identity and development processes. For more information about the MyVoice project, see Box 42.2.

Box 42.2 The MyVoice Project

MyVoice project is a longitudinal mixed methods study designed to engage youth via text messaging on a wide variety of topics that reflect timely youth-related policy issues or health concerns. Eligible participants (14–24 years of age, with access to a phone with SMS capabilities) are recruited at community events and through social media. Youth are recruited to meet benchmarks based on the latest ACS. Interested youth are directed to a website through which they are consented online and complete an online demographic survey. A youth-centered interactive platform has been developed that automatically sends confidential weekly surveys and incentives to participants. Parental consent is not required because the survey is of minimal risk to participants. The research team, including academic researchers, methodologists, and youth, develop questions through an iterative writing and piloting process. Question topics are elicited from community organizations, researchers, and policy makers to inform salient policies. Probes are developed to be open-ended and elicit narrative responses. Weekly surveys collect quantitative data and qualitative data. Quantitative data are analyzed using descriptive statistics. Qualitative data are quickly analyzed using natural language processing and traditional qualitative methods. Mixed methods integration and analysis supports a more in-depth understanding of the research questions. In March 2019, MyVoice youth responded to a survey seeking to understand youth experiences and perspectives of racism and consisting of the following 5 probes:

1. Hi {{name}}! This week we want to hear about the role your race/ethnicity plays.
2. What do you think MOST people think about your racial/ethnic group?
3. How does how other people view your race affect you?
4. Have you experienced or witnessed racism? Tell us about it.
5. How do you think you or people your age can deal with negative experiences related to racism?

Abbreviations: ACS, American Community Survey; SMS, short message service.
Derived from Dejonckheere M, Nichols LP, Moniz MH, et al. MyVoice national text message survey of youth aged 14 to 24 years: study protocol. *JMIR Res Protocols.* 2017;6(12):e247.

In response to the question "What role does your race and ethnicity play?" teens said,

"My race/identity forms a large aspect of my identity because it influences a lot of the treatment that I receive. As a black woman here in America, there are inevitably negative connotations associated with my racial group. Whether it be violence, bruteness, or a lack of emotional connection with others. There are positive things about my racial group, but it is rarely acknowledged unless blatantly emphasized." (17-year-old black girl)

"It means a lot! I am a very proud Mexican girl, even though I am very light and pass." (14-year-old Latina girl)

"My race is white, and it does not play a large role in my life. To me, it simply means that I am naturally privileged by my race and that I don't face the challenges that those of other races face in the United States." (22-year-old white young woman)

"Race/ethnicity means a lot to me. I am half-Japanese and half-White. Throughout my life, and even currently[,] I'm trying to come to terms with my mixed identity. I've only been to Japan when I was really young and wasn't able to pick up the language, so I feel disconnected with the Japanese side of me [']cause of that." (18-year-old Asian young woman)

"My Chinese heritage means so much to me. I have a rich culture spanning thousands of years back. I am from one of the first civilizations. I am proud to be Chinese." (17-year-old Asian American girl)

"I don't always put that much emphasis on my ethnicity because I don't 'look the part.' My mom's family is Native American, but my dad is very European, so I look more white than people assume native people are. I would say I identify more with my native background because those ideals were more emphasized during my childhood[,] and my ties to my tribe will dictate where I decide to work and how I will serve that community after graduation." (16-year-old Native American teen)

"My primary identity that I associate with my ethnicity is Jewish. That is my most important identifier. My race is white, which doesn't mean much to me besides the fact that I should use the white privilege afforded to me by that to do good." (23-year-old Jewish young woman)

Throughout the chapter, we use varying terms, such as *youth of color* and *diverse youth,* to describe the population. We also choose to use the term *youth from nondominant racial-ethnic groups,* as it highlights dimensions of power and privilege and describes relative powerlessness and not racial traits. While racial-ethnic groups that were once considered minorities increasingly come to represent the majority in numbers in our increasingly diverse society, they remain marginalized in their access to social and political capital. Table 42.1 provides definitions to assist readers in developing a common language as it relates to racism. It includes the ideal we should thrive for in society—*race equity*—that one's racial identity bears no influence on how one fares in society.[17]

Race and Racism

What Is Race, After All?

Race is a social construct created to classify and categorize, to create hierarchies to ensure an unequal distribution of privilege, resources, and power in favor of the dominant racial group. It is a classification that has varied over time and has created a set of values and assumptions toward people from different groups.[6] In fact, data from the National Human Genome Research Institute reveal that while an individual may

Table 42.1. Bias and Oppression Defined

Terms	Definitions
Advocate	A person who stands up for oneself and one's identity group or a cause. Advocates work for the enactment of public policy, laws, and programs to address intentional or unintentional harm to people of color and people who have been oppressed, whether caused by action or inaction.
Ally	A person who may not be a part of an oppressed group who advocates with and for others who are discriminated against and/or oppressed
Bias	Partiality, conscious or subconscious prejudice, preference, or favoritism that results in unfairness or exclusion
Discrimination	Actions, based on bias or prejudice, that benefit or advance one group over others
Diversity	The broad array of mutual and unique qualities among individuals
Dominant culture	The cultural practices and viewpoints that are presumed to be the most significant and influential in a society
Health equity	According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, health equity is described as "Everyone has fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. This requires removing obstacles to health such as poverty, discrimination, and then consequences, including powerlessness and lack of access to good jobs with fair pay, quality education and housing, safe environments, and health care."[18]
Implicit bias	These biases are unconscious, although they result in unfavorable or favorable judgments.
Ism	A societal construct in which prejudice is accompanied by systematic power to enact it
Marginalized	Excluded, disregarded, or consigned to the perimeter of a community or society
Microaggression	Common insults and degrading and derogatory messages sent to marginalized groups by individuals external to the group (often from a majority group who may be unaware of the impact of their statements or actions)

Table 42.1. Bias and Oppression Defined (*continued*)

Terms	Definitions
Oppression	Consequences of the use of structural power and privilege. It occurs when one person or group profits at the disadvantage and expense of another. Oppression results in dominance. The systematic subjugation of one social group by a more powerful social group for the social, economic, and political benefit of the more powerful social group. Rita Hardiman and Bailey Jackson state the oppression exists when the following 4 conditions are found: 1. The oppressor group has the power to define reality for themselves and others. 2. The target groups take in and internalize the negative messages about them and end up cooperating with the oppressors (thinking and acting like them). 3. Genocide, harassment, and discrimination are systematic and institutionalized, so that the individuals are not necessary to keep it going. 4. Members of the oppressor group and the target group are socialized to play their roles as normal and correct.[19] Oppression = power + prejudice.
People of color	A group term for adults and youth of African, Asian, Latin, and Native American heritage, in contrast to the group term *white* for those of European ancestry. The term *people of color* is intended to be inclusive among nonwhite groups in the United States, highlighting the common experiences of racism.
Prejudice	A biased, usually negative judgment about an individual or group often based on stereotypes
Privilege	An advantage or benefit conferred solely because of group membership
Racism	Prejudice and discrimination based on differences in racial-ethnic identity and power, exerted by white or European descent groups against people of color. Racism involves a group having the power to enact systematic prejudice and discrimination through institutional policies and practices and by creating the cultural beliefs and values that reinforce racism.
Safe space	An environment in which all feel secure expressing themselves and engaging fully, free from fear of attack, ridicule, or exclusion
Silencing	The conscious or unconscious exclusion or inhibition of the voice or participation of particular social groups
Social justice	Actions intended to create genuine equity, fairness, and respect for everyone
Social oppression	According to Hardiman and Jackson, social oppressions "[e]xist when one social group, whether knowingly or unconsciously, exploits another group for its own benefit."[19]
Stereotype	Generalized beliefs, biased opinions, and prejudiced expectations about members of certain groups
System of oppression	Organized and systematic harassment, discrimination, exploitation, prejudice, and inequity that affect different groups
"White guilt" or "white shame"	The collective or individual guilt felt by some white people for the privilege and harm resulting from racism

have more than 3 million differences in the genome compared with someone else's, *humans share 99.9% of the same DNA.* The differences we observe (eg, skin color, eye color, hair texture, bone structure) are known as clines, which do not qualify humans to be distinguished into different biological races of people.[20,21]

Race only minimally describes biologically or genetically distinct groups and is a social and political concept, not a scientific one. To quote Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison on race: "There is no such thing as race. None. There is just a human race—scientifically, anthropologically. Racism is a construct, a social

construct…. [I]t has a social function, racism." It is critically important to understand that the societal focus on our differences has resulted in unequal access to resources, including freedom, and has over time resulted in disparate health and wellness outcomes. Now, tremendous scientific focus is on the 0.1% differences in humans in an effort to understand and improve human health; however, without equal attention to unmet needs and the impacts of the conditions under which certain populations live, the observed disparities across racial categories as socially defined will likely remain.

Racism Defined

Racism is defined as the beliefs, attitudes, and actions resulting from categorizing individuals and groups according to phenotype (physical appearance), heritage, or culture. It is a pervasive force that permeates every socio-ecological sphere and exerts negative influences in the lives of people of color. Racism creates power imbalances that can diminish social inclusion, as it "leads to incomplete citizenship, undervalued rights, undervalued recognition, and undervalued participation" and creates a culture of oppression.[6] As a corrosive and destructive force, however, racism does not only affect people of color. It affects all of us. It reduces our institutions, which were founded on the core values of justice, equity, and respect for all humanity. It negatively affects our interpersonal interactions and relationships and lessens us as a people. It creates unhealthy tensions in the environments within which all youth navigate their processes of becoming.

Levels of Racism

Racism exists on 3 levels that demonstrate how it permeates our external, interpersonal, and internal lives.[22]

Institutionalized (or structural) racism is the differential access to the goods, services, and opportunities of society by one's membership in a stigmatized group. It is structural, as well as normative; manifests as inherited disadvantage; and is embedded into our institutions. Health disparities affecting populations of color are not simply caused by genetic health differences but are systematic health inequities that are a function of the historical and present unequal distribution of social, economic, and environmental resources.

What can we do about this? Addressing institutionalized racism requires public health and population health interventions. It requires the creation of policies and processes that incorporate a **h**ealth **e**quity **a**ction **l**ens (HEAL) as delineated by the World Health Organization into all their aspects.[23,24] HEAL is a means of fulfilling the promise of health in all policies by focusing our attention to equity and catalyzing policy change. Social determinants of health are critical determinants of health. *Social determinants of health* have also been referred to as *political determinants of health,* as they are unevenly distributed through unequal policies. This unequal distribution is maintained by inequitable policies and biased processes. Policy and process solutions are central to addressing inequities in physical, emotional, social, and economic health.

Personally enacted racism encompasses 3 related but separate aspects: prejudice, or emotional bias; stereotypes, which are generalized assumptions about others according to their group membership or cognitive bias; and discrimination, or behavioral bias. Discrimination can range from subtle daily microaggressions (Table 42.2) to overt acts of hate and violence or macroaggressions. They can be intentional, or unintentional, acts of commission or omission. They can be experienced directly and/or vicariously.

Racism also manifests itself covertly as implicit bias. Implicit bias is a mechanism of discrimination that operates beneath our level of consciousness. More than 4 decades of research has demonstrated that individuals hold racial biases of which they are not aware, biases that can co-occur alongside deeply held personal commitments to equity and can result in discriminatory behaviors.[25]

Research shows that implicit bias against black, Hispanic, and dark-skinned individuals is, across race, present among many health care professionals of different specialties, levels of training, and levels of experience, and it has been shown to influence the patient experience, clinician practices such as pain management recommendations, and patient outcomes.[26] Such biases exist in every field.

What can we do about this? As people who care for and about youth, it is critical that we view racism as not just overt acts of race-based maltreatment but living invisibly in our subconscious. We must all identify, acknowledge, and manage our implicit biases. Research shows that they are malleable with attention,

Table 42.2. Examples of Racial Microaggressions

Theme	Microaggression	Message
Alien in your own land When Asian Americans and Latino Americans are assumed to be foreign-born	"Where are you from?" "Where were you born?" "You speak good English."	You are not American. You are a foreigner.
Ascription of intelligence Assigning intelligence to a person of color because of the person's race	"You are a credit to your race." "You are so articulate." Asking an Asian person to help with a math or science problem	People of color are generally not as intelligent as white people. It is unusual for someone of your race to be intelligent. All Asian people are intelligent and talented in math and/or sciences.
Color blindness Statements indicating that a white person does not want to acknowledge race	"When I look at you, I don't see color."	Denying a person of color's racial-ethnic experiences Assimilate and/or acculturate to the dominant culture.
Myth of meritocracy Statements asserting that race does not play a role in life successes	"Everyone can succeed in this society, with enough hard work."	People of color are given extra unfair benefits because of their race. People of color are lazy and/or incompetent and need to work harder.
Pathologizing cultural values and communication styles The notion that the values and communication styles of the dominant, often white, culture are ideal	Asking a black person, "Why do you have to be so loud [or animated]? Just calm down." To an Asian or Latino person, "Why are you so quiet? We want to know what you think. Be more verbal," or, "Speak up more."	Assimilate to dominant culture.

Adapted in part from University of Minnesota School of Public Health website. https://sph.umn.edu/site/docs/hewg/microaggressions.pdf. Accessed September 19, 2019, and Sue DW, Capodilupo CM, Torino GC, et al. Racial microaggressions in everyday life: implications for clinical practice. Am Psychol. 2007;62(4):271–286.

intention, and time. With unexamined implicit biases, providers in health care settings can contribute to inequities as described in the Institute of Medicine report *Unequal Treatment*.[27] The ADDRESSING tool developed by Pamela A. Hays, PhD, provides a framework to help us recognize and explore intersecting social identities and the many possible influences on identity development and the lived experiences of youth.[28] Given that implicit bias is a critical factor contributing to disparities, the framework is essential for assessments of the isms that divide society and highlights the importance of intersectional approaches.

Racism is also internalized. *Internalized racism* refers to the acceptance of members of stigmatized races of negative messages about their abilities and intrinsic worth. Internalized racism can be especially damaging and developmentally disruptive in light of adolescents' fundamental task of forming their individual and group identities and reflecting on the critical questions "Who am I?" "Am I normal?" and "How do I fit in?" It can be deeply undermining of a youth and the youth's strengths. It results in the fundamental failure to recognize and affirm one's value, strengths, and potential as an individual and member of a social group.

Internalized racism has an internal dimension.[29] The self-system model describes the erosive effects of internalized racism on individuals—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.[30] In internalized racism, self-image is negated (physical), self-concept is limited (mental), self-love is defeated (emotional), and self-esteem is corrupted (spiritual). It manifests itself in a sense of inferiority, by constantly viewing oneself as a victim and denying one's own power to transform a situation or in not taking responsibility for one's role as a perpetrator of or colluder with oppression. Additionally, focusing on doubting, questioning,

and striving for white majority acceptance leaves less time, energy, and resources for self-development. It also manifests itself in self-defeating stereotype threat—the risk of confirming negative stereotypes about one's group because of self-doubt.[31] It is a fundamental failure not to recognize and affirm one's value, strengths, and potential as an individual and member of a social group.

Internalized racism also has an interpersonal dimension.[29] Racism can negatively affect the ability of people of color to maintain healthy and fulfilling relationships with each other and members of white society. Projecting one's own sense of inferiority and inadequacy onto members of one's group, for example, results in a distrust and a lack of confidence in group member's abilities and in the lack of acceptance and support of each other's leadership. *Cross-racial hostility,* a term coined by writer Gloria Anzaldúa, is produced in a racist system when one oppressed racial group supports the oppression of another oppressed racial group by adopting, supporting, maintaining, and benefiting from the set of attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that undergird the dominating race's supremacy.[32] Cross-racial hostility is a problem people of color must recognize and address. Personally enacted discrimination is not simply a white on color phenomenon, because youth of color can also emulate the discriminatory behaviors many in their group experience. In relationships with white members of society, internalized racism can manifest as relating to them as an inferior. Conversely, it can manifest as anger, hostility, and discriminatory behaviors directed at white peers.

Within the institutional dimension of internalized racism, people of color may question or subvert their own power in white majority–controlled institutions in a number of possible ways.[29] These include assuming that white people know more about what needs to be done for their group and for society than members of their own group do, by not supporting each other's authority and power and by allowing themselves to be silenced by the system in place that rewards people of color who support the prevailing dominant order and power structure and coerces or punishes those who do not.

What can we do about this? Later in this chapter, we describe the process of racial-ethnic and political socialization through which we can support youth to develop the critical consciousness and self-awareness to understand dimensions of privilege and power, to challenge prevailing narratives, and to view themselves in the richness and fullness of their present selves and their future possibilities. Liberation from oppression proceeds from the inside out. However, we must first assist youth in critically examining and dismantling internalized racism, from which point they can address its interpersonal and institutional dimensions.

The Effects of Racism

Racism exerts profound effects on youth's identity development, lived experiences, and lifelong health.

Racism and Identity Development

The process and outcomes of racial-ethnic identity development are influenced by many forces from different spheres that surround youth, the summative effect of which can range from creating stress and internalized racism to resilience and the development of positive racial-ethnic self-concepts (see Chapter 13, Understanding and Supporting Healthy Adolescent Development, for a deeper discussion of racial-ethnic identity development).

Racism and Youth's Lived Experiences

Youth responses to the question "Have you experienced or witnessed racism?" through the MyVoice poll reflect how racism shapes the lived experiences of youth of color.

Youth experience racism directly.

> *"Yes, I have. I have heard people say derogatory phrases about Indians before. However, being dark-skinned, I am often mistaken for being black, and as such, I have been called a 'n****r.' I have also seen people walk away from me when I have my hood up and look nervous around me at times despite being a small, non-threatening, well-dressed person." (20-year-old Asian young man)*

> *"Yes, often being stereotyped[,] like assumptions that I only got into Penn State due to affirmative action." (21-year-old black young man)*

"I'm multiracial[,] so I've received racism from a lot. Black people won't accept me because I have 'white people assets' and white people won't accept me because I look black." (19-year-old black young woman)

"Yes. I have been told I am not Chinese enough and that I am too White or that I'm too Chinese." (17-year-old Asian American girl)

Youth experience racism vicariously.

"My father is black, and I have seen him experience racism." (16-year-old biracial girl)

"Yes, a black friend of mine was pulled over but [was] almost immediately pardoned after seeing a white friend in the car." (16-year-old black boy)

"Yes, I am a quarter Hispanic and my dad has had trouble in his professional life being discriminated against." (20-year-old white young woman)

Racism also shapes the lived experiences of white peers who care about youth of color.

"My teacher made fun of my Muslim friend by calling her a terrorist and saying[,] 'Look, the Arab's angry, watch out!'" (16-year-old white girl)

"Yes. My grandfather is racist and will often make remarks about how black people are 'ghetto.'" (16-year-old white girl)

"Yes, when I mentioned my girlfriend was Hispanic and told someone her name, they replied[,] 'Not that it matters, she'll be kicked out when the wall gets built anyway.'" (16-year-old white boy)

"I've witnessed racism many times, [and] just the other day[,] I was going through TSA and my Arab friend got selected for a secondary search. This happens to him almost every time they fly." (17-year-old white nonbinary teen)

Racism also negatively affects white youth directly.

"Sometimes it makes me feel a little discouraged, but I remember that my race doesn't define me—I define me." (15-year-old white girl)

"It bothers me because we didn't do anything to be white like they didn't do anything to be their race." (19-year-old white young woman)

"It makes me sad how ignorant people can be." (14-year-old white girl)

"It [racism] makes us all look bad." (22-year-old white young woman)

"It sometimes makes me feel guilty because I am often privileged in this world for an arbitrary reason[,] like the color of my skin." (23-year-old white young woman)

"It makes me feel sad about racial history." (21-year-old white young man)

And white youth can and do reflect on power and privilege.

To the MyVoice poll question "How does how other people view your race affect you?" white youth responded in ways that reflect their capacity to critically examine the constructs of power and privilege.

"It doesn't really affect me[,] except to reinforce my own belief that I do not face the challenges that people of other races face." (22-year-old white young woman)

"I think it makes me aware of what my skin color does and doesn't afford me. It also makes me consider what it's like for people of other races/ethnicities." (20-year-old white young woman)

"It affects me very little, likely due to my insulation as a member of the majority." (17-year-old white boy)

"It makes me more aware of my privilege and how [I] can use it to help others." (16-year-old white transgender boy)

"It makes me reevaluate myself and my preconceptions of other races, as well as acknowledge my privilege. It makes me more aware of the systematic oppression and daily prejudices to which I may be oblivious as a white person." (16-year-old white girl)

"It makes me challenge myself to be more open minded and expose myself to other ethnicities and cultures. I feel that I was raised with certain preconceived notions and engrained stereotypes that I have to actively fight against." (22-year-old white girl)

"It makes me feel extremely privileged, as I never worry about being persecuted by someone for being white. Don't take that as 'white guilt,' though. I used to 'feel bad' for being white, but upon evaluating how self-pitying that is, I simply take my privilege as a reason to fight against racism through policy and peaceful protest." (22-year-old white boy)

Racism and the Role of Expectations (or Lack Thereof) on Youth Development

Youth live up to—or down to—our expectations of them and their expectations of themselves. This is especially relevant in education—a social determinant that truly affects the life course and with which racial disparities in developmental and vocational outcomes are well-documented. Despite the *Brown vs Board of Education,* 347 US 483 (1954), decision, educational experiences for students of color have continued to be substantially separate and unequal. Two-thirds of black and Latinx students still attend segregated schools, most located in central cities and funded well below those in neighboring suburban districts.[33] Significant differences have been demonstrated between these schools on measures of class size, teacher qualifications, and the availability of instructional resources.[34] In these schools, youth of color are subject to biased perceptions of misbehavior by educators and stories that perpetuate a "failure narrative,"[35] one suggesting these youth need social-emotional learning skills more than other children and that they would be better off if they would just learn to relate to people better, manage themselves more effectively, have more self-control, and be calmer. The narrative of low expectation continues to affect youth who, despite their successes, hold an imposter syndrome—a pattern of behavior of people doubting their accomplishments, as well as attributing their successes to luck rather than their talent or qualifications, and so they have a persistent, often internalized fear of being exposed as frauds.[36]

Newer research describes how youth's perceptions of the systems that surround them as fair or not influences their development,[37,38] specifically the impact on self-esteem, internalizing behavior, deviant behavior, classroom behavior regulation, and perceived discrimination. Predicting that early system-justifying beliefs would be related to poorer developmental outcomes, researchers found their predictions to be partially accurate: In sixth grade, believing that the system was fair was protective for all study variables. However, youth who justified the system as fair had stronger declines in self-esteem and classroom behavioral regulation and a much more significant increase in deviant behavior across sixth, seventh, and eighth grades. This makes sense, as their ongoing cognitive development provides youth the ability to examine abstract social structures and systems. As youth concurrently develop their racial-ethnic identities, they come to understand that they belong to groups "left behind" by the system they previously justified and believed as fair. When youth defend unfair systems, they tend to internalize negative stereotypes and act out in increasingly deviant ways to fit the stereotypes that they perceive others hold of them. *In other words, if youth perceive an unfair system as fair, they are left to see themselves as the problem.* Later in this chapter, we explore the process of racial and political socialization and how parents can prepare youth of color for success by acknowledging inequalities in society.

How do we counteract these adverse influences and positively influence outcomes? We must work hard at the individual level to promote a growth mind-set. This mind-set helps children and youth to learn how to learn, to accept mistakes as part of learning, and to create individual resilience. This is particularly critical in the context of poverty and economic insecurity; a growth mind-set can help transcend prevailing conditions and is anchored in hope, ability, and possibility.[34] To help youth who have been racialized succeed, we must add critical thinking around political socialization with *all* youth. Political socialization creates awareness of how power and privilege are forces used in our society to create advantages for some groups while leaving others behind. We need to open conversations about implicit biases in education and how the system is not really the meritocracy it claims to be and provide youth with the hope and skills to navigate their educational environments, while we all work at the system level to assure equity in outcomes. Our expectations influence the life trajectories of youth. We must hold the highest of expectations of our youth, build their confidence and strengths, trust in their abilities and inner strengths, and affirm their rights to live up to the fullness of their potential. This is not only true of racially diverse youth but true of all youth with marginalized and intersecting social identities.

Integrating Trauma-Sensitive Care, Health Equity, and Positive Youth Development

Trauma-sensitive care, health equity, and positive youth development share core values and principles that are interrelated and complementary. Together, they inform promising practices and interventions that can guide us in effectively supporting and responding to youth affected by racism. They are fundamentally strength based; emphasize creating safe spaces and fostering trust; elevate youth voice, autonomy, and choice; and foster a participatory culture in which youth own the solutions. They stress the importance of viewing trauma from a historical perspective and the need for intergenerational approaches in seeking solutions for healing.

Partnering With Parents and Other Caregivers

Racial-ethnic socialization is the process by which society transmits messages to children, youth, and their families about the significance of their race and ethnicity and associated values and norms.[39] It shapes the meaning children and youth ascribe to their group membership, their expectations about experiences they may have as group members, their knowledge of the history and values associated with being a group member, their sense of group belonging and pride, and their beliefs about how others view and treat various groups. Racial-ethnic socialization is a strategy for raising healthy children and youth in a society in which being a person of color often has negative connotations.

In conceptual and empirical work, researchers have focused primarily on the role that parents play in their children's racial-ethnic socialization.[40] A conceptualization of racial socialization messages distinguishes 4 general categories of messages[39]:

- **Cultural socialization.** Messages that promote ethnic pride and transmit knowledge about cultural history and heritage.
- **Preparation for bias.** Messages intended to prepare children and youth to adapt to and operate within a racialized world, including exposure to prejudice and discrimination. They prepare youth for experiences of racial discrimination and provide strategies for coping.
- **Egalitarianism.** Messages emphasizing diversity and interracial equality.
- **Promotion of mistrust.** Messages about the potential for discrimination and to be wary of interracial interactions. These are distinct from preparation for bias in that they include no messages about coping strategies.

With this differentiation, researchers acknowledge that parents vary in what they choose to teach their children about race and ethnicity. Some parents teach group differences, discrimination, and disadvantage; others teach history, culture, and traditions; others emphasize the value of diversity and egalitarian

perspectives; still others do some combination or all of these. Importantly, children and youth are not passive recipients of such messages. Instead, they initiate and select the messages they internalize.[41]

A growing number of studies have examined the consequences of parents' racial-ethnic socialization messages for youth. Socialization messages related to cultural pride and preparation for bias relate most consistently to youth outcomes. Cultural socialization has consistently been associated with more favorable adjustment, including higher self-esteem,[42,43] higher academic engagement and performance,[44] fewer behavioral problems,[45] and fewer depressive symptoms.[46,47] Strategies that provide youth of color with modeling, messages, and environments that emphasize racial-ethnic pride and promote learning about one's heritage offer the most powerful aspect of racial socialization as a protective factor. A well-developed racial-ethnic identity may help targeted youth distinguish between actions directed at them as individuals and those directed at them as a member of their group. This can protect targeted youth from injuries to self-esteem or distress when they are exposed to negative events that may be a function of racial-ethnic discrimination rather than their individual characteristics. A sense of ethnic community connection and belonging can serve to ameliorate some of the pain of ostracism from other groups. Specific racial socialization messages can provide youth with the opportunity to consider possible approaches to discrimination and can serve to expedite the implementation of coping responses. Assessing and promoting the development of positive self-concepts is an important aspect of our work with youth.

In addition, while parents stress the importance of personal effort and responsibility, they recognize that this does not necessarily translate to success because of oppressive social forces. Parents are intentional in this effort, recognizing that their youth constantly receive messages of a color-blind meritocracy in which the ability to succeed is portrayed as linked only to their effort. Parents value and promote effort but caution their youth that such is not always enough in a society marked by inequity. They equip their children and youth with the critical consciousness that enables them to identify and analyze dimensions of power and authority, to effectively resist against the internalization of undermining messages, and to remain resilient in the face of barriers imposed by society.

Opening the Dialogue With Youth: Breaking the Ice

In the various roles we each play in the lives of youth, we can create spaces to explore with youth the influence of their racial-ethnic group membership and other social identities on their identity development processes and lived experiences, to assess coping, and to integrate promising interventions to address racism as part of an overall strategy to promote positive self-concepts, adaptive coping, and positive development. It is vital that we bring these crucial conversations to the many different spaces in which we reach youth. Some teens may not see the relevance of talking with us about racism. Doing so, however, allows us to raise its importance, model conversations, and promote reflection. The youth we care for and interact with have varying opportunities to have these conversations at home or with other caring adults. We can foster these conversations with youth and explore and celebrate with youth their racial-ethnic and intersecting identities.

As we engage youth in these conversations, we should refrain from assumptions of negative experiences and detrimental influences and instead in an open-ended way explore these constructs with youth while maintaining a keen focus on strengths, coping, and resilience.[48] It is also critically important that we guard against imposing our worldview and maintain appropriate boundaries, especially if we might ourselves hold marginalized social identities, have navigated our individual development processes, and have our own set of lived experiences. These conversations can and should be had by any person, of any background, as long as engaged in with a deeply respectful stance that recognizes young people as the experts in their own lives. Young people need people who they know have had a shared experience *and* they need allies. And allies are extremely powerful, as they role model how an equitable society should work and give hope a real dimension. However, as we describe in our first paragraph, sometimes people need to go through a process of self-reflection before they are prepared to most productively hold these conversations with youth. Many people find implicit bias training coupled with reflection on power and privilege a helpful starting point. See the Related Resources section in the online version. And for more information, go to Chapter 29, Examining Our Unconscious Biases.

Exploring Identities and Their Meaning

Youth come from a wide variety of backgrounds, which influence their individual identity development processes, lived experiences, and perspectives. We must begin with a genuine desire to get to know youth, especially as it pertains to their identities and lived experiences, one youth at a time. It is important to begin by allowing youth to describe dimensions of their identity that are salient to them and their associated meanings.[49] It is also essential that as caring adults, we not only screen for negative influences of social forces on youth's self-concept but recognize resilience in which self-concepts are positively intact. Begin with exploring how youth see themselves in this complex world.

> *…I am always eager to learn more about young people. How they define who they are…racially, sexually, spiritually…. What their identities mean to them, as well as their experiences being who they are…. Tell me about yourself….*[48]

> *…What are some of the messages you have received about the identities that you consider to define you?*

> *…How do you view yourself in comparison with the messages you have received?*

> *…What do you consider some of the positive things about being [identity]?*

> *…Is there anything you consider negative about being [identity]?*

> *…Working with youth immigrant families, I have come to appreciate that youth sometimes view and define themselves differently than their parents or other family members do. How is it for you?*

> *…How do you balance your family's racial-ethnic identity with yours? Does that create tension?*

> *…What do you think your parents want you to appreciate the most about your community? What do you appreciate the most?*

Another strategy to open conversations about race before going into exploring youth's self-identification is to start conversations with less direct questions, such as

> *How diverse or segregated do you think the students are at your school? How diverse is your social group? Do teachers ever talk about race?*

Broader questions, such as "How do you think the color of a person's skin influences how the person sees and experiences the world?" can also help us understand youth's views on race in general and their racial-ethnic group membership in particular.

Current events and trending issues on social media that are familiar to teens can also serve as starting points for conversations that explore youth's identities, perspectives, values, and reactions.

Exploring Experiences of Discrimination and Bias (Particularly When Youth Do Not Bring the Issue to the Conversation)

> *What are some of the experiences you have had related to being who you are?*

> *These are the years when you figure out who you are at so many levels—culturally, vocationally, politically, sexually, religiously. Have you had any trouble in any of these areas? Have you ever been discriminated against around these issues?*

> *What are some of the experiences you have had related to your identity? You being who you are?*

> *Do issues related to race and racism ever show up in your school? How? How have they been handled?*[50]

> *Are race and racism ever issues in your interactions with your peers or adults? How? How have they been handled?*

Do you feel that other people know and understand your race or culture? Do you talk about race or culture with your friends?

What is your earliest experience dealing with race or racism?

Responding to Youth Experiences of Racism

Recent practice recommendations, especially from the counseling psychology literature,[51] provide guidance on how we respond to youth experiences of racism. They represent strategies that we can apply in encounters with youth and adapt according to their cognitive, emotional, and developmental characteristics. These evidence-informed strategies include different areas.[51]

- Validation (eg, normalizing and validating racism experiences)
- Psychoeducation (eg, teaching culturally responsive coping strategies)
- Self-awareness and critical consciousness (eg, understanding the intersection of race and other historically marginalized identities)
- Culturally responsive social support (Encourage the development of and connection to ethnic community and allies.)
- Developing positive identity (eg, exploring strengths and opportunities associated with multiracial experiences)
- Externalizing and minimalizing self-blame (eg, minimizing internalization of negative race-based messages)
- Critical examination of privilege and power and of racial attitudes
- Advocacy and agency

Validation (eg, Normalizing and Validating Racism Experiences)

- Validate their feelings and emotional responses to such experiences.

  Hey, I know that it hurts [or bothers or concerns] you [reflect here how they have shared with you how they feel about this]; *it is real.*

  I appreciate you sharing how that felt for you. It hurts. I find it difficult to even hear about it, let alone experience it.

- Allow them to name the situation (help them define issues if they don't know the names).

  Discrimination hurts. Sexism hurts. Racism hurts. It's real. But we have ways to shield ourselves a bit from that pain, to build strengths from pain, to grow from pain. Sometimes, people lift themselves up by putting others around them down. What matters most is that you are undiminished and no less despite this experience. This is the moment to reaffirm who you are and to recall all the strengths that come from your culture.

- This is the place to talk about how group identity common to communities of color can provide a powerful protective sense of belonging and connectedness.

Psychoeducation (eg, Teaching Culturally Responsive Coping Strategies)

How Do Youth Cope With Racism?

It is important to recognize youth may need to use different types of coping at different points in time: in anticipation of potential exposure, at the time of exposure, following exposure, and when dealing with persistent or recurring exposure. A variety of coping strategies may be needed at each point.[52] Consequently, one of the most pressing challenges facing youth of color is the need to develop a broad range of coping responses to permit them to respond to different types of situations with appropriate and effective strategies, to adjust their responses depending on factors that might influence the effectiveness of

any coping strategy, and to possibly deploy them as needed over prolonged periods of time. Youth need to develop the cognitive flexibility, called *coping flexibility,* to implement an appropriate and effective strategy in each of the wide range of situations.[53] The perception that one's coping capacity is not adequate to meet the demands increases the likelihood that race, and ethnicity-related maltreatment, will be experienced as a chronic stressor. As mentors, we need to remind youth that coping is a lifelong endeavor and that we each need to develop approaches and strategies for self-preservation. These strategies must allow us to assess our energy levels and decide when we can take on certain issues and when we need to pass and let it go, conserving our energy for the next time or for our need for self-care and improvement. Caring for ourselves compassionately while reminding ourselves that we are each enough is not self-indulgence or defeat. Self-preservation and care is essential for resilience and is a form of activism.

While the psychological research literature provides a variety of categories of coping responses, ultimately, what matters most is that we be fully present with youth and assess whether their coping is adaptive, effective, and enough.

How have you dealt with these experiences?

How did you respond? How did others around you respond?

How did you think and feel while this was happening or watching? How do you deal with these thoughts and feelings?

What impact did your experience have on you? What did you learn from the experience?

Did the encounter change you in some way and if so, how?

Experiences such as yours have a way of getting to young people. It can sometimes affect how you see yourself, how you think and feel, even how you relate to others. But young people also have this remarkable ability to stay above and overcome. All in all, how well would you say you are doing? If you were to give yourself a letter grade for how well you are dealing with the negativity, what letter grade would you give yourself? What letter grade would you want to have? Are there any strategies or ways that you can think may help you get there?

What has helped you deal with your experiences and stay above the negativity?

Self-awareness and Critical Consciousness (eg, Understanding the Intersection of Race and Other Historically Marginalized Identities)

- Encourage them to use narrative as a healing mechanism: telling one's story can be incredibly empowering and healing for youth. We can encourage teens to explore various means for self-expression, including
  - — Recording the stories on video
  - — Creating an illustration of the encounter
  - — Creating comics or storyboards that tell the story
  - — Illustrating the story with 5 or more selfies that convey their thoughts and feelings
  - — Creating a Snapchat story that illustrates what happened
  - — Performing portions of their story through spoken word, song, or performance art
- Prepare youth for certain encounters using concrete examples of where and how such may occur and how they can best respond depending on the context of such encounters. This allows youth to identify what is happening, recognize their emotional reactions, and deploy the appropriate coping responses instead of internalize the harm that comes from race-based maltreatment—for example, "Ah, I wonder if this is what my dad was talking about [stereotyping]!" instead of accepting a negative comment as an accurate reflection of their actions.

Culturally Responsive Social Support (Encourage the Development of and Connection to Ethnic Community and Allies)

It is important to remember that coping is influenced by several factors, including individual characteristics, context, and cultural values. The person-context fit theoretical model provides a framework for understanding how adjustment depends on the behaviors and characteristics of individuals and their context.[54,55]

Cultural values also influence what is considered positive coping. Research among Asian Americans describes how collectivistic cultural values drive the dominant interdependent cultural norms to seek connections and develop a "relational self," rather than develop an independent self that solves one's own problems.[56] Even among third-generation Asian Americans, a strong cultural prevalence of interdependence predicts low endorsement of individualistic problem-solving strategies.[57] Families of color (African American families, through their African togetherness concept; Latinx families, through their strong family orientation [called *familism*]; and Native Americans from our Indigenous Nations) tend to share a group identity unlike the individualistic lens of most Eurocentric families. What works for one group might not be as protective for other groups.

It is critical that we learn how teens are coping with experiences of discrimination, allow them to think through their processes, and create safe spaces for reflection while taking into consideration their individual racial-ethnic identity development processes.

- Brainstorm positive culturally responsive coping strategies, that is, a balance between problem-solving coping—when an individual enacts a course of behaviors to alter or directly confront the stressful event—and seeking social support coping—when an individual uses social connection to deal with stress by asking for advice or assistance from another person, often a friend or a teacher.
- Fostering positive relationships and connections starts with us! Through listening, actively and with mindful intent, and using all our senses to be fully present when youth talk about their painful experiences. In these moments, we need to use all our presence and empathy to really listen and form bonds with youth. Recognize that this may be the only safe space for youth to do so. This aspect also includes assessing youth connectedness and belonging and brokering meaningful connections if youth desire such. Affinity groups and having spaces or communities that belong to them are important to affirm youth's identity and to provide a safe space in which difference based on the social construct of race does not become a burden.

> *I want you to know that you have me. Many young people I come across also talk about the importance of community—a group of people who they can identify with, can lean on, and can turn to for support and encouragement. Do you feel that there is a community that you identify with? Remember, I am your advocate.*
>
> *How do you fit into this community? In what ways are you connected to this community? How did you develop this connection?*
>
> *Is connecting with a community something you would like?*

Developing Positive Identity (eg, Exploring Strengths and Opportunities Associated With Multiracial Experiences)

See the Culture and Identity section earlier in this chapter.

Externalizing and Minimizing Self-blame (eg, Minimizing Internalization of Negative Race-Based Messages)

Developing mindfulness is a strategy to develop youth's capacity to reflect on their feelings and to begin to deconstruct internalized racism.

> *You know how we speak to ourselves. We speak to ourselves in ways that lift ourselves up or put ourselves down. Reflect on the ways you speak to yourself. It is important that you stay alert and be watchful of the ways you speak to yourself.*

Sometimes young people may have received negative messages or may have had negative experiences about who they are from the outside and they take it as truth. My wish for you is that you make your own truth by embracing yourself and loving the unique strengths that you have.

It is important to stay alert to the messages that you say to yourself. We need to be mindful of our own self-talk and realize when we might be repeating negative messages that we have absorbed from the outside! We can do that by being present, present in the situation and present with ourselves. And by continually asking ourselves, "Where is this thought [or feeling] coming from?"

Critical Examination of Privilege and Power and of Racial Attitudes

Privilege and power. The process of examining privilege and power is called *political socialization.* Paired with critical thinking, it can lead to a more equitable society. Our task is to use understandable language that is appreciative of all and designed to create awareness.

It's important to recognize and discuss that in our society, certain forces and structures around power and authority get in the way of fairness. We need to have a critical way to think about those forces and to start seeing these issues around us. The goal is to see them so that we can celebrate and take full credit for our successes and don't blame ourselves when we can't achieve something—to work on how we can advocate for ourselves using our creativity and respect.

We should have conversations about power and privilege with all youth, regardless of their race and ethnicity, to best prepare them for critical social examination and collective action.

This critical examination can provide opportunities for white youth to understand racism and racial privilege and process their emotional reactions. They can examine what race and privilege have meant for them and begin to recognize that not having had to think about it previously is itself a sign of privilege. It can prepare them to better understand the obstacles youth of color routinely navigate and establish alliances across racial-ethnic divides. It gives them a space to examine and counter the individualistic narrative that all success revolves around one's effort and by recognizing inequities in structures and systems. White youth see racially motivated discrimination and bias all around them.[58] This awareness of power and privilege allows them to reflect on what they see in their families and communities and strengthen their commitments toward a just, equitable, and empathetic society. White youth receive limited racial socialization messages. Many white youth are eager to have meaningful conversations about race and recognize how they differ from previous generations, even as some of them wrestle with "white guilt" or "white shame."[50] These conversations can prepare them to understand the language and actions allies can take to create social change.

Just as we have prepared bystanders in cases of bullying to act and intervene, we should train and empower witnesses to racially motivated discrimination and bias to react as allies for targeted individuals. But before that, we should introduce conversations about power dynamics in our society.

For youth of color, conversations about power and privilege can help them better understand the dynamics they may have had to navigate. It can counter the forces that promote the internalization of negative messages. It can provide positive affirmations and support the development of critical consciousness and agency through liberating truth telling.

Racial attitudes. When you hear or read about a stereotype, you should learn to critically recognize this and then use this as reminder to yourself to focus on the things that you love most about your culture!

Advocacy and Agency

Advocacy. Advocacy is a powerful strategy for dealing with racism. Adults working with youth should be prepared to support youth to build their capacity for self-advocacy.

Foster *agency*. Agency is the ability to be part of the solution, the ability to identify and pursue outlets for effecting positive change, creating agents of change. In trauma-sensitive care, we assist youth in creating their narratives of their lived experiences. As we do so, it is our role to help youth recognize how their experiences and resilience in the face of trauma, adversity, and inequality have served to mold and strengthen them. We must build on their idealism and desire for change. We can coach them how

to become involved and how to act. *Helping youth gain ownership where they see themselves as cocreators of a better system is the ultimate mechanism for healing.*

After validating youth's feelings and experiences, assessing coping, and helping them name difficult emotions, we should tap into youth's idealism and passion for action through future goal setting. This will channel their pain into power. This reflects how diverse culturally responsive positive parents[59,60] teach youth by example and guide them on how to best channel their anger and pain into prosocial ways that engage them as active participants in the creation of a fairer society. As we encourage youth to focus on their hopes and dreams, they can show their communities what they, as individuals and group members, are truly capable of achieving. As we work with youth in dismantling their internalized racism, we encourage them to reclaim their pride, to reclaim their right to dream, and to dream big as their greatest acts of courage. Because these greatest individual acts of courage, collectively, are what move us closer to a just, equitable, fair, and caring society.

Most of us find ourselves coaching our teens to reenvision their boldest, greatest dreams, as their dreams have often been limited by the negative messages that they have encountered in society. This process of reclaiming their dreams needs to be paired with strategies that foster critical thinking. Ask teens,

> *What is your greatest, boldest dream? Do you have one? If not, how come? Have you ever thought to yourself that your dream might be unattainable? Why? If you were told that you could achieve anything and not fail, what would you like to achieve? What made you stop thinking about that? How can we change that?*
>
> *If I was your fairy godmother and granted you 3 wishes today, what you would wish for?*

Then, ask,

> *What is standing in your way?*

Once you know what they see as standing in their way, explore how those barriers could be lessened. Young people may dream less when they see hurdles in their way.

- Give youth every opportunity to achieve control over their circumstances, decisions, and future. Ask, "How do you think we can change these things?" See how you can support them.
- Sometimes they need to know they can advocate in a way that is larger than just examining their own life. Offer a list of outlets of how to create change. The Anti-Defamation League proposes[61]:
  - — Educate others.
  - — Advocate for legislation.
  - — Run for office.
  - — Demonstrate.
  - — Do a survey about the issue in your own world and share the results.
  - — Raise money.
  - — Write a letter to a company.
  - — Engage in community service.
  - — Get the press involved.

Most important, adults who care for and about youth must learn to advocate for system-level changes that influence the health determinants that especially affect the youth we care for: education, housing, policing, and other determinants. We must get involved in ways that effectively modify the forces that contribute to inequities and disparities and exert pervasive negative effects onto the lives of the youth we serve. Hope fosters resilience. When we engage in system-level work and advocacy and as we contribute to the modification of socially toxic environments,[62] we infuse into ourselves and into others "Critical Hope."[63] Critical hope demands "a committed and active struggle to change the deadly tides of wealth inequality, group xenophobia, and personal despair."[64] Critical hope encompasses "Audacious Hope," a hope that stands in solidarity with those who have suffered. We must stand in solidarity with youth, families, and communities who are marginalized and that our society has decentered, share the burdens they have carried, and treat their pain as our pain. Because it is in this solidarity that we find opportunity for "Radical Healing,"[65] the process that builds our capacity to act on our world in ways that contribute to our collective well-being and for the common good.[65]

Bringing the Ecological Lens to the Community

Healing from racial-ethnic trauma directed at racial-ethnic groups requires that individuals, families, and communities create and hold some level of control and power over the ways in which they are internally and externally oppressed.[66] Treatment models and interventions that reflect the intersection of trauma-sensitive care and liberation psychology, such as the HEART (Healing Ethno-Racial Trauma) model provide a viable integrative framework to promote healing.[67] The acronym, in and of itself, anchors the model to Indigenous Aztec Latinx and African beliefs in which the heart symbolizes the center of life where the spirit and seed of humanity reside. The heart, rather than the brain, is the source of human wisdom, memory, and emotions. The approach anchors healing from trauma in cultivating and promoting self-determination, which fosters hope and resistance. The approach is also grounded in the premise that healing comes from individuals reconnecting, strengthening, or staying connected to their ethno-racial roots.

The Pervasive Ways That Racism Is Structural

To emphasize the negative and pervasive impact of racism on youth health and well-being, the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine Diversity Committee released a position paper.[68] The paper was borne out of the need to create action at the system level to shield our teens from the new wave of hate crimes around the globe.

The entire paper can be downloaded for readers to apply to their organizations (www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X(18)30239-8/fulltext).

The American Academy of Pediatrics released its own policy statement on the impact of racism on child and adolescent health (https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/144/2/e20191765).[69]

A Summative Call to Action

Racism exacts a heavy toll on the physical, emotional, and social health and well-being of youth, families, and communities. It is a formidable social determinant underlying inequities that disproportionately affect racialized groups in our society. Racism is corrosive, and it undermines and demeans all of society. Need we continue to hurt each other and ourselves?

We belong to each other. Together, regardless of race and beyond race, we must want what is right for each other, aspire for better, and work for greater if we are to leave the generations of youth that will come after us a just and equitable society—all while caring for each other. None of us can do it alone, but we can each do our part and we each have critical and complementary roles to play—as youth workers, advocates, clinicians, educators, researchers, parents, and peers. Through the many ways that we each touch youth's lives, we must ensure that they are fully equipped with the tools to be critically conscious, interpersonally generous, institutionally courageous, and fully engaged despite where our society has positioned them. That they can effectively negotiate their multiple identities, resist against undermining messages, and stay resilient in the face of adversity caused by society's many internal, interpersonal, and institutional isms. That they can connect across differences in ways that are authentic, honest, fair, caring, and compassionate. That they can live harmoniously in our increasingly diverse society. That they can build alliances with their peers and work together effectively toward creating a better world. Youth need the tools to break down the racial and social divisions they have inherited, and we must work with them, as equals. It is also critically important that we consider that just as forms of oppression and systems of subordination are interrelated, so are forms of justice. Rather than single axes, vertical approaches of #MeToo, Black Lives Matter, or Trans Lives Matter, we should consider that we are multidimensional beings who hold within ourselves intersecting identities, learn how we are affected by multiple systems of oppression, and develop horizontal approaches that strive for intersectional justice. Horizontal approaches through which all lives are valued and through which the many identities we each hold define us and are celebrated.

Supporting Families as They Navigate an Otherwise Biased System

I serve as a family-based therapist for both children and their families. The families I support are in severe crisis, so much so that a medical doctor has deemed it medically necessary for them to receive family therapeutic services. These families are from a broad range of demographics with various presenting problems. Whatever their affliction may be, someone in their system/community told them they are unable to overcome their trial without "professional help."

And this message of helplessness, this context of inadequacy from which a referral arrives in my inbox, is embedded in the shame the families experience when I open up services. For the single mom, this message of incompetence shakes deep insecurities and reinforces all the negative voices telling her she failed. For families overcoming addiction, this message resurfaces the negative self-concept that they are "less than" and will forever live in the shadow of their past choices. For disenfranchised families of color, this message is a consistent theme—white people overseeing the system have concluded you are unfit. These are some of the painful biases that I greet when I shake my first hand during the intake session.

One may ask, "How does a therapist overcome these obstacles in your situation? How do you combat years and, in some cases, centuries of trauma and shame to forge any meaningful progress with a family?" What I've found, that irrespective of the culture, gender, religion, or problem-saturated background, they all find their healing in one word: *love*. Because love produces faith, and faith produces hope—and with hope comes change. Hope increases strength, conviction, and a subtle persuasion that things can be different. Maybe they can try something new. Maybe they can respond to little Johnny differently. Maybe they can have the courage to set boundaries with an aggressive teenager. Maybe they can collaborate with that ex-partner who they can't stand. Maybe, just maybe. But it all begins with love.

What do I mean by love? Is it just warm affections, sweet words, and a gentle rub on the shoulder? Is it trying to muster up emotions you don't possess? No. Love is when you choose to empathize with others in their brokenness. Love carefully listens without judgment. Love fights through the darkness to see evidence of light and grace in their lives, the proof of strength, gifting, growth, competence, and courage. Love is the pathway to hope, and hope produces change.

When parents are grilling young Rashawn about how he missed school most of the month, love seeks to understand what gave him the strength to go at all. When a single mom expresses anger and shame that she doesn't have what it takes to help her autistic son, love celebrates and wonders about her competence and courage to ask for help and support. When Dad mourns that he missed most of Jessica's childhood due to his past drug addiction, love is curious about how he managed to find his way back to her, how he overcame and grew into the father he is today. In this way, love opens the door toward hope, and hope leads to change.

—Michael Howard Ryan, MS, LPC

Group Learning and Discussion/Personal Reflection

Personal Reflection

- Can you write a paragraph about or think about a time when you felt wrongly judged? Or a time someone made you feel that you did not belong to a group? How did you feel? Were you able to move forward? What helped you reframe that moment and move forward?
- How has power and privilege affected you?
- Do any pieces of these conversations above make you feel uncomfortable or not ready? Where are you in your own identity exploration? Have you had implicit bias training?
  - ➢ Consider writing how would you say some of those statements in your own words: make them yours!

Group Reflection

- How could your practice setting be intentional in celebrating difference or different identities?
- What elements do you think you can bring to your space to make it more welcoming, as well as more inviting, to celebrate the strengths of all diverse youth's ethnic identities?
- You can use the Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine position paper (see the **Related Resources** section in this chapter) to analyze whether you have in place the components that the society recommends. Choose which ones you could include now, in the short term. In the long term, what actions could you take to make your environment and organization inclusive?
- We believe that all youth-serving professionals should be an ally to youth who have endured marginalization, discrimination, and racism. But they also have to be ready to do so. Has your organization done the groundwork to prepare them to do so? Have you implemented implicit bias recognition and training? (See the **Related Resources** section.)

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Related Resources

Harvard University

Project Implicit: This center offers online experiences that allow individuals to gain insight into their implicit biases about race, gender, sexual orientation, and more.
https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/index.jsp

National LGBT Health Education Center *Learning to Address Implicit Bias Towards LGBTQ Patients: Case Scenarios:* https://www.lgbthealtheducation.org/publication/learning-to-address-implicit-bias-towards-lgbtq-patients-case-scenarios/

National Center for Youth Law *Implicit Bias and Juvenile Justice: A Review of the Literature:* https://youthlaw.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Implicit-Bias-Juvenile-Justice-Lit-Review-for-ncyl-web3.pdf

National Juvenile Justice Network *Implicit Bias: Why It Matters for Youth Justice:* https://www.njjn.org/uploads/digital-library/NJJN%20Implicit%20Bias%20Snapshot%202017.pdf

Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity *Understanding Implicit Bias:* http://kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/docs/implicit-bias_5-24-12.pdf

Society for Adolescent Health Medicine "Racism and Its Harmful Effects on Nondominant Racial–Ethnic Youth and Youth-Serving Providers: A Call to Action for Organizational Change": https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X(18)30239-8/fulltext