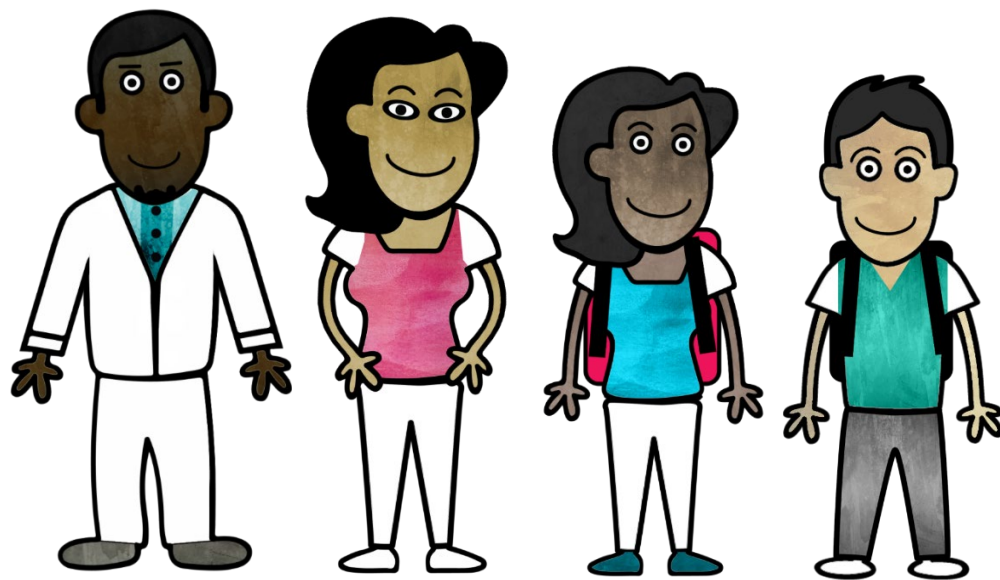


Let's *have THAT* talk about Racism



What is Racism?

Simply put, “racism” is a term that describes the mistreatment of others due to the colour of their skin. In other words, racism is defined as the prejudice, oppression, and discrimination directed against someone of a different race based on the belief that one’s own race is superior. Racism can exist in different ways, including within the systems that allow our society to function. This is called **systemic racism**. It is when policies, practices, and procedures cause disadvantages to racialized groups by failing to identify and take action on racial disparities and inequities. Another type of racism is **individual racism**. This refers to someone’s racist assumptions, beliefs or behaviours. It is a form of racial discrimination that stems from conscious and unconscious prejudice. It can include face-to-face racism, subtle actions, hate, or bias based on race. Examples of this include racial slurs or derogatory comments, glances, and gestures. Within the category of individual racism, there is also **internalized racism**. This is when an individual’s *subconscious* beliefs may result in bias, prejudice and oppression. It is the acceptance of negative societal beliefs and stereotypes. An example includes beliefs about beauty standards and the use of skin bleaching creams. Another type of racism that exists is **interpersonal racism**. This is the private belief about race that become public when interacting with others. It is what we typically think of when discussing racism. Examples include hate speech, racial violence and bigotry.

Key Messages

Experiences of racism can often cause the victims to have poor mental health, and sometimes even physical health. Racialized communities (also referred to as people of colour), may even experience chronic stress, anxiety, depression, psychological distress, and trauma due to the racism that they undergo. Additional stress and fear can also be caused by a person’s anticipation of negative treatment due to their previous experiences with racism. Stress-related disorders in these communities are often common and include illnesses like hypertension. Racialized communities may also find it difficult to access reliable and adequate healthcare due to the racism that exists within our society. Racism is a fundamental determinant of health. It influences access to resources, which ultimately impacts all other social determinants of health. In other words, racism can result in unequal access to quality education, healthy foods, affordable housing, and livable wages.

Resources

For more information on racism, or if you would like support, please visit:

- [The On Canada Project – Settlers take action](#)
- [Black Experiences in Health Care Symposium – Report from January 2020](#)
- [National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health: Understanding racism](#)
- [University of Waterloo: Anti-Racism Resources](#)
- [Black Health Alliance](#)

Activity 1: Discussion

Goals

- To learn and identify the different types of racism.
- To understand the impact that racism has on mental health and well-being.
- To learn how to respond and speak to youth about racism, and how it can affect their mental health.
- To learn about different coping strategies and the ways to protect your own mental health after experiencing racism.

Messages

- Always remember that you are not alone. When experiencing acts of racism, it is okay NOT to feel okay, and to recognize that you don't have control over stressful events like this. These incidents happen to racialized and Indigenous people and it is wrong and unfair.
- Coping mechanisms such as positive self-talk, practicing self-care, speaking to friends and family, and learning how to respond and manage your feelings are things that you can do to protect your mental health after experiencing racism.
- Think about things that helped you cope in the past; talking to an ally; playing sports; going for nature walks; eating well and getting enough sleep.
- Being an ally is sometimes one of the best ways to show support to your family, friends and loved ones. Knowing how to speak up in the face of adversity can make the biggest difference.
- Take time to process your feelings and talk about them with someone you trust. Remember that you can always go to your loved ones for support. Speaking to a health care professional through counselling or mental health phone lines can also help.

Time

- 20-30 minutes (depending on the size of the group).

Supplies

- *HaveTHATtalk* video: "[HaveTHATtalk about Racism](#)"
- Paper and pencils.

Facilitator Steps

1. View the video linked in the "supplies" section.
2. In a large or small group, ask the participants the following questions:
 - A. Why was Kwame stopped and searched by the security guard?

- B. What would you do if you were Kwame’s friend, and you noticed your friend experiencing racism?
- C. How do you think you would feel if you experienced an act of discrimination and racism like Kwame did in the video?
- D. What changes do you think Kwame’s mother noticed in his behavior and day to day routine after the racist incident that Kwame encountered?
- E. What kind of things do you think Kwame’s mother discussed with Kwame to protect his mental health after he shared his story?
- F. How can parents like Kwame’s mother talk to their child/teen and help them feel more comfortable sharing their lived experiences with racism and mental health?

Possible Participant Answers

- A. Kwame is different from his friends because he is from a racialized community.
 - Kwame was racially profiled because he is a black youth.
- B. You can be an ally to Kwame and stand up for him during the act.
 - You can talk with Kwame/your friend and be a support network for them during difficult times.
- C. Feeling upset, hopeless, stressed, angry, anxious, and worried that the incident will happen again.
- D. Kwame was acting differently than before. He was isolating himself and avoided going out in public. His appetite changed, and he began experiencing nightmares.
- E. Kwame’s mother may suggest:
 - Practicing self-care.
 - Practicing positive self-talk.
 - Finding coping strategies such as talking to an ally, playing sports, going for a nature walk, eating well, and getting enough sleep.
 - To surround yourself with allies and a strong, supportive network, such as faith leaders and other community resources.
 - Reaching out to a mental health line or a healthcare professional to talk about your mental health and experiences with racism.
- F. Being supportive when listening to their child/loved one share their story.
 - Acknowledging and reassuring their feelings and reminding them that they are not alone.
 - Surround yourself and your family with allies and continue to have open and ongoing dialogue.
 - Provide messages that promote self-esteem and self-acceptance.
 - Start talking about racism early and facilitate open discussions while sharing your history and lived experiences on coping with similar situations.