



A SPECIAL NOTE FROM LICENSED FAMILY THERAPIST, DR. GEORGE JAMES, EXPERT FROM **KIDS, RACE AND UNITY: A NICK NEWS SPECIAL**



RACISM'S IMPACT ON KIDS AND FAMILIES

Licensed family therapist, Dr. George James, who is featured in **Kids, Race and Unity: A Nick News Special**, offers relatable examples of what racial trauma is and its lasting impact on adults and children alike.

WHAT IS RACIAL TRAUMA?

Racial trauma represents the emotional and physical symptoms often experienced by Black families and people of color due to the everyday occurrences of microaggressions and racism. Adults and children can both experience racial trauma, which includes intergenerational injuries resulting from personal and collective experiences of racism.

REAL-LIFE EXPERIENCES

Dr. James recounts descriptions of just a few ways racial trauma has revealed itself in real life for adults.

- The feeling in the pit of your stomach before you have "The Talk" about how race impacts kids' daily lives
- The anxiety you feel around your colleagues after the killing of a Black man or woman
- The anger parents or caregivers feel when a child shares a racist social media post from one of their classmates
- The confusion and overwhelming feeling you have when your usually mature child starts regressing in their behavior due to a racial incident at school

Dr. James notes, "What you feel is valid. **The pain, hurt, and trauma you feel daily due to racial injustice is valid.** Moreover, the changes and reactions you see in your children might not be attributed to a character deficit, attitude, or chemical imbalance, but it could be due to racial trauma."

ACKNOWLEDGING PAINFUL—AND RECENT—EVENTS

Over the past decade alone, we've seen numerous acts of violence and other examples of racial injustices discussed in the public sphere. It's happened for four centuries, and it's still happening.

If you have a child or children under 18 years of age, they have likely experienced at least three major national uprisings and protests as a result of racism and injustice and the countless other Black women and men and children who have been unjustly killed including Trayvon Martin in 2012, Eric Garner in 2014, Freddie Gray and Sandra Bland in 2015, and in just the past four months Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Rayshard Brooks.

These tragic events, along with one's private experiences, exacerbate the impact of racial trauma on families and children.

5 Ways Racial Trauma Presents Itself

- **Increased Anxiety:** Being afraid to go out, worrying about interacting with the police or simply walking in your neighborhood may reflect the trauma you've experienced.
- **Silence:** Many Black families don't talk about racism because it triggers the pain and hurt of the trauma, some of which they have felt a majority of their lives.
- **Lack of Sleep/Insomnia:** Trouble sleeping, increased nightmares, or a more frequent desire to sleep in bed with parents can be another sign of anxiety and trauma.
- **Intense Anger and Rage:** Seemingly irrational or prolonged, intense anger can be a sign that something is wrong and can fill you with negative energy.
- **Lack of Production/Academic Decline:** Trouble at work or in school can be a symptom of racial trauma.

WHAT CAN PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS DO FOR KIDS EXPERIENCING RACIAL TRAUMA?

You can support your children and family by engaging in difficult conversations, providing opportunities for them to share their feelings and fears, and finding mechanisms of advocacy that you can engage in collectively. It's important to get the help and support you need for yourself and your children. Having supportive teachers, colleagues, and community to rely on can help to minimize the symptoms of racial trauma.

**YOUR FEELINGS AND YOUR CHILDREN'S FEELINGS ARE VALID.
TAKE EVERY OPPORTUNITY POSSIBLE TO DISCUSS THEM.**

SPECIAL THANKS:

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