

***Raising White Kids* by Jennifer Harvey**

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Introduction: Good Parents, Hard Conversations Takeaways Page 26

- ✓ We live in a society that is racially unjust, that is deeply segregated, and that privileges our (white) racial group. But we can teach our kids a commitment to equity and social justice.
- ✓ We know that teaching children to be color-blind or to value diversity is an inadequate strategy.
- ✓ Racial development is no different than physical, intellectual, or emotional development.
- ✓ Race-conscious parenting means talking about race— and racism— early and often in our children’s lives.
- ✓ Developing antiracism in our kids, and living it ourselves, is a central commitment in what it means to raise healthy white children in a racially unjust America.

1. From Color-Blindness to Race-Conscious Parenting Takeaways Page 53

- ✓ Color-blindness seems like a good idea, but it doesn’t address the unlevel playing field created by generations of racist policies and practices. And the simple fact is, we cannot not see race. Race matters everywhere one turns in our society.
- ✓ The celebration of diversity as a framework avowedly “notices difference.” Noticing differences and developing prejudice are two distinct processes: Prejudice is learned. Seeing racial differences is natural neurological development.
- ✓ Children notice racial differences and pick up on individual and structural racism from young ages.
- ✓ We need to proactively interpret the meaning of racial differences for our children or they will simply absorb the negative messages about race and people of color that pervade our society. Telling children to not notice race or that race doesn’t matter actively distorts their interpretation of reality.
- ✓ Children need concrete language about racial justice and antiracism because messages like “we’re all equal” are too abstract for them.
- ✓ Race-conscious parenting is an approach that insists on noticing and naming race early and often. Talking authentically about race and racism responds to children’s actual experiences and teaches children as they develop and grow to be able to do the same.

2. Where Do I Start? Takeaways Page 81

- ✓ It is difficult for many white adults to begin to speak about race openly and explicitly. We only learn to do it and get better at it through practice. There’s no way around those awkward, challenging feelings.
- ✓ There’s no special age at which point kids are ready to hear and understand the difficult truths about race and racism. They begin to work out their racial concepts and ideas long before they can articulate them.
- ✓ We start with our children’s deepest assumptions about the world: a notion of race as visible and normal, an awareness of racial injustice, and a working presumption that people can and do take actions against racism.
- ✓ Young children should be engaged with lots of talk about difference: skin tone and bodies, and the ways different communities of color identify. Making a commitment to normalize talk about difference preempts the pressures kids experience to treat difference as a taboo.

- ✓ Be aware that using the language of race— especially with young children— always runs the risk of reducing people to labels or implying everyone who shares that identity label is the same in some significant way (stereotyping). Be specific and nuanced.
- ✓ Race- conscious parenting for a healthy white identity development must include teaching about racial injustice and inequity as much as it does racial difference. Consider experiential learning, such as protests, for this.

3. What Does a “Healthy” White Kid Look Like?

Stages of White Identity Page 87-88

[Despite the following list,] racial development is not a linear process. Nor are the various stages mutually exclusive. We can actually experience more than one at the same time...Development is a constant process and unless we are continually active on the journey, we can easily move backward into earlier stages of development and understanding.

(Side note: this list should also not be seen as prescriptive. It would be lovely if, upon learning that racism exists, we could all skip step 3, the attempt to re-integrate our “experience of differential treatment into [a] framework...that presumes things are basically fine in society” (i.e., victim-blaming) and progress immediately to understanding that the issue lies within our culture.

- Contact—Starts Here: the initial experience of racism in society
- Disintegration—What Do You Mean We’re Not All Equal?
- Reintegration-- Blaming People of Color, or What is Wrong with Black People?
- Pseudo-Independence—Something is Wrong with Society!
- Immersion/ Emersion—Changing Our Relationship to Whiteness
- Autonomy—An Ongoing Journey

Despite Helms’s choice of labeling, this doesn’t mean we have no need for others. We can’t successfully function individualistically and in isolation in regard to race and racism. It’s more like having our feet firmly planted on the ground in a more holistic way. **Powerful positive emotions can attend this growth because we begin to find some language and analysis for phenomena we’ve experienced.**

Chapter 3 Takeaways Page 110

- ✓ “Healthy” white children are comfortable in their own skin but function appropriately in racially diverse environments. They neither ignore nor pretend not to notice the racial identities of others but do not make assumptions about people based on their race. They have strong moral commitments to interrupt and challenge racism when they witness it.
- ✓ Race- conscious parenting aspires to developmentally encourage children toward a healthy racial identity.
- ✓ Racial identity does not predetermine who we are or become, but racial identity development results from a relationship between the internal (emotions, understandings, and so on) and the external (messages, experiences with others, environment).
- ✓ Healthy white identity is an oxymoron in a racially unjust nation; whites can only be “healthy” to the degree that antiracist commitment and practice is at the heart of how we live.

- ✓ A race-conscious posture that supports healthy identity requires we acknowledge that white privilege and injustice exist, while also supporting the recognition that white people can join with others to fight injustice— and finding ways to help our kids do that.

4. Do We Have to Call It Racism? Takeaways Page 137

- ✓ If there's a racial dimension to an incident among children, call it out as such; don't just say "Be nice!" or "That was mean."
- ✓ One of the best things we can do to support the racial health of white kids is actively invite them to name, acknowledge, and inquire further into their own experiences of racism.
- ✓ Basic principles: follow kids' lead, stay engaged, and assume that we stand to experience mutual growth if we practice being on a journey with them. We don't have to have all the answers— we just need to be persistent and authentic.
- ✓ Kids hear and use racist language and have racist incidents with one another all the time; often parents never even hear about this. We need to equip them to challenge it— which means we need to talk explicitly about racism.
- ✓ Our society already locates whiteness on top and treats white as normal, even superior. It's important to teach white kids not just about racism but explicitly about white people's participation in racism— while being mindful of doing so in ways that enable agency, not despair.
- ✓ Equipping white children to understand and be able to challenge racism is required if we are to create a world of flourishing for all children. In a world full of racism there's nothing innocent about letting white kids remain "innocent."

5. Our Bodies in Racial Scripts Takeaways Page 167

- ✓ If ensuring our children have the right ideas were all it took to raise healthy white kids, racial tensions and division in the United States would have been long gone by now. But long-established racial scripts keep us divided.
- ✓ Racial scripts are about collective, intergroup racial relationships and histories that impact our individual relationships in the present. These long-standing patterns mediate all initial encounters between people of different races— even kids.
- ✓ Interracial relationships among kids are impacted by larger social structures they live in, so if we want diversity to succeed we need to actively support them in recognizing scripts and taking action for justice to decrease their power.
- ✓ We feel and live race in our bodies (think: body language), not just in our minds and in words; and these bodily dimensions of race are always context and location specific. Even if we have all our ideas, beliefs, and thoughts correct, our bodies will give us away every time— and will either create connection or make it worse.
- ✓ Despite the reality that it can be difficult, nurturing healthy white children means we need to seek out spaces in which our children can experience being a demographic minority, remembering to determine if such participation is welcome, and to participate with humility and openness.
- ✓ The daily habit of engaging the voices, perspectives, and productions of people of color (in media, art, literature, news, scholarship of many different kinds) impacts not just what we think. It potentially changes what we feel in the world as we move through it after being shaped and informed by such engagement.

6. Diversity Is Confusing! Takeaways Page 194

- ✓ As kids become aware of the concepts of racism, diversity, white privilege, and so on, they can become confused or anxious. Quips like “That’s so racist!” have become common in youth culture. Parents must help develop clarity about the dimensions of racism.
- ✓ Being white is a painful and vexed location in the context of awareness of injustice— particularly for kids. This makes it difficult for whites to authentically embrace diversity, let alone embrace it deeply. Despite it being taboo, we need to support white children in scrutinizing and talking about how they feel about being white, what being white does or does not have to do with “being racist,” and even about how confusing diversity can be for them, given their whiteness.
- ✓ This dialogue and work help white kids find ways to create a gap between themselves and racism: white doesn’t have to only mean “racist” — namely, you can be white and engage in antiracist activity, without downplaying the racism we breathe in and benefit from as white people.
- ✓ Because of the system we live in, white people are all complicit with racism and we must help our kids contend with this even while we equip them with lots of explanations about concepts like inherited privilege, equity in contrast to equality, and the analogy of racism as a moving sidewalk!

7. What Does Resistance Look Like? Takeaways Page 223

- ✓ The more we engage our children explicitly about racism and racial injustice, the more often we will find ourselves impressed by their understanding and readiness to act— in spite of the fact that their hearts might be broken by it.
- ✓ Parents of white children can— and must— step into the unknowns, chart what is mostly still uncharted, and become resilient participants alongside parents of children of color who are already at it and have long been so. A racial justice movement is alive and strong in this nation, and it needs all of us to be all in.
- ✓ The hopes embedded in a commitment to race-conscious parenting require us to allow our children to be vulnerable and feel the ache and hurt of the harm that injustice causes. We may want to insulate our kids from it, but the humanity of even the youngest of our children is directly tied to their ability to identify with that suffering.
- ✓ Standing up for justice in the United States requires a willingness to challenge relentlessly circulating myths about this nation’s history and “heroes” that are simply not true. We must teach kids that it’s always worth asking whether there is more to the story, and help them connect the dots.
- ✓ If we want white children to be able to ask, challenge, and intervene when injustice is happening, they have to develop the recognition that people in authority positions and with power aren’t always correct.
- ✓ It’s not at all uncommon for one white person breaking silence to free others up to do the same. Our verbal, visible, and constructive engagements for justice may very well reveal allies and coparticipants we wouldn’t have recognized had we stayed silent or unengaged.