

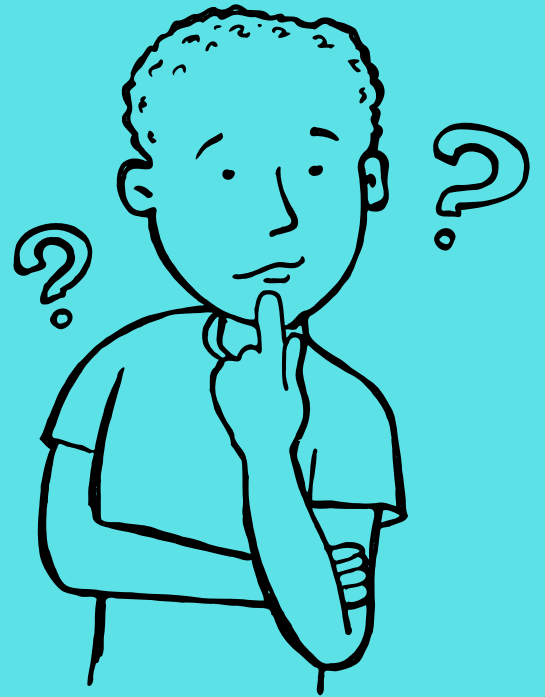
RACIAL TRAUMA



RECOGNITION, HARMS, & WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

WHAT IS RACIAL TRAUMA?

Racial trauma is a person's or group's reaction or response to *racial discrimination*, including microaggressions. It is often considered distinct from other types of trauma that can cause PTSD. Racial trauma is not bound to a specific race, identity, region, or context.



Racial trauma can be a single event, or it can be multiple events, which may build upon one another. This means it can be **persistent** and **cumulative**. Racial trauma also includes traumas that are systemic, vicarious, or historical.

WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF RACIAL TRAUMA?

The psychological or emotional impacts can include:

- Re-experiencing the event through intrusive memories or nightmares
- Avoidance of talking or thinking about the experience or reminders of the event
- Feeling down, ashamed, guilty, or changing how you think about the world
- Being more on guard than usual or overly reactive

RACIAL TRAUMA CAN ALSO LEAD TO:

- Biological changes in stress load
- Physical impacts, like higher blood pressure
- Social withdrawal or only associating with certain people or groups
- Identity conflicts or internalized racism
- Questioning one's faith or spiritual beliefs

Children who experience racial trauma may also show changes in behavior, such as becoming more interested in toys not reflecting their racial identity, not speaking language of origin, or avoiding the sun to achieve a lighter skin tone.



HOW CAN I ADDRESS RACIAL TRAUMA...

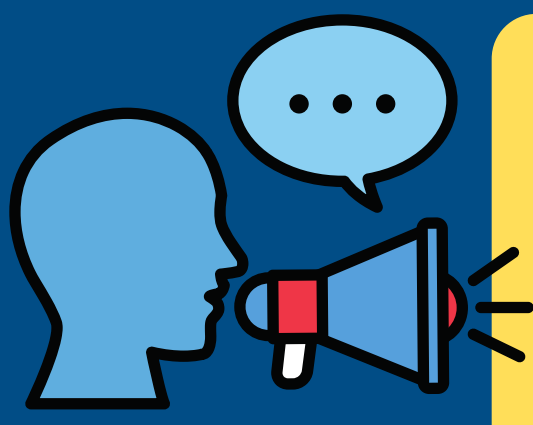
> FOR MYSELF?

- **Talk to someone you trust**, like a family member, close friend, teacher, pastor or minister, who you feel you can share your experiences and reactions with.
- **Consider how you can change the situation**, like reporting the event to a supervisor or organizational official, depending on the environment.
- **Talk to a therapist** about your experiences. When looking for a therapist, you may want to ask them to discuss their background and experiences, or their previous work with diverse clients or race-related issues.



> FOR PEOPLE I CARE ABOUT?

- **Reach out if you notice changes** in their mood or behavior.
- **Be willing to listen without judgment**, and consider asking what they need or want--from a listening ear, or place to process the experience, to discussing and planning next steps.
- **Ask permission before sharing your own experiences**, especially if you don't share the same aspects of identity.



> FOR MY COMMUNITY?

When witnessing discrimination or racial conflict, consider the *Microinterventions* steps (by Dr. Derald Wing Sue and colleagues):

- Step 1: Make the microaggression that is invisible, visible (e.g., name it or call it out)
- Step 2: Disarm the microaggression or discriminatory act (e.g., express disagreement)
- Step 3: Educate the offender (e.g., encourage the other person to examine their beliefs)
- Step 4: Seek external intervention (e.g., support from therapy, spiritual community)

Consider volunteering or donating to local organizations working toward racial equity and social justice.

