
Teacher-Child Relationships Through a Racial Equity Lens

INSTRUCTIONS

This handout was designed for use with “The Power of Bias and How to Disrupt It in Our Children (with Dr. Jennifer Eberhardt)” from the podcast *Unruffled* by Janet Lansbury. The questions and activities in this handout could be used in a work session (e.g., professional learning community, professional development session), for individual coaching, or for self-reflection.

Goals

- ◆ Understand how racial bias develops in our brains and creates disparities in how we interact and relate with children in the classroom.
- ◆ Explore concrete ways to disrupt the negative impact that racial bias can have on teacher-child relationships.

Activity

- ◆ Listen to the podcast episode or read the transcript. This podcast is an interview with Dr. Jennifer Eberhardt, a Stanford psychology professor, national expert in racial bias, and author of *Biased: Uncovering the Hidden Prejudice That Shapes What We See, Think, and Do*.
- ◆ If you don't have time to listen to the full episode, focus on the first 10 minutes.
- ◆ After listening to the podcast, use the questions below to guide your reflection on the role that racial biases can play in how teachers interact and relate with children.

“Bias is operating on a kind of cosmic level, connecting factors and conditions that we must individually make an effort to comprehend and control, and it deserves a cosmic response with everyone onboard. [...] We all have agency here. There’s something every person can do in this fight.”

Dr. Jennifer Eberhardt

Reflection questions

- ◆ What caught your attention from the podcast? What made that fact, excerpt, or example meaningful to you?

- ◆ Dr. Eberhardt says that all of us use categories, even if we are not aware that we are doing it. To get a “flavor” of how this works, follow these three steps:
 1. Choose a specific racial group category that you are not part of (e.g., White, Black, Latino, Asian, Native American, American Indian, etc.).
 2. Make a list of all the things that first come to your mind when you think about that group.
 3. Reflect: what did you learn by doing this exercise?

- ◆ The podcast shares an example of teachers interacting differently with White versus Black students and disciplining Black students more harshly. Based on this example, why do you think that becoming aware of our own racial biases is important when interacting with children in the classroom?

- ◆ Dr. Eberhardt teaches us that getting to know our students is an effective way to disrupt the potential negative effect of racial biases in our relationships with children. Janet Lansbury, the host, says that this strategy seems to help us “see them as individuals” and “poke holes in the group mentality.” Plan how to use this strategy by:
 1. Identifying one specific child in your classroom who belongs to a racial group that is not yours.
 2. Deciding on one concrete way to get to know that child better (e.g., intentionally observe that child to learn more about them, call with their caregivers to learn more about them, use the *Banking Time* strategy).
 3. Follow through this plan for at least one week and reflect on your experience. What new information did you learn about that child? How does this information help you better meet this child’s needs?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To learn more about different types of biases and perceptions and reflect on how they may affect teacher-child relationships:

- ◆ **Source:** IRIS Center, Vanderbilt University's Peabody College
 - ◆ **Module:** What Do You See? Perceptions of Disability
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/da/>
 - ◆ **Description:** In this online module, you will explore your implicit biases (i.e., perceptions, attitudes and beliefs) around people with disabilities. After completing the module, you can reflect around why becoming aware of our biases about people with disabilities is important to develop close and supportive relationships with children with disabilities in the classroom.
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- ◆ **Source:** UC Berkeley's Greater Good in Education Program
 - ◆ **Reflection Protocol:** Mindful Reflection Process for Developing Culturally Responsive Practices
 - ◆ **Link:** <https://ggie.berkeley.edu/practice/mindful-reflection-process-for-developing-culturally-responsive-practices/>
 - ◆ **Description:** In this exercise, you will unpack one challenging interaction that you have had with one of your children. The reflection protocol will guide you to consider how different types of implicit biases (e.g., race/ethnicity, disability, culture) may be influencing your interactions and relationship with such child, particularly your attributions around that child's behavior.