

Religion or Belief

Advice for Parents

Talking to children about religion or beliefs:

Keep calm and be KIND

The best way to handle awkward questions is calmly and factually. Try the KIND approach:

- Be **kind**
- Use **inclusive** language
- Stick to what they **need** to know – according to their age and the context
- Be as **direct** as possible – keep your answer short, simple and truthful

Use these moments as a learning opportunity.

Some conversations might be too much for a public setting, so take the time to discuss further in private.

Be specific

Don't shy away from using terms like Black or White to describe skin tone. It's important for a child to understand that being White or Black or Brown is not just about the colour of your skin but your experience as a member of society. You could talk about how being White might give you certain advantages – for instance, you are more likely to see people who look like you on TV. However, White people can choose to use their advantages to help make a fairer world for all. These are big topics, so don't try to cram in everything at once. Talking about race is similar to talking about the birds and the bees. You can't rely on one conversation. The trick is to take it at your child's pace and keep checking in as they grow older.

How to start a conversation

How do you approach such a big topic?

Start small. Don't begin a lecture on hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan. You want to educate them, not give them nightmares.

Start with what's familiar. You could talk about your own ethnic background.

The best way to eliminate discrimination is through knowledge – after all, nearly all persecution stems from ignorance. You can research online and in the library, but one of the most interesting ways of gaining information about religious customs is to talk to people.

Different aspects you can learn about:



Places of Worship

Synagogues, mosques and churches contain images and items sacred to the religion, and a helpful religious leader may be willing to explain more about their relevance.



Clothes

The way people dress and why can help highlight the belief systems of different religions.



Beliefs

One of the most interesting things about religions is their common ground.

Festivals

Most religions have festivals throughout the year to mark important events on their calendars.



Food

Specific foods are forbidden in some religions, while others use fasting to aid adherents' spiritual growth. One aspect of religious festivals is the food that is part of the celebrations.

