

It's Time to Talk About Hate: A Family Centered Initiative

Dear Milton Community:

First and foremost, thank you for participating in “It’s Time to Talk About Hate”, a family-centered initiative for all who live in Milton. While it is true this project is in response to unacceptable incidents in our community and others, it nonetheless reflects a goal that merits diligent and ongoing effort – a goal that is both lofty and necessary:

To raise children who have integrated the values of respect, acceptance and civility into the core of their very being.

Tolerance is not enough. Unfortunately, there is no onetime magic pill to make this happen. For these values to be maintained and strengthened in our community they must be affirmed and reaffirmed on multiple fronts, where each person takes it upon him/herself to be both messenger and role model. Even more, these ideals are not limited to any particular time or place. **Raising children to be decent human beings isn’t easy.** Yes, “it takes a village” and enough people in this little village of ours have come to the realization that now is the right time for parents and guardians to make a special effort to engage their children in a serious and thoughtful conversation about embracing diversity. We hope you find this Conversation Resource Sheet helpful. Thank you again for your participation. It is an investment we are making in ourselves and in one another.

Thank you also to all the groups and organizations in Milton whose support made this initiative possible.

Sincerely,

Milton Interfaith Clergy Association, Rev. Hall Kirkham, Chair.

Parent Conversation Guide: Ages 2-5

*Each age-appropriate Conversation Guide includes statements from experts in the field, tips for discussing these ideas and suggested conversation starters/questions to help facilitate the conversation with your child. These ideas are taken directly from *Beyond the Golden Rule: A Parents’ Guide to Preventing and Responding to Prejudice* (<http://www.tolerance.org/publication/beyond-golden-rule>) written by Dana Williams and published by Teaching Tolerance (<http://www.teachingtolerance.org>).*

Recommendation for Getting Started:

- *Read through this Conversation Guide and decide how to adjust it to best work for you and your child.*
- *Set aside a quiet time and place to engage your child using the conversation starters below. We would like everyone to make this happen by the end of May.*
- *Once you have done this, we encourage you to add your name to a public listing of all those who have participated in this initiative and “had the conversation”. To add your name, please follow this link: <http://bit.ly/2qK15jX>.*

Voices from the Field:

- ❖ *“We know children begin to notice racial and ethnic differences in particular between the ages of 3 and 5. This brings about a naive curiosity that isn’t yet linked to any positive or negative qualities about different groups of people. What happens after that is that positive and negative qualities do come into the picture, conveyed to children through their parents, significant others and the mass media.” **Dr. Derald Wing Sue** (professor of psychology and education at Teachers College, Columbia University)*
- ❖ *“Few are guilty, but all are responsible.” Abraham Joshua Heschel*

❖ **Parent Self-Reflection:**

Is your family and/or your child related to, friends with or friendly toward anyone who is of a different: race, color, ethnic group, religion (creed), gender expression or identity, national origin (ancestry), physical ability, sexual orientation, family structure?

If Yes – What are your similarities and differences? What do you like about this person?

If No – It is human nature to feel comfortable with people who are “like us” and to feel unease or discomfort with people who are different from us – see list above – and yet we are all equally human beings. Have you or your child ever heard someone tease or say mean things about or to someone else because of the way they look, dress, cut their hair, talk, etc.? Has your child ever been teased? If so, what was s/he teased about and how did it make him/her feel? How was the incident resolved? What do you as a parent think is the best way to resolve these kinds of behaviors among children this age?

Conversation Starters/Activities:

❖ *Materials needed: 4 pieces of paper; crayons, markers, colored pencils. Directions: You and your child should each draw a picture **using only one color**. Next, you should each draw the same picture on a new sheet of paper using all of the colors available. Now, brainstorm 3 words with your child that would describe each picture. Questions to discuss with your child: How does each picture make you feel? How did it feel to draw with just one color? How did it feel to draw with all the colors? What would it be like if everyone was exactly the same?*

❖ *Have a scavenger hunt, or brainstorm a list, to see how much diversity of different things you have in your home. Look in the food cabinets, refrigerator/freezer, clothes, jewelry, books, games, toys, dolls, pictures on the wall, etc. Questions to discuss with your child: What it would be like if we only had one choice of each? How does having different things feel? How are people different? Why is it good that people are different in many ways?*

❖ *Ask each person in your family to describe how they are different and what makes them special. Share those answers with your child. Ask your child what makes her/him different and special. Possible extension: Ask each member of the family to describe how each member is different and special. Find a photo of each member and add the words or phrases that describe how they are different and special to the photos. Discuss these photos/words with your family.*

Tips for Parents for the Preschool Years:

- ❖ **Be Honest.** Don't encourage children not to “see” color or tell children we are all the same. Rather, discuss differences openly and highlight diversity by choosing picture books, toys, games and videos that feature diverse characters in positive, non-stereotypical roles.
- ❖ **Embrace Curiosity.** Be careful not to ignore or discourage your youngster's questions about differences among people, even if the questions make you uncomfortable. Not being open to such questions sends the message that difference is negative.
- ❖ **Broaden Choices.** Be careful not to promote stereotypical gender roles, suggesting that there are certain games, sports or activities that only girls can do or only boys can do.
- ❖ **Foster Pride.** Talk to your child about your family heritage to encourage self-knowledge and a positive self-concept.
- ❖ **Lead by Example.** Widen your circle of friends and acquaintances to include people from different backgrounds, cultures and experiences.