



Talking to your Child about Hatred and Prejudice

By [Caryl M. Stern-LaRosa](#)

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When life hands you a lemon, peel it

We often think that teaching our children about diversity is a long and difficult task. However as the following exercise shows, it can be as simple as peeling a lemon:

Gather a group of young children and give them lemons, one lemon for each child. Tell them to "get to know your lemon." The children will examine their lemons-smell them, touch them, throw them in the air, and roll them around. After a few minutes, take the lemons back and collect them in a big basket. Next, ask the children to find their lemons from among the bunch. Remarkably, most recognize their lemons at once. Some will even get protective of them.

Next, ask the children to describe how they recognized their lemons. The responses are always varied. "My lemon was a big lemon," one might say. "My lemon was a perfect lemon," says another. And another, "My lemon had dents and bruises." This launches the discussion about how people are like that-different sizes, different shapes, different shades of color, different "dents and bruises."

After exploring those ideas, collect the lemons again. This time, peel the lemons and return them to the basket without their protective skin. Now tell the children to again find their lemon. Presented with this quandary, the children's reactions are always precious. "But the lemons all look the same!" they'll exclaim. This opens the door to a discussion of how people, much like the lemons, are pretty much the same on the inside.

While it may take only 15 minutes and a bowl of lemons to teach young children about diversity, it takes a conscious effort and a lifetime of attention to ensure that lesson is remembered. As parents, we must provide that commitment.

