Identity is how we define ourselves, and how we understand the way in which we fit into the world.

- Identity formation is a lifelong process with many stages
- To support your child, explore the ways your race influenced your identity

**Identity formation is a lifelong process with many stages**

Understanding who we are is a lifelong process that has many stages from early childhood, adolescence, leaving home, and starting a new family of our own. There is no precise timeline or specific age-range for each stage, but it is important to consider:

- When very young children interact primarily within the close family circle, it is common for them to identify more with their parents. They may even identify themselves as being of the same race as their parents, even when they are not.
- As socialization outside of the home begins, other children may question them about their race and the way their family looks. Children will be prepared to respond appropriately if parents have talked openly about skin color, race, racism and adoption.
- Children will develop a broad vocabulary about race and adoption when their parents talk with them about race, ethnicity and other differences. This will make it easier for them to respond more confidently as they get older.
- Through the adolescent and teen years, children begin an advanced exploration of what groups they do or don’t fit into and how they feel about who they are. They may have resentment or other emotional reactions, and go through phases of both seeking out and rejecting their own race. They may resent or feel embarrassed by their parents and this may include a rejection of their parents’ race.
- The process of forming a racial identity is an ongoing process that can influence who a person marries, where they live, how they parent, their course of study and choice of occupation.

**To support your child, explore the ways your race influenced your identity**

Your child will need your support with identity formation through many stages of their life. In order to provide this support, you must explore the ways that your race has influenced your own identity.

- How does your race affect the way you see the world and the way the world sees you?
- When adopting a child of a different race, you must become racially aware. Explore media such as books, documentaries, movies, magazines and journals to learn more. If possible, speak with people of different races and ethnicities about their life experiences.