

# The Intersection of Adolescent Development and Anti-Black Racism



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## The Importance of Peers and Social Media

**During adolescence, relationships with peers become increasingly central to healthy development as belonging to social groups outside the family takes on new importance.** Young people become more sensitive to social status, and their desire to earn respect from others increases. Positive peer relationships can promote further healthy outcomes.

For Black adolescents, peer groups provide a crucial support system. Same-race peers, in particular, as well as peers belonging to other racial groups who have experienced a similar history of marginalization and racism, can provide an important place of belonging, mutual support, understanding, and respect.

Currently, in 2021, many peer relationships are happening online. Overall, social media broadens the traditional range of peer interactions and provides adolescents with unprecedented opportunities to give and receive support, connect, and share their voices. Because of their broad scope, social media and other online spaces provide unique ways to promote resiliency in adolescence and better equip Black youth to manage negative experiences with racism.



**The following research-based recommendations can help ensure that these interactions, both in-real-life and online, support positive development for Black youth:**

- **Schools and Community-based Organizations:** Create space and provide resources for youth to connect with social groups that increase belonging and support positive identity.
- **Parents and Other Caring Adults:** Talk with adolescents about what they see, hear, and are exposed to online, including open dialogues about race-related content.
- **Media and Researchers:** Build and strengthen connections between researchers, media producers, and youth, such as via collaborative youth councils, to inform media representations of and content for Black adolescents.
- **Youth:** Create, advocate for, and participate in affinity groups and other affirming social spaces.