



EPISODE 6 - PARIS HIGH SCHOOL **PARIS, TX**

- *Bullying, prejudice and cliques are fixtures in schools across America.*
 - *Challenge Day is a one-day program that aims to break down these barriers.*
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ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Paris High School is a big small-town school of about 900 students, located 98 miles north of Dallas, Texas.

Featured students and their roles on campus:

Ashleigh – “Loner”
Eric – “Jock”
Marshay – “Cheerleader”
Paige – “Popular”
Matthew – “Nerd”

Cliques and the stereotypes people form about various groups on campus are a painful reality in every school.

- What are the cliques at your school? What stereotypes do you attribute to them?
- Have you or any of your friends ever been hurt by stereotypes or by being associated or labeled as a member of any of these groups?
- Do you relate to any of the students in this episode?



THEMES TO EXPLORE AND DISCUSS

1. The “Be a Man Box”
2. Racism
3. Breaking Family Cycles

1. The “Be a Man Box”

Collectively our popular culture shoves boys into an invisible, life-limiting, emotionally restrictive and often dangerous place that at Challenge Day we refer to as the “Be a Man Box.” – from “Be The Hero You’ve Been Waiting For” by Yvonne and Rich Dutra-St John.

Notice

- In this episode **Eric** freely shares the pain and pressures of growing up male. How have you or the males in your life been influenced or personally impacted by the “Be a Man Box?”
- Which, if any, of the following comments have you used or heard? “Be a man; don’t cry; toughen up; don’t be a wimp; don’t be a punk; cowboy up; don’t act like a girl?” How do messages like these affect you or the boys and men in your life?
- How do you or the men and boys in your life deal with feelings? When was the last time that you saw a man cry? Have you ever wished your father or another adult male or family member could more easily share his emotions with you?

If you NOTICE that the “Be a Man Box” is a problem for you or people close to you, and you CHOOSE to Be the Change – you can ACT by doing one or more of the following...

Act

- If you are a boy or a man, write, make a list or talk with your friends about any ways your life and relationships have been negatively affected or limited by the “Be a Man Box.” If you are female, try writing or having a conversation about how the box has influenced or affected your relationships with the males in your life.
- The next time you hear or witness someone making rude, sexist or stereotypical comments or gestures that disrespect a woman or shove a man or boy into the “Be a Man Box,” don’t be a bystander. Let them know it’s not cool, and ask them how it might feel if the comments or gestures were directed at them or someone they love.



- If you notice a man having the courage to risk showing their vulnerability or being emotional, offer your support and listening. Follow **Eric's** friend **JB's** lead and let the person know that you respect them for being a "real man."

2. Racism

Notice

- Do you believe racism is a problem in your school or community? If not, why not? If so, what are some of the divisions and attitudes that you see or experience?
- Since we've all learned lies and stereotypes about people from other races, take a moment to notice any beliefs and stereotypes you hold that cause you to separate from others. Do you have problems accepting people from any particular race? If so, why do you think that is?
- Why do you think people of similar races often tend to hang out together? When was the last time you reached out, spent time with, got to know or ate lunch with people from a race other than your own?

If you NOTICE that racism is a problem in your school or in your life and you CHOOSE to Be the Change – you can ACT by doing one or more of the following...

Act

- Reach out to people who have different backgrounds than you and spend time getting to know them. Start up a conversation--perhaps even ask them to share what you might know if you really knew them.
- If you notice your cafeteria, quad, classroom, team or club seems to be divided by race, be the change by breaking down the walls of separation. Encourage friends and classmates to sit with people from different backgrounds and get to know them.
- Take note of any ways that your family or friends seem to hold racist beliefs or stereotypes. Compassionately ask them to share about their beliefs and where they learned them. We've all learned the lies of racism, and since anything we learn we can unlearn, do your best to challenge their beliefs.



3. Breaking Family Cycles

Notice

- Low expectations, alcohol and drug abuse, abandonment and the overall lack of financial and emotional support have sadly become cycles for many families. What expectations and cycles have you grown up with? Are you getting the support and guidance you need? If not, do you know you can break the cycle? What if anything, will you do differently when you grow up?
- For better or for worse, your family can have a huge impact on the way you live your life. In **Marshay's** case, she used the fact that one of her sisters grew up as a teenage mother and that neither of her older sisters ever graduated from high school as motivation to break the cycle. Who have been your role models? How have they influenced the way you live your life?
- The principal of Paris High School describes many of his students as coming from a cycle that he calls generational poverty. Many Paris High students would be the first in their families to graduate from high school or to even consider going to college. How has your family life influenced your values around education? What expectations do you have for your future?

If you NOTICE that negative family cycles are a problem for you or others in your life and you CHOOSE to Be the Change – you can ACT by doing one or more of the following...

Act

- Discover the cycles that have influenced you and your family. When teaching the Formula For Change, Challenge Day leaders point out that you can't choose to break a habit, let alone a cycle, until you first notice it's there. Remembering that everyone including our family members are always doing the best they know how, interview older family, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers or anyone else who knows your family history. See if you can identify any patterns or cycles you'd like to change.
- Identify the positive role models in your family. Celebrate those who are doing things differently, like family members who have broken or are breaking longstanding family cycles. Talk with them directly or write a letter, e-mail or text telling them how grateful you are to have them as your role model. Remember to be specific and generous when sharing your appreciations.



- The first step in breaking negative family cycles is to believe it's possible. Next, you need a vision to step into. Write a letter to friends and family you trust outlining any current dreams and the goals you have for your future. Be as specific as possible. Do you want to graduate? Do you want to go to college? Where do you want to live? What kind of relationships do you want? What cycles do you want to break? Once your vision is clear, ask them to hold you accountable and to support you in following your dreams.

LEARN MORE AND SHARE

- If stuff going on at school is impacting your emotional health, check out <http://www.halfofus.com>.
- To further discuss the issues in this episode, head to <http://ifyoureallyknewme.mtv.com>.

