It’s a question that people ask all the time. If we’re all part of the human race, why are people racist?

After all, there are no biological differences between people. No race is superior or inferior to another. We’re all the same.

There are many reasons why people can have racist attitudes.

— Will, 15

“Why do people continue to be racist after so many articles, videos and talks about how racism is dumb?”

— Ruby, 16

“Why is racism even a thing anymore? Haven’t we moved past that?”

— Ruby, 16

It’s normal to want to spend time with people that have the same interests, background, culture and language. It creates a sense of belonging that is really important. The downside is that it can also set up differences between other groups and, over time, this might lead to us to thinking that our group is better than others.

A lot of our attitudes are shaped when we’re young. When our family members or friends express racist opinions, it’s common that we will take on those views ourselves. The problem is that, unless we do something about it, they can stay with us for a lifetime.

For more information about What You Say Matters and the Racism. It Stops With Me campaign go to itstopswithme.humanrights.gov.au
WE'RE QUICK TO JUDGE

We often put labels on people. He dresses like this so he must be into this music. She goes to that school so she must be rich. We can also stereotype people from different racial backgrounds as “lazy”, “brainy”, “aggro”… you get the idea. The way to beat the stereotypes? Don’t judge a whole group. Get to know people from different racial backgrounds and find out how much you have in common.

WE BLAME OTHERS FOR OUR PROBLEMS

When we feel angry or frustrated, we often look for someone else to blame for our problems. As a community, we can do the same thing. People who look or talk differently to us are an easy target. You can hear it happening today in comments like, “those people take our jobs” or “they get government handouts all the time”. Nearly all the time, these statements are wrong.

There are no reasons or excuses for racism. It’s just wrong. And In many cases, racism is against the law. For more information, see the “What does the law say” factsheet.

If racism happens to you, find out what you can do in the “What can you do?” factsheet.

If you see racism happening at school, in public or online, stand up to it. There’s lots of safe ways that you can help. Find out more in the “What you can do?” factsheet.

You can get support or advice to deal with a difficult situation from organisations like Kids Helpline (www.kidshelp.com.au) and ReachOut.com (au.reachout.com).