

# Inspiring early child expert delights Little Moments Count Conference attendees

**Dr. Rosemarie Allen was the keynote speaker at the 2022 Little Moments Count annual conference.**

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Alberto Monserrate has attended nearly every Little Moments Count annual conference. When the 2022 event ended, the New Publica PR agency CEO called keynote speaker Dr. Rosemarie Allen, “the best one yet.” The 7th annual Little Moments Count event took place on Dec. 2.



Based in Colorado, Dr. Allen is an early childhood expert and the president and CEO of the [Institute for Racial Equity and Excellence](#). Her Little Moments Count speech, titled “The Impact of Racism on the Developing Brain,” received a standing ovation from the 75 people in the room — and she held the attention of more than 500 online viewers.

[Little Moments Count](#) is a statewide movement to help parents and the community understand that each little moment of connection with a child—particularly in the first 1,000 days—has a tremendous impact on brain development. The inaugural conference was held in 2016. Each year since then, community leaders involved in the collaboration identify a keynote speaker to increase our collective knowledge about early childhood development and continue to build momentum of Little Moments Count.

When Early Risers host Dianne Haulcy introduced Dr. Allen she said, “Her ability to be vulnerable and give concrete knowledge is incredible. Every time I hear her speak, I learn something.” [Early Risers](#) is a Little Moments Count podcast, developed in partnership with Minnesota Public Radio.

HealthPartners Senior Vice President of Government & Community Relations Pahoua Yang Hoffman, who attended this year’s conference, said, “The Little Moments Count annual conference showcases HealthPartners’ role as a community convener and our leadership in ensuring all children have a bright start and strong future. Dr. Allen’s expertise combined our focus on children’s health with our commitment to anti-racism and reducing bias.”

Here are just a few takeaways from Dr. Allen's remarks:

## **The amygdala is the brain's guard dog**

"The brain is the physical part of relationships, and the amygdala (the fight-or-flight response) is the brain's guard dog. It's on duty to identify any threat...We have a responsibility to keep children's brains safe so they can grow and thrive...Yet, we're always giving kids reasons to stay on high alert."

## **None of us is immune to bias; none of us is at fault**

"[Implicit bias] is based on messages that we have received over the course of our lifetimes...It seeps through the fibers of our bodies. It's like breathing biased air and drinking biased water. None of us is immune and none of us is at fault. We don't blame and shame what we cannot control."

## **It's not ONLY about race but it is ALWAYS about race...**

"People always say to me all the time...it's not just about race, it's about poverty, it's about zip codes, it's about language...and they are right. No matter how you slice and dice the data, Black and Brown children are at the bottom, and Black children are at the very bottom. And unless we talk about this issue, we can't solve anything else."

## **What do you wish your team members knew?**

Dr. Allen explained a cultural humility exercise a Colorado teacher did with her young students. She had them complete the phrase "I wish my teacher knew." Two of the answers included: I wish my teacher knew I didn't have a friend to play with me and I wish my teacher knew I don't have pencils at home to do my homework. Dr. Allen said, "Imagine how safe she can keep their brains because she now knew something about them." The keynote speaker then asked the audience, "What do you wish your team members knew?"

## **Being aware is halfway there**

In the Q&A, Haulcy asked Allen, "When you're in the moment if bias is unconscious, how do we bring it into our consciousness?" Dr. Allen said, "Being aware is halfway there." She then described four steps to becoming aware:

1. Stop what you're doing
2. Notice
3. Wonder why
4. Change your behavior

Dianne also had the chance to interview Dr. Allen on Early Risers. To listen to that episode and learn more from Dr. Allen, go to [Disrupting the bias within us | Early Risers](#). For more anti-bias, anti-racism and racial and social justice resources, check out resources at [Little Moments Count website](#).