



“Did I Say That?”

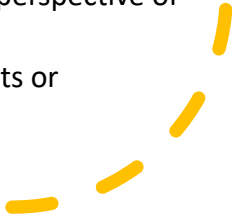
Recognizing and Combating Microaggressions in the Workplace



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Learning Outcomes

- Ability to understand microaggressions, language used, and be able to identify the negative effects they have on others in the workplace
 - Understanding of why microaggressions are harmful
 - Examples of different types of micro-aggressive behavior that occurs in the workplace
 - How to respond to micro-aggressive behavior in a positive and helpful manner from the perspective of a target, microaggressor and ally
 - Space to share experiences as recipients or observers of microaggressions
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|| Ground Rules

- Stay present – turn off AND put away electronic devices
- Be present, engaged and spend emotional energy into the process
- Be respectful of everyone's thoughts and opinions
- Assume positive intent
- Open-minded
- Share experiences
- Listen attentively
- Take an honest assessment of your own behaviors

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|| Group Reflection

- Discuss the following questions:
 - How did you feel watching the video?
 - Based on your experiences, how do you think this topic applies to the work environment?
 - What do you think might be some barriers to combating microaggressions, as you see them, in the workplace?

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|| Understanding Microaggressions

“Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, non-verbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.” *(e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religion, ability, or class.*

—([Derald Wing] Sue, et al., 2007, p. 271)

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|| 3 Types of Microaggressions

I. Microassaults

- Explicit derogations and purposeful discriminatory actions (essentially explicit racism or discrimination).
- Intention is to hurt, oppress or discriminate
- Examples include slurs, catcalling, outing somebody, sexual harassment



|| 3 Types of Microaggressions

II. Microinsults

- Behavioral or verbal remarks that convey rudeness, insensitivity, and demean a person's heritage or identity.
- *Not intentional!*
- Occur due to underlying biases and prejudices outside of one's awareness.



3 Types of Microaggressions

III. Microinvalidation

- Verbal comments or behaviors that exclude, negate or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings or experiential reality of a person



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Group Discussion

When people discuss microaggressions, a common response is that they are “innocent acts” and that the person who experiences them should “let go of the incident” and “not make a big deal out of it.”

Do you agree or disagree with this point of view? Explain your reasoning.



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It isn't about having your feelings hurt. It's about how being repeatedly dismissed and alienated and insulted and invalidated reinforces the differences in power and privilege, and how this perpetuates racism [other types of isms] and discrimination."

~Roberto Montenegro, a chief fellow in child and adolescent psychiatry at Seattle Children's Hospital

Why Microaggressions occur

- Implicit bias
- Stereotyping
- Clash of racial, identity, or other realities
- Failure to recognize another person's experience
- Belief that microaggressions are minor and not harmful
- Failed attempt at humor
- Belief that you are being complimentary





If a person from a marginalized group pointed out to you that one of your comments was microaggressive, how would you respond? Would it change the likelihood of you making a similar comment in the future? Why or why not?

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Examples of Microaggressions in the Workplace

- "You're so articulate." "You speak so well."
- 'The way you've overcome your disability is so inspiring.'
- 'Your name is so hard to pronounce'
- Females who may be experts in their field or at a high-ranking level within an organization may experience male colleagues interrupting or rolling their eyes when they speak.
- A female employee is labeled as pushy, bossy, a "diva" and difficult to get-along with while her male counterpart is described as forceful and someone who sets high standards.
- People coming from different countries experience microaggressions from perpetrators wondering whether they will go back to their homeland.
- Referring to different targeted groups as "you people."
- People with disabilities, blonde hair, or overweight, LGBTQ+ and religious groups being the target of jokes; can circulate through emails or in social settings.

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Internal Dilemma

- Did she say what I think she just said?
- Did I interpret that correctly?
- What did he mean by that?
- Should I say something?
- Saying something may make it worse.
- They'll probably think I'm overreacting.
- Speaking up is going to hurt more than help.



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Psychological Effects of Microaggressions

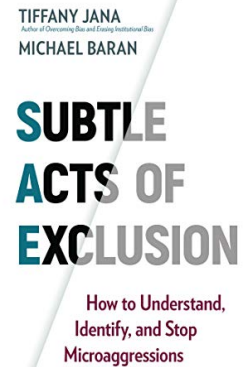
- Can cause the **imposter syndrome** (*feeling insecure, undeserving, or unaccomplished enough to be in a particular setting*).
- **Stereotype threat** (*the fear of validating a stereotype about people from your identity group*) can impact a person's mental health and well-being.
- They amplify feelings of **alienation**.

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How Microaggressions alienate and exclude

They implicitly communicate one (or more) of the following:

- You are invisible.
- You are inadequate.
- You are different.
- You don't belong.
- You are inferior.
- You are not normal.
- You are not welcome.
- You are a threat.
- You are a burden.
- You are a lesser human being.



Jana and Baran, 2020

Barriers to Responding to Microaggressions

- Five barriers to responding to microaggressions
 - 1) interpreting the incident as discrimination;
 - 2) deciding whether it is serious enough to warrant a response;
 - 3) taking responsibility for confronting;
 - 4) deciding on a strategy;
 - 5) responding.

Ashburn-Nardo et al. 2008; Czopp et al. 2012; Nadal 2013). Ashburn-Nardo et al. (2008)

|| Responding to Microaggressions - Target

Express your feelings	• “That hurts my feelings” “That’s offensive.”
Appeal to values	• “Do you really believe that?”
Get them to explain	• “What did you mean by that?”
Empathize with underlying feeling	• “I know X, but have you considered Y”
Give more information	• “Persons w/disabilities are able to accomplish a lot.”
Use humor	• (laughing) “Interesting, you sound like my grandpa.”
Involve others	• Talk to trusted others; seek advice
Non-verbal response	• Look shocked, confused, disappointed, etc.

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Committing a microaggression is not indicative that we’re bad people. It’s more indicative of a society where the dominant world view tends to be Eurocentric, masculine, and heterosexual.”

~Vincenzo G. Teran, PsyD, president of the Clinical Psychology of Ethnic Minorities Section of APA’s Div. 12

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|| Responding to Microaggressions - Aggressor

What should you do if someone accuses you of a microaggression?

- Resist the urge to defend yourself.
- Acknowledge the other person's hurt feelings sincerely apologize.
- Thank them.
- Acknowledge what you've learned.
- Don't expect anything in return.
- Remember this doesn't make you a bad person.
- Do your research.
- Try harder the next time.

<https://www.bustle.com/p/what-to-do-when-someone-calls-out-your-unintentional-microaggressions-because-being-a-good-ally-means-learning-from-your-mistakes-48685>



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|| Responding to Microaggressions - Bystander

Type your responses in the chat:

- In the last month, have you experienced or observed a comment that made you uncomfortable or was inappropriate?
- Did anyone intervene?
- Did you intervene?
- If you chose not to intervene, why didn't you?



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|| Responding to Microaggressions - Bystander

- Intervene
- Invite them to speak (gives the power back to the victim)
- Change the dynamics in the room by becoming an advocate
- Don't take part
- Don't encourage the behavior
- Approach the recipient
 - Let them know you are aware of the behavior and that it's not acceptable
 - Encourage them to ask for help, go with them to get help, or provide them with information about where to go for help
 - Let them know they are not alone



Source: Andrea Pohlsander "Overcoming Microaggressions & The Bystander Effect In The Workplace" July 2019

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|| "Killing Me Softly"

- Killing Me Softly: A game demonstrating how it feels to suffer microaggressions and acculturative stress day after day.
- Created by Librarian Fobazi M. Ettarh
- <http://fobettarh.github.io/Killing-Me-Softly/>

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Resources

- NYLPI's Workshop, "Recognizing and Responding to Microaggressions in the Legal Profession." Panelists Michelle Krause et. Al, May, 2019
- "You Can't Change What you Can't See: Interrupting Racial & Gender Bias in the Legal Profession" 2018 American Bar Association and Minority Corporate Counsel Association report.
- The Impact of Microaggressions – Training presentation, Brea Banks, PhD
- <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2017/01/microaggressions>
- <https://www.businessinsider.com/microaggression-unconscious-bias-at-work-2018-6#your-name-is-so-hard-to-pronounce-8>

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