

What are Microaggressions?

“Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral (nonverbal), and/or environmental indignities whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of underrepresented communities and/or or people perceived to hold less power.” (Pierce, 1970; Sue 2010)


Microaggressions Table

Adapted by Patricia A. Burak, Ph.D., Tae-Sun Kim, Ph.D., Amit Taneja, Doctoral Candidate.

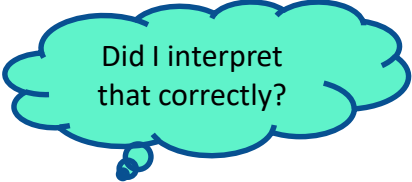
Syracuse University 2009

Themes	Microaggression Examples	Implicit Message
Alien in Own Land: When Asian Americans and Latinos are assumed to be "foreigners"	Where are you from? Where were you born? You speak good English. You don't even speak with an accent. How long have you been in the States?	You are not American.
Ascription of Intelligence: Assigning intelligence to a person based on their race, gender or (perceived) abilities.	Assuming that Asians are naturally more intelligent in the sciences and math.	Asians are naturally gifted in the sciences and math; they do not work hard for it.
	Assuming that it is unusual for an African American or Latino to be in an academically rigorous program or prestigious university.	People of color are not as intelligent as Whites. It is unusual for them to be intelligent or articulate.
	"Oh, you are a bio major? Are you studying to be a nurse?" (when said to a woman)	Women are not smart enough to be doctors - men would rarely, if ever, be asked this question
	"You get a note taker for every class? Why can't you take your own notes?" (when said to a student with a learning disability)	Students with learning or other invisible disabilities are not smart enough.
"Intrinsic Skills" & "Personality Types": Using stereotypes of race, gender and sexual orientation to assume an individual's interests and talents.	"You're gay? You have to give me some decorating tips!"	All gay men are interested and talented in interior design and decorating
	Women in power lead by emotion and are too sensitive!	Women are "genetically" emotional & sensitive; They are not intelligent, rational and impartial.
	Are you here on a basketball scholarship? (when asked of African American students)	African Americans are good at basketball and that is the only way they would be able to attend our college.

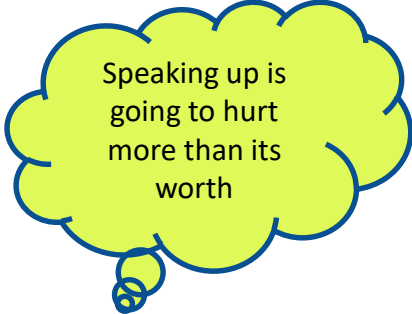
What happens when a microaggression occurs?

A blue thought bubble with a small trail of three smaller bubbles leading to it.

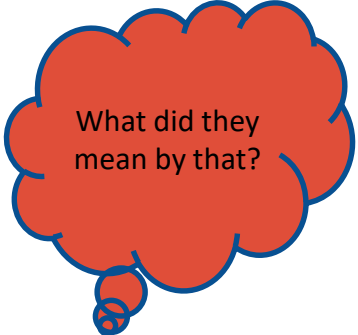
Did they say what I think they said?

A teal thought bubble with a small trail of three smaller bubbles leading to it.


Did I interpret that correctly?

A yellow thought bubble with a small trail of three smaller bubbles leading to it.


Speaking up is going to hurt more than its worth

A red thought bubble with a small trail of three smaller bubbles leading to it.


What did they mean by that?

A light blue thought bubble with a small trail of three smaller bubbles leading to it.

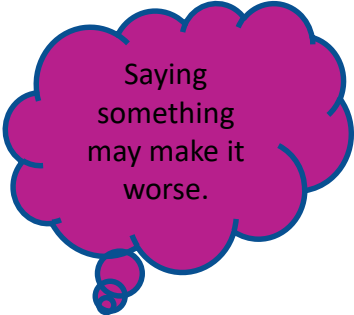
Did this microaggression really occur?

A green thought bubble with a small trail of three smaller bubbles leading to it.

Should I say something?

A purple thought bubble with a small trail of three smaller bubbles leading to it.

They'll probably think I'm overreacting

A magenta thought bubble with a small trail of three smaller bubbles leading to it.

Saying something may make it worse.

Microaggression Stress

1. Biological and physical effects

- Accumulative small changes/stress could be additive--equal to the effect of a major catastrophic trauma.

2. Emotional effects

- “Isms” affect emotional well-being, psychological adjustment, and mental health.

3. Cognitive effects

- Try to make meaning of incidents
- Disrupted cognitive processing (decreased focus and productivity)
- Stereotype threat (identity/disengage from interests/under-perform)

4. Behavioral effects

- Hypervigilance /skepticism (suspiciousness toward majority group)
- Forced compliance (surviving or being co-opted)
- Rage and anger
- Fatigue and hopelessness
- Adaptation to adversity (functional survival skills)

When and How to Respond to Microaggressions

Three main ways to react:

1. Let it go
2. Respond immediately
3. Respond later

When and How to Respond to Microaggressions

by Ella F. Washington, Alison Hall Birch, and Laura Morgan Roberts

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When and How to Respond to Microaggressions

- **Discern.** Determine how much of an investment you want to make in addressing the microaggression.
- **Disarm.** If you choose to confront a microaggression, be prepared to disarm the person who committed it.
- **Defy.** Challenge the perpetrator to clarify their statement or action.
- **Decide.** You control what this incident will mean for your life and your work.

Responding to Microaggressions

- Acknowledge necessity of having conversations
- Keep an open mind by asking questions
- Avoid being defensive
- Lean into the tension
- Increase personal and psychological resources and strength through self-care



<https://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=microaggressions+and+mosquito+bites+clean&docid=608015018149225572&mid=20E06363C89807DB3BE820E06363C89807DB3BE8&view=detail&FORM=VIRE>

Breakout Group Exercise

- Think back to the label you were given.
- How would you respond to the person now?

