

Recognizing and Addressing Microaggressions: Takeaways

Microaggressions Defined

- Microaggressions: Commonplace verbal, behavioral or environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages based on one's membership in a marginalized groups.—Derald Wing Sue, PhD

Types of Microaggressions

- *Microinsult* - behaviors, actions, or verbal remarks that convey rudeness, insensitivity, to demean a person's group, social identity or heritage
 - snubs, avoid eye contact, turning away
 - given poor service
- *Microinvalidation* -actions that exclude or negate the psychological feelings or experiential reality of people
 - "I don't see race, we are all equal"
 - "Don't be so sensitive!"
- *Microassault* - explicit derogation characterized by a verbal or nonverbal attack meant to hurt someone
 - name calling, avoidant behavior
 - purposeful discrimination

Common Themes of Microaggressions

- Treating like a second class citizen
 - Person of color mistaken for a service worker
- Assuming inferiority or pathology of marginalized identity
 - Raising your voice to speak to a blind person
- Assuming normality of dominant culture/identity (Alien in own land)
 - You don't look ____.
 - Where are you from? Your English is great!
- Denying personal bias
 - Obviously, I'm not homophobic, my brother is gay
- Ascription of Intelligence
 - You are so articulate
 - You're good at math, right?
- Culture blindness
 - We are all part of one race, the Human Race
- Assuming criminality
 - I don't want trans* people using MY restroom
 - Being followed in a store

Strategies to confronting microaggressions

Let Someone Know You Disagree

- I identify as____, and that has not been my experience.
- I have talked to many people who identify as____, and it is my understanding that their experience is more like....
- Saying that is harmful because those kind of comments contribute to....
- Messages like that do not always reflect what is happening for actual people.

Challenge the Microaggression

- What did you mean by that?
- I've heard the opposite....Who have you talked to about that?
- Where did you hear that?

Redirect or Change the Conversation

- Let's shift the conversation.
- I have to go.

General Tips

- Listen when someone raises a concern
- Become aware of your own unconscious bias - WE ALL HAVE THEM, BUT WE SHOULD ALSO INTENTIONALLY WORK TO ADDRESS THEM AS WELL!
- Learn about other social/cultural groups norms
- Be observant - notice reactions
- Interrupt microaggressions when witnessing them
- Educate others about your experience & understanding

Resources

- Berk, R.A. (2017) [Microaggressions in the academic workplace](#). *Journal of Faculty Development*, 31(2), 69-83.
- Sue, D., Nadal, K, Capodilupo, Lin, Rivera & Torino. (2008) [Racial microaggressions against Black Americans: Implications for counseling](#). *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 86(3), 330-338.
- Sue, D. (2010). [Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation](#). Hoboken, N.J.: Wiley
- Vo, L.T. (2012). Navigating the academic terrain. In Harris, A.P. & Gutierrez y Muhs, G. (2012) *Presumed Incompetent: The Intersections of Race and Class for Women in Academia*. University Press of Colorado (pp. 93-109)
- Warren, L. (n.d.). [Navigating Difficult Moments in the Classroom](#). *The Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning*. Retrieved from <https://bokcenter.harvard.edu/navigating-difficult-moments>