



Microsoft Tech Resilience Mentoring Program

Training Session (3 of 4)
February 5, 2021

Welcome back

Pilot: Fall 2020

Personally, interacting with a whole group of people was the best part. I got to see so many different perspectives which I previously was unaware about.

- Mentee from 2020 pilot

98%

gained insights into how to improve my experience with teamwork or collaboration with others

95%

gained a sense that there are other people in tech who share their interests

Agenda

- Settle in
- Steer the dynamic
- Pivot
- Q & A with experienced mentors
- Self-guided debrief

Sometimes people dominate or interrupt.



Mentor (Becky)	Nicole, could you please share how that activity was for you?
Mentee 1 (Nicole)	Well. Let me think.
Mentee 2 (Audrey)	<Interrupting> My team crushed that activity!
Mentor (Becky)	Stop right there, Audrey. You cut Nicole off. You know, you keep dominating the conversation. Remember, step up and step back.

Sometimes people **dominate** or **interrupt**.
Mentors create a respectful space for all.



What it <u>doesn't</u> look like:	What it <u>could</u> look like:
“Stop right there. You keep dominating.”	“I’m glad to hear from you and I don’t think _____ was done yet. _____, would you finish what you were saying?”

Holmes, M. H. Jackson, J. K., Stoiko, R. (2016). Departmental dialogues: Facilitating positive academic climates to improve equity in STEM disciplines. *Innovative Higher Education*, 41, 381-394.

Sometimes people **minimize** another's experience.



Mentor (Audrey)	Becky, are you willing to share?
Mentee (Becky)	In office hours the other day, my instructor told me I was taking up too much time asking questions, and that not everyone is cut out for CS. So, basically, they think I should drop the class.
Mentor (Audrey)	That's weird. Are you sure the professor meant it that way?

Sometimes while trying to reassure, people **minimize** or **dismiss** another's experience. Instead, listen to understand + thank them for sharing.



What it doesn't look like:

“That’s weird. Are you sure the professor meant it that way?”

What it could look like:

“Thank you for being willing to share your experience with us. That sounds very difficult.”

Remember: intent vs impact

Sometimes people **single out** someone for their social identity group



Mentor (Becky)	I'm excited for this next topic. Audrey, I notice you are the only woman and person of color here. I bet this belonging video will really speak to you. Will you tell us what could we do to improve diversity in tech?
Mentee (Audrey)	Umm...I'm going to pass.

Don't **single out** anyone to represent a particular social identity group. **Instead**, value different lived experiences and let people *choose* what to share.

What it <u>doesn't</u> look like:	What it <u>could</u> look like:
<p>“X, I notice you are the only woman and person of color here. I bet this belonging video will really speak to you. Will you tell us what could we do to improve diversity in tech?”</p>	<p>“We're going to hear from everyone. Share whatever is comfortable for you or you can pass.”</p>

Sue, D. W., Alsaidi, S., Awad, M. N., Glaeser, E., Calle, C. Z., & Mendez, N. (2019). Disarming racial microaggressions: Microintervention strategies for targets, White allies, and bystanders. *American Psychologist*, 74(1), 128-142.

Sekaquaptewa, D., Waldman, A., & Thompson, M. (2007). Solo status and self-construal: Being distinctive influences racial self-construal and performance apprehension in African American women. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 13(4), 321–327

What if a mentee says it? Take action.

What it <u>doesn't</u> look like:	What it <u>could</u> look like:
“X, I can’t believe you said that!”	“In this space, let’s not expect someone to speak for a social identity group. It’s great that you want to learn more about diversity in tech; I can share some resources with you.”

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Self-guided

Would you be tempted to stop the conversation after this second student or continue the round robin? Why or why not?

- Student 1: *I remember being in a class in high school where I didn't want to raise my hand because I didn't want to look stupid. I wasn't sure if my teacher in the class believed I was smart or that I could do it. I remember the teacher questioning me and asking me to defend my answer. I just felt out of place. I guess I was the only woman and person of color. Come to think of it, I have never had a teacher who looked like me.*
- Student 2: *Hmmm. I remember in high school feeling challenged by my teachers and that was a good thing. **Are you sure that is how the teacher meant it?** I know that to make it in tech, we have to toughen up. I have never had to look for a role model because I feel like I can make it on my own.*

You named this tension...

The difficulty here is that it steers the conversation...
[when the mentor jumps in.]

It would cause the rest of the students to not want to speak up since they will now feel like student 2 [was called out]. It might end up causing students to not feel safe to share their experiences since it doesn't align with their mentors.

You suggested...

I probably would try to add a comment to acknowledge the situation. The paper you shared does mention however: Don't try to speak on behalf of the person who has experienced the microaggression since doing so can itself be a form of microaggression. I would probably try to say something that was mentioned in the one-pager: It sounds like you have a strong opinion about this. Tell me why - I want to understand better how you felt

Inquire

You suggested...

Yes I would be tempted to stop the conversation and vouch for student 1 so they feel heard while respectfully addressing why the response from student 2 makes me feel uncomfortable.

Use I Statements

You suggested...

I would be tempted to stop the conversation, and point out that we can't know the intentions of Student #1's teacher and don't have to. Student #1's experience and that impact it had on her are what matter.

Reframe

You suggested...

Reassure student 1 by “Witness and holding emotional space”
e.g. “I am sorry that you felt that way and had to go through it...” It might help student 1 feel better.

Witness and Hold Space

Self-guided

How you think it might shift the situation if a co-mentor had chosen to interject a microaffirmation after Student 2 spoke?

Student 3: *On campus, I am part of a student organization where I do feel I belong. I walk in and I feel like I can just be myself. But when I walk into my CS class... you know that feeling of looking around and trying to impress people or that you have to fit in? It's like that for me. I hate that feeling.* ***And Student 1? I have had a teacher treat me like that before. I feel sad for you but also a little relieved it wasn't only me.***

Student 4: *I do know what you mean. I hate that feeling of trying to fit in, thanks for naming that.* When I started my summer research, I was very nervous. A graduate student working in the lab went out of their way to make me feel welcome. ***They even asked my opinion on some things, and it made me realize I had something to contribute.*** That felt good. After that I felt I could relax a little bit, like I could be myself.

You suggested...

I think Student 1 would feel a lot better and supported if a co-mentor interjected immediately after Student 2 spoke. Words cut deep, especially in the moment, so being able to initiate the microaffirmation train would allow Student 1 to feel supported from the get-go while being able to model a more positive and inclusive response for the other mentees instead of waiting.

Witness and Hold Space

You suggested...

I think that the co-mentor could also offer valuable microaffirmations, but it's more powerful if the microaffirmations come from other students first. The co-mentor can share their thoughts after the round robin is over for the same impact, but the students' thoughts will be more impactful if they're not first influenced by the mentors.

Actively Listen & Echo

Remember: intent vs. impact

- We want to hear from Student 2, but their comfort is not more important than Student 1's inclusion
- Doing nothing could be interpreted as you agreeing with Student 2
- Calling out Student 2 sends the message there is no room to learn or misspeak

Call out vs. Call in

Student 1, that took courage to share, and I'm sorry you experienced that.

We want this space to be one, where when someone shares, we can validate and support them.

The tech journey is not going to be the same for everyone, and we want to create room for different perspectives.

Student 2, I heard you say you were challenged by your teachers in high school and had a good experience.

<bridge from co-mentor> Student 3, can you share...?

You can come back

I just want to notice something from earlier...

How do we work together to make space for and validate different experiences?

Mentors are invested and continue to learn.



- Do some of your own learning
- Persist even when it's challenging
- Stay updated; terminology changes
- Practice
- Engage (with this mentoring group, your co-mentor, ...)

Bibliography

Rowe, M. (2008). Micro-affirmations & Micro-inequities. *Journal of the International Ombudsman Association*, 1(1).

This article explains the difference between microaggressions and microaffirmations- seemingly small acts that have negative or positive consequences respectively. Multiple strategies for promoting microaffirmations are described including offering comfort during distress, sharing opportunity, giving credit. In short, small things make a difference.

Sue, D. W., Alsaidi, S., Awad, M. N., Glaeser, E., Calle, C. Z., & Mendez, N. (2019). Disarming racial microaggressions: Microintervention strategies for targets, White allies, and bystanders. *American Psychologist*, 74(1), 128-142.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/amp0000296>

Abstract

Given the immense harm inflicted on individuals and groups of color via prejudice and discrimination, it becomes imperative for our nation to begin the process of disrupting, dismantling, and disarming the constant onslaught of micro- and macroaggressions. For too long, acceptance, silence, passivity, and inaction have been the predominant, albeit ineffective, strategies for coping with microaggressions. Inaction does nothing but support and proliferate biased perpetrator behaviors which occur at individual, institutional and societal levels. This article introduces a new strategic framework developed for addressing microaggressions that moves beyond coping and survival to concrete action steps and dialogues that targets, allies, and bystanders can perform (microinterventions). A review of responses to racist acts, suggest that microaggression reactions/interventions may be primarily to (a) remain passive, retreat, or give up; (b) strike back or hurt the aggressor; (c) stop, diminish, deflect, or put an end to the harmful act; (d) educate the perpetrator; (e) validate and support the targets; (f) act as an ally; (g) seek social support; (h) enlist outside authority or institutional intervention; or (h) achieve any combination of these objectives. We organize these responses into four major strategic goals of microinterventions: (a) make the invisible visible, (b) disarm the microaggression, (c) educate the perpetrator, and (d) seek external reinforcement or support. The objectives and rationale for each goal are discussed, along with specific microintervention tactics to employ and examples of how they are executed.

Sekaquaptewa, D., Waldman, A., & Thompson, M. (2007). Solo status and self-construal: Being distinctive influences racial self-construal and performance apprehension in African American women. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 13(4), 321–327. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1099-9809.13.4.321>

Abstract

A preliminary study and main experiment tested the hypothesis that racial solo status (being the only member of one's race in a group) increases racial self-construal among African Americans. The preliminary study showed that African American men and women reported greater collectivist (i.e., group-based) over individualist self-construal under solo compared to nonsolo status, whereas Whites did not. The main experiment showed that the increased collectivism among African American solo women appears to be strongly reflected in racial identity becoming a salient aspect of self-construal. African American participants were also more likely than Whites to perceive that their anticipated performance would be generalized to their race, to feel like representatives of their race, and to show greater performance apprehension (indirectly evidenced by increased self-handicapping) when in racial solo status. The implications of solo status for African Americans in evaluative situations (such as academic testing sessions) are discussed. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2016 APA, all rights reserved)