Understanding Microaggression and Racist Abuse

It is important to learn the vocabulary in how to talk about building racial stamina. The more fluent we become in antiracist language, the more we will come to recognize our own behavior and become more observant of others. Part of our growth will be to stop the behavior, words, or actions that we may show in our communications with other people. Or to speak up and not remain silent when we hear or see behavior in others.

This chart helps to unpack the concepts of microaggressions and racist abuse by highlighting the ideas and assumptions associated with each concept.

Microaggression (Racial)	Racist Abuse (from Kendi)
A microaggression is the casual degradation of any marginalized group. Racial microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color.	A persistent daily low hum of racist abuse is not minor. Abuse describes the action of making racist comments towards a person of color. The effects of racist abuse include distress, anger, worry, depression, anxiety, pain, fatigue and suicide.
Implicit Bias	Implicit Bias
Explicit bias refers to the biased assumptions, attitudes or beliefs that one endorses at a conscious level. Implicit bias refers to the bias in judgment and/or behavior that results from subtle cognitive processes that often operate at a level of below conscious awareness.	Using terms such as implicit bias make it easier to speak around racism.
Implicit Bias Framework	Antiracism
- Exclusive of stakeholders - Not attentive to race, gender, income and other inequities - Ignores barriers to access - Does not consider racial impacts	- Builds in decision-making guides that evoke consideration of equity - Fosters active engagement and empowerment of stakeholders - Gives distinct, specific and sufficient attention to key disparities/inequities - Supports and implements strategies to remove barriers - Systematically analyzes potential impacts on disadvantaged groups - When disparate impacts are recognized, changes the policy regardless of original intention

Sources: Desmond-Harris, Jenée, Vox, 2015; National Museum of African American History & Culture; Ibram X. Kendi, *How To Be An Antiracist*, 2019