

UNDERSTANDING MICROAGGRESSIONS

WHAT ARE MICROAGGRESSIONS?

Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights towards a marginalized group.

Behaviors or statements that do not necessarily reflect malicious intent, but which nevertheless can inflict insult or injury.

TYPES OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

- **Micro-Assaults** - Conscious and intentional discriminatory actions towards marginalized groups.
- **Micro-Insults** - Communication that conveys stereotypes, rudeness, or insensitivity and demean a person's racial, gender, or sexual orientation, heritage, or identity.
- **Micro-Invalidations** - Communication or actions that exclude, negate or nullify the psychological thoughts, feeling, or experiential realities of certain groups.

COMMON MICROAGGRESSION THEMES

| THEME | MICROAGGRESSION | MESSAGE |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Alien in own land | "Where are you really from?" "You speak English really well" | You aren't American Perpetual foreigner |
| Ascription of intelligence | "You are so articulate" | It is unusual for someone of your race to be intelligent |
| Color Blindness | "When I look at you, I don't see color" | Denies a person of color's racial/ethnic experiences |
| Assumption of criminal Status | A store owner follows a customer of color around the store | You are going to steal, you are poor, you do not belong |
| Denial of individual racism/sexism | "My best friend is black" or "as a woman, I know what you go through" | I'm immune because I have friends of color. Your racial oppression is no different than my gender oppression. |

STRATEGIES TO ENCOURAGE MICRO-AFFIRMATIONS

- **Work together with diverse teams:** work as equals in pursuit of common goals.
- **Recognize your unconscious biases:** think if your reactions would be different with different people.
- **Individuation:** intentionally see others as individuals rather than as members of groups
- **Direct Contact:** make direct eye contact with members of other groups.
- **Context/Environment:** make everyone feel like they have a voice.
- **Avoid the Bystander Effect:** Speak up!
- **Acknowledge when microinequities have occurred.**

MICRO-AFFIRMATION BEST-PRACTICES

- Using friendly facial expressions and gestures
- Listening intently as the other person is speaking
- Make eye contact unless the person looks away
- Opening a door for someone
- Asking others for their opinions
- Recognizing the achievements of others
- Engage with authentic hello/goodbye.
- Open up groups when others approach