

IPG  
Diversity &  
Inclusion

MERGE

BEN  
BLACK EMPLOYEE NETWORK

# MICROAGGRESSIONS



# WHAT ARE MICROAGGRESSIONS?



Microaggressions are verbal, behavioral, or environmental actions (whether intentional or unintentional) that communicate hostility toward oppressed or targeted groups including people of color, women, LGBTQ persons, persons with disabilities, and religious minorities. Microaggressions are subtle ways people may demonstrate their biases and prejudices.



## TYPES OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

**Microassaults** are overt forms of discrimination in which actors deliberately behave in discriminatory ways. They may think that their actions are not noticed or harmful. For example, when someone says, "That's so gay!" to connote that something is weird, the person is aware of the words that they choose; however, they may not realize that using such language is considered offensive.

**Microinsults** are statements or behaviors in which individuals unconsciously communicate discriminatory messages to members of target groups. For example, a person might tell an Asian American that they "speak English well," implying that Asian Americans do not speak good English. This instance can be especially upsetting to Asian Americans who do not speak any other language besides English.

**Microinvalidations** are verbal statements that deny, negate, or undermine the realities of members of target groups. For example, when a person tells a person of color that racism does not exist, that person is invalidating and denying the person of color's racial reality.

# THE IMPACT OF MICROAGGRESSIONS



Impact of Micro-Aggressions Based on Race, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Age, Religion, Nationality and Other strands of Diversity needs to start with an overview of hard consequences:

- Proven impact on health and well-being (stress, mental health, physical health and chronic conditions)
- Siphon energy and passion away from the actual work towards surviving the environment
- Neutralize the value and power of differences for creativity and innovation
- Create self-fulfilling prophecies that impair performance, or create perceptions of impaired performance
- Make belonging and authenticity impossible



# RESPONDING TO MICROAGGRESSIONS



## RESTATE OR PARAPHRASE.

"I think I heard you saying \_\_\_\_\_ (paraphrase their comments). Is that correct?"

## ASK FOR CLARIFICATION OR MORE INFORMATION.

"Could you say more about what you mean by that?" "How have you come to think that?"

## ACKNOWLEDGE THE FEELINGS BEHIND THE STATEMENT.

Express empathy and compassion. "It sounds like you're really frustrated/nervous/angry... "

"I can understand that you're upset when you feel disrespected."

## SEPARATE INTENT FROM IMPACT.

"I know you didn't realize this, but when you \_\_\_\_\_ (comment/behavior), it was hurtful/offensive because \_\_\_\_\_.

Instead you could \_\_\_\_\_ (different language or behavior.)"

## SHARE YOUR OWN PROCESS.

"I noticed that you \_\_\_\_\_ (comment/behavior). I used to do/say that too, but then I learned "

## EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS.

"When you \_\_\_\_\_ (comment/behavior), I felt \_\_\_\_\_ (feeling) and I would like you to \_\_\_\_\_."

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## CHALLENGE THE STEREOTYPE.

Give information, share your own experience and/or offer alternative perspectives. "Actually, in my experience \_\_\_\_\_"

"I think that's a stereotype. I've learned that \_\_\_\_\_"

"Another way to look at it is \_\_\_\_\_"

## APPEAL TO VALUES AND PRINCIPLES.

"I know you really care about \_\_\_\_\_ Acting in this way really undermines those intentions."

## PROMOTE EMPATHY.

Ask how they would feel if someone said something like that about their group, or their friend/partner/child. "I know you don't like the stereotypes about (their group), how do you think he feels when he hears those things about his group?"

"How would you feel if someone said that about/did that to your sister or girlfriend?"

## TELL THEM THEY'RE TOO SMART OR TOO GOOD TO SAY THINGS LIKE THAT.

"Come on. You're too smart to say something so ignorant/offensive."

## PRETEND YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND.

As people try to explain their comments, they often realize how silly they sound.

"I don't get it..."

"Why is that funny?"

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## USE HUMOR.

Exaggerate comment, use gentle sarcasm. "She plays like a girl?" You mean she plays like Serena Williams? Or Mia Hamm?"

## POINT OUT WHAT THEY HAVE IN COMMON WITH THE OTHER PERSON.

"I'm tired of hearing your \_\_\_\_\_ jokes. Do you know he's also studying \_\_\_\_\_ and likes to \_\_\_\_\_? You may want to talk with him about that. You actually have a lot in common."

## W.I.I.F.T. (What's in it for Them)

Explain why diversity or that individual/group can be helpful/valuable.

"I know you're not comfortable with but they can help us reach out to/better serve other groups on the account/team/in the community."

## REMIND THEM OF THE RULES OR POLICIES.

"That behavior is against our code of conduct and could really get you in trouble."



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# QUESTIONS?

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