

Background

To recap, microaggressions are the everyday, subtle remarks towards a person of a historically marginalized group. These remarks are harmful, whether they were intentional or unintentional. Microaggressions are also not called ‘micro’ because they aren’t a big deal or don’t cause harm, they’re ‘micro’ because they happen on an individual basis.

There are 3 types of microaggressions: (1) microassaults, (2) microinsults, and (3) microinvalidations. Renee Wells, Director of the NC GLBT Center, offers the following definitions.

MICROASSAULTS	MICROINSULTS	MICROINVALIDATIONS
<p>Microassaults are conscious and intentional acts by an aggressor, they are similar to what we think of as “overt discrimination”.</p> <p>They can be verbal which includes name-calling and using epithets.</p> <p>They can be nonverbal which includes behavioral discrimination (ex: Christian parents discouraging their children from dating Muslim folks).</p> <p>They can be environmental which includes offensive signs, posters, or other visual displays (ex: Asian caricatures with extremely slanted eyes, Confederate</p>	<p>A microinsult is a comments or action that communicates insensitivity to or disregard for a person’s identity or heritage. Perpretators are largely not consciously aware of the harm they’re causing.</p> <p>Example: Professor doesn’t acknowledge or call on Muslim students in the classroom (underlying message = your thoughts/ideas/contributions are not important)</p> <p>Example: A tour guide asks a student if they’re planning to major in math because “all Asians are good at math” (underlying message = Asians are model minorities who don’t have unique identities</p>	<p>A microinvalidation is a comment or action that ignores or dismisses the thoughts, feelings, or experiences of a member of an underrepresented community. Perpetrators are usually not consciously aware of the harm they are causing.</p> <p>Example: An LGBTQ+ couple tells a friend a hotel manager was rude to them, their friend says to not be “overly sensitive” (underlying message = your emotions are unwarranted)</p> <p>Example: White student rolls their eyes when a Latinx student comments in class there aren’t many courses that cover Latinx history and culture (underlying message = you’re preoccupied with</p>

Diversity & Inclusion Programs- DIP

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symbols).	or experiences)	racial/ethnic issues)
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Activity #1

Watch this video, [Microaggressions in the Classroom](#) (2017).

Consider the following questions from Renee Wells. Think about a time someone said something about some aspect of your identity that you felt was intentionally or unintentionally dismissive, insulting, or demeaning.

What did they say to you?

How did it make you feel?

How did you respond to what they said?

How did you feel afterwards?

Think about a time where you made a comment that you realized was offensive or hurtful to others.

What did you say?

How was it offensive to others?

How did they respond to what you said?

Did you respond to them by saying out loud or thinking they were “overreacting”, being “overly sensitive”, or took what you said the “wrong way”?



How did you feel when you realized you had offended others?

Activity #2

Read [Dear anti-racist allies: Here's how to respond to microaggressions](#) (2020) by Kristen Rogers.

Can you think of a time where you were present for one of the microaggressions in the article? After reading this article, what would you do differently if you witnessed a microaggression today?

Practice responding to some of these microaggressions with a partner. How will you (a) make the invisible, visible, (b) educate the perpetrator, and (c) disarm the microaggression?

Resources

Focused Arts. *Microaggressions in the Classroom* (14 May 2017):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZahtlxW2CIQ>

Rogers, K. *Dear anti-racist allies: Here's how to respond to microaggressions* (06 June 2020):
<https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/05/health/racial-microaggressions-examples-responses-wellness/index.html>

Wells, R. *Recognizing and Responding to Microaggressions*:
<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1y-ScAwQ3WA0Xay4-zw098bFfleUMx-5smOESPv6oEzo/pub?start=true&loop=false&delayms=5000&slide=id.p8>

Further learning

Alvoid, T. *Eliminating Microaggressions: The Next Level of Inclusion* (09 December 2019):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cPqVit6TJjw>

Fombo, M. *No. You Cannot Touch My Hair!* (19 December 2017):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLQzz75yE5A>

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Grinnage-Cassidy, W. *Why Microaggressions Aren't So Micro* (03 May 2019):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7l194OXxYo>

Washington, E., Birch, A. and Roberts, L. *When and How to Respond to Microaggressions* (03 July 2020): <https://hbr.org/2020/07/when-and-how-to-respond-to-microaggressions>

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