

Microaggressions: Fact, Fiction, or Fake News

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Today's Agenda

Participants will spend the first half of the session discussing various forms and historical origins of microaggressions.

The second half will engage participants in culturally relevant activities, designed to stimulate dialogue and use effective communication tools to address microaggressions both individually and interpersonally.

Goal Statement


Our goal for the day is to provide additional tools and information to help you reduce or respond to the emotion associated with managing our differences and to affirm diversity of thoughts, ideas, and perspectives critical to a changing workforce.

Learning Outcomes

By participating in this session, individuals will be able to:

- ✓ Identify basic assumptions of microaggressions and the impact they have in the workplace/social environment.
- ✓ Recognize the difference between stereotypes and microaggressions.
- ✓ Engage practical communication methods designed to inspire appropriate sharing, listening and reflections

GROUND RULES

- Respect others' opinions and experiences
 - KEEP an open mind, with no judgment
 - Have FUN while learning!
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QUOTE

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

~ Dr. Maya Angelou

Microaggressions: Facts



MICROAGGRESSIONS: FACTS

Microaggressions Defined:

Dr. Derald Wing Sue, Professor of Counseling Psychology at Columbia University and the author of "*Microaggressions in Everyday Life*," defined microaggressions as:

"The everyday signals, insults, and validations that people experience in their day-to-day interactions with well-intentioned individuals who are unaware that they have engaged in something that may prove to be offensive to someone else."

MICROAGGRESSIONS: FACTS

American Psychologist, Chester M. Pierce, coined the term "microaggression".

"Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults towards people."

It speaks to the idea that specific interactions between those of different cultures or social identities can be interpreted as **non-physical aggression**.

SIX ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT MICROAGGRESSIONS

Six Basic Assumptions

- We have been socialized into a society in which there exists individual, institutional and societal biases associated with race, gender and sexual orientation
- None of us are immune from inheriting the biases of our ancestors, institutions and society.
- It is not “old-fashioned” racism, sexism and heterosexism that is most harmful to people of color women and LGBT persons, but the contemporary forms known as microaggressions

SIX ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT MICROAGGRESSIONS

Six Basic Assumptions

- The characteristics of these forms of bias are their invisible, unintentional and subtle nature; usually outside the level of conscious awareness.
- Racial, gender and sexual orientation microaggressions create psychological dilemmas for the perpetrator and recipient because they represent a clash of racial, gender and sexual orientation realities.
- Microaggressions create a hostile and invalidating climate for marginalized groups, saps their spiritual and psychic energies and their cumulative nature can result in depression, frustration, anger, rage, loss of self-esteem, anxiety, etc.

Impact on the environment

- Microaggressions undermine a person's self-worth and can have a negative impact on productivity.
- Microaggressions go beyond race and have the potential to reach multiple areas of the social experience.
- Microaggressions play a role in the injustices within the legal system
- Impact upon the psychological well-being of marginalized groups
- Impact on standard of living by creating inequities in health care, education, employment and housing.

Intent vs. impact

Although some statements, phrases, and gestures are made with good intentions, often they are not received well because they remind people about negative life experiences tied to their identity. The intent of the statement vs the impact on the individual who receives that statement **may not be equal.**

“When we do something that is offensive/harmful to another person, **we have a tendency to want to evaluate our behavior** based on our intent rather than the impact our words/actions had on the other person, particularly as members of the dominant or privileged group.”

Each of us has the individual right to articulate why something is offensive to us. It is important to remember that we don't always know the intention of others but effectively working at it... takes practice.

Creates a **hostile and invalidating** work/social environments

Saturates the broader society with cues that **signal devaluation** of social group identities

Lowers work productivity/problem-solving abilities

Responsible for **creating inequities** in education, employment and health care

QUOTE

“Here’s the thing...you get tired of being treated as an unreliable witness to your own experience.”

Leonard Pitts

Microaggressions: Fiction & Fake News

MICROAGGRESSIONS: FICTION/FAKE NEWS

- Racism is no longer a problem
- Minorities are the cause of race relation challenges
- The playing field is level--everyone has an equal chance to succeed
- People of color and other minority groups are over-sensitive
- Microaggressions are just a modern way to shut down conservative or right-leaning viewpoints

BEST PRACTICES FOR RESPONDING TO MICROAGGRESSIONS

What Can You DO?

Self-Monitor

Practice Assertive Communication

Stop Debating Intent

Confront the Invisible – If you can't see, Ask. Seek to Understand.

Stop Minimizing - A Little Validation Goes A Long Way

Practice Apologizing – You will make mistakes

Be the one to speak up

Summary

Microaggressions Defined:

Dr. Derald Wing Sue, defines microaggressions as:

“The everyday signals, insults, and validations that people experience in their day-to-day interactions with well-intentioned individuals who are unaware that they have engaged in something that may prove to be offensive to someone else.”

Dr. John Fitzgerald Gates offers this definition: “A small act of non-physical aggression based on bias and stereotypes, usually against someone racially or ethnically different than the perpetrator.”