

Examples of Racial Microaggressions

Theme	Microaggression	Message
<p><i>Alien in own land</i> When Asian Americans and Latino Americans are assumed to be foreign-born</p>	<p>"Where are you from?" "Where were you born?" "You speak good English." A person asking an Asian American to teach them words in their native language.</p>	<p>You are not American You are a foreigner</p>
<p><i>Ascription of Intelligence</i> Assigning intelligence to a person of color on the basis of their race.</p>	<p>"You are a credit to your race." "You are so articulate." Asking an Asian person to help with a Math or Science problem.</p>	<p>People of color are generally not as intelligent as Whites. It is unusual for someone of your race to be intelligent. All Asians are intelligent and good in Math / Sciences.</p>
<p><i>Color Blindness</i> Statements that indicate that a White person does not want to acknowledge race</p>	<p>"When I look at you, I don't see color." "America is a melting pot." "There is only one race, the human race."</p>	<p>Denying a person of color's racial / ethnic experiences. Assimilate / acculturate to the dominant culture. Denying the individual as a racial / cultural being.</p>
<p><i>Criminality – assumption of criminal status</i> A person of color is presumed to be dangerous, criminal, or deviant on the basis of their race.</p>	<p>A White man or woman clutching their purse or checking their wallet as a Black or Latino approaches or passes. A store owner following a customer of color around the store. A White person waits to ride the next elevator when a person of color is on it.</p>	<p>You are a criminal. You are going to steal / You are poor / You do not belong / You are dangerous.</p>
<p><i>Denial of individual racism</i> A statement made when Whites deny their racial biases</p>	<p>"I'm not a racist. I have several Black friends." "As a woman, I know what you go through as a racial minority."</p>	<p>I am immune to races because I have friends of color. Your racial oppression is no different than my gender oppression. I can't be a racist. I'm like you.</p>
<p><i>Myth of meritocracy</i> Statements which assert that race does not play a role in life successes</p>	<p>"I believe the most qualified person should get the job." "Everyone can succeed in this society, if they work hard enough."</p>	<p>People of color are given extra unfair benefits because of their race. People of color are lazy and / or incompetent and need to work harder.</p>
<p><i>Pathologizing cultural values / communication styles</i> The notion that the values and communication styles of the dominant / White culture are ideal</p>	<p>Asking a Black person: "Why do you have to be so loud / animated? Just calm down." To an Asian or Latino person: Why are you so quiet? We want to know what you think. Be more verbal." Speak up more." Dismissing an individual who brings up race / culture in work / school setting.</p>	<p>Assimilate to dominant culture. Leave your cultural baggage outside.</p>

RESPONDING TO MICROAGGRESSIONS AND BIAS

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 _____.”

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?”

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 Muslim 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 campus/in the community.” “In the real world, we are going to have to work with all sorts of people, so might as well learn how to do it here.”

Adapted from: Goodman, D. (2011). *Promoting Diversity and Social Justice: Educating People from Privileged Groups*. New York: Routledge