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Witnessing Microaggressions: What Can I Do?

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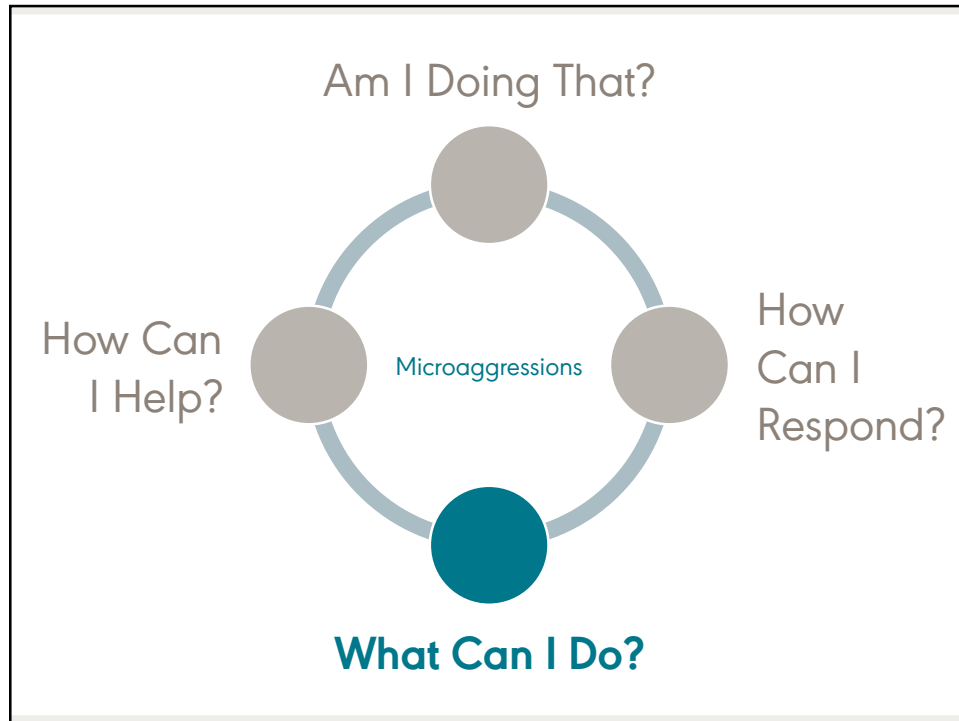
 ASHA
Professional Development

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 - Member of National Black Association for Speech-Language and Hearing



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Microaggressions are indignities that insult or marginalize targeted individuals.

Microaggressions can create physiological and psychological harm over time.

Too often, microaggressions are **seen and heard** by bystanders, but no one **says** anything, to either the person making the comment or the one being insulted or marginalized.

Why?

Many reasons why...

- Some subtlety or nuance in the comment that gives an illusion of ambiguity
- Conflict-averse, reluctant to label subtle racism, or not sure what to say
- Fear of repercussion or retaliation or making things worse
- Speed of the moment
- Immobilized by not knowing what to do

For targets of microaggressions,
microinterventions are words or actions of
bystanders that:

- **Validate** their reality.
- **Convey** their **value** as a person.
- **Affirm** their racial or group identity.
- **Support** and **encourage**.
- **Reassure** that they are not alone.

(Clay, 2017; Sue et al., 2019, 2020)

Microinterventions can:

- **Make** “the invisible visible”
- **Disarm** negative words and actions
- **Educate**
- **Support** and **empower** targets of
microaggressions

(Clay, 2017; Sue et al., 2019, 2020)

Being an **Active Bystander**

- Recognize acceptable and unacceptable behaviors.
- Realize the positive outcomes for all through action.
- Have a repertoire of responses to use.
- Practice, practice, practice.
- Seek external intervention.

(The Ohio State University Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity:
kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/active-bystander-training/)

Drawing Attention

- Discourage problematic acts or comments by calling attention to them.
- A new Asian or Latinx CSD student is visiting your team. Everyone seems impressed by her and an older staff person says, "You speak excellent English."
- After the student leaves, you say, "Why were you surprised that she speaks English well?"

The Impact, on You

- Avoiding assumptions or assertions about the potential impact on the student, you describe the impact on you.
 - “I felt uncomfortable by it, like we were drawing attention to a perceived difference.”

A Different Perspective


- Offering a different perspective when they respond, “I was just trying to compliment her. What’s the big deal?”
- You reply, “If I just met the team and had, what I thought was a great conversation, and the only thing one of them said to me was that my English was good... I think I might take it as a bad sign, right?”

Resources

- Did They Really Just Say That?! Being an Active Bystander
kirwaninstitute.osu.edu/active-bystander-training/
- Tool: Interrupting Microaggressions
academicaffairs.ucsc.edu/events/documents/Microaggressions_InterruptHO_2014_11_182v5.pdf
- Standing Up, Speaking Out for Racial Justice
leader.pubs.asha.org/doi/10.1044/leader.ftr.2.25082020.52/full/
- Raw Conversations: Stop the Silence Listening Session and Tips to Become a CSD Student Ally
blog.nsslha.org/2020/06/16/raw-conversations-stop-the-silence-listening-session-and-tips-to-become-a-csd-student-ally/
- Resources on Implicit Bias' and Microaggressions
diversity.gwu.edu/resources-implicit-bias-microaggressions
- Allies and Microaggressions
www.insidehighered.com/advice/2016/04/13/how-be-ally-someone-experiencing-microaggressions-essay
- A Guide to Responding to Microaggressions
advancingjustice-la.org/sites/default/files/ELAMICRO%20A_Guide_to_Responding_to_Microaggressions.pdf


Coming up next

We've explored the concept. In the *next activity*, we'll review some **examples**.



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REVIEWING EXAMPLES



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The Team- mate

A couple of colleagues and I were chatting about our time in undergraduate CSD programs. One, a new employee, expressed surprised that the other, who is African American, went to an Ivy League school.

Later, sort of out of the blue, she suggested to me that her being Black must have been **the reason she got into the school.**

**The
Team-
mate**

Recognize the problematic comment and draw attention to it.

**What
Can I
Do?**

Offer another perspective that validates the target of the microaggressor.

Describe the impact on you.

**The
Team
Mate**

“That’s definitely not right. She’s an exceptionally smart and dedicated clinician. I bet she worked incredibly hard to get into that school. The idea that successful people of color get unfair advantages and don’t deserve their success isn’t true and really bothers me.”

**What
Can I
Do?**

**The
New
Hire**

I was part of an **interview team** to hire a new employee.

One member of the team asked the applicant if he'll be **comfortable living in a city where there are few Hispanic families**.

She added that they "**took a chance**" a few years ago in hiring a Hispanic individual who left after 2 years.

**The
New
Hire**

Stop it **right away**.

Recognize the problematic comment and **call attention** to why it's a problem.

**What
Can I
Do?**

Offer a **different perspective** that moves the conversation in a **positive direction**.

**The
New
Hire**

**What
Can I
Do?**

“Actually, that’s **not correct**. She was a **great colleague** and we **were lucky to have** her join the team. Two years **isn’t unusual** anyway. We know that coming to a totally new city can be challenging for anyone, which is why our onboarding process **welcomes new coworkers’ entire family** to our community. We **welcome and try to celebrate diversity here.**”

**The
Cases**

SLPs in a school region were meeting to receive the names of the students who would be on our caseloads.

Each student’s name was given along with the SLP to whom the student was assigned.

I started to notice that **all the BIPOC students were being assigned to BIPOC clinicians.**

**The
Cases**

Draw attention to the issue through observation.

**What
Can I
Do?**

Talk about the **impact on you** and suggest a **different course of action**.

**The
Cases**

"I'm not sure if you noticed, but **it looks like** all the BIPOC kids have been assigned to just a few SLPs. That's probably **not ideal**, is it?"

**What
Can I
Do?**

I really **enjoy** working with kids from different backgrounds and recognize it **helps me** be a better clinician. If we more evenly distributed those students, **we'd all benefit** from the experience."

Coming up next

We've explored the concept and reviewed some examples. The *next activities* are **your turn** to **plan, practice, and reflect**.



..... 's PLAN

Spend 5 minutes to create a plan to apply the course concepts

WHO

DATE

WHAT

HOW

3

YOUR PLAN

What microaggressions have you witnessed before? What could you imagine witnessing in your everyday life? What could you do or say to intervene as an active bystander? Plan a practice conversation.

4

TRYING YOUR PLAN

.....

Spend 5 minutes at work putting your plan into action

NOTES

.....

TRY IT
.....

Practice the conversation out loud or with a friend. Try to imagine how they might react. Remember that the goals of intervention are to draw attention to an issue; invite people to do better, rather than ostracizing them; and offer support to the impacted individuals.

5

's REFLECTIONS

.....

WHAT HAPPENED

.....

WHAT WORKED WELL

.....

IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

.....

SPEAKER TIPS
.....

What worked well?
What was hard?
What would you change next time?
Practice is critical to effective intervention, so keep practicing to build your confidence and repertoire of responses.

Spend 5 minutes to reflect on how your plan went

6

LEARNING ASSESSMENT

Spend 5 minutes to complete your learning assessment
in the ASHA Learning Center.

You'll have access to a certificate of completion
immediately after you complete and submit your
assessment.

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