

Responding to Subtle and Overt ACTS OF EXCLUSION (MICROAGGRESSIONS)

Subtle and overt acts of exclusion, also known as microaggressions are typically verbal, behavioral, or environmental actions (intentional or unintentional) that communicate hostility or bias toward historically marginalized groups including, but not limited to, people of color, women, LGBTQIA+ persons, persons with disabilities, religion, and persons over the age of 40. However, anyone can experience a Microaggression. Microaggressions often have a negative impact on the individual and the workplace. Microaggressions do not demonstrate respect or follow our Guiding Principles.

TYPES OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

VERBAL: A comment or question that is hurtful or stigmatizing to a marginalized group or person. *Example:* "Where are you really from?"

BEHAVIORAL: Behaving in a way that is discriminatory or otherwise hurtful to a marginalized person or group. *Example:* A store owner follows a customer of color around the store.

ENVIRONMENTAL: A subtle discrimination occurs within society in such a way that it makes one or more groups feel invalidated. *Example:* Female doctors who enter a room to speak to a new patient are assumed to be nurses rather than physicians.

WHAT TO DO

- To respond to a microaggression in the moment, see Possible Responses below.
- Speak to your supervisor about the incident(s) and ask for support. If you do not feel comfortable speaking to your supervisor, please reach out to your HR Generalist.
- Prepare an incident log. Now that you know what microaggressions are, it will be easier to keep track of the incidents and have documentation so you can communicate specific concerns to your supervisor or HR Generalist if needed.



If it is brought to your attention that you were, intentionally or unintentionally, part of a **microaggression**, do this: resist feeling defensive, apologize, say thank you, be curious about what you can learn, and consider the feelings and impact on the other person. It is important to **be empathetic, compassionate, and validating** when an individual experiences a microaggression or if you witness a microaggression. We all experience situations differently, so don't assume your experience is the same as everyone else's. **Be open to accepting someone's experience as their own.**

POSSIBLE RESPONSES to consider when responding to MICROAGGRESSIONS

Restate or Paraphrase

"I think I heard you saying _____ (paraphrase their comments). How accurate is that?"

Ask for Clarification/More Information

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

Separate Intent from Impact

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

Share Your Own Process

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

Pretend You Don't Understand

"I don't get it. Why is that funny?" As people try to explain their comments, they often realize how silly they sound.

Express Your Feelings

"When you _____ (comment or behavior), I felt _____ (feeling) and I would like you to _____."

Use Humor

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

Promote Empathy

Ask how they would feel if someone said something like that about their group, friend, partner, child, or loved one.