

Wednesday

WeBelong Monthly:



**Microaggressions: What They Are +
How To Respond**



What is a Microaggression?

- Actions and/or statements that can be subtle, intentional, or unintentional, that ultimately show discrimination or bias towards marginalized groups
- Everyday verbal or non-verbal slights
- Subtle acts of exclusion

Types of Microaggressions

Microassault

Explicit put-downs, belittling, or bullying behaviors that overtly discriminate or criticize a marginalized group.

“Your kind doesn’t understand English.”

Microinsults

Comments that communicate that the demographic group is not respected, but the target is seen as an exception to the stereotype.

“You’re so articulate!”

Microinvalidations

A comment or action that dismisses the experiences of historically disadvantaged group members.

“I don’t see color.”

How Workplace Microaggressions Are Sent

Behavioral

Communicating a message with actions or symbols that display insensitivity to identity stereotypes.

Not using someone’s pronouns correctly on purpose.

Environmental

Lack of representation and diversity, including gender, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

Only promoting white men.

Verbal

Saying something that may not outright appear to be, but is disrespectful or offensive to a marginalized group.

“She’s so exotic!”

What's the Harm?

Microaggressions in the workplace can cause:

- Disengaged team members
- Distrust among colleagues
- Poor work environment
- Employees questioning their abilities
- Effects on hiring, promotion + retention

In a survey of over 4,000 participants on experiencing microaggressions at work:

- 26% definitely experienced
- 22% unsure
- 36% witnessed



Stress in Historically Marginalized People

- Chronically high levels of stress are common within groups of marginalized people, such as members of the LGBTQ+ community, people of color, or disabled individuals
- When microaggressions are experienced frequently over a long period, they can exert a detrimental impact on recipients, contributing to low self-esteem, levels of depression, anxiety, and other mental health problems

Who Commits Microaggressions?

Everyone!

Including folks with
good intentions!

We're all *human*.

What's important is **acknowledging** our mistakes, **apologizing** for and **correcting** them, and being willing to **learn**.

Taking Action

Countering Microaggressions with Microaffirmations

Small acts of language that foster inclusion, offer encouragement, and build relationships.

Assess the Situation

Before speaking up, assess the situation.

Every situation is unique, and it may not always be safe to speak up.

Speaking Up

Speaking up can help to educate others and shift the climate.

Ask + Share

Ask for clarification – come from a place of curiosity and not accusation or assumption. Share what you observed and the impact of the comment.

"Can you please help me understand what you meant by that?"

"I am concerned that when you make statements like that, it may be construed that you..."

"Can you tell me what you were hoping to communicate with that comment?"

"When I heard your comment, I felt uncomfortable because, in my experience, I have heard people say that to perpetuate negative stereotypes."

"Thank you for having this conversation with me. I encourage you to stay open to considering why language matters."

Call to Action

Practice Allyship + Advocacy

Amplify voices that are often not heard. Sponsor or advocate for someone not like you.

Listen with Empathy

Pause to be empathetic and acknowledge the lens and experiences of others.

Remain Open to Growth

Acknowledge your own mistakes. Read and learn independently to build cultural competence.

Speak Up!

Call out when someone else is being disrespected, mistreated, or disregarded in the moment.