



Building a Culture of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion through... **UNDERSTANDING MICROAGGRESSIONS**

DID YOU KNOW?



Microaggressions are everyday slights, indignities, put-downs, and insults that members of marginalized groups experience in their day-to-day interactions with individuals who are often unaware they have engaged in an offensive or demeaning way.

CONTEXT:



Microaggressions are often discussed in a racial context, but anyone in a marginalized group — be it because of their gender, race, sexual orientation, disability, age, religion, or other protected characteristics — can experience one.

Microaggressions can be as overt as watching a person of color in a store for possible theft and as subtle as discriminatory comments disguised as compliments.

The first step to addressing a microaggression is to recognize one has occurred and dissect what message it may be sending. To question where someone is from, for instance, may seem innocuous, but it implicitly delivers the message they are an outsider. Other examples may include wrong assumptions based on someone's characteristics, or normalizing stereotypes such as ageism with "having a senior moment". Even subtle actions are nonverbal assumptions and examples of microaggressions. See a few examples below; [click here](#) for the complete version.

THEMES	MICROAGGRESSION EXAMPLES	MESSAGE
Race/Ethnicity/Nationality as Outlier Calling out someone's race, ethnicity or nationality as an outlier.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Where are you from?" or "Where were you born?" • "You speak English very well" (as if surprised). • "What are you? You're so interesting looking!" • "You don't act/sound Black." • Continuing to mispronounce names after being corrected by the person time and again. Not willing to listen closely and learn the pronunciation of a less common sounding name. • Saying "You people..." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are "different" and "not normal." • Your ethnic/racial identity makes you exotic. • You are not American or not a true-American, i.e., don't belong. • You and others "like you" are not welcome.
Ascription of Intelligence Assigning intelligence to a person based on race/gender.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "You are a credit to your race." • "Wow! How did you become so good in math?" • Based on race/gender, "You must be good in math, can you help me with this problem?" or "I would have never guessed that you were a scientist." 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People of color are generally not as intelligent as Whites. • All [Asians] are intelligent and good in math/science. • It is unusual for a woman to have strong math/science skills.

CONVERSATION ENGAGEMENTS:



1. Can you think of microaggressions you may have witnessed?
2. What could you do if you realize you have witnessed or unknowingly performed a microaggression?
3. How can you ask questions about someone's culture or make compliments about someone's appearance without performing a microaggression?
4. What action do you feel motivated to take based on what you learned?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:



- <https://thediversitymovement.com/have-you-committed-any-of-these-35-common-microaggressions/>