



Microaggressions

Microaggressions are brief and **commonplace** daily verbal or behavioral indignities, **whether intentional or unintentional**, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative slights and insults. The definition was initially developed regarding racial microaggressions and has since evolved to include targets of other oppressed and/or marginalized groups.

The 5 Roles of Microaggressions

Aggressor – person who commits the offense (whether intentionally or unintentionally)

- **Acknowledge** for what you said or did that was offensive
- **Apologize** without minimizing
- **Forgiveness is not guaranteed** and cannot be asked for
- Explain what you will do differently next time

Ally – a person who takes **direct action** (e.g. telling the person to stop, stating the offense is unacceptable) to intervene when a microaggression occurs

- Intervene with aggressor/offender. Speak directly to them (or their manager depending on protocol) about the observed offense.
- Describe the offense that you observed or told.
- Ask them to stop or apologize depending on situation.

Bystander – someone who watches the microaggression but takes no action

- Observe what is happening
- Be aware of your own emotions and reactions.
- Consider the emotions and reactions of the person involved (Empathy)
- Decide if you will become a Witness, Ally, or remain a Bystander. What are the risks or consequences to consider to make this decision?

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Witness – a person who witnesses the microaggression and makes a supportive gesture in the moment or later (e.g. eye contact to validate the offense, later stating what they witnessed)

- Validate what happened. Tell the target/victim what you saw / observed / felt.
- Demonstrate empathy:
 - “I’m sorry ____ happened”
 - “____ was unfair/unacceptable/hurtful”
- Depending on relationship or situation explain why you were a witness and not an ally.

NOTE: There will be times when this explanation will not be wanted or “accepted” by others.

Victim/Target – the person(s) who the microaggression is directed to.

- Acknowledge your reactions and feelings
- Validate your experience (check-in with a friend, ally)
- Address your feelings, **what do you need** to do to honor your emotions and release in a way that doesn’t hurt you?
- Stay connected to others