

Building a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive culture: Addressing Microaggressions



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The 'Carrot'...

Enhance training and PEDP sections of

- Mentored grants(e.g. K99/R00, F31/32)
- Grants that require Plan for Enhancing Diverse Perspectives (PEDP) (e.g. BRAIN Initiative, RM1, R61/R33)

Contact [REDACTED] for the latest example text to put in grants.

The applicant(s) will participate in the LRT's two-part 'Microaggression Awareness Training' which is offered at least every other month. Microaggressions are everyday actions and behaviors that have harmful effects on marginalized groups. This awareness training helps teams recognize, address and avoid microaggressions to help diverse teams work more effectively together.

Part I. This introductory session starts with 45 minutes of interactive didactics where attendees learn how to recognize a microaggression, the impact microaggressions have, and how to respond to microaggressions if they are the recipient, a bystander, or the source. The didactic portion is followed by 45 minutes of group discussions of different case studies where attendees work through how to respond if they are the recipient, bystander, or source.

Part II. This advanced skills practice session includes a 15-minute didactic refresher followed by an hour and 15 minutes of guided skills practice and role play. Scenarios discussed will emphasize specific topics or situations the attendees are most in need of help with based on a pre-session anonymous survey.

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The 'Stick'...

We regularly get comments from attendees like:

- Power structure makes it difficult to confront my PI
- This training should be mandatory for the PIs

More Carrots...

Training is not about identifying 'good' or 'bad' people...

Its goal is to build understanding and help people from all parts of the workforce interact more effectively.

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What is a Microaggression?

Microaggressions are everyday actions and behaviors that have harmful effects on marginalized groups.

Microaggressions may be intentional or unintentional, implicit or explicit.

"Micro" aggression does not mean "small" impact.

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Microaggressions can be based on:

Race/
ethnicity

Education

Age

Religion

Body
size

Socio-
economic
status

Physical
disability

Gender

Neurodiversity

Sexual
orientation

Etc.

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Microaggression examples

- No, where are you really from?
- Wow, you're so articulate!
- She must be off her meds!
- Of course he got it, he's Hispanic.
- Hon, can you take notes?
- A woman clutches her purse when a black man enters the elevator

Think about the implications of these comments and behaviors. How do they make you feel? How do you think others feel? Is that the reaction you want?

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What a Microaggression really says...

You are a second-class citizen

You aren't one of us

There is something wrong with you

You don't belong here

You aren't good enough

You are dangerous

I expect you to adapt to my normal

You won't succeed

You are different

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INTENT \neq IMPACT

When you said/did X, I felt ...

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Special challenges when the source has *Power & Privilege*

Vulnerable populations

- **Boss-employee relationships:** fear of retaliation with poor performance reviews; not promoted; given less desirable duties
- **New to this country:** no local social support system; still learning the culture and language; fear of deportation if they lose their job
- **Students/trainees:** fear of not graduating or getting letters of recommendation needed for advancement
- **Historically-targeted groups:** Significant past experience of being treated unfairly and not having concerns addressed

Just because someone hasn't complained about how they are treated, that doesn't mean the microaggressions don't bother them

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Why microaggressions can have even more of an impact than macroaggression

Response to overt harassment/aggression:
That person is a creep.

Response to microaggression:

- ↓ am not good enough,
- ↓ don't belong in this job,
- ↓ should change to a career more suited to my gender/race/etc.

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How to respond to microaggressions?

If you are the recipient...

- Ask **clarifying questions** without judgment.
- Explain in a factual manner why the **action** is bad—not why the **person** is bad.
- Explain the **impact** on you and/or others.
- Clearly state the **alternative action** you want taken.

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How to respond to microaggressions?

Bystander Rules of Engagement:

- Do **pay attention** and put yourself in others' shoes. You can't be an ally without noticing when microaggressions occur.
- Do tell the recipient that you noticed the event and that the behavior was **not okay!**
- Do ask **how you can help**.
- Do provide a **safe space** to talk. Listen to their concerns.
- Do offer **suggestions/resources** on how to approach the situation

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How to respond to microaggressions

Bystander Rules of engagement:

- Don't **go against the recipients wishes** and confront the source on their behalf because **'you know best'**.

However, you can raise your **own** concerns as long as you make it clear that the concerns are coming from **you**.

- Don't **'out'** someone without their consent
Not just sexual orientation, ... political affiliation, religion, health status, etc.

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How to respond to microaggressions? If you realize you are the source...

- Acknowledge that it happened and apologize
- Focus on the **effect of the action** not the intent
- Recognize issues of power and privilege
- Seek feedback and Commit to improving

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How to respond to microaggressions? If you are called out as the source...

- Acknowledge that it happened and apologize
- Focus on the **effect of the action** not the intent
- Recognize issues of power and privilege
- Seek feedback and Commit to improving
- **Thank** the person and encourage them to speak up again in the future

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Creating an Inclusive Environment Micro-Affirmations

- Learn people's names and how to pronounce them
- Attentively listen when others are speaking
- Use friendly body language, facial expressions, and vocal tone
- Actively seek input from all participants, particularly those who have not had a chance to speak
- Acknowledge and affirm others' feelings and experiences
- Make it a habit to give credit generously
- Make a purposeful effort to consider whom you are leaving out and why

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What if microaggressions persist and/or are clearly intentional?

- Continue to ask for the Microaggressions to stop
- Document events with written notes. Make note of any witnesses that could corroborate your story
- Go to your supervisor with your notes...or
- Go to your representative:

[REDACTED]

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Example text for grants

The [applicant(s)] will participate in the LRI's two-part 'Microaggression Awareness Training' which is currently offered every other month. Microaggressions are everyday actions and behaviors that have harmful effects on marginalized groups. This awareness training helps teams recognize, address and avoid microaggressions to help diverse teams work more effectively together.

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