Unpacking Microaggressions

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Overview

• What are Microaggressions?
• Impact of Microaggressions
• Coping Skills
• Ally Action Steps
• Resources
Taking a Mindful Moment
Welcome and Icebreaker

- Pair up with a partner and share what brought you to today’s workshop.
Ground Rules

• Respectful, active listening.
• Step up, or step back.
• Ask questions, avoid assumptions.
• Maintain confidentiality.
What Are Microaggressions?

• Subtle, “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative” slights and insults towards marginalized groups (Sue et al., 2007)

• Outside conscious awareness, even well-intended

• Represent underlying tensions, privilege, cultural biases or prejudicial beliefs
Types of Microaggressions

- **Microassaults**: Conscious and intentional; aims to attack the person’s group identity or harm them through name-calling, avoidance, and discriminatory actions.

- **Microinsults**: Often unconscious verbal, nonverbal, and environmental communications that subtly convey a stereotype, rudeness and/or insensitivity towards a person's group identity.

- **Microinvalidations**: Often unconscious communications that deny, exclude, or negate the thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of an individual in a group.
Impact on Marginalized People

• Creates a psychological bind and internal dilemma
• College students of color experienced an average of 291 microaggressions over 90 days
• Negatively impact mental and physical health, decrease productivity and problem-solving abilities, create hostile work and institutional environments
Video

Microaggressions: Comments That Sting
Debrief/ Discussion

• Turn to the person next to you and debrief:
  • What is your initial reaction to the video?
  • Describe a time you experienced a microaggression. What was the underlying message? How did it impact you? What did you do?
  • Or, describe a time you witnessed a microaggression. What was the underlying message? How did you feel? What did you do?
Coping Skills

• There is no one way to cope.

• Personal Level Coping: “The Internal Response to Racist Slights”
  • Name our experiences.
  • Do relaxing activities - bath, yoga, prayer, hiking, meditation.
  • Engage in creativity - journaling, art, knitting, music.
  • Create internal boundaries – mirror vs. sponge.

• Community Level Coping:
  • Connect with community and create space to process.
  • Take advocacy steps OR
  • Encourage allies to take advocacy steps.
If addressing a microaggression...

• Ground yourself.
• Assess the situation.
• Model the behavior you want to see.
• Confront the behavior, not the perpetrator.
• Strategies for addressing the microaggression in an assertive way:
  • Affirm the person or relationship (“I really appreciate having you as a friend.”)
  • Describe the behavior.
  • Use impact and “I” statements - e.g., “I felt (feeling word) when you said or did (comment or behavior).”
  • Make a request (“Can I please ask you to not say/do that in the future?”) and/or join with the person or find out more (“Tell me more about that”; “What did you mean by that?”; “What makes you say that?”)
If someone comes to you with a concern...

- Actively listen.
- Be open to hearing difficult feedback, and manage your own feelings of defensiveness.
- Differentiate intent vs. impact.
- Remember your mistakes don’t define you.
- Take responsibility and genuinely apologize: “I really appreciate you telling me”, “I’m so embarrassed that I did that”, “I’m so sorry my words/actions made you feel that way”.
Ally Action Steps

• Listen and Learn.
• Educate yourself continuously.
• Make space for marginalized voices in your everyday interactions.
• Amplify voices of marginalized people.
• Support the work of marginalized people. Step out of the spotlight.
• Increase awareness of language you use (in conversation, in publications, with patients, etc). Consult with people from the community you are working with / writing about/ etc.
AllyAction Steps

• Become aware of our own biases.
  • Implicit Association Test: https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/
• Develop / Support spaces for marginalized communities to come together.
• Advocate for multicultural topics to be infused in your curriculum.
• Get involved in advocacy groups on-campus or in your community
• Speak up and acknowledge microaggressions when they occur.
Let’s Continue the Dialogue

- Turn to the person next to you and debrief:
  - What **individual** action will you take to address microaggressions?
  - What **community** action will you take to address microaggressions?
“In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.
For Further Reading

Microaggressions in Everyday Life
Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation
Derald Wing Sue

Microaggressions and Marginality
Manifestation, Dynamics, and Impact
Edited by Derald Wing Sue
Remember Your Resources

Student Health & Counseling
476-1281

Student Disability Services
476-6595

Office of Diversity and Outreach
476-7700

Ombuds
502-9600

Multicultural Resource Center
502-1911

LGBT Resource Center
476-7700

Your Peers

Faculty/Mentors

First Gen Support Services
514-0840