Microaggressions: Not So Small After All
Agenda

• How Did We Get Here?
• The Anatomy of Microaggressions
• Walk A Mile in My Shoes (activity)
• The Impact of Microaggressions
• Responding to Microaggressions
• We are Better Together
Objectives

• Identify and define racial and other microaggressions
• Develop skills to respond to, and prevent microaggressions
• Commit to being better together!
Rules of Engagement / “Be” Attitudes

- Be comfortable, and participate at your own comfort level
- Be ready to engage in open and honest dialogue
- Be present, no cell phones/checking email
- Be open to new and different perspectives
- Be aware of how your words affect others
- Be in search of understanding, not judgement
- Be a scientist of your own behavior
Starting Status (Poll)

• I want to learn more about microaggressions?

• I have been a recipient of a microaggression?

• I cannot even spell microaggressions?

• I may have delivered a microaggression?
How Did We Get Here?

1970
Chester M. Pierce

1973
Mary Rowe

2010
Derald Wing Sue
First, a few key concepts...
“Social oppression exists when one social group, whether knowingly or unconsciously, exploits another social group for its own benefit.”
PRIVILEGE

“Both agents, those who are privileged in the hierarchy of oppression, and targets, those who are victimized and penalized, play a role in maintaining oppression.”
Microaggressions are more than just racial

Microaggressions are offensive regardless of the context

Microaggressions are cumulative
How do these concepts surface in everyday life?
The Makeup of a Microaggression
Microaggressions Are

Brief and **commonplace** daily, verbal, behavioral or environmental indignities, whether **intentional or unintentional**, that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative slights and insults towards people.
Microaggressions Are Multi-Layered

Micro-Assaults: Conscious and intentional actions or slurs
Example: “Your kind doesn’t understand English”

Micro-Insults: Subtly convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person’s identity
Example: “That’s so gay”, “You are so articulate”

Micro-Invalidations: Alien in your own country, unintentionality mis-gendering, denial of individual racism, sexism, heterosexism
Example: “There is only one race, the human race”
Experiencing Microaggressions Has Been Described As Death By 1000 Papercuts
Has Been Described Like Mosquito Bites
One Bite Might Not Hurt That Much........
But Multiple Bites Can Build Up Over Time....
Microaggressions Up Close

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nQ9l7y4UuxY
A New Microaggression Mindset

What’s the INTENT?

What were they trying to say?

What’s the IMPACT?

What feeling might the recipient feel?

What should you do INSTEAD?

What might you do to understand, diffuse, process the situation?
Walk A Mile In Another’s Shoes/Breakout Sessions

Breakout into small groups
Elect someone to be the speaker when we return to the main group

Discussion:
What was the intent of this remark?
What was the impact of this remark?
What is a way to be more inclusive?
“I am not a racist I have [any marginalized culture] friends”
Group One

“You are so articulate”
Group One

“I wish I could sit down all day” (said to individuals who use a wheelchair)
Group Two

“You do not know Snap Chat”
Group Two

“Who is the girl, Who is the boy?”
Group Two

“As a woman, I know what you go through as a minority”
Group Three
Ladies & Gentlemen
Group Three

“I can’t say your name, I will just call you…”
Group Three

“You are my spirit animal”
Group Four

“All Lives Matter”
“When I look at you, I do not see color.”
Group Four

Using “tribe” to describe a group of people/team
Group Five

“That is so gay”
Group Five

“Your family must be so proud”
Group Five

“You are in America, speak English”
The Impact of Experiencing a Microaggression

- It creates an **emotional tax**

  - Toxic Environment
  - Misunderstood
  - Excluded
  - Disengage
  - Exhaustion
  - Judged
  - Frustrated
  - Disrespected
  - Prejudiced

**BURNED OUT**
Responding To Microaggressions

• Did I hear that correctly?
• Did the individual say what I thought I heard?
• Should I say something?
• I will just be quiet, or I will be accused of being angry
• Saying something will only make it worse
• Speaking up will hurt more than help
Microaggression-Call In

- Apologize immediately
- Take responsibility
- Manage feelings of defensiveness
- Listen intently to what happened
- Recognize your own cultural conditioning
- Do not defend yourself, based on intentions
- Reflect on what is being said
- Ground yourself, so that you can hear difficult feedback
- No gaslighting
What do you think Gaslighting is?
Gaslighting Sounds Like

- “It was just a joke”
- “Why do you have to make everything about race?”
- “You are probably imagining it”
- “I know them, they are not racist”
- “It is not that big of a deal”
- “_______ people are racist too”
- “Just to play devil’s advocate…”
Respectful Responses

- Ask for more clarification: “Could you say more about what you mean by that?”, “How have you come to think that?”

- Separate intent from impact: “I know you didn’t realize this, but when you said _____ or behaved in a particular way, it was hurtful/offensive because of _____”

- Having like-minded allies to step in to respond can validate the experience for victims. **Allyship** is a supportive mechanism for tackling microaggressions. It is about building relationships of trust, consistency, and accountability by everyone.
Finding the SPACE to be better

S lowing Down: being mindful and considerate in your responses to others

P erspective Taking: actively imagining the thoughts and feelings of others

A sking Yourself: Active self-questioning to challenge your assumptions

C ultural Intelligence: Interpreting a person’s behavior through their lens

E xpand: The formation of diverse friendships

Source: Include-empower.com
We Are Better Together

In the next few minutes using the chat write one thing you are committed to doing as a result of our discussion today. **BNP: Buffalo Niagara Promises**
Tangible Takeaways

• I know more about microaggressions that I did earlier?

• I will monitor more closely the things that I say to others

• I still cannot spell microaggressions

• I will share the information with my team
We are Here to Help, and Happy To Help

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Every word has consequences.

Every silence, too.