

Understand Microaggression



Understand Microaggression - Course description



Microaggressions are things that people say or do that subtly reflect biases like racism, sexism, and homophobia. Frequently, they are not meant to be aggressive. Members of marginalized groups often experience microaggressions in their daily interactions, and these microaggressions can not only be hurtful but can also perpetuate marginalization. Commenting on someone's accent, dress, or other features can be considered a microaggression, especially if it reinforces a stereotype. Be thoughtful about what you say to others and how they might receive it.

Understanding the roles in a microaggression - Aggressor

Find explanations of the roles that people play in microaggressions below.



The aggressor is the person who says or does something offensive or hurtful. They may have good intentions and be unaware of the impact, or they may use microaggressions to exert power or assert their status. But even if they had good intentions, what matters is the impact.

Understanding the roles in a microaggression - Reciever

Find explanations of the roles that people play in microaggressions below.



The receiver is the person who is the target of the comment or behavior. Experiencing a microaggression feels like a personal insult. It can also make someone feel isolated or alienated from a whole group of people, even if they aren't all aggressors.

Understanding the roles in a microaggression - Ally

Find explanations of the roles that people play in microaggressions below.



An ally is someone who publicly shows support for the person who experienced a microaggression and tells the aggressor that what they said or did was not OK. Although the goal is to be an ally in any microaggression, it's not a label we should claim for ourselves.

Understanding the roles in a microaggression - Bystander

Find explanations of the roles that people play in microaggressions below.



A bystander is someone who witnesses a microaggression and takes no action, even if they know it was inappropriate. The bystander effect is the principle that the more people are present, the less likely anyone is to help someone in need.

Understanding the roles in a microaggression

Which statement is an aggression and not an aggression

Question	Yes	No
Do you need help?		
You don't talk like other people from there		
You have a beautiful skin		
Great idea		
You must be good at math		
You look nice today		
"What are you" - Referring to someone's ethnicity.		
Can I touch your hair?		
Are you OK?		

Identifying microaggressions

Which statement is an aggression and not an aggression

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Do you need help?		X
You don't talk like other people from there	X	
You have a beautiful skin	X	
Great idea		X
You must be good at math	X	
You look nice today		X
"What are you" - Referring to someone's ethnicity.	X	
Can I touch your hair?	X	
Are you OK?		X

Identifying microaggressions - Experiencing or witnessing a microaggression



Identifying microaggressions - When you experience it



Microaggressions can cause lasting pain for those who experience them, whether or not it happens frequently. What may seem unimportant to some people can be hurtful and exhausting to others, especially when they are based on stereotypes or involve qualities a person has no control over. And these offenses can accumulate over time, possibly hurting people's self-esteem and causing feelings of alienation or mental health problems.

Identifying microaggressions – How to respond

Derald Wing Sue, a professor of psychology and education at Columbia University in New York, USA, suggests that, when you experience a microaggression, you respond with a "microintervention," or a response that makes it clear that the behavior was inappropriate. Practice responding to microaggressions. Match the responses on the left with the microaggressions they address on the right.

≡ (To a male nurse:) "You're a nurse? You don't see that every day."	"I'm a person, just like you. A better question would be 'Who are you?'"
≡ (To an LGBTQ+ intern:) "You don't sound gay."	Well, sexual orientation doesn't have a particular sound. I sound like me."
≡ (To someone who is multiracial:) "What are you?"	"Just because something is less common doesn't make it weird or negative."

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≡ (To an LGBTQ+ intern:) "You don't sound gay."	"Well, sexual orientation doesn't have a particular sound. I sound like me."
≡ (To a male nurse:) "You're a nurse? You don't see that every day."	"Just because something is less common doesn't make it weird or negative."

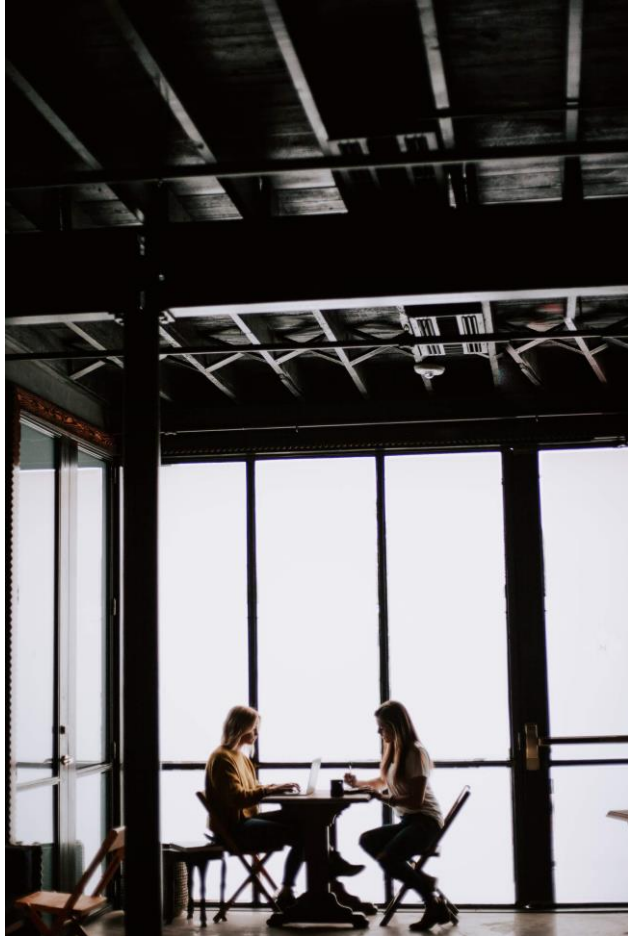
Identifying microaggressions - When you're an ally



Being an ally means speaking up when you notice a microaggression and showing support for the person who experienced it. Calling someone's attention to a comment that could hurt or offend another person can be uncomfortable. But if it's done respectfully, it can bring meaningful change.

Rotary has no tolerance for racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, classism, or ageism. Agreeing to this with your fellow club members and working together to become more aware of biases and microaggressions will help you create an environment where everyone feels welcome and safe. This may include telling someone, in a supportive way, when they make a mistake, or pointing out discrepancies between someone's behavior and the club's shared values. At times, you may have to tell someone more firmly that their behavior isn't acceptable. But aim for improvement, not condemnation. Mistakes can happen even when we're working to improve. Reminding one another what's hurtful and what's better helps the whole community.

Identifying microaggressions - How to address inappropriate behavior



One way to hold people accountable is to tell them when they've said or done something inappropriate. Calling attention to offensive behavior takes courage, but it tells the aggressor what's not OK and also shows the receiver that they have support.

Identifying microaggressions – How to

1. Say what you observed and in what way you felt it was inappropriate.



Restating what someone said or describing what they did tells them it was noticed. For example, "You just said that they weren't a good fit for our club and winked. That implies that we have unwritten membership standards, which is inappropriate and might be discriminatory." Telling them a comment or action isn't OK shows that similar behavior won't be tolerated and also offers support to anyone else who was offended.

Identifying microaggressions – How to

2. Help the aggressor avoid repeating the behavior



Acknowledge that anyone can unintentionally say or do things that are offensive, and that your intention is not to make them feel bad but to help them avoid repeating the behavior.

Identifying microaggressions – How to

3. Help them understand how it felt



Explain why what they said or did is inappropriate and why it offended others or could do so. In a serious case, or if it wasn't simply a mistake, make sure they understand that hurtful behavior won't be tolerated. Ask them to consider the impact their words and actions had on other people.

Identifying microaggressions – How to

4. Give them alternative words



If it's appropriate, suggest a more constructive way to say what they meant. In this case, you might say, "If you have legitimate concerns about this prospective member, of course you should express that. For example, you could say, without winking, 'I think they may not be a good fit for that role because of their lack of experience.'"

Identifying microaggressions – How to

5. Create accountability



Let the person know that you'll continue to discuss this kind of issue with anyone whose comments might be hurtful or offensive, and that you're open to receiving feedback as well.

Identifying microaggressions - Summary

By agreeing to uphold certain standards, and by expecting one another to do so, we all contribute to an inclusive club environment where all members are fully welcome.

Identifying microaggressions

When others experience microaggressions

What can you do when someone tells you that another member experienced a microaggression? Here are a few suggestions:

- Talk with the person who experienced it and express your support.
- Avoid saying things like "But I know that person, and they aren't racist," (or sexist, etc.) or "But they're such a good member! They would never say such a thing."
- Talk with the club about how certain behavior hurts the inclusive, productive, and enjoyable club environment.

Identifying microaggressions

Repairing relationships after you commit a microaggression

Of course we all strive to avoid committing microaggressions, but we might still do it unintentionally. Knowing how to respond after you offend someone in this way can help you repair the relationship. Find some tips below from Rebecca Knight, who wrote about the topic for the Harvard Business Review.

Identifying microaggressions - Pause



When we're confronted about something we said or did, it usually doesn't feel good. We may feel defensive, embarrassed, or even ashamed.. [Deep breathing](#) stimulates the nerve that calms us down. Take a moment to collect yourself before you respond.

Identifying microaggressions - Listen



It takes courage to tell someone that they caused offense. When someone tells you that you did, remember that the other person's intentions are good: They want to create an inclusive club environment, and they want you to be a partner in the effort. Listen to what they say, and be open to their comments. As diversity consultant Lily Zheng told the Harvard Business Review, "When someone says, 'What you said hurt me,' they're saying, 'You have hurt me in the way that people have hurt me, and people like me, in the past.'"

Identifying microaggressions - Focus



When others find fault with our behavior, it's natural to want to defend ourselves, explain what we meant, or to try to convince them to see it in another way. However, when we focus on our intent, we focus on our own feelings. By focusing instead on our impact, we prioritize the feelings of people in marginalized groups, who experience microaggressions frequently. Their perspectives need to be heard and validated.

Identifying microaggressions - Apologize sincerely

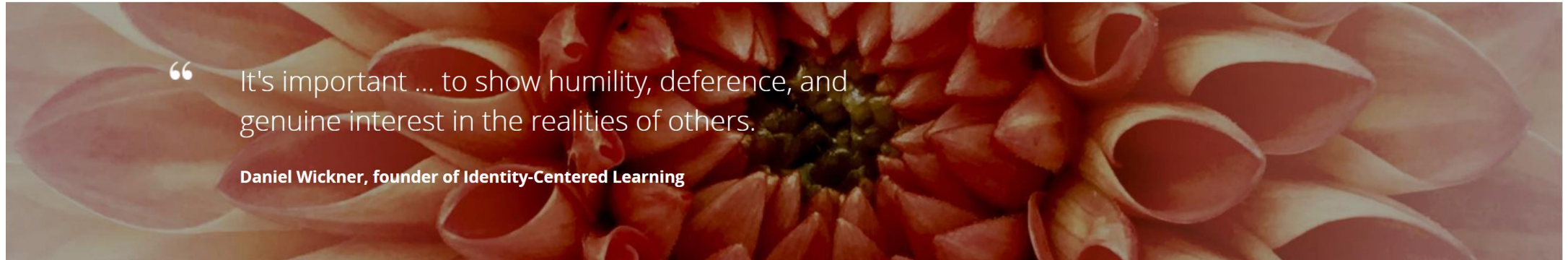


Instead of becoming defensive or trying to make your behavior seem better, offer a genuine apology that addresses the hurtful comment and acknowledges the impact it had, and commit to doing better.

Avoid saying "I'm sorry if ...". That suggests that you feel that the problem isn't what you did, but how the person reacted to it. It places the blame on the other person and doesn't acknowledge the effect of the microaggression.

Finally, don't overdo it or focus on what they think of you. It's not their responsibility to make you feel better.

Identifying microaggressions



After you apologize, you can do a few other things that can help in the future:

- Reflect on the situation and think about how you would act differently in a similar circumstance the next time.
- Don't be too hard on yourself.
- Remember that good people with good intentions make mistakes and that you can keep striving to do better.

Identifying microaggressions

Which apology is sincere and which one is not		
Apology	Sincere	Not Sincere
Thank you for telling me	..	
I realize my words hurts you	..	
I´m sorry that what I did was offensive		
I´m really not a bad person, I promise		
I care, and I want to improve		
I´m sorry you interpreted it that way		
You must think I´m a racist		
What i was trying to say was...		
I promise to better in the future		
I feel horrible, I must be such an idiot		..
I`m sorry if you were offended		..
I´m sorry I said...	..	

Identifying microaggressions

Which apology is sincere and which one is not		
Appology	Sincere	Not Sincere
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You must think I´m a racist		X
What i was trying to say was...		X
I promise to better in the future	X	
I feel horrible, I must be such an idiot		X
I´m sorry if you were offended		X
I´m sorry I said...	X	

Identifying microaggressions - Transformative learning



The process of holding substantive conversations about DEI topics can be emotional and even stressful for some people. This is common, and the discomfort may indicate that transformative learning is taking place. Transformative learning occurs when some problem or challenge makes you rethink your assumptions, beliefs, or values and changes your perspective or behavior. Depending on their knowledge, experience, or feelings about the topic, people may experience it at different times.

Identifying microaggressions – Take action

Here are some steps your club can take to learn more about microaggressions and setting and maintaining shared standards of behavior:

- Invite members to express their thoughts and talk about their experiences in and outside the club.
- Encourage members to recommend books they read, movies they see, speakers they hear, or courses they take that have helped them learn and do better.
- Practice what you could say to respond to inappropriate behavior or to apologize when you say something harmful.

Identifying microaggressions - Supplementary information

Some of the ideas in this course were drawn from these sources:

Antiracism: Intent vs. Impact.

Emily Meadows och Daniel Wickner på TIE (The International Educator) Online

[Link to their webpage](#)

Microintervention Strategies: What You Can Do to Disarm and Dismantle Individual and Systemic Racism and Bias

En bok av Derald Wing Sue, Cassandra Z. Calle, Narolyn Mendez, Sarah Alsaïdi och Elizabeth Glaeser

[Read the book](#)

You've Been Called Out for a Microaggression. What Do You Do?

By Rebecca Knight i Harvard Business Review

[Read the article](#)

Identifying microaggressions



The course in original is called” microaggressions”.
<https://learn.rotary.org/members/learn/mycourses>
Then search for “Preventing and addressing
microaggressions”.

You must be logged in at <https://my.rotary.org/en/>

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