



## **What You Should Know About Microaggressions and Micro-affirmations**

### **Tip Sheet**

#### **Microaggressions are:**

"Micro-aggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership" (Sue & Rivera, 2010)

#### **Why they matter:**

Neuroscience research reveals how the brain is impacted by violations of dignity, and respect. Mental health considerations: depression and anxiety. Workplace considerations: lower productivity, attrition, and morale uncivil behaviors, if unchecked, may cascade into bullying and even violence.

#### **How to avoid them:**

- Be vigilant about your own biases and fears
- Don't be defensive - Seek out others who are different from you
- Be an ally, an upstander, to rally against all forms of discrimination and bias
- Be curious and open to exploring others' experiences
- Be open to acknowledging the impact and hurt

#### **Microaffirmations are:**

"Small acts in the workplace fostering inclusion, listening, comfort, and support for people who may feel unwelcome or invisible in an environment" (Rowe, 2008)

#### **Why they matter:**

Small acts of kindness can increase a sense of inclusion BUT they do not undo the harm of a microaggression.

#### **Intention vs. impact:**

Remember: impact ALWAYS supersedes your intention!

What does it take to practice micro-affirmations? You're probably already using them. Recognize the large impact these small gestures can have on those around you. Here are some examples:

- Ask others for their opinions
- Recognize the achievements of others
- Use friendly facial expressions and gestures
- Take a genuine, professional interest in someone's personal life
- Pay attention
- Make eye contact (yes, this means putting down your phone)
- Give credit to another's ideas
- Nod and smile

While small and often unconscious, these acts move your organization toward inclusion and away from discrimination. They re-frame the conversation and encourage workplace respect.

Contact us for additional information on Unconscious Bias and other DEI training and development.

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