

1

Recognizing Microaggressions: Am I Doing That?

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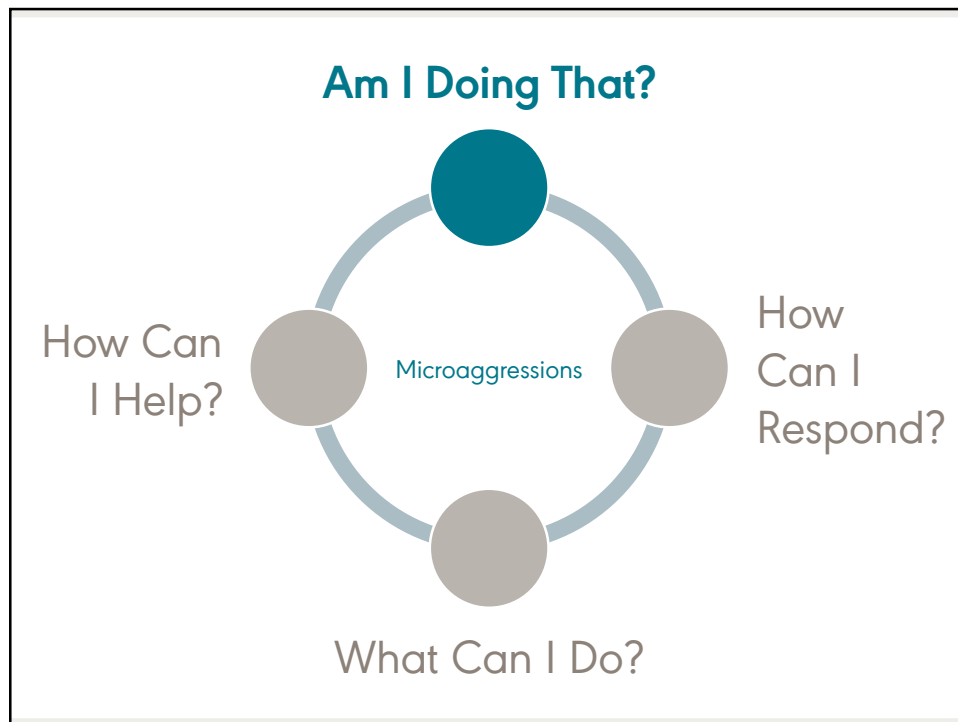
 ASHA
Professional Development

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 - ASHA SIG 14 affiliate
 - Member of National Black Association for Speech-Language and Hearing



Noma Anderson, PhD



We all have **implicit biases and assumptions**.

We are all shaped by our **position within our society**, which can vary greatly and in different ways.

“Individuals do not perpetuate microaggression in a vacuum but rather in a macro-context of **power and privilege.**”

“They believe in the **superiority** of their values, worldview, and ways of being **over all others’.**”

(Sue & Spanierman, 2020)

The term *microaggression* was coined by Dr. Chester Pierce in 1978, who described them as “subtle, stunning, often automatic verbal and nonverbal ‘put-downs.’ ”

- **Microaggressions are** unintentional or intentional acts of:
 - Racism
 - Genderism
 - Sexism
 - Heterosexism
 - Classism
 - Ableism

(Sue & Spanierman, 2020)

- The *micro-* part of the word means that they are *interpersonal* acts.
- The *-aggression* part of the word means the behavior is *harmful*.
- Microaggressions are **NOT** small, **NOT** harmless, and **NOT** benign.
- Microaggressions *hurt, assault, invalidate, and insult*.

**AuD
Faculty**

Met with a new AuD student in her first term.

She was feeling overwhelmed and isolated but was passionate about “giving back” to her community.

I suggested that she might feel more comfortable looking at a different field of study, something like education that would best serve her community.

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She had graduated valedictorian from her high school and magna cum laude from her undergrad CSD program.

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We are often unaware that we have engaged in an exchange that may deeply demoralize another.

Microaggressions can be **self-perpetuating**.

When unchallenged, the behavior is seen as acceptable by those making microaggressions.

In groups, when unrecognized, these behaviors can create **an isolating and hostile environment**.

Repeated microaggressions can become **microbullying**.

Microbullying is **repetitive** and **targeted**.

Microbullying may be subtle to everyone **except the person experiencing it**.

(Anderson & Young, 2020)

How To **Avoid** Being a **Microaggressor** or **Microbully**

- “Learn from constant vigilance of that **quiet voice** in your head.”
 - That quiet voice that’s **surprised when a person of color is the top achiever in their SLP courses.**
 - That quiet voice that’s **surprised when a junior faculty member, who is Hispanic, is awarded an external research grant with their first submission.**
 - That quiet voice that **says the two African American AuD students are in the program because the department wants more diversity, so they must have received scholarships.**

(Anderson & Young, 2020)

“When you hear **that voice**, you can train yourself to **question the voice’s assumptions and even to tell it that it’s wrong**. The more often you do, the more your brain will listen and **make fewer assumptions based on human categories**.”

(Anderson & Young, 2020)

- Embrace learning about **different cultures, perspectives, and sociocultural experiences**.
- Strive to engage genuinely with **people of different cultures and perspectives**.
 - Do you have any friends whose cultures and perspectives are different from yours?
 - Ask a trusted friend about their marginalizing experiences.
- **Don’t impose** your personal values, morals, or beliefs on others.
- **Show respect to all**.


(Anderson & Young, 2020)

Resources

- Examples of Common Racial Microaggressions
nortonism.tumblr.com/
- ASHA Voices: Ijeoma Oluo Talks Race, Conversation, and Microaggressions
leader.pubs.asha.org/doi/10.1044/asha-voices-ijeoma-oluo-talks-race-conversation-and-microaggressions/full/
- You've Been Called Out for a Microaggression. What Do You Do?
hbr.org/2020/07/youve-been-called-out-for-a-microaggression-what-do-you-do?


Coming up next

We've explored the concept. In the *next activity*, we'll review some **examples**.



Recognizing Microaggressions: Am I Doing That?

REVIEWING EXAMPLES



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The Hair

Today we're celebrating unity at work and a new colleague, who is African American, came in with a natural hairstyle.

When I saw it, I told her I thought it was amazing. I reached out and touched her hair.

She seemed to pull back.

**The
Hair**

I feel a sense of awkwardness now. I said her hair was beautiful. What's the big deal?

What did I do? Did I commit a microaggression?

**Am I
Doing
That?**

How could I think more about what I did and what is problematic?

**The
Hair**

When you touch someone or invade their personal space without asking, it's **disrespectful** and **dehumanizing**. It also **draws (potentially unwanted) attention** and signals to them that they are different, a novelty.

**Am I
Doing
That?**

"I'm really sorry, I don't know what I was thinking. It was rude to touch your hair like that."

**The
Accent**

Last week, a parent expressed concerns over a colleague's ability to help her child, citing her "Mexican" accent.

To avoid an awkward interaction, I removed the child from her caseload.

**The
Accent**

What message am I sending to my colleague about **her expertise** and **my confidence in her**?

**Am I
Doing
That?**

What message does it send to the parent about **my acceptance of their comments**?

**The
Parent**

I was talking with the mother of a new child I'm working with, both of whom are African American.

The news happened to be on in the background and it was an awful story about police abuse.

I said how horrible I thought the story was, that America is a melting pot, and that I don't see color.

She didn't seem to appreciate it.

**The
Parent**

What's wrong about not wanting to see color?

What did I really mean when I said that? Does what I mean really match up with what I said?

**Am I
Doing
That?**

How can I think more about this? What could be problematic with it?

**The
Parent**

Saying that color doesn't matter ignores the tremendous value of diversity and the reality that people of color have vastly different experiences in our society. It signals that I don't care about their experience.

**Am I
Doing
That?**

"I'm sorry I disregarded your experience as a person of color. I know racism exists and ignoring color doesn't help. I need to educate myself on ways to really help."

When Called Out

- Be available as a good listener and show empathy.
- Avoid being defensive or focusing on your intent.
- Acknowledge the impact and apologize.
- Reflect on how you can avoid similar mistakes in the future and grow as a person.

Coming up next

We've explored the concept and reviewed some examples. The *next activities* are **your turn** to **plan, practice, and reflect**.



3

What About Me?

Let's assume that I have unintentionally committed microaggressions.

What have I said, or what could I imagine myself saying?

How would I talk about it?

's PLAN		3 YOUR PLAN Imagine that earlier today, you unintentionally committed a microaggression when interacting with a colleague and now realize it. What will you do or say? Plan/script out a practice conversation, that you'll speak out loud to yourself, or have with a friend.
Spend 5 minutes to create a plan to apply the course concepts		
WHO	DATE	
WHAT		
HOW		

4	TRYING YOUR PLAN

TRY IT	Spend 5 minutes at work putting your plan into action
..... Acknowledging your microaggression and its impact could be tough. Think about the harm these statements can do. What kind of a colleague do you want to be? Find a friend at work you can practice with, or practice on your own somewhere at your workplace.	NOTES

's REFLECTIONS

.....

WHAT HAPPENED

WHAT WORKED WELL

IDEAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Spend 5 minutes to reflect on how your plan went

5

SPEAKER TIPS

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How did it go? What was harder to say? What was easier? How could you improve? Would practicing again help? Talking with a friend?


6

LEARNING ASSESSMENT

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Spend 5 minutes to complete your learning assessment in the ASHA Learning Center.

You'll have access to a certificate of completion immediately after you complete and submit your assessment.

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