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Creating an Inclusive Culture by Addressing Micro-Inequities

Once you have made the final decision to address the offense, indeed, be assertive, this does not mean be rude or show how upset their comment made you feel with a shot and a stomp. Being assertive in this interaction is to assist in letting the person know how you were affected by their comment or actions. You don't want to jokingly tell someone that they offended you because, more than likely, it won't be taken seriously. Be sure to have a calm tone and clearly walk them through the event which took place and how their words or actions specifically made you feel and why. Steer clear of using accusatory words like "racist or homophobic," this could change the direction the conversation very quickly as most become defensive when labeled. The outcomes vary; however, a new outlook on how we interact with each other and being aware of our statements and actions is the overall goal of the conversation.

After addressing the microaggression, seek support. Your HR department is there for situations like this. If you decide not to address it directly, you can still also utilize HR first by filing a complaint. Processing one's emotions is also essential because microaggressions have been known to lead to an array of mental health problems, including depression, anxiety, and trauma. Therefore, individuals who experience microaggressions may find it helpful and necessary to discuss their cognitive and emotional reactions with people outside of the workplace like their loved ones or mental health professionals.

Let's start the conversation first by explaining what a microaggression is: a statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of marginalized groups such as racial, ethnic Minority, LGBT, or persons with disabilities. Microaggressions often get overlooked and are not addressed because employees fear what's to come following that. So what happens when you want to discuss them? How do you dress them without creating A hostile environment?

First, let's explore the three different kinds of microaggressions:

Micro-assaults are overt forms of discrimination in which actors deliberately behave in discriminatory ways, but do not intend to offend someone or may think that their actions are

not noticed or harmful. These types of experiences are similar to the “old-fashioned” discrimination that existed in earlier times, but different in that people may not openly proclaim their biases. For example, when someone says, “That’s so gay!” to connote that something is weird, the person is aware of the words that they choose; however, they may not realize that using such language is considered homophobic and can offend LGBT people.

Micro-insults are statements or behaviors in which individuals unintentionally or unconsciously communicate discriminatory messages to members of target groups. For example, telling an African American person with an attitude of shock that she or he “is very articulate” as a compliment, implying that these persons aren’t ordinarily articulate.

Micro-invalidations are verbal statements that deny, negate, or undermine the realities of members of various target groups. For example, when someone tells a woman that she is “being too sensitive” or that an LGBT person “should stop complaining,” they invalidate the reality of discrimination in these people’s lives.

So now that we have reviewed the various types of microaggressions, I want to give you three questions to ask yourself when you think you have been a victim of one.

1. Did this microaggression occur?
2. Should I respond to this microaggression?
3. How should I respond to this microaggression?

When determining if the microaggression occurred, be clear to assess every component that contributed to the interaction. If you conclude that a microaggression was used, you have to decide if a response is necessary. Weigh the pros and cons of addressing it being that it could have the potential risks. Ask yourself questions like:

If I respond, will this lead to an argument?

How will this affect my relationship with this person?

If I don’t respond, will I regret not saying anything?

If I don’t respond, does it convey that I accept their behavior or statement?

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Even when you have the best intentions, you, too, can become a micro-aggressor. So be aware of your demeanor and delivery in everyday conversation within the workplace. If someone accuses you of a microaggression, be sure to remember the steps that you would take in approaching someone else. Try not to be defensive and acknowledge the other person’s feelings. Be sure to apologize and reflect.