

# **UNDERSTANDING & MANAGING MICROAGGRESSIONS**

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Presented by: Sabrina  
Johnson

Ed.S, NBCC, LPC-A

# OBJECTIVES

To define and understand microaggressions

To identify the impact of microaggressions

To identify skills and resources to manage and overcome  
microaggressions

# WHAT ARE THEY?

"....subtle, stunning, commonplace, daily exchanges that send denigrating messages to a marginalized group" - 1978, Pierce

2007: definition was expanded to include commonplace, daily exchanges that send denigrating messages to marginalized groups

Race-based, sexual orientation-based, gender identity-based

Ong, A.D. & Burrow, A.L., (2017).

Sue, D.W. (2010).

# MANIFESTATION OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

- Verbally
- Nonverbally
- Environmentally/  
Visually
- Conscious
- Unconscious

MOST PEOPLE ARE UNAWARE THAT  
THEY ARE EXHIBITING  
MICROAGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR.

# Forms of Microaggressions

# MICROASSAULTS

- Severe, explicit, and intentional denigration
- Conscious behaviors
- Messages verbal or nonverbal that intend to threaten, intimidate, and make an individual or specific group feel unwanted, unsafe, or less than
- Purposeful discriminatory acts
- Ex: Calling someone the N-word, calling females a B---h



# MICROINSULTS

- Subtle communications or behaviors that perpetuate stereotypes, rudeness, and insensitivities that demean a person based on race, gender, sexual orientation, heritage, or identity
- Often unconscious
- Conveys an underlying, insulting message

# THEMES OF MICROINSULTS

- Ascription of Intelligence
- Second-class citizen
- Pathologizing cultural values and communication styles
- Criminality / Assumption of Criminal Status
- Sexual Objectification
- Assumption of Abnormality



Sue, D.W. (2010)



# MICROINVALIDATIONS

- Communication or environmental cues that negate, deny, nullify, or disregard the thoughts, feelings, experiences and reality of a person based on race, gender, sexual identity/sexuality
- **Most damaging of the types of microaggressions**
  - The ambiguity of these types of microaggressions can result in internalizing behaviors resulting in one inferring that the cause of a microaggressive behavior is a result of oneself versus other people. (Wong-Padoongpat, et.al, 2017)
  - Research has shown that people of color who attribute negative feedback to themselves instead of identifying it as discrimination experienced more stress. (Crocker & Blanton, 1999)

# THEMES OF MICROINVALIDATIONS

- Alien in One's Own Land
- Color/Gender/Sexual Orientation Blindness
- Denial of Individual Racism/Sexism/Heterosexism
- Myth of Meritocracy



*“Sue (2005) posits that the denial of color is really a denial of differences. The denial of differences is really a denial of power and privilege. The denial of power and privilege is really a denial of personal benefits that accrue to certain privileged groups by virtue of inequities. The denial that we profit from racism is really a denial of responsibility for our racism. Lastly, the denial of our racism is really a denial of the necessity to take action against racism.”*

IF MICROAGGRESSIONS HAPPENED TO WHITE PEOPLE

LOOK DIFFERENT

Pool Patrol Paul

Racism In America - APA

An individual microaggression may have a small impact, however, the collective impact of these slights that occur on a day to day basis creates significant distress on many different levels.

# Socio-Ecological Model



# SOCIAL DOMINANCE THEORY

- Created by Jim Sidanius and Felicia Pratto in 1999
- Looks at social hierarchies and the role of oppression in human societies
- States that all human societies organize in hierarchies in which one group has more social and economic power, as well as privileges than the other members in the society that are deemed subordinate
- It is suggested that this theory may explain the perpetuated race effect on stress, which relates to the stress experienced when a marginalized group of people experience microaggressive behaviors

# IMPACT OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

- Negative impact on self-esteem
- Increased anger & frustration
- Decreased mental and physical energy
- Increased risk of health problems
- Shortened life expectancy
- Denied equal access to opportunity (including but not limited to education, employment, & health care)

# IMPACT OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

- FEELINGS OF DIFFERENCE
- INTERNALIZED STIGMA
- FEAR OF REJECTION
- LOWER UTILIZATION AND PREMATURE TERMINATION OF SERVICES (PSYCHOLOGICAL OR OTHERWISE)
- INCREASED STRESS
- CREATES MISTRUST WITHIN A COMMUNITY
- IMPACTS SAFETY

Farr, et.al, (2016), Hook, et.al, (2016).

# DEALING WITH MICROAGGRESSIONS IS EXHAUSTING



# OVERCOMING MICROAGGRESSIONS

Define

Recognize

Understand & deconstruct the hidden  
message

# MANAGING MICROAGGRESSIONS

- Use of behavioral coping strategies
  - being passive
  - using confrontation
  - protective coping
- Cognitive Reactions
  - resiliency & empowerment
  - conform to societal norms
  - accept microaggressions as being a part of life
- Emotionally react
- When tough conversations arise from microaggressions, don't avoid it

# MANAGING MICROAGGRESSIONS

- Armoring
- Spirituality and religion
- Shifting
- Support Network
- Sponsorship and mentoring
- Self-care

Where have you seen  
microaggressive  
behavior?

How have you  
reacted?

Have you  
engaged in any  
microaggressive  
behaviors?

# ROLE PLAYS

### **Scenario #1:**

You're at a July 4<sup>th</sup> cookout and you hear someone use the N-word in reference to a black male who's your friend.

### **Scenario #2:**

You're in class and the professor decides to begin a discussion on immigration and the ban of immigrants from certain countries. You begin to hear your classmates say that this isn't a big deal and that most people from Muslim countries are terrorist.

### **Scenario #3:**

You're watching the news with a group of colleagues in the lunch room. On the news they're discussing the injustices of the prison system and black men being incarcerated. Your boss walks in and responds that this isn't true and that her nor other people see "color."

### **Scenario #4:**

You're in a meeting with a group of colleagues and you notice that they call on your Asian co-worker to answer most of the questions regarding math and chemistry.

### **Scenario #5:**

You're playing basketball with a group of people and hear the comment, "you play good for a girl".

### **Scenario #6:**

You are at a doctor's appointment with your trans-identified male friend. When the nurse calls him back, you notice he uses a pronoun not preferred by your friend.

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