

# The Impact of Microaggressions – An Introductory Training

Presentation prepared for the Nebraska Internship Consortium  
in Professional Psychology

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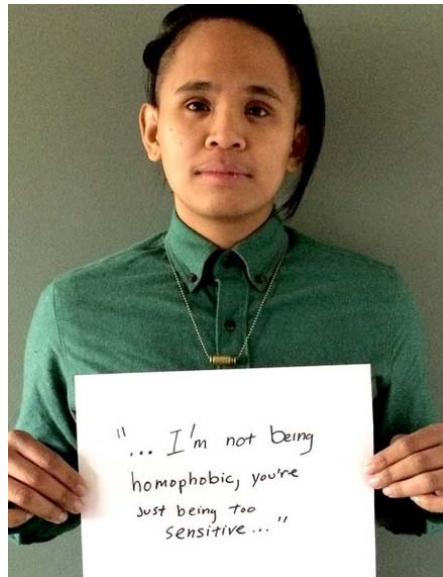
# Learning Objectives

1. Create awareness surrounding the common occurrences of microaggressions.
2. Explore the outcomes associated with the experience of microaggressions.
3. Discover techniques to minimize the occurrence of microaggressions and ways to respond when someone has been microaggressive.



# Microaggressions Defined

- Verbal, behavioral, or environmental slights
- Often automatic and unintentional
- Occur in brief instances on a daily basis
- Communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative viewpoints
- Perpetuate a worldview of White supremacy and superiority
- 3 types...





# Microassaults

- “Old-fashioned racism”
- Uncommon
- Deliberate, conscious, and explicit
- Intention is to hurt, oppress, or discriminate (Dovidio & Gaertner, 2000)
- Examples:
  - Refusing service to sexual minorities
  - Displaying the hood of the Ku Klux Klan



# Microinsults & Microinvalidations

Not intentional! Typically occur due to underlying biases and prejudices outside of awareness.

## Microinsults

- Convey insensitivity, are rude, or demean an individual's identity or heritage.

## Microinvalidations

- Exclude, negate, or nullify an individuals' thoughts or feelings.



# A Humorous Example



YouTube Channel: [chescaleigh](https://www.youtube.com/channel/chescaleigh)

# Themes of Race-based Microaggressions

Theme	Microaggression	Message
Alien in own land	"You speak good English."	You aren't American.
Ascription of intelligence	"You are so articulate."	It's unusual for someone of your race to be intelligent.
Color blindness	"When I look at you, I don't see color."	Denies a person of color's racial/ethnic experiences.
Assumption of criminal status	A store owner follows a customer of color around the store.	You are going to steal.
Denial of individual racism	"My best friend is Black."	I'm immune because I have friends of color.
	"As a woman, I know what you go through."	Your racial oppression is not different than my gender oppression.

# Themes of Race-based Microaggressions

Theme	Microaggression	Message
Myth of meritocracy	“Everyone can succeed in America if they work hard enough.”	People of color are lazy and/or incompetent and need to work harder.
Pathologizing cultural values	Dismissing an individual who brings up race/culture at work/school.	Leave your cultural baggage outside.
Second-class citizen	A taxi cab passes a person of color to pick up a White passenger.  “You people.”	You’re likely to cause trouble and travel to a dangerous neighborhood.  You don’t belong and are a lesser being.
Environmental	Television shows/movies without representation of people of color.	You are an outsider. You don’t exist.



# More Examples

Type	Microaggression	Message
Gender	“Smile! You’re too pretty for people to not see your smile.”	Your appearance defines what people think of you.
	A female doctoral student continues to receive emails from potential participants addressed “sir.”	It is unlikely for someone of your gender to pursue an advanced degree.
Sexual Orientation	“I like you, but why do others have to shove it in our faces?”	The LGBTQ experience is offensive and abnormal.
	“So who’s the man in the relationship?”	Implies that a “normal” relationship must involve a man and a woman.
Disability	Without being asked, a man helps a disabled person board the train.	You can’t function independently.

# More Examples

Type	Microaggression	Message
Religion	<p>“You don’t look Jewish!”</p> <p>Although not explicitly celebrated, a public school displays Christmas decorations in December.</p>	<p>All Jewish people look the same.</p> <p>In America, Christianity is the most important religion. Those who practice others are outsiders.</p>
Class	<p>“That’s ghetto.”</p>	<p>Being poor is associated with negative/undesirable characteristics.</p>

# Internal Dilemma

Experiencing a microaggression may lead to the following intrusive cognitions

- Did I interpret that correctly?
- Did she say what I think she said?
- What did he mean by that?
- Should I say something?
- Saying something may make it worse.
- They'll probably think I'm overreacting.
- Speaking up is going to hurt more than it helps.



# Psychological Consequences

Associated psychological impact

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Sleep Difficulties
- Diminished Confidence
- Helplessness
- Loss of Drive
- Intrusive Cognitions (e.g., internal dilemma)
- Diminished Cognition



# From a Child's Perspective



Move the cursor above and press play



# Professional Relationships

Consider the professional relationships that may be affected, therefore damaging established rapport and trust:

- Colleague  $\leftrightarrow$  Colleague (e.g., interdisciplinary team members)
- Therapist  $\leftrightarrow$  Patient
- Supervisor  $\leftrightarrow$  Supervisee
- Advisor  $\leftrightarrow$  Advisee
- Professor  $\leftrightarrow$  Student
- Employer  $\leftrightarrow$  Employee





# What Next?

## Individuals

- Recognize that dismissive attitudes are harmful.
- Engage in self-reflection to identify times that you may have been microaggressive in your personal and work life.
- Participate in continuing education activities.
- Avoid making assumptions and labeling individuals.

## Institutions

- Foster inclusive and supportive environments.
- Collaborate with groups and organizations who are committed to addressing issues of diversity and inclusion.
- Offer trainings and opportunities for continuing education and diversity workshops.





# What Next?

## Supervisors

- Recognize that microaggressive instances occur on a daily basis in the workplace and that supervisees are likely to experience them.
- Foster an environment that encourages supervisees to discuss occurrences openly. This may be accomplished during initial meetings and/or through the supervision contract.
- If/when you realize that you have made a statement or conducted a microaggressive action, approach the supervisee and acknowledge the occurrence.

## Trainees

- Foster discussions surrounding diversity with colleagues and supervisors.
- Discuss microaggressive instances with “perpetrators” first before addressing their superior.
- Recognize that slights are often unintentional.







# Productive Responses

- Take a deep breath!
- Assume offense was not the intent.
- Explain how the slight may be interpreted by others.
- Ask a follow up question: “who are you referring to when you say that?”  
“what do you mean?”
- Identify individuals you feel comfortable discussing issues with (e.g., family members, cohort members, mentors).





# Productive Responses

What about when the “perpetrator” denies having been offensive:

- Ask yourself:
  - Will further conversation will be beneficial AND productive?
  - What is my current level of stress?
  - Am I able to respond non-emotionally?
- If you decide to discuss further:
  - Take a deep breath!
  - Reiterate that you are not blaming the person, only expressing the way the comment/action made you feel.
  - Explain that instances occur daily and others have made similar comment/actions.
  - Be open to their input and expression of their feelings.





# Thank You!

Please direct questions/comments to:

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# References

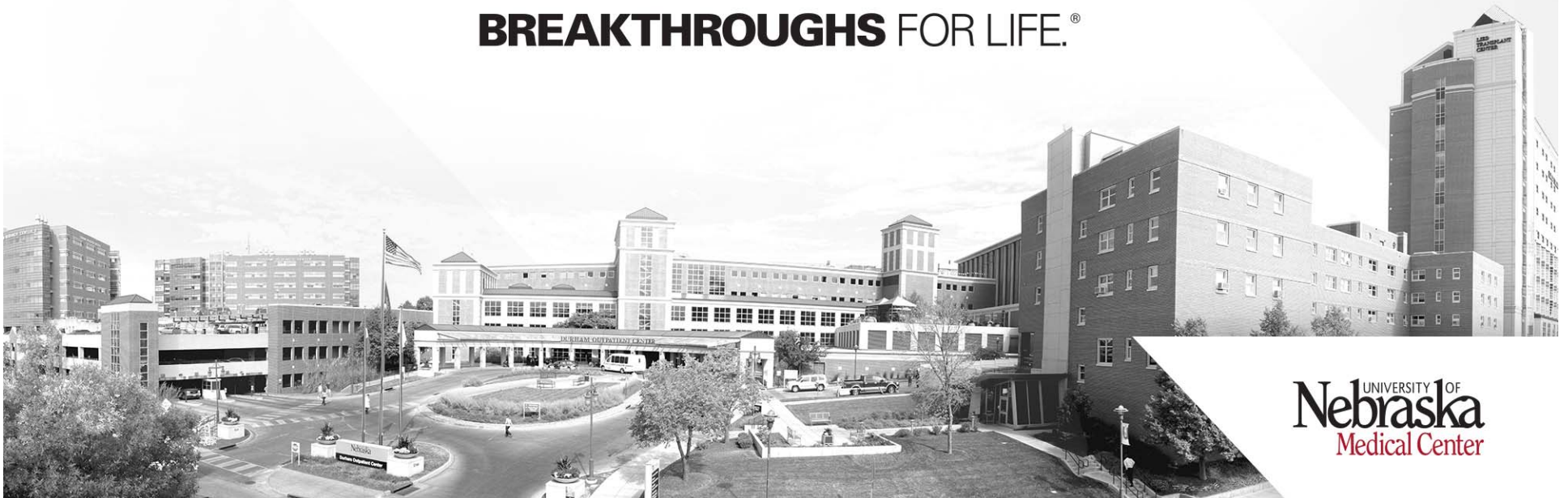
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