

Microaggressions in Healthcare: How to Respond

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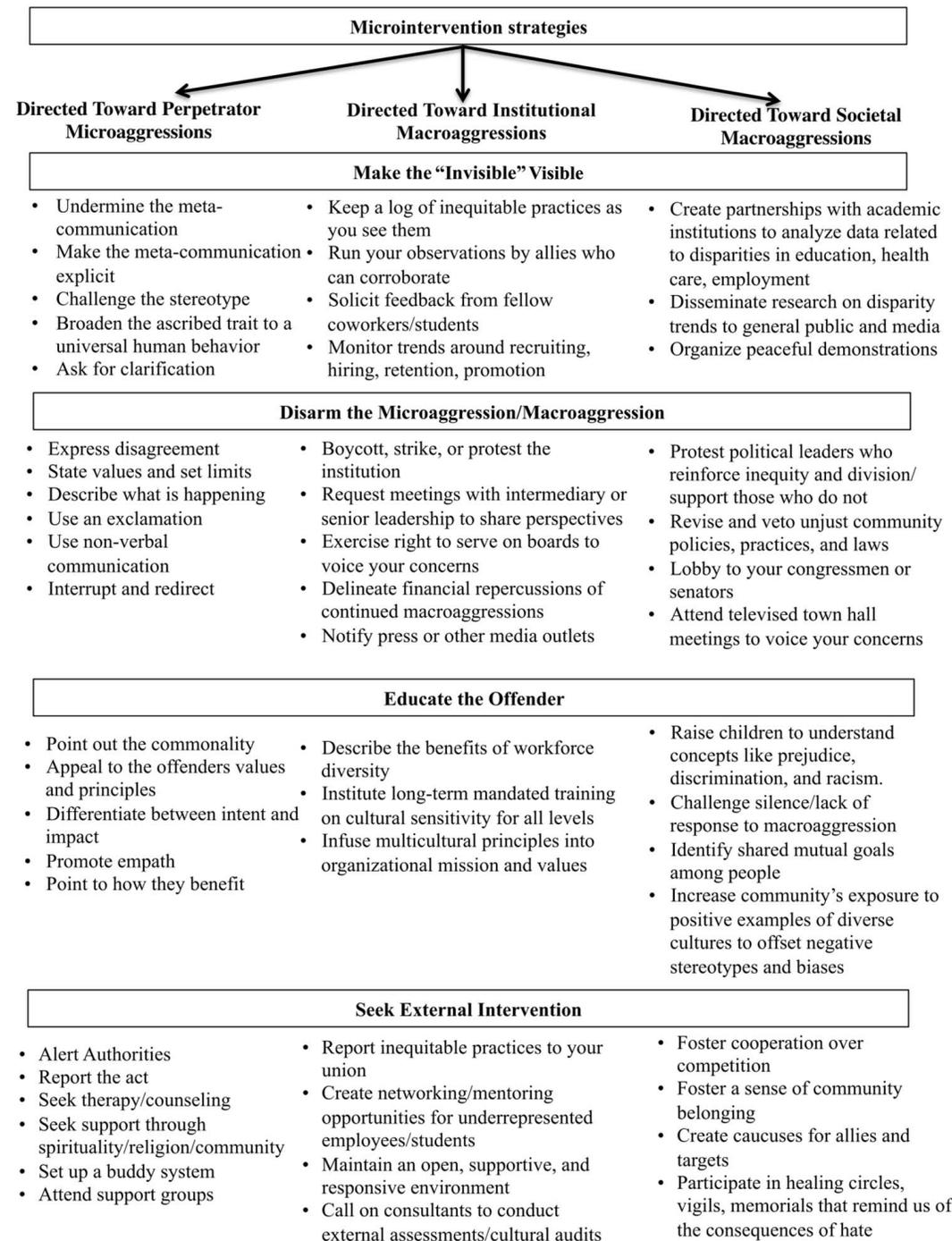
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Continuing the Discussion...

- Previous presentations have covered what microaggressions are, their impact, and the multitude of directions that they can occur in the healthcare setting
- Microaggressions - Commonplace behavioral indignities whether intentional or unintentional communicating hostile, derogatory or negative attitudes toward marginalized groups.
- Review of intention vs impact
- Multifaceted approach to addressing microaggressions – individual, institutional, and societal

Responding to Microaggressions



Sue, Derald Wing; Alsaidi, Sarah; Awad, Michael N; Glaeser, Elizabeth; Calle, Cassandra Z; Mendez, Narolyn **Disarming Racial Microaggression: Microintervention Strategies for Targets, White Allies and Bystanders.** American Psychological Association 2019. Vol. 74 (1) 128-142

<http://psychiatry.emory.edu/documents/microaggressions.pdf>



Responding to Microaggressions

- First step to addressing microaggressions is to recognize them when they occur.
- In general, if you see something, say something
 - Context, environment, and timing matter.
 - Inform patient or staff person of follow up options if this is something they are interested in pursuing.
 - Many people have tendency to freeze and not say anything. Advise to prepare for these moments ahead of time and have responses available.

Determining Whether to Respond

- Assess the situation
 - If I respond, how will this affect my relationship with this person?
 - **If you are a part of the majority group: Am I in a better position to respond to this compared to a marginalized group? Will there be fewer consequences to me?**
 - If I don't respond, will I regret not saying something? Does that convey that I accept the behavior or statement?
- Identify what you are trying to accomplish
 - Am I trying to model for others that these comments/behaviors are inappropriate?
 - Am I interested in educating the person about microaggressions?
 - Am I trying to confront the person because they were making an intentional slight?
- Consider where and when you could address the microaggression
 - If I address the comment/behavior in public, will this lead to defensiveness or backlash?
 - Would it be better to address the comment/behavior now, as a model for others, or to raise the issue later when the person may be more receptive?

Potentially Helpful Topics

- Ask for clarification
 - “Could you say more about what you mean by that?”
 - “How have you come to think that?”
- Focus on impact rather than intent
 - “You may not realize this, but when you _____ (comment/behavior), it was hurtful/offensive because _____.”
- Share your own process
 - “I noticed that you _____ (comment/behavior). I used to do/say that too, but then I learned _____.”
- Focus on the comment/behavior, rather than the person
 - “Your _____(comment/behavior) was hurtful...”, rather than, “You are being racist...”

RESPONDING TO MICROAGGRESSIONS AND BIAS

(Can be used alone or in combination)

▶ RESTATE OR PARAPHRASE.

"I think I heard you saying _____ (paraphrase their comments). Is that correct?"

▶ ASK FOR CLARIFICATION OR MORE INFORMATION.

"Could you say more about what you mean by that?"

"How have you come to think that?"

▶ ACKNOWLEDGE THE FEELINGS BEHIND THE STATEMENT. Express empathy and compassion.

"It sounds like you're really frustrated/nervous/angry....."

"I can understand that you're upset when you feel disrespected."

▶ SEPARATE INTENT FROM IMPACT.

"I know you didn't realize this, but when you _____ (comment/behavior), it was hurtful/offensive because _____. Instead you could _____ (different language or behavior.)"

▶ SHARE YOUR OWN PROCESS.

"I noticed that you _____ (comment/behavior). I used to do/say that too, but then I learned _____."

▶ EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS.

"When you _____ (comment/behavior), I felt _____ (feeling) and I would like you to _____."

▶ CHALLENGE THE STEREOTYPE. Give information, share your own experience and/or offer alternative perspectives.

"Actually, in my experience _____."

"I think that's a stereotype. I've learned that _____."

"Another way to look at it is _____."

▶ APPEAL TO VALUES AND PRINCIPLES.

"I know you really care about _____. Acting in this way really undermines those intentions."

▶ PROMOTE EMPATHY. Ask how they would feel if someone said something like that about their group, or their friend/partner/child.

"I know you don't like the stereotypes about _____ (their group), how do you think he feels when he hears those things about his group?"

"How would you feel if someone said that about/did that to your sister or girlfriend?"

▶ TELL THEM THEY'RE TOO SMART OR TOO GOOD TO SAY THINGS LIKE THAT.

"Come on. You're too smart to say something so ignorant/offensive."

▶ PRETEND YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND. As people try to explain their comments, they often realize how silly they sound.

"I don't get it....."

"Why is that funny?"

▶ USE HUMOR. Exaggerate comment, use gentle sarcasm.

"She plays like a girl?" You mean she plays like Serena Williams?" Or Mia Hamm?"

▶ POINT OUT WHAT THEY HAVE IN COMMON WITH THE OTHER PERSON.

"I'm tired of hearing your Muslim jokes. Do you know he's also studying _____ and likes to _____? You may want to talk with him about that. You actually have a lot in common."

▶ W.I.I.F.T. (What's in it for them). Explain why diversity or that individual/group can be helpful/valuable.

"I know you're not comfortable with _____ but they can help us reach out to/better serve other groups on campus/in the community."

"In the real world, we are going to have to work with all sorts of people, so might as well learn how to do it here."

▶ REMIND THEM OF THE RULES OR POLICIES.

"That behavior is against our code of conduct and could really get you in trouble."

Adapted from: Goodman, D. (2011). *Promoting Diversity and Social Justice: Educating People from Privileged Groups*. New York: Routledge. Excerpt available at www.dianegoodman.com

Diane J. Goodman, Ed.D. www.dianeagoodman.com



When you receive feedback that you performed a microaggression...

1. Check in with yourself – notice feelings of defensiveness, acknowledge emotions
2. Listen – try to understand impact had on person vs intention behind comment/behavior
3. Acknowledge the microaggression – validate person's feelings and acknowledge negative impact of comment/behavior
4. Apologize – goal to acknowledge mistake, not receive forgiveness
5. Practice Self-Compassion – if you were able to listen, acknowledge, and apologize for your comment/behavior, you handled this the best way you could

Additional Resources

This presentation combined and utilized information from many of the resources below. For more information on what microaggressions are, how they are harmful, and ways to address them, please refer to the following resources.

- **How to Respond to Microaggressions**
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/03/smarter-living/how-to-respond-to-microaggressions.html>
- **A Guide to Responding to Microaggressions**
https://advancingjustice-la.org/sites/default/files/ELAMICRO%20A_Guide_to_Responding_to_Microaggressions.pdf
- **Dear Anti-Racist Allies: Here's How to Respond to Microaggressions**
<https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/05/health/racial-microaggressions-examples-responses-wellness/index.html>
- **This Is the Right Way to Respond to Microaggressions at Work**
<https://www.themuse.com/advice/how-to-respond-microaggressions-at-work>
- **Allies and Microaggressions**
<https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2016/04/13/how-be-ally-someone-experiencing-microaggressions-essay>
- **Everything You Need to Know About Microaggressions**
<https://www.oprahmag.com/life/relationships-love/a26294696/what-is-microaggression/>
- **Microaggressions Are A Big Deal: How To Talk Them Out & When To Walk Away**
<https://www.npr.org/2020/06/08/872371063/microaggressions-are-a-big-deal-how-to-talk-them-out-and-when-to-walk-away>
- **Microresistance and Ally Development: Powerful Antidotes to Microaggressions**
<https://www.unomaha.edu/faculty-support/teaching-excellence/microaggressions-handout.pdf>

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