



## Microaggressions

Thurber, A., & DiAngelo, R. (2017). Microaggressions: Intervening in three acts. *Journal of Ethnic & Cultural Diversity in Social Work, 27*(1), 1-11.

### WHAT IS THIS RESOURCE?

This article evaluates microaggressions and proposes possible approaches to handling situations in which microaggressions occur. The authors delve into real-life experiences that they endured from the unique perspective of three different roles: witness, perpetrator, and target.

### WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL FINDINGS?

Strategies for responding to a microaggression based on your role include:

#### WITNESS:

Rather than ask what will be gained by intervening, **ask what will I lose** by not acting – There is much more to lose by not acting: integrity; alignment of your values with your behaviors; the trust of those targeted by the microaggression, passive collusion with oppression; and peace of mind.

**Clarify your goals** – You may determine that immediate action is needed, or that additional time is needed to craft a strategic response.

**Ground your actions in care** – “Call them in” rather than “call them out.” Calling out is associated with shaming someone into reevaluating their actions, while calling in invites someone to reevaluate their actions.

#### PERPETRATOR:

**Look into rather than away from oppressive patterns** – The question is not, did oppression occur, but rather how is it occurring in this specific context?

**Accountability is a process, not a procedure** – Accountability requires a long-term commitment to assuming responsibility for the consequences of your actions, regardless of your intentions.

**Seek restorative action** – Meet with the persons directly affected by your actions to acknowledge your conduct, articulate how you plan to change your behavior, invite them to share the impact of your actions, and ask if there is anything they need to say or hear in order to continue working together.

#### TARGET:

**Your first responsibility is to yourself** – It is critical to notice and affirm what you are feeling and take time to re-center.

**Consider possibilities for action** – Once you have identified your goals, you can evaluate possible strategies for moving forward.

**Reclaim your voice** – Targets of oppression do not owe a response to anyone.

### WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR OUR WORK?

Microaggressions have no easy solution, as each interaction and occurrence has different roles and implications. Each of us is embedded in complex sociopolitical power relations and embody multiple and intersecting identities. Addressing microaggressions requires us to challenge our socialization in new and often uncomfortable ways, but doing so is a powerful, intellectually stimulating, and emotionally fulfilling journey.