

MICROAGGRESSIONS

Microaggressions are the "...brief and commonplace daily, verbal, behavioral and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative (*trait driven*) slights or insults to the target person or group." Adapted from Sue, D.W., *Microaggressions in Everyday Life*, 2010 John Wiley and Sons

While any one microaggression may seem inconsequential, the continuous, accumulating nature of these unpredictable indignities damages health. The combination of uncertainties, helplessness and the "catch-22" entrapment degrades self-esteem, perceptions of reality, relationship styles, capacity to trust and often, the "willingness to try". Because microaggressions are often perpetrated unconsciously and unintentionally, and are thus "invisible" in the experience of the offender, recipient experience most often goes unaddressed, and therefore unresolved. The intention to diminish our vulnerabilities to perpetrate microaggressions is actualized (a) in translating "I didn't mean to do harm" into "I mean not to do harm" and (b) through a keen awareness of our own histories of experiencing microaggressions. Microaggressions can be experienced at the individual, community and organizational levels. Microaggressions permeate community "knowledge" of groups and thus impose expectations and limitations on individuals.

MICROAGGRESSION – AWARENESS WORKSHEET

On a scale of 1 to 5, 1 being rarely and 5 being often, please rate yourself on the following:

1. ____ When meeting Asian American or Latino American clients, I tend to expect that the individual is foreign born.
2. ____ When working with clients I ignore their skin color and treat everyone the same.
3. ____ Based on skin color or ethnicity, I expect some clients to be of higher intelligence than others.
4. ____ I believe that I am generally immune to cultural biases and that my conscious intention toward fairness guarantees my clients safe and equal treatment.
5. ____ I believe that primary measures of mental health, to be emphasized in mental health treatment, are individuality, autonomy, self-examination and self-efficacy.
6. ____ I believe that mental health professionals should demonstrate, and sustain, professional distance, detachment and the clear dichotomy of the client-counselor relationship.
7. ____ I work in circumstances wherein skin color predicts a client's degree of criminality of criminal intent.
8. ____ I use my own history of experiencing oppression and marginality as the framework for interacting with clients about their life experiences.

9. ____ I am confident that hard work and persistence can break through cultural barriers equally for everyone.
10. ____ I believe that various sexual orientations, particularly in young clients, are passing phases and that related struggles will pass with the phase.
11. ____ As a male therapist I silently appreciate the “eye candy” that attractive women clients bring to my office.
- 12 ____ I feel that a proper behavioral “decorum” is expectable of all my clients throughout their work with me.
- 13 ____ I believe that my educational and professional credentials most effectively establish my credibility with my clients.

By, Sue, D.W., *Microaggressions in Everyday Life*, John Wiley and Sons, 2010