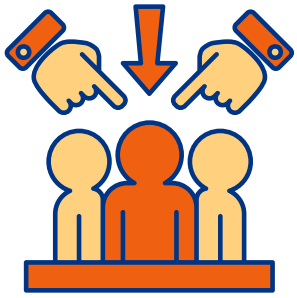
Microaggressions and Disability

Microaggressions are everyday, subtle, and often unintentional comments and actions that communicate negative messages towards marginalized individuals.



Learn more: Watch "How microaggressions are like mosquito bites."

Examples of Common Disability Microaggressions:

EXAMPLE	MESSAGE IT SENDS
"You people are so inspiring."	My expectations for you are so low that your basic existence is seen as heroic or exceptional.
Helping without asking (e.g., onto a bus or train)	You are incapable of navigating the world on your own. My desire to "help" is more important than your consent.
"I can't believe you are married."	You are not a "whole" person. I see your disability as a barrier to love, intimacy, and a normal adult life.
"Come on now, we all have some disability."	Your actual struggle and the barriers you face aren't real. My minor inconveniences are the same as your lived experience.
Avoiding eye contact or physically distancing oneself	You are an object of discomfort or pity, not a fellow human being worthy of social recognition.
"I would never date someone in a wheelchair."	I have already decided you are "less than." Your disability makes you fundamentally undesirable and unworthy of me.

(Eleversity, 2022)

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How to Address Microaggressions:

1 Reflect



Notice your own assumptions. Ask yourself: "What biases do I have that might influence what I say and do? Could I be unintentionally causing harm to someone else?"

Respond 2

Address the moment with growth in mind. If you witness a microaggression, calmly bring it up in a safe environment without attacking the person's character (Washington, 2022). If your own words are called out, listen without becoming defensive. Acknowledge the impact, apologize, and use the moment as a learning opportunity.



3 Practice



Use small actions that foster inclusion. *Micro-affirmations* create a more inclusive and welcoming environment through active listening, recognizing and validating experiences, and affirming emotional reactions (Brown University, n.d.).

Key Takeaway

Our small actions can reinforce exclusion—or create belonging. By recognizing microaggressions and practicing micro-affirmations, we can help build environments where everyone feels respected and valued.

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