

UNPACKING MICROAGGRESSIONS

Part One Instructions:

1. Read each statement in Column A
2. Think critically about how a person could interpret the statements as a “put down”
3. Draw a line connecting the statement to what you believe is the best possible interpretation from Column B

COLUMN A: STATEMENTS
“It’s almost like you’re not Black” or “You don’t even seem Black”
[To a trans person] “I know you identify as a woman, I just struggle with using new pronouns for you”
“That’s retarded” or “That’s lame” or “That’s gay”
“How did your family react when they found out you were gay?”
“I don’t see color” or “The only race is the human race” or “All lives matter”
[To a Latinx person] “Where are you from? No, where are you <i>really</i> from?”

COLUMN B: HARMFUL IMPLICATION
People with that identity are less important, likeable, or competent
Your experiences as a minority are not valid and not different from anyone else’s
You don’t belong here, you’re not one of us
Being your authentic self is an inconvenience to people in your life
Everyone from your group acts the same
Your life choices are problematic or hurtful for people around you

Part Two Instructions:

Working in pairs, one person play the Speaker using one of the statements above, the other play the Target. The Target should consider the range of responses in the chart below when deciding how to deal (or not deal) with the microaggression. Roleplay what this conversation might actually look like.

	No Response	Keep it Light, Keep it Moving	Confront it Directly
Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep on track • Save time + energy • Self-protection – show no vulnerability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep on track • Lay down a marker • Warning shot • Other side can save face 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act of self-esteem • Attack head-on • Deter future misbehavior • Inspire change
Risks/Costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow yourself to be harmed • Internalize “stereotype tax” • No change to environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Too subtle – no impact • Too strong – stops activity, makes you work harder than intended 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stops activity • Huge emotional investment • Risks political capital