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DEATH BY A THOUSAND PAPER CUTS: Microaggressions and Their Effects on the Learning Climate

Michael J. Maurer, MD, Rachel L. Goldstein, MD, Luisa F. Valenzuela Riveros, MD, Alyssa Honda, MD, Yana Vaks, MD, Michelle R. Brooks, C-TAGME, Hayley A. Gans, MD, Fernando S. Mendoza, MD, MPH, Lahia Yemane, MD



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Children's Hospital
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Disclosures

The authors have no financial relationships or conflicts of interest to disclose.

Agenda

Introductions and overview of microaggressions	30 minutes
Discussion on addressing microaggressions	10 minutes
Case Scenarios	20 minutes
Action Plan Creation	20 minutes
Conclusions/Questions	10 minutes

Objectives

1. Define microaggressions and describe their impact on the learning climate
2. Practice identifying and managing microaggressions within the learning environment
3. Create action plans to improve the learning climate

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDd3bzA7450>

(Warning: ADULT LANGUAGE)**

Small Group Reflection

- Please break off into small groups of 3-5 people and discuss the following questions:
 - How did you feel watching the video?
 - Have you heard of microaggressions before this workshop?
 - Based on your experiences, how do you think this topic applies to the learning climate?
 - What do you think might be some barriers to combating microaggressions, as you see them, in the learning environment?

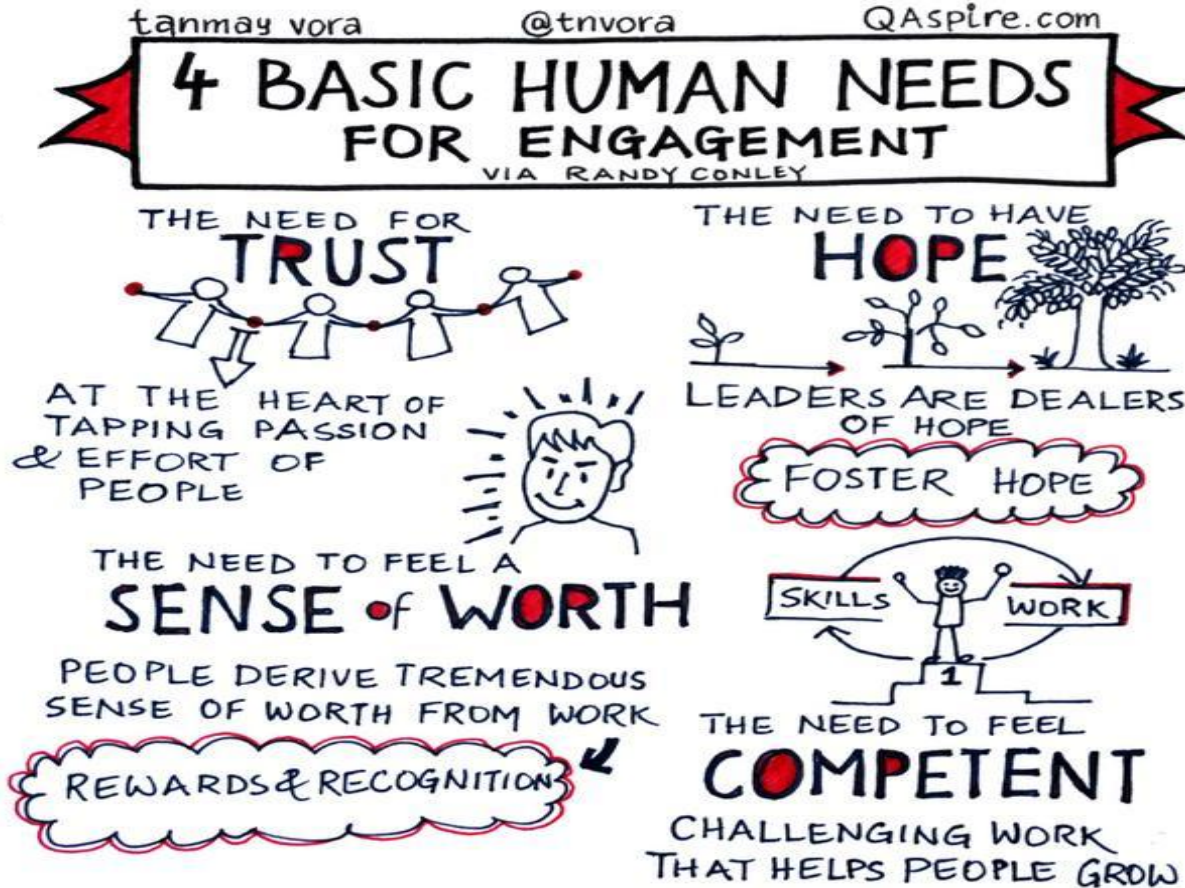
What Is A Microaggression?

“Brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, ***whether intentional or unintentional***, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults...”¹

1. Sue, D. W. (2010). *Microaggressions in everyday life: Race, gender, and sexual orientation*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Why Should We Care About Them?

- ACGME requirement to create a safe learning environment
- Those who experience microaggressions:
 - Disengagement
 - Dissatisfaction in the workplace/burnout
 - Can impact patient safety
- As faculty and program leaders, you have the opportunity to
 - Empower trainees
 - Foster environments where trainees feel safe and supported
 - Take Action



How It Usually Happens:

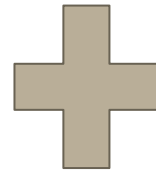






So, Should I Say Something?

Attempt to make
meaning of event



Activation of
stereotype threat

Am I being too sensitive?
Am I attacking someone as racist?
If I don't say something, will they do it
again...

Is what they said true? Maybe I am...

Cumulative Effect



Judged

Prejudice

Disappointment

Misunderstood

BURNED OUT

Excluded

Disengaged

Vulnerable

Unsafe

Toxic Environment

Disrespected

Gallery Walk

- Please fill out as many post-it notes as you would like with examples of microaggressions that you have either committed, experienced, or witnessed
- Place your post-it notes on the wall and then partake in an explorative gallery walk to learn about the experiences of others

“Now that I know what a microaggression is, **what can I do about it?**”

SPEAK UP!

- The most important thing we can do is verbally **ACKNOWLEDGE** the microaggression that has been committed and **EMPOWER** the aggressor to think about his/her words in a different way

Approaches to Communication

- Inquire
- Impact/Preference Statements
- Reflect
- Reframe
- Revisit

Inquire

Purpose: To have the aggressor explain more his/her way of thinking

Example phrases: “Can you elaborate more on that idea?” “Can you tell me more about why you believe (insert idea here)”

How this helps: Gives the aggressor a chance to elaborate on specific feelings or emotions, occasionally allows the aggressor to realize the implications of his/her comment

Impact & Preference Statements

Purpose: Describe HOW you feel and WHAT you would prefer had happened instead

Example phrases: “I think ___ about what you said/did and would rather _____ was___” “It would be helpful if you said it this way in the future”

How this helps: Allows the aggressor to understand the impact he/she has had on another individual and gives that person a strategy for communicating differently in the future

Reflect

Purpose: To paraphrase (in your own words) what the aggressor has stated, giving him/her a chance to know that you understood the comment

Example phrases: “To me it appears that you believe....” “I want to make sure I understood you correctly, in my own words what you said was _____”

How this helps: Enables the aggressor to feel as though you are listening and then gives him/her the chance to hear the way in which the statement is received

Reframe

Purpose: To develop an awareness for alternative ways to looking at and understanding a situation

Example phrases: “How would you feel if this occurred to your” “What if we looked at the situation in this way...”

How this helps: Creates an environment open to alternatives

Revisit

Purpose: To discuss a prior microaggression after the fact

Example phrases: “I wanted to talk about something that was said the other day..” “Do you remember our conversation when you mentioned ____?”

How this helps: Albeit delayed, this can still show the microaggressor that prior actions/words/inactions actually were not well-received and accepted

Things To Consider

- Non-verbal cues
- Tone of voice/delivery of message
- Attempt to not place blame... i.e. saying things like “you’re sexist” and instead say “there are many people that would view that as a sexist comment”

Small Group Role Play:

- In small groups, act out the 2 provided scenarios utilizing strategies just reviewed.
- Reflect on:
 - How did the role play go?
 - What did you feel?
 - Did any particular strategies seem to work better than others?
 - Perceived barriers and solutions?

Summary

- Microaggressions are defined as “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults”
- Vicious cycle
- The first step is acknowledging that microaggressions exist
- Address the microaggression
 - Inquire
 - Reflect
 - Reframe
 - Revisit

Create Your Own Action Plan!

- Consider potential barriers to implementation and solutions

Make the “invisible” visible- D.W. Sue

- Set the stage
 - Prior to rounds, set expectations for a safe learning environment
 - Team huddle
 - Tell trainees you’re open to all perspectives
 - Encourage trainees to speak up when they feel uncomfortable about a situation
 - Don’t be afraid to initiate this as a trainee!
 - Challenge yourself
- Model the behavior
 - If you experienced the MA before, share your story
 - Keep an open mind
 - Recommend tools based on your prior experience
 - Don’t be defensive

Educate, Educate, Educate

- Create a lecture/curriculum for trainees at all levels about microaggressions
- Incorporate this topic into orientation for trainees at all levels
 - May be useful to tie into sexual harassment talks
- Offer a talk to allow all individuals in the health care setting to learn about microaggressions
- Conduct climate surveys at your institution

Build A Network

- Contact person at each institution
- Share your policy with trainees and other staff
- Sign up for our email thread!
- We're all in this together

Acknowledgements

- LEAD Program
 - funded through a grant from the Stanford Vice Provost for Faculty Development and Diversity and the Office of Pediatric Education

Questions?

- Kenney, G. *Interrupting Microaggressions*, College of the Holy Cross, Diversity Leadership & Education. Accessed on-line, October January February 2018.
- Sue, D. W. (2010). *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender and Sexual Orientation*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.



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