

## RESPONDING TO MICROAGGRESSIONS

(Can be used alone or in combination)

### ► RESTATE OR PARAPHRASE.

"I think I hear you saying \_\_\_\_\_ (paraphrase their comments). Am I getting that right?"

### ► ASK FOR CLARIFICATION OR MORE INFORMATION.

"Could you say more about what you mean by that?"

"How have you come to think about/understand it this way?"

### ► ACKNOWLEDGE THE FEELINGS BEHIND THE STATEMENT. Express empathy and compassion.

"It sounds like you're really frustrated/nervous/angry."

"I can understand that you're upset when you feel disrespected."

### ► SEPARATE INTENT FROM IMPACT.

"You may not realize this, but when you \_\_\_\_\_ (comment/behavior), it was hurtful/offensive because \_\_\_\_\_ (impact). Maybe consider \_\_\_\_\_ (different language or behavior)."

### ► SHARE YOUR OWN PROCESS.

"I noticed that you \_\_\_\_\_ (comment/behavior). I used to do/say that too, but then I learned \_\_\_\_\_ (impact/perspective), so now I \_\_\_\_\_ (say/don't say, do/don't do)."

### ► EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS.

"When you \_\_\_\_\_ (comment/behavior), I felt \_\_\_\_\_ (feeling). Could you \_\_\_\_\_ (make a request/set a boundary)?"

Adapted from: Goodman, D. (2011). *Promoting Diversity and Social Justice: Educating People from Privileged Groups*. New York: Routledge. Excerpt available at [www.dianegoodman.com](http://www.dianegoodman.com)

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- **CHALLENGE A STEREOTYPE.** Give information, share your own experience and/or offer alternative perspectives.

“That’s not been my experience. Could I share something about my experience that’s different from yours?”

“I’m surprised to hear you say that. That hasn’t been my experience. Something I’ve learned is that \_\_\_\_\_.”

- **APPEAL TO VALUES AND PRINCIPLES.**

“I know you really care about \_\_\_\_\_ (value/principle). When you say/do \_\_\_\_\_, it undermines those intentions.”

- **PROMOTE EMPATHY.** Ask how they would feel if someone said something like that about their group, or their friend/partner/child.

“I know you don’t like the stereotypes about \_\_\_\_\_ (their group). Can you imagine how he feels when he hears those things about his identity/community?”

“How would you feel if someone said that about/did that to your child/spouse/family member?”

- **TELL THEM THEY’RE TOO SMART OR TOO GOOD TO SAY THINGS LIKE THAT.**

“I’m surprised to hear you say something like that. What has led you to that belief?”

- **PRETEND YOU DON’T UNDERSTAND.** As people try to explain their comments, they often realize how silly they sound.

“I don’t get it. Can you help me understand why that’s funny?”

- **USE HUMOR.** Exaggerate comment, use gentle sarcasm.

“She plays like a girl?” You mean she plays like Serena Williams?” Or Mia Hamm?

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► **POINT OUT WHAT THEY HAVE IN COMMON WITH THE OTHER PERSON.**

“It’s upsetting when I hear jokes that reduce someone to a stereotype or label. Do you know they are also studying/working on \_\_\_\_\_ and they like to \_\_\_\_\_? We all have a lot in common.”

► **W.I.I.F.T. (What’s in it for them).** Explain why diversity matters for them or why an individual/group is valuable.

“I know you’re not comfortable with \_\_\_\_\_ (issue/person/group), but you may actually have some common ground with them. You might even be more successful if you could work with them.”

“In all professions, being able to work with all sorts of people will be a key to our ability to be successful, so these skills are important to develop.”

► **REMIND THEM OF THE RULES OR POLICIES.**

“That thing you said/did is against the code of conduct (or policy) and could really get you in trouble.”

“What you are saying can have a negative impact even if you don’t intend it to and could be a problem when it comes to university policies.”

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