

RESPONDING TO MICROAGGRESSIONS AND BIAS

(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

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

“Could I share something about my experience that’s different from yours?”

“I think that’s a stereotype. Something I’ve learned is that _____.”

“Another way to look at it might be _____.”

- ▶ **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.**

“Come on. You’re so smart. I’m surprised to hear you say something like that.

- ▶ **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. 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 the real world, being able to work with all sorts of people will be a key to our ability to be successful, so we might as well learn these skills here.”

► **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.”

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