

Microaggressions

“Microaggressions are the everyday encounters of subtle discrimination that people of various marginalized groups experience throughout their lives.” (Derald Sue, 2014)

Microaggressions can be

-Unconscious: The person is not aware that what they said was wrong and offensive

-Unintentional: The person is not aware of the effects that their words and actions have on the people around them

Some common themes of LGBTQIA microaggressions:

- a) Use of heterosexist or genderist terminology
- b) Endorsement of heteronormative culture and behaviors
- c) The assumption of a universal LGBTQIA experience
- d) Discomfort or disapproval of LGBTQIA experience
- e) A suggestion of abnormality
- f) Denial of bodily privacy

Below are some common microaggressions that LGBTQIA people experience. Many of these microaggressions are common to more than one identity, but are grouped by identity for the purposes of this discussion.

Questions to consider:

- 1) Why is each question or statement microaggressive?
- 2) Why is the question or statement harmful to the particular group?
- 3) What can you do when you hear people make the statements or ask the questions listed below?

Lesbians

“You’re too attractive to be a lesbian.”

“How do you have sex?”

“Have you ever had a sexual relationship with a man?”

“What led you to be lesbian?”

“So who is the man in the relationship?”

“Do you have a boyfriend?” (asked by people who do not know her identity)

“What form of birth control do you use?” (asked by health care providers)

Gay Men

“That’s so gay.”

“I’m not being homophobic—you’re being too sensitive.”

“This is my gay best friend!”

“You aren’t into me, right?”

“What led you to be gay?”

“Do you have a girlfriend?” (asked by people who do not know his identity)

Bisexuals

“You’re not bi—you have a long-term partner!”

“Does your partner know?”

“Doesn’t that make your partner jealous?”

“But you have mostly (only) had male/female partners.”

“How about a threesome?”

“I don’t believe that bisexuality really exists.”

“I’m opposed to bisexuality because it reinforces a gender binary.”

Trans Women

“What is your ‘real’ name?”

“Why would you want to have your penis cut off?”

“So, what do you have down there?”

“You don’t seem to be a woman to me.”

“You don’t make a very convincing woman.”

“Why would I call you ‘her?’ You’re not really a woman!”

“I’m not comfortable sharing a bathroom with you.”

Trans Men

“What is your ‘real’ name?”

“Why do you want to cut off your breasts?”

“So, what do you have down there?”

“Why couldn’t you just be a butch lesbian?”

“I can still tell you were born a woman.”

Non-Binary Individuals

“What are you?”

“Were you born a man or a woman?”

“You must be confused.”

“Which bathroom do you use?”

“How do you find partners who would get you?”

“I’m not using ‘they/them,’ because that is not grammatically correct.”

“You use ‘ze/hir’ for pronouns? I don’t feel that I can learn that.”

Asexuals

“How do you know you don’t like sex if you haven’t tried it?”

“You must be confused.”

“Were you abused as a child?”

“You just have not met ‘the one.’ Don’t worry—it will happen.”

“Oh, so you’re celibate?”

“You’re missing out!”