

# **BUILDINGENERGY BOSTON**

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## **Addressing Racism and Subtle Acts of Exclusion in the Design and Construction Workplace**

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**Curated by Maria Washington and Joy Yakie**

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**Northeast Sustainable Energy Association (NESEA)  
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# KEY CONCEPTS

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Types of Microaggressions

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Understanding the Impact of  
Microaggressions

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Recognizing Microaggressions

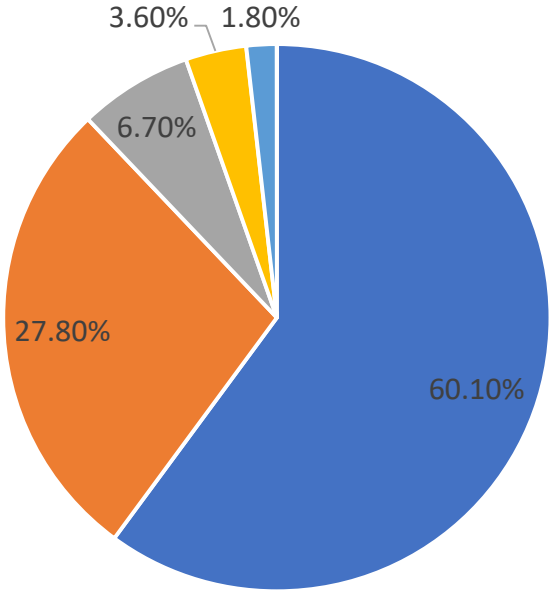
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Interrupting Microaggressions

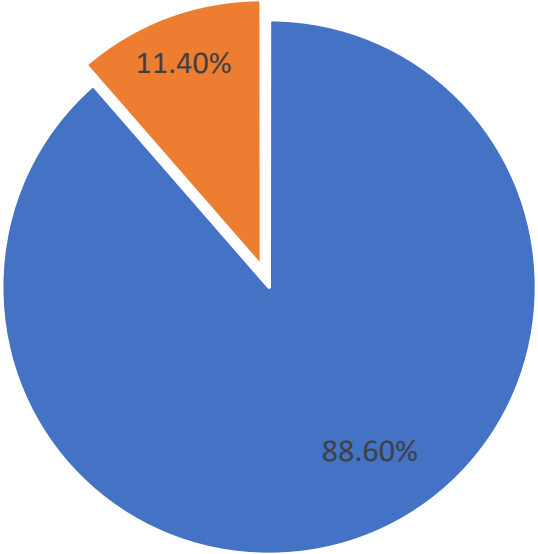
# DEMOGRAPHICS



Race/Ethnicity



Gender



- Male
- Female
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- White
- Hispanic or Latino
- Black or African American
- Asian
- Other or Multiple Races

# MICROAGGRESSION “Othering”

Are everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target a person based solely upon their marginalized group membership (Sue et al., 2007)



# COST OF BIAS IN THE WORKPLACE



# TYPES OF MICROAGGRESSIONS

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Micro-assaults

Microinsults

Micro-invalidations

# FORMS OF MICROAGRESSIONS

**Exclusion**

**Inappropriate comments or jokes**

**Lack of accommodation**

**Unconscious bias**

**Underestimating competence**

**Tokenism**

**Stereotyping**



# YOUR EXPERIENCE OF INCLUSION

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## **Focusing on exclusion**

- Describe the impact of exclusion on you. What did you feel? What was the impact on your performance?
- What were the actions and behaviors of leaders and peers that fostered that experience?

## **Focusing on inclusion**

- Describe the impact of inclusion on you. What did you feel? What was the impact on your performance?
- What were the actions and behaviors of leaders and peers that fostered that experience?





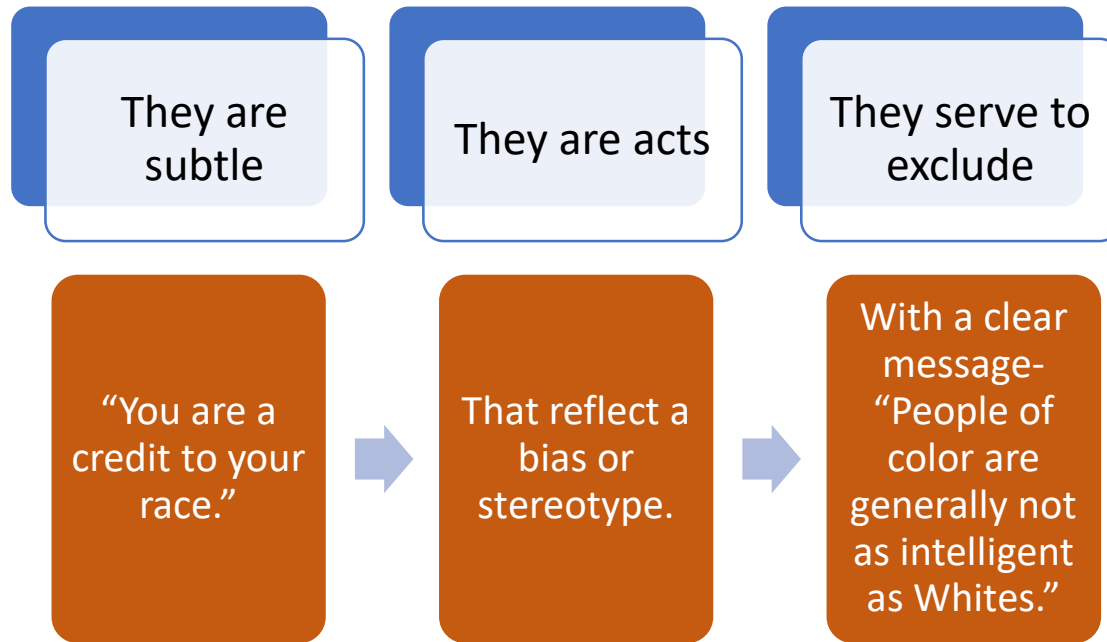
# WHY REFRAME THE TERM “MICROAGGRESSION”?

Lack of clarity about what  
microaggression is and why they  
are a problem

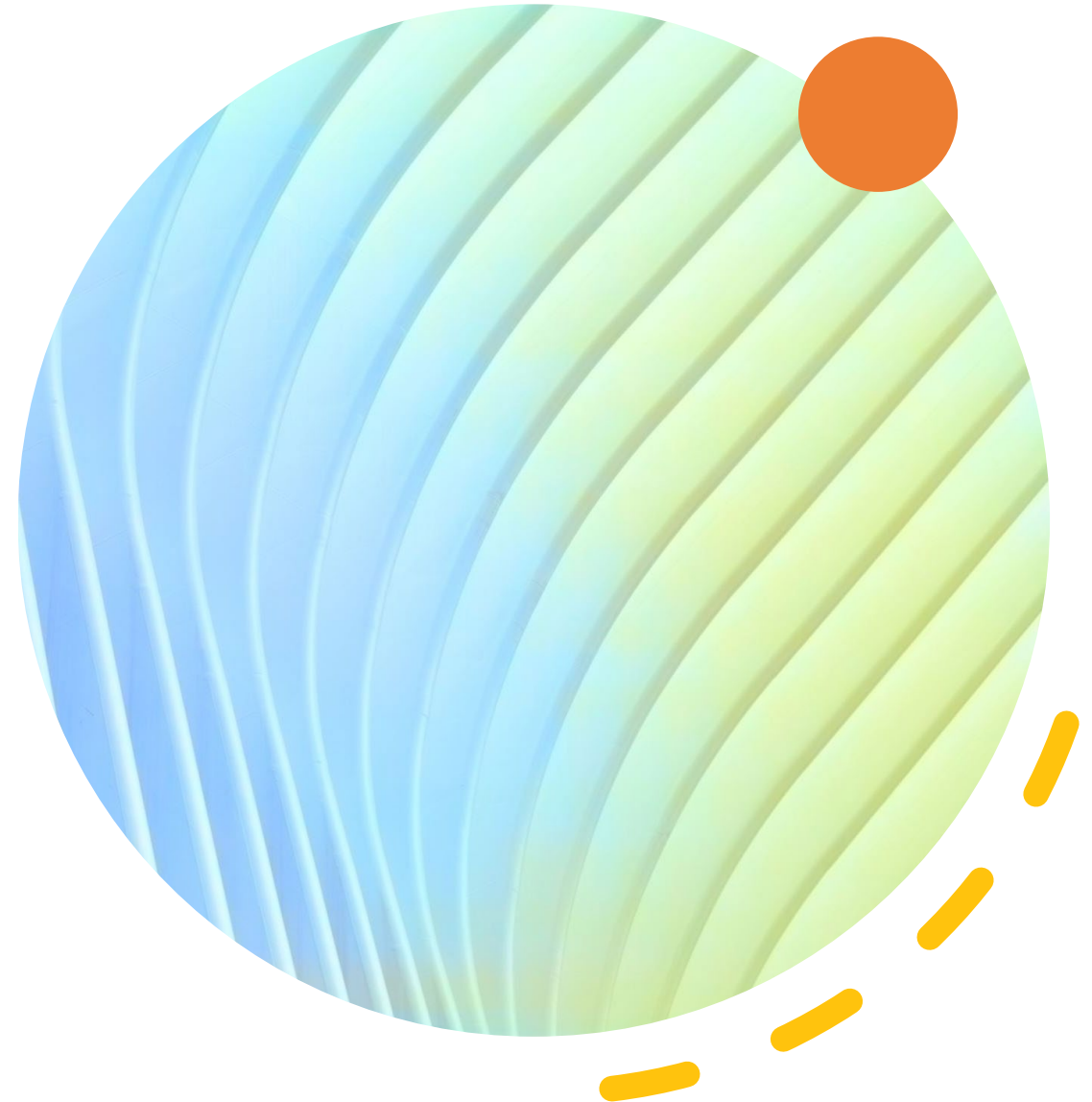
“microaggression communicates  
implicit, unspoken messages that  
are often beyond our control



# ELEMENTS OF MICROAGGRESSIONS



Subtle Acts of Exclusion



# IMPACT

You are invisible

You (or people like you) are inadequate

You are not an individual

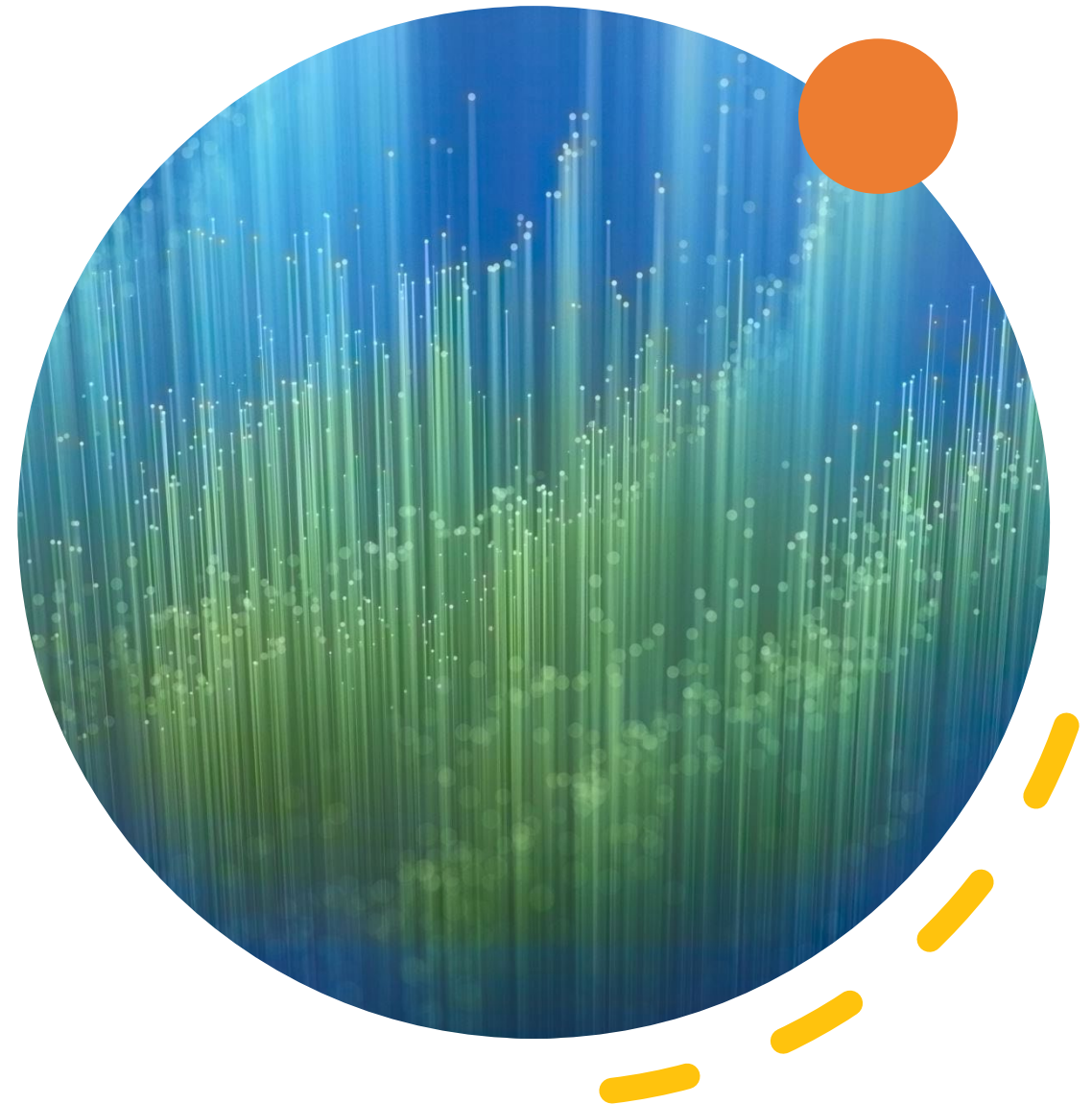
You don't belong

You are not normal

You are a curiosity

You are a threat

You are a burden

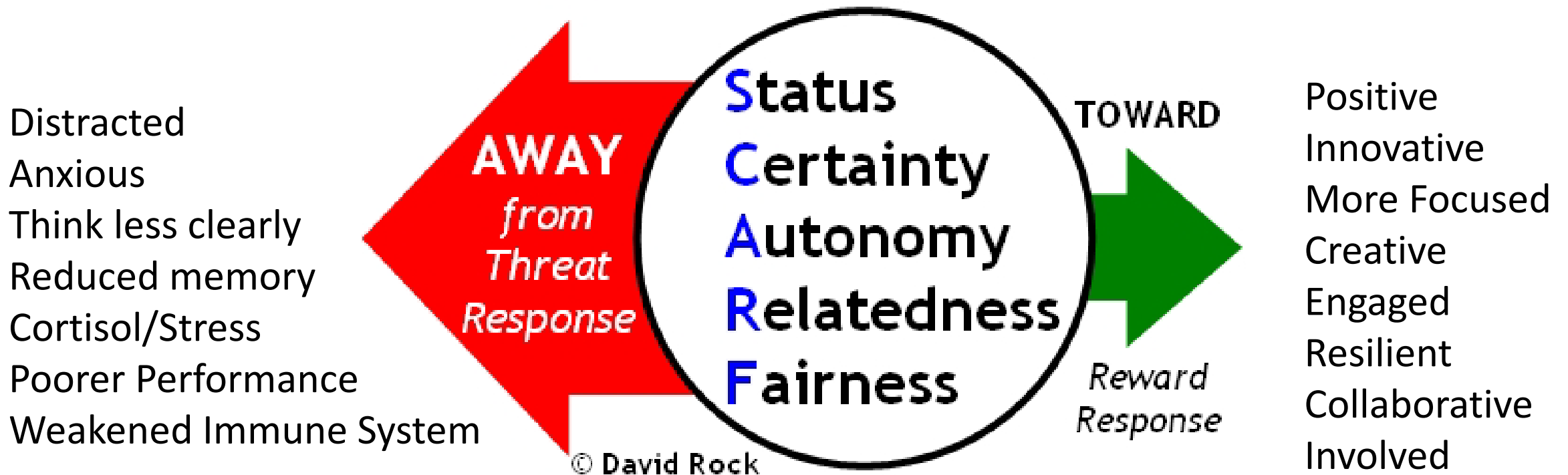




**WHY  
UNDERPERFORMANCE?**



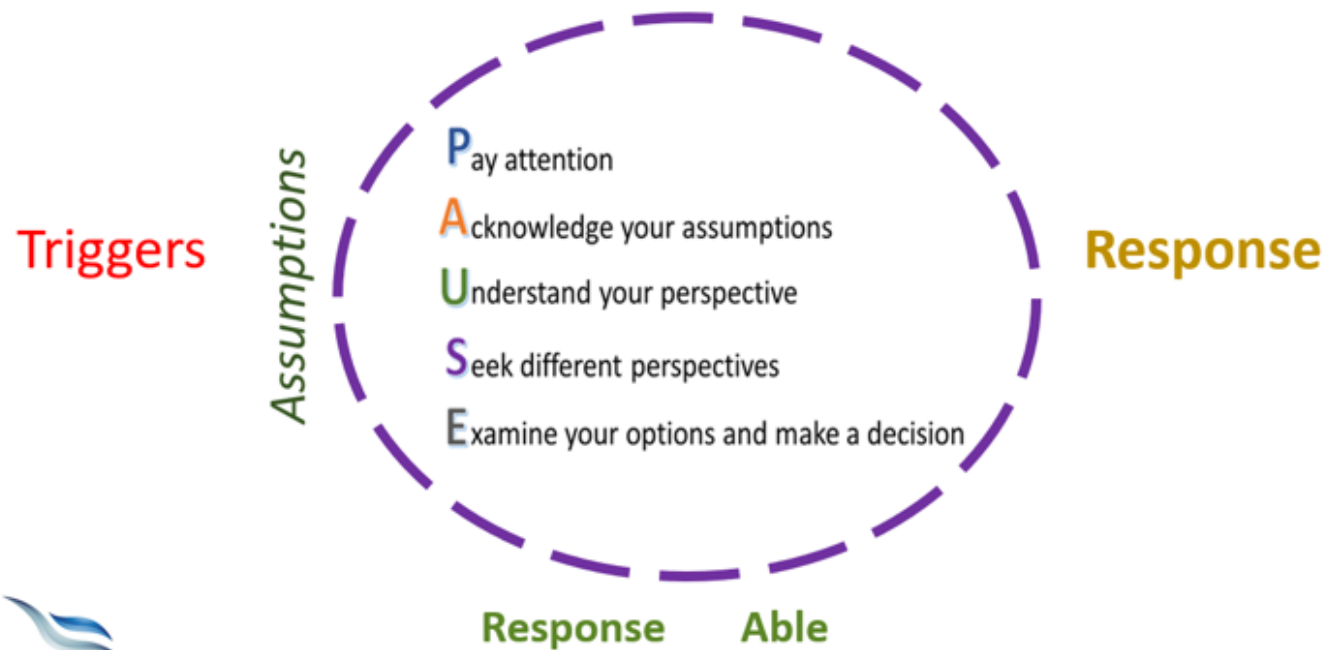
# SCARF Model of Social Threats and Rewards



5 domains

# PUTTING A PAUSE ON DECISIONS

## Putting a PAUSE on Decisions



# PUTTING A PAUSE ON DECISIONS

**P** is for *pay attention*. What was happening that caught your attention? What was your physical or emotional reaction to the behavior? What did you see as the impact on others in the room?

**A** is for *acknowledge your assumptions*. Why do you think this behavior is occurring? How does power play a role? Does power or privilege need to be expressed in this context? What am I assuming is acceptable in this situation?

**U** is for *understand your perspective*. What biases may influence my perspective? How have I contributed or supported this pattern? What have I not done to interrupt this pattern?

**S** is for *seek different perspectives*. What would be a way to help others see the behaviors? What questions could be asked? Of whom? What perspectives would help reframe this pattern?

**E** is for *examine your options*. What actions would be most effective in interrupting this pattern of power and privilege.

# USING PAUSE TECHNIQUE

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During a meeting to discuss workplace safety, a construction manager refers to the female workers as “the girls” instead of using their actual names, making them feel dismissed and disrespected.



# PUTTING A PAUSE ON STEREOTYPES

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## Small Group Discussion

- Handout: “Putting a PAUSE on Stereotypes.”
- Choose one or two “What If” situations.
- From the *Iceberg of Human Dimensions*, identify which trait could trigger a stereotype or bias.
- Use the **PAUSE** technique to determine an effective response.
- Report one example for the debrief.



# DEBRIEF

What did you learn?

What are you concerned about?

What will you do next?

INTERRUPTING  
MICROAGGRESSIONS

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Name the behavior

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Explain the impact

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Educate

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Encourage feedback

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Model the behavior

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Provide training

# WHAT IS ONE THING YOU CAN START DOING?

## Inclusive Leadership– The Starting Place

- Requires lifelong reflective practice – A willingness to be uncomfortable
- Respecting differences AND being curious about differences
- Sensitive to power imbalances
- Starts with a willingness to examine assumptions and biases
- Requires a willingness to learn as you go – learn from your mistakes

**Being comfortable with being uncomfortable**



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# WHY SHOULD YOU CARE ABOUT INCLUSION?

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# QUESTIONS?/REFLECTIONS

Thank you!

Fatou Njie-Jallow

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# RESOURCES AND LINKS

## Articles/Websites:

- <https://necc.box.com/s/w7cjqn0tc4veifoehpxmhwzktbq6o4x>
- HelenSandersonAssociates.co.uk – Person-Centered Theory
- speedoftrust.com - Stephen Covey
- <http://www.liberatingstructures.com/> - Liberating Structures

## Tedtalks & Videos:

- Blind spots: Broaden perspectives - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HbBTM8bJt8Q>
- The Urgency of Intersectionality – Kimberle’ Crenshaw, PhD. - [https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle\\_crenshaw\\_the\\_urgency\\_of\\_intersectionality](https://www.ted.com/talks/kimberle_crenshaw_the_urgency_of_intersectionality)
- Why good leaders make you feel safe – Simon Sinek <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmyZMtPVodo>
- Building Trusting Teams- Simon Sinek <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dQ2vzFKOD5w>

## Books:

- Subtle Acts of Exclusion - Tiffany Jana and Michael Baran
- [The Inclusive Language Handbook: A Guide to Better Communication and Transformational Leadership](#)
- Thinking, Fast and Slow, by Daniel Kahneman
- Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People, Mahzarin R. Banaji & Anthony Greenwald
- Beyond Inclusion, Leticia Nieto
- Leaders Eat Last – Simon Sinek
- Braving the Wilderness – Brene Brown
- Speed of Trust – Stephen Covey
- Good to Great – Jim Collins
- Laws of Teamwork – John C. Maxwell
- 7 Habits of Highly Effective People -Stephen Covey
- Shifting the Monkey – Todd Whitaker
- The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace for Learning, Innovation, and Growth – Amy Edmondson, PhD



# COMMON SCENARIOS

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## SCENARIO 1

“Where’s your family from? Where were you born?”

### ALTERNATIVE

“I’m from this place; where are you from?”

### WHY:

Asking where someone is from may imply that you assume that person is not from the same country as you, which pressures them to defend their identity. Instead, share where you grew up and ask where that person is from without suggesting that it may not be the same place.

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## SCENARIO 2

“Wow, you are so articulate!”

### ALTERNATIVE

“Thank you! That presentation was informative.”

### WHY

Mentioning someone’s ability to articulate implies that you’re surprised by someone’s ability to do so. Empower others based on their talents and celebrate their wins.

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## SCENARIO 3

You are giving someone a nickname that is easier for you to pronounce.

### ALTERNATIVE

Ask them, “How do you pronounce your name?”

### WHY

Give people the respect of calling them by their preferred name regardless of how different it may seem to you. Work on your pronunciation over time; your efforts will be appreciated even if it’s a work in progress.

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## SCENARIO 4

“You’re in a senior role?”

### ALTERNATIVE

“What is your role?”

### WHY

Questioning if someone is in a senior role implies you are surprised by someone’s success. Never make assumptions about who might be the most senior person in the room.



# COMMON SCENARIOS

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## SCENARIO 5

"I support you. I have friends like you!"

### ALTERNATIVE:

"I'm an ally."

### WHY

Explaining that you are not racist or discriminating because you have friends in a marginalized group ignores the individual experience of the person you're talking to. Establish yourself as an ally and convey that you are willing to listen and learn from someone's experience.

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## SCENARIO 6

"Racism isn't something that exists at our company."

### ALTERNATIVE

"What has been your experience at our company?"

### WHY

If you make assumptions based on your own experience or dismiss a peer's concerns about race, ethnicity, or culture at work, you establish that there is no room for open dialogue or differences in the workplace. Understanding individuals' experiences can help us become more educated and better ourselves and those around us.

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## SCENARIO 7

"I didn't mean to sound racist."

### ALTERNATIVE

"Can we have a conversation about why what I said was racist? I want to learn."

### WHY

Validation is critical. Even if your intention was not to say something offensive, you still might have offended someone. Have a conversation to avoid language that could be offensive or misinterpreted in the future.

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## SCENARIO 8

"Can I touch your hair?"

### ALTERNATIVE

"What is your morning routine?"

### WHY

It's ok to be curious about someone's experiences, but this question both infringes on the person's space and implies that the person you're talking to doesn't fit a societal standard. Learning about and understanding someone's personal experience creates a space for listening and learning.