RESPONDING TO MICROAGGRESSIONS AND BIAS

(Can be used alone or in combination)

► RESTATE OR PARAPHRASE.

“I think I heard you saying__________ (paraphrase their comments). Is that correct?”

► ASK FOR CLARIFICATION OR MORE INFORMATION.

“Could you say more about what you mean by that?”

“How have you come to think that?”

► 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.

“I know you didn’t realize this, but when you __________ (comment/behavior), it was hurtful/offensive because________. Instead you could________ (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________.”

► EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS.

“When you __________ (comment/behavior), I felt __________ (feeling) and I would like you to ______________.”

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

“Actually, in my experience________________.”

“I think that’s a stereotype. I’ve learned that________________.”

“Another way to look at it is ______________.”

► APPEAL TO VALUES AND PRINCIPLES.

“I know you really care about __________. Acting in this way really 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), how do you think he feels when he hears those things about his group?”

“How would you feel if someone said that about/did that to your sister or girlfriend?”

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

“Come on. You’re too smart to say something so ignorant/offensive.”

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

“I don’t get it…….”

“Why is that funny?”

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

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

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

“I’m tired of hearing your Muslim jokes. Do you know he’s also studying ______ and likes to _________? You may want to talk with him about that. You actually have a lot in common.”

► **W.I.I.F.T. (What’s in it for them).** Explain why diversity or that individual/group can be helpful/valuable.

“I know you’re not comfortable with _____ but they can help us reach out to/better serve other groups on campus/in the community.”

“In the real world, we are going to have to work with all sorts of people, so might as well learn how to do it here.”

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

“That behavior is against our code of conduct and could really get you in trouble.”


Facilitator Suggested Strategies for Addressing Microaggressions

• What you have said meant this to me. What was your intention? What do others think? I heard you say this. What it felt like to me. . . . Did any able feel that way. Okay, nobody else felt that way but I’d like to share . . . .

• Has anyone had an experience different from what was just said? Other perspectives might be . . . What’s another way someone might feel about that?

• Let the group know that nobody is perfect but we strive to do including myself. (avoid providing a rationale or reason for avoiding self-improvement)

• Excuse me, can you repeat what you said?