



## The Mystery of Microaggressions

Have you ever experienced or witnessed indirect, subtle, or unintended discrimination against members of a marginalized group? Did the event make you feel uncomfortable, but seemed too small to merit your intervention? Such incidents, commonly known as microaggressions, are widely overlooked. These resources help to define, assess, and process microaggressions and their effect on daily encounters.

### Reflect and Share

1. Have you ever experienced a microaggression? How did it affect you?
2. Have you ever stated a microaggression? How do you feel looking back on the incident?
3. How can you be more conscious of microaggressions and their implications?

### Key Definitions

These definitions are from psychologist Derald Wing Sue:

- *Racial Microaggression* – brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward people of color.
- *Microassaults* – Conscious and intentional actions or slurs, such as using racial epithets, displaying swastikas, or deliberately serving a white person before a person of color in a restaurant.
- *Microinsults* – Verbal and nonverbal communications that subtly convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity. An example is an employee who asks a colleague of color how she got her job, implying she may have landed it through an affirmative action or quota system.
- *Microinvalidations* – Communications that subtly exclude, negate, or nullify the thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person of color. For instance, white people often ask Asian Americans where they were born, conveying the message that they are perpetual foreigners in their own land.





## Read

### **“Allies and Microaggressions” by Kerry Ann Rockquemore**

<https://goo.gl/BJzYUp>

This account from the president of the National Center for Faculty Development and Diversity, Kerry Ann Rockquemore, Ph.D., recalls a personal experience with microaggressions and provides various methods for combatting them when experiencing them as a bystander.

## Listen

### **“Microaggressions: Be Careful What You Say”**

**by Michel Martin**

<https://goo.gl/4HczjR>

This NPR podcast includes an interview with professor of psychology Derald Sue, Ph.D., from the University of Columbia. Sue provides physiologic insight on health issues associated with those who experience microaggressions on a constant basis. The discussion also touches on two personal accounts.

## Watch

### **“What Kind of Asian Are You” by Ken Tanaka**

<https://goo.gl/CohftV>

Ken Tanaka is known for this award-winning short video outlining social examples in which microaggressions occur.

### **“How Microaggressions Are Like Mosquito Bites”**

**by Fusion Comedy**

<https://goo.gl/7cZKcN>

This quick video provides a perfect metaphor for the ways in which microaggressions act, with some people getting “bitten” more than others, making for vast differences in personal experiences.

