Possible responses to a microaggression

Did that just happen?

Did they just say that because I’m...

Well, maybe they didn’t mean it that way...

How should I respond?

Possible meanings or impacts of a microaggression

I do not belong.

I am abnormal.

I feel powerless.

I am invisible.

The Way Forward: Strength Through Adversity

I have the wisdom to discern the truth, to “read between the lines.”

I have the flexibility to see multiple worldviews and understand the other’s point of view.

I can read nonverbal cues to understand intention instead of relying solely on what someone says.

I can get validation of my experience through a sense of collective identity with a group.

When Someone Lets You Know You’ve Committed a MICROAGGRESSION

Initial Reactions:

I’m in shock.

I feel (ashamed, angry, afraid, sad, uncertain, anxious).

But I’m a good person.

That’s not what I meant.

You’re being sensitive.

Am I still a good person?

Am I racist?

What do people think of me?

What can I do?

What To Do:

✓ Breathe
  Take a slow deep breath. Don’t be afraid of strong feelings.

✓ Respect
  Understand the risk that someone has taken to let you know they have been hurt.

✓ Say
  “Thank you for letting me know. I am sorry that my words/actions have hurt you.”

✓ Listen
  Do your best to overcome defensiveness and hear what is being said to you.

✓ Reflect
  Try to understand the meaning of your words or actions to the other person.

✓ Learn
  Read, watch, listen, engage, dialogue. Don’t expect people of color to do the work for you.

Some Positive Outcomes of Engaging in a Challenging Process:

I have a better understanding of myself, privilege, culture, and oppression.

My awareness of injustice and oppression has increased.

I accept that I will make mistakes. What matters is how I deal with them.

I know my values and try to align my behavior with what I believe is right.