

Handout to Activity 12: The Microaggression Bystander

Let's see if you outline the appropriate course of action in a given situation.

Conversation in the car repair shop:

- Male supervisor: You did really well on the skills check off today. I was pleasantly surprised!
- Female subordinate: Since I was a kid, I've always known I wanted to do this.

The following sentences are suggestions on how to intervene during the microaggression as a bystander, but only if you feel safe.

Step 1: Interrupt the situation.

You can ask questions to get at any underlying assumptions: **Why did that surprise you?**

Step 2: Acknowledge what happened to the person affected. Ask for clarification what he meant by his statement. This gives an opportunity to clear up any misunderstanding his statement might have caused.

You can say: **I heard your comment and it didn't feel right.**

This puts him on notice that what he said was not ok with you. Defuse the situation by shutting down the conversation which gives an opportunity to take a moment to reflect on. Everyone must calm down. Only then you can proceed with next step.

Step 3: Explain to the person saying or behaving in a harmful way why such actions had a negative impact, even if unintentional. You can offer a different perspective on how what was said might be interpreted or reframed. Using generalities usually leads to a microaggression.

Give an example of non-micro aggressive statement: You did really well on the skills check off today – **I knew you would!**

If you miss an opportunity to address a microaggression at least try to revisit what was said and try to construct a way how could you react.

Source: <https://www.med.unc.edu/healthsciences/about-us/diversity/jeditoolkit/micro-aggressions-microaffirmations/>