MASTERING
CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Building Trust Through Better Communication

Words That Work

SCORE Los Angeles

Luiza Dreasher, Founder and CEO, Mastering Cultural Differences

Luiza Dreasher

Brazilian by Birth, Multicultural by Choice

My Life's Passion:

Helping Organizations Create More Inclusive Environments

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What would you do?

Imagine The Following Situations

After This Webinar...

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- Understand how certain comments impact others, despite the speaker's good intentions.

- Acquire a few strategies you can use to facilitate a dialogue and improve your effectiveness when you hear insensitive comments.

Agenda

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- A brief introduction to microaggressions
- The impact of our words
- Strategies to speak up in a productive manner
- How to be an ally
- Closing

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Eliminate Distractions

Introduction to Microaggressions

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Source: Chris Whissen Photos: shutterstock.com

Microaggressions

- Brief statements or behaviors that, intentionally or not, communicate a negative message.
- Cut across all social identities.
- Often occur outside the level of conscious awareness of the perpetrator.
- Can be disguised as compliments or positive statements.
- For many individuals, they are everyday occurrences.

Source: Red Shoe Movement

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Source: Eric Breitenback/Daytona State College

"Death by 1,000 Cuts"

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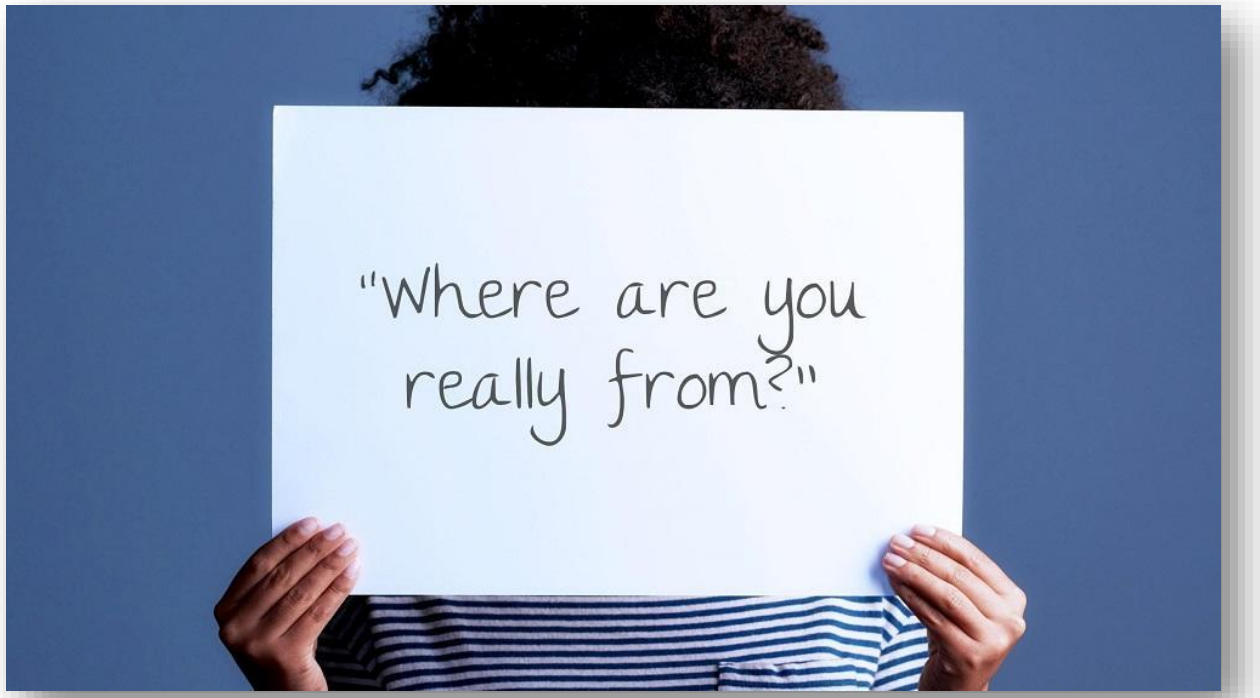
Recognizing the Impact of Our Words

Racial Microaggressions Photo Series, Fordham University

You Don't Belong



Feel Invisible

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There is something Wrong | They Are a Burden

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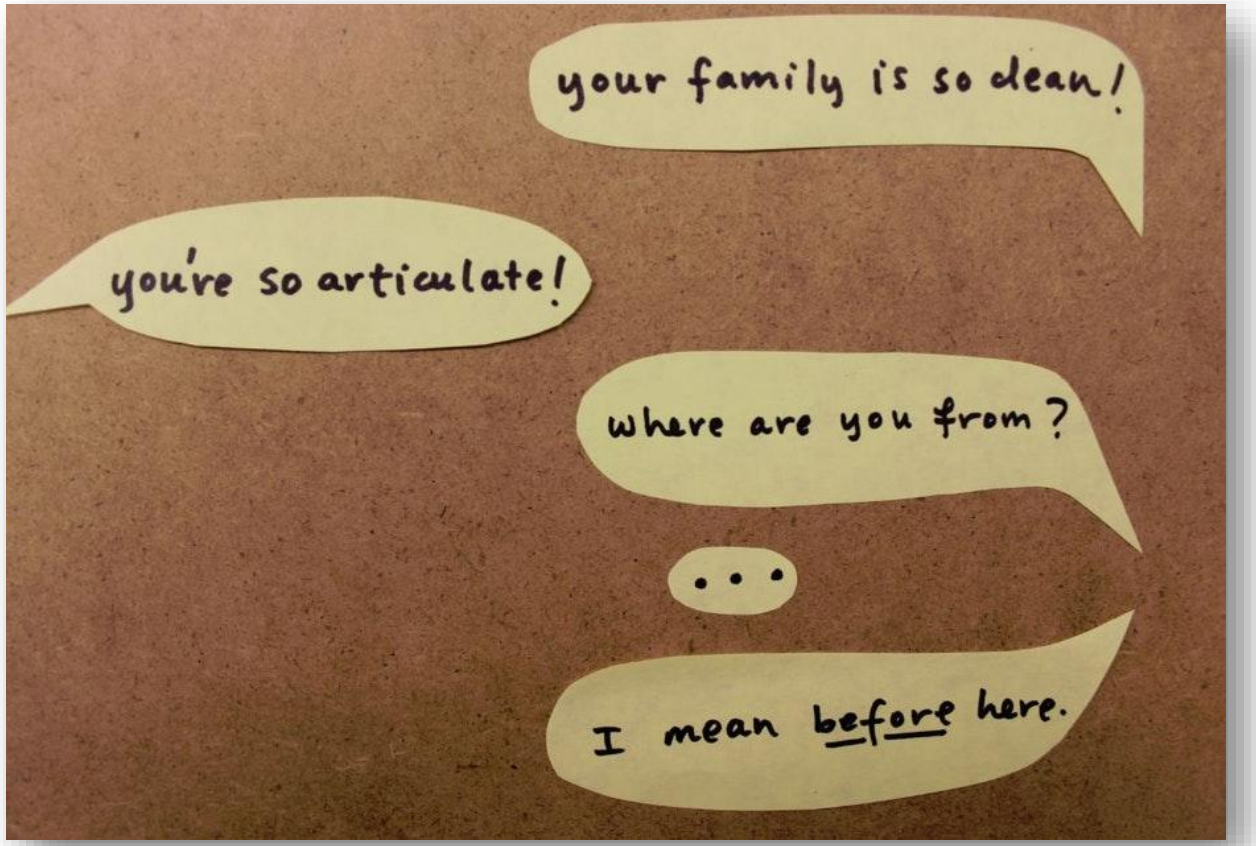
"My father, who died when I was young, chose my name, …. It's one of the few links I have to him, and I'm not willing to let it go. I am twisting myself into a pretzel to adapt to my company culture, and they can't budge an inch to call me by my given name."

Latine Executive

Feel Inadequate



Credit: KUOW Illustration

Recap

Our words can unintentionally make individuals feel:

- They don’t belong
- They are invisible
- There is something wrong with them
- Inadequate

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Choices You Have

Bystander or Ally

Luiza Dreasher, Founder and CEO, Mastering Cultural Differences

You Act as a *Bystander*

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A person who witnesses harm occurring but ignores the harm being done and takes no specific action to minimize, reduce, or stop it.

You Can Choose to Be an *Ally*

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A person who voices or otherwise demonstrates moral and emotional support for someone to whom harm is being done.

My Goal For You

After this webinar, when you witness acts of microaggression, you will gather the courage to step up and be an ally whenever you are needed.

How to Speak Up in a Productive Way

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1)
Explain the impact while assuming good intent on the part of the speaker

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- Start with the assumption that the person is a decent human being but clueless about the impact of their words.
- ***The key:*** Approach the person who has been offensive, demeaning, or discriminatory as if they <u>did not intend to harm.</u>
- ***Important!*** If the person doing the harm is your superior, speak to them in private.

Strategy 1:
What You Could Say

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- *I know you mean well, but that really bothered me.*
- *I am sure you meant that to be funny, but that stereotype is not a joke. Unfortunately, some people actually believe that.*
- ***[To a superior]*** *Mr. Johnson, everyone knows you are committed to the success of this organization. Did you realize that what you said in the meeting today was offensive? Can I give you my perspective?*

2)
Give them a chance to reexamine what they said by asking “non-blaming” questions

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- Sometimes, people don’t realize what they have said is offensive.

- Give the individual a chance to think about what they said while giving them the benefit of the doubt.

Strategy 2:
What You Could Say

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- *What do you mean when you say…*
- *It sounds like you are saying… Is that what you mean?*
- *Can we get back to what you said a few minutes ago?*

3)
Redirect the conversation

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This is an indirect way to point out that the language used was demeaning and inappropriate.

Strategy 3:
What You Could Say

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- **When someone says:**

  *I am not prejudiced against **oriental people**. I just don't have any oriental friends.*

- **Redirect <u>with the correct terminology</u>**

  I am glad to hear you are not prejudiced against Asians/Asian-Americans.

4)
Help individuals see the absurdity of their statement

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- A useful strategy for when individuals are generalizing.
- Because while certain behaviors/characteristics may be true for an individual, it is not true of everyone in a group.

Strategy 4:
What You Could Say

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- **For example, when someone says:**

  Immigrants are lazy and don't even try to speak English. ***(Stereotypical statement)***

- **You can counter:**
  Actually, I've met dozens of immigrants who have learned English or are trying to learn it.
  Do you know how hard it is to learn another language?

- ***Make it individual:***
  Was there someone in particular you were trying to communicate with?

5)
Pause the action with feedback

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- First, you describe the **SITUATION** and the **BEHAVIOR** you observed.

- Then give feedback on the **IMPACT** – always using the “I” voice:

Strategy 5:
What You Could Say

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For example, when someone says:

Immigrants are lazy. They don't even try to speak English.

You can say:

*When you made the "lazy immigrant comment," **[BEHAVIOR YOU OBSERVED],** it hurt / it felt really uncomfortable **[IMPACT].** As one of the many non-native speakers in this organization ----(go on explaining **your point of view**).*

6)
Interrupt the conversation

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- **Someone says:**

  There aren't any women with this type of high-level expertise that we can bring into the project.

- **Counter**:

  Let's not assume that the women won't have the skills we are looking for. Let's look at everyone in the pool and then make our decisions based on what we actually discover.

- **Or if someone starts saying an offensive joke. You can say:**

  Whoa, let's not go there! That is inappropriate.

7)
Walk away

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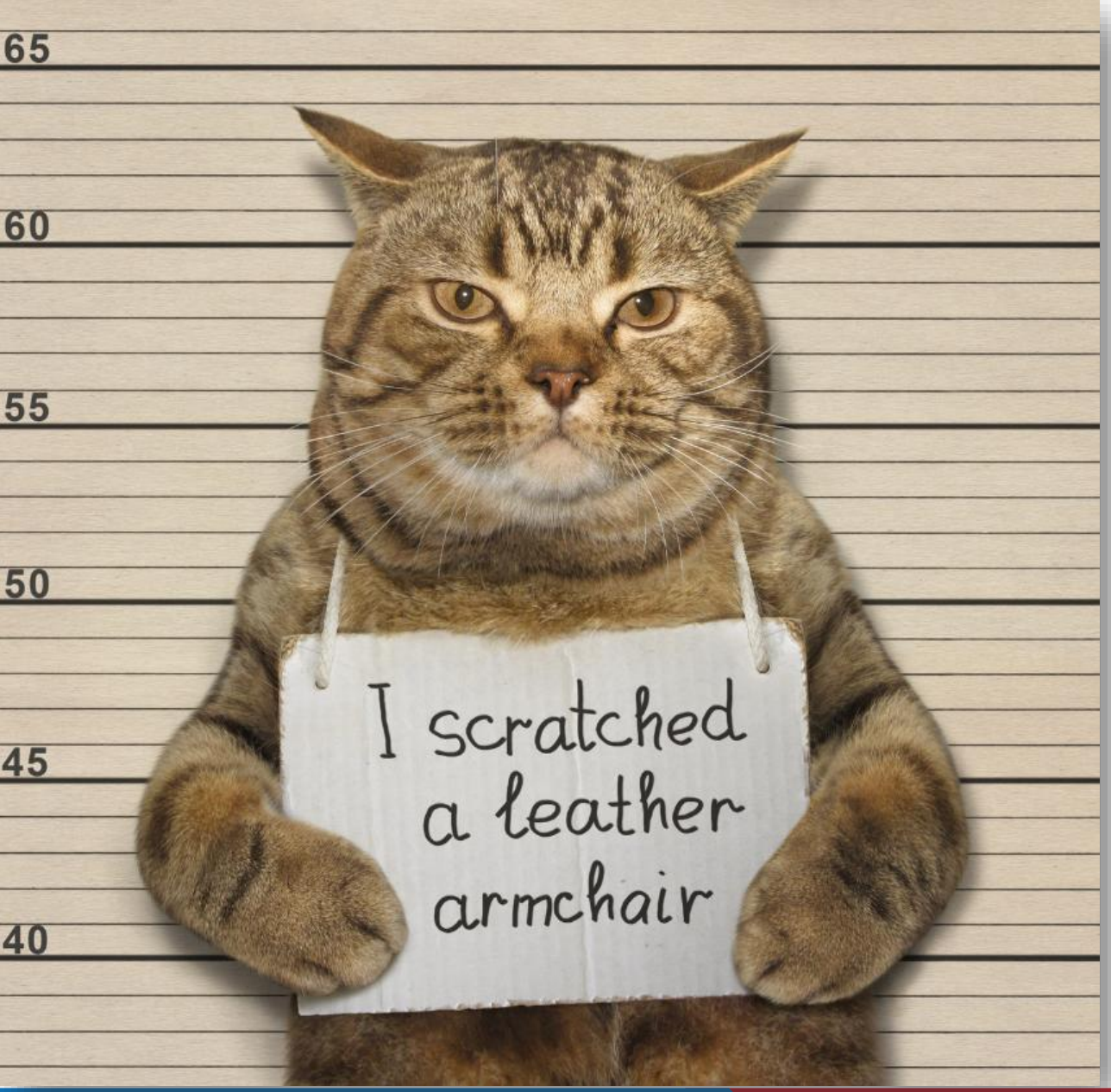
- There may be times when you need to walk away, especially if it is not safe, or you experience a strong emotional reaction.

- Remove yourself from the situation. You can go back to it when you are calmer – you will be far more efficient.

The Seven Strategies

1. Explain the impact while assuming good intent on the part of the speaker.
2. Give individuals a chance to reexamine what they said by asking “non-blaming” questions.
3. Redirect the conversation.
4. Help individuals see the absurdity of their statement, especially when they are generalizing.
5. Pause the action with feedback.
6. Interrupt the conversation.
7. Walk away.



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What if you are the offending party?

Final Reminders for Building Trust and Improving Communication

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1. Remember that even well-intended people can cause harm. When you say something offensive or hurtful, acknowledge it and accept responsibility.

2. Let go of your mistakes. It prevents you from moving forward, taking risks, and learning. **Staying stuck in your guilt accomplishes nothing.**

3. Before you act, ask yourself: *Is this an effective intervention? Am I seeking to educate? Am I reacting in a respectful way*?

4. Understand that words matter. Recognizing how individuals are impacted by words clears the way for better communication. The sooner you understand the impact of your words or actions, the sooner you will transform the quality of your interactions.

5. First, listen attentively and seek to understand. Only then take the time to formulate a respectful and compassionate response. There is a lot that must happen before you respond.

6. Keep in mind that just because you acknowledge someone's experience, it does not mean you have to agree with it.

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Biggest Takeaway

Q/A