

Pre-Module:

Run looping slides of “Shit My Reviewers Say” or similar entries of non-constructive feedback. This is meant to give something people to talk/laugh about prior to the module while instilling a sense of empathy for those who have suffered unnecessarily tough or destructive criticism.

Introduction (10 minutes):

- Discussion of mental health, importance of consideration in how feedback is received.
- Talk about how critiques are meant to improve performance, which criticism simply points out faults.
- Define microaggressions and how prevalent they are in academic society, as well as discussing how they can be conscious or unconscious but often originate in bias and power dynamics.
- Emphasize that we probably have all, at some point in our lives, committed some sort of microaggression offense, which is okay so long as we take opportunity to think about and learn from those experiences to keep them from happening again.

Small group discussion Break (5 minutes):

Give participants in small groups opportunities to discuss different microaggressions they can imagine occurring to themselves or others. This activity is meant to open minds to consider microaggressions that others could experience outside of personal life experiences.

Continued lecture/large group discussion (15 minutes):

-Present the 3-step approach for evaluating potential microaggressions (Nadal, CUNY Forum, “A Guide to Responding to Microaggressions”):

1. Did a microaggression occur?
 - i. Ask others who were there
 - ii. Describe the situation to people you can trust
 - iii. Don't let others invalidate your experience
2. Should I respond?
 - i. If I respond, could my physical safety be in danger?
 - ii. If I respond, will the person become defensive and will this lead to an argument?
 - iii. If I respond, how will this affect my relationship with this person (e.g., coworker, family member, etc.)
 - iv. If I don't respond, will I regret not saying something?
 - v. If I don't respond, does that convey that I accept the behavior or statement?
3. How should I respond?
 - i. Passive-aggressive
 - ii. Proactive (“let loose”)
 - iii. Assertive (discussion-based)
 - iv. Seek out support

-What should I do if I commit a microaggression? It's important to own up to it, recognize it, and apologize. Skirting the issue or denying culpability invalidates the victim's experience, resulting in further potential microaggressions.

Small group discussion break (10-15 minutes):

Individuals in small groups read scenarios and provide their reactions. The rest of the group can then provide feedback on what they might do differently. Participants then rotate who is responding to a situation. This exercise starts introspectively, evaluating personal actions that could be taken, but is again focused on broadening beyond the personal experience by incorporating feedback from others. Some might be uncomfortable being “on the spot” to react to a situation, but this is an opportunity to think and prepare in a controlled environment, while similar situations in real life are much faster and more difficult to deal with in a calm, controlled manner.

Wrap-up discussion (5-10 minutes):

Ask the group for examples of resources that can be used when experiencing microaggressions. As for any questions or feedback regarding the seminar.