

Coping with Negativity and Critique

Adapted from “Managing Microaggressions,” a module created by Ben Golas

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A quick note:

- ▶ We will be discussing potentially sensitive material in this module.
- ▶ This is a safe environment where we should feel free to express ourselves and our opinions.
- ▶ Please be respectful of others.
- ▶ If you are uncomfortable with how something is presented or something I've said, please feel free to let me know so we can work towards positive change.

Activity:

S@#! Real People

- ▶ Said to Real People

S@#! My Teachers Say (Real life teacher comments)

“I know this is a new era, and I can’t say ‘That’s wrong; you’re stupid,’ so that was a very good answer, but here’s a better one.”

S@#! My Teachers Say (Real life teacher comments)

“Something tells me the rest of your life is going to be spent buying 40 oz. malt liquor in a brown paper bag and hoping your parole officer doesn’t find out.”

S@#! My Teachers Say (Real life teacher comments)

“You are the child left behind.”

S@#! My Teachers Say (Real life teacher comments)

“You are a worthless waste of space, and all you do is suck up air.”

S@#! My Teachers Say (Real life teacher comments)

“Do your best but I don’t think you’ll pass.”

S@#! My Students Say (Real life teacher/TA evals)

“If I had one hour to live, I’d spend it in this class because it feels like an eternity.”

S@#! My Students Say
(Real life teacher/TA evals)

“He sounds like Bert from ‘Bert and Ernie’ only
with throat cancer.”

S@#! My Students Say (Real life teacher/TA evals)

“I wouldn’t wish this guy on Bin Laden.”

S@#! My Students Say
(Real life teacher/TA evals)

“This professor is about as qualified as a squirrel
with a magic flute.”

S@#! My Students Say (Real life teacher/TA evals)

“[Instructor #1] is your short, cocky, Field Liaison B!+©# and [Instructor #2] is her tall, dumb, aide-de-camp. Together, they are part of one of the most corrupt, unconscionable, and unethical administrations in higher education history. Understanding how these two think may be the closest one gets to seeing evil in its purist form.”

S@#! My Reviewers Say (Real life reviewer comments)

“If the editor somehow decides to accept this paper, they risk permanently destroying the credibility of this journal and its entire editorial board.”

S@#! My Reviewers Say (Real life reviewer comments)

“This article is on an interesting topic.
Unfortunately, there is no more positive to say
about this manuscript.”

S@#! My Reviewers Say (Real life reviewer comments)

“Startlingly naive and jejune. Obviously a poorly tailored master’s thesis.”

S@#! My Reviewers Say (Real life reviewer comments)

“This paper reads like a woman’s diary, not like a scientific piece of work.”

S@#! My Reviewers Say (Real life reviewer comments)

“Find your inner nerd—it must be a big part of you—bind and gap it and then dump it in the ocean tied to a large rock.”

Discussion and Reflection

- ▶ How did some of the comments/feedback make you feel?
- ▶ How would you respond if you got feedback like this?
- ▶ Have you ever made a comment/given feedback like this?

Science and teaching
are inherently
antagonistic processes

Critiques are meant to
EMPOWER, not degrade

Mental health is increasingly
recognized as an important
issue in STEM

Assaults on mental
health come from many
different directions

Bias is an important influence

- ▶ Microaggression: a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group

Examples of microaggression

- ▶ “You’re very pretty for a scientist.”
- ▶ “The author should have consulted a native English speaker,” or “I didn’t learn anything because the teacher can’t speak English.”
- ▶ “That’s so gay!”

Discussion and Reflection

- ▶ Have you ever been on the receiving end of a microaggression? How did that make you feel?
- ▶ Have you ever witnessed another person acting in a microaggressive manner? What did you do?
- ▶ Have you ever acted in a microaggressive manner?

Steps to take when confronted with microaggression

1. Did a microaggression occur?
2. Should I respond?
3. How should I respond?

1. Did a microaggression occur?

- ▶ Sometimes critique can be blunt and feel hurtful. Was the critique about the work or the person?
- ▶ Is there repetition in the potentially aggressive behavior?
- ▶ Is the potential aggressor treating the subject differently from others?

1. Did a microaggression occur?

If you're not sure:

- ▶ Ask someone who was there
- ▶ Describe the situation to someone you can trust
- ▶ Trust your experience

Steps to take when confronted with microaggression

1. Did a microaggression occur?
2. Should I respond?
3. How should I respond?

2. Should I respond?

- ▶ Is responding safe?
- ▶ Will the person react defensively, and how might the relationship be damaged?
- ▶ Will I regret not responding, and could this convey acceptance of the behavior?

Steps to take when confronted with microaggression

1. Did a microaggression occur?
2. Should I respond?
3. How should I respond?

3. How should I respond?

- ▶ Passive aggressive - hope the perpetrator gets the message
- ▶ Proactive - vent frustrations
- ▶ Assertive - begin a dialogue

3. How should I respond?

SEEK SUPPORT!!!

I committed a microaggression. Now what?

- ▶ We all commit microaggressions
- ▶ Recognize, apologize, try to do better
- ▶ Failure to own up can be a microaggression

How can I stop myself from committing microaggressions?

▶ LISTEN

▶ LEARN

▶ APPLY

Scenarios

- ▶ Are microaggressions occurring?
- ▶ If so, what microaggressions are occurring?
- ▶ How would you respond in these scenarios?

How can we apply what we learned today to our mentoring relationships?

Resources are available!

- ▶ Student Diversity Programs and Services
- ▶ Student Resolution Center
- ▶ Health Network
 - ▶ Counseling Services
 - ▶ CSU Mental and Emotional Health website