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# Examining Implicit Bias and Microaggressions

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# Agenda

- Guidelines for engaging
- Learning Objectives
- Empathy vs. Sympathy
- Implicit Bias
- Microaggressions
- Reflections and wrap-up

# Learning Objectives

- Understand the concept of unconscious/implicit bias and the cognitive processes which enable it.
  - Gain a deeper understanding of microaggressions and how they can play out.
  - Explore various communication strategies to approach microaggressions through understanding and accountability.
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# Guidelines for engaging

- Respect the confidentiality of others
- Do your own work in the room and out.
- Seek to understand first, and then be understood.
- Leave room in the space for both/and/all.
- There are no quick fixes AND individuals and organizations DO grow and change.
- Practice forgiveness and letting go.
- Engage openly and honestly.
- Participate
- Use I statements - our own experiences shape the conversation
- Sharing “airtime” is essential to understanding.
- Trust that through dialogue (not debate) we will reach deeper levels of understanding and acceptance with others.
- Have fun and laugh!

# Empathy vs. Sympathy

Things to think about...

1. How do you express empathy with others?
2. When have you expressed sympathy rather than empathy?  
Why?
3. How can we practice empathy rather than sympathy?

[Video link](#)



# Debrief

# Implicit Bias

An implicit bias is any unconsciously-held set of associations about a social group.

Implicit biases can result in the attribution of particular qualities to all individuals from that group, also known as stereotyping. Implicit biases are the product of learned associations and social conditioning.

## Above the Water Line

Clothing / Attire

Physical Appearance

## At the Water Line

Marital Status

Religion / Spirituality

Race

Socioeconomic Status

Gender

Abilities / Disabilities

Age / Generation

## Below the Water Line

Nationality

Ethnic Background

Interests

Sexual Orientation

Language

Hobbies

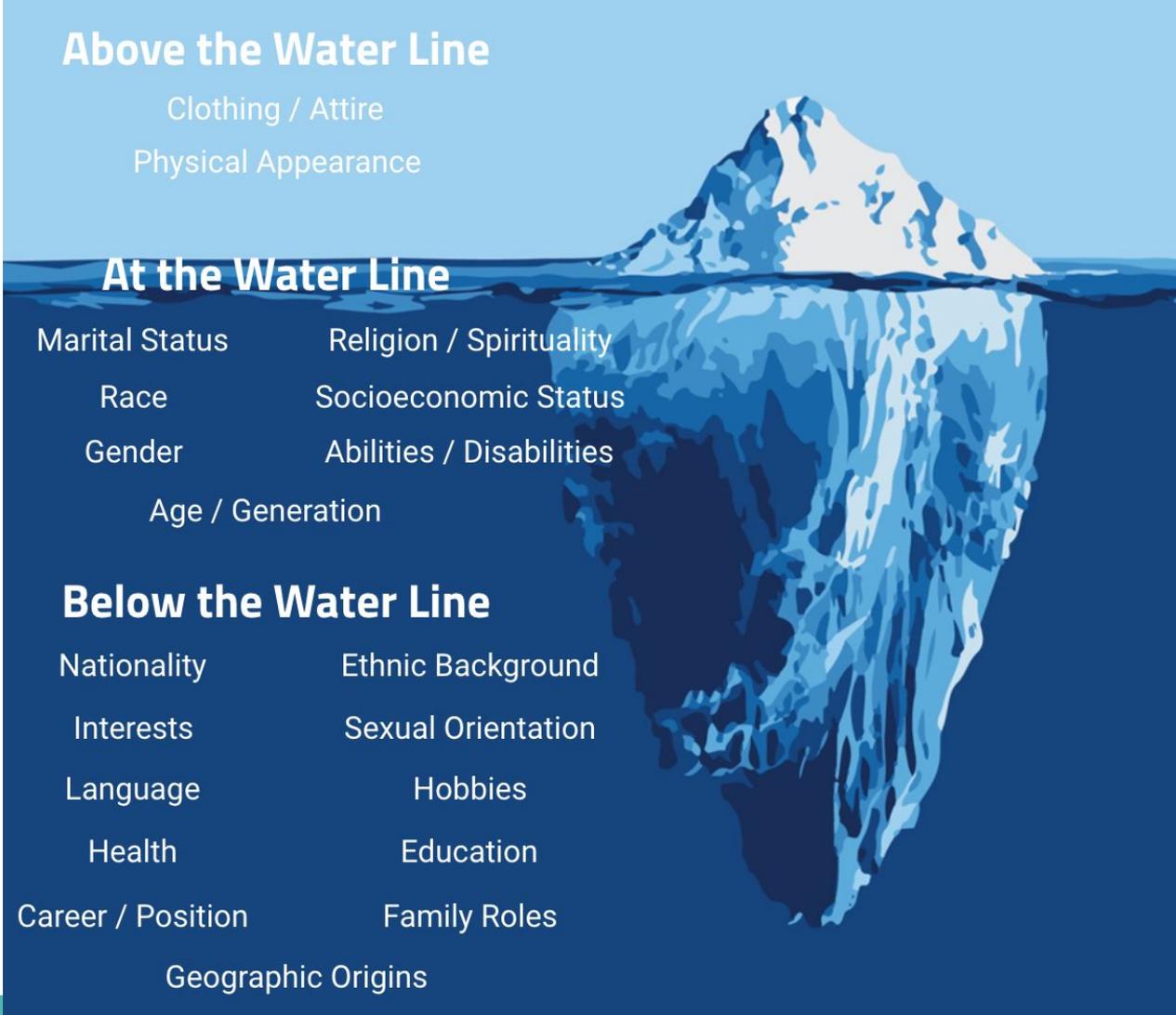
Health

Education

Career / Position

Family Roles

Geographic Origins



## **Small group discussions:**

**Share something about yourself that one would not know when just meeting you!**

**Thinking about your role, what decisions do you make or interactions you have where there is the potential for implicit bias?**

# Debrief

5 minute break!

# Microaggressions

Everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental potentially offensive comments which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

[Video Link](#)



WE MEAN MICROAGGRESSIONS.

# Examples and Themes

Theme	Microaggression	Message
<b>Alien in own land</b>	“Where are you really from?”	You aren’t American
<b>Ascription of intelligence</b>	“You are so articulate”	It is unusual for someone of your race to be intelligent
<b>Color blindness</b>	“When I look at you, I don’t see color”	Denies a person of color’s racial/ethnic experiences
<b>Assumption of criminal status</b>	A store owner follows a customer of color around the store	You are going to steal
<b>Denial of individual racism</b>	“My best friend is black” or “as a woman, I know what you go through”	I’m immune because I have friends of color. Your racial oppression is not different than my gender oppression

# Experiencing a Micro-Aggression

Did I interpret that correctly?

Did she say what I think she said?

What did he mean by that?

Should I say something?

Saying something may make it worse.

They'll probably think I'm overreacting

Speaking up is going to hurt more than it helps.

# Small group discussion

1. If a person from a marginalized group pointed out to you that one of your comments was a microaggression, how would you respond at the time?
2. If you overheard an interaction that sounded like it had microaggressions, how would you respond?
3. How would you prefer to receive feedback in a situation if your comment may have been a microaggression?

# Debrief

**Here are two live examples!**

# Let's practice! Microaggressions around age (ageism)

Scenario:

Person A: What do you think about the future of our environment?

Person B: Share 1-2 short sentences about your opinion

Person A: Oh, no wonder you think that, it's because you are from X generation

Person B: Decide how you will respond

Person A: Decide how you will respond

SWITCH!

# Addressing Microaggressions

- Bring awareness to power dynamics
- Recognize your own personal bias
- Interact with others who are different than you - experiential reality
- Be willing to receive feedback - don't be defensive
- Be an ally

# Responding to microaggressions

- If I respond, could my physical safety be in danger?
- If I respond, will the person become defensive and will this lead to an argument?
- If I respond, how will this affect my relationship with this person (e.g., co-worker, family member, etc.)
- If I don't respond, will I regret not saying something?
- If I don't respond, does that convey that I accept the behavior or statement?

# Microinterventions: Disarm a microaggression

**Ask for more clarification:** “Could you say more about what you mean by that?” “How have you come to think that?”

**Separate intent from impact:** “I know you didn’t realize this, but when you \_\_\_\_\_ (comment/behavior), it was hurtful/offensive because \_\_\_\_\_. Instead you could \_\_\_\_\_ (different language or behavior.)”

**Share your own process:** “I noticed that you \_\_\_\_\_ (comment/behavior). I used to do/say that too, but then I learned \_\_\_\_\_.”

# Accountability

- Resist the urge to defend yourself
- Apologize Genuinely (ASAP)
- Thank them
- Acknowledge what you've learned
- Don't expect anything in return
- Remember, this doesn't make you a bad person!
- Do your research
- Make an effort in the future

# Reflections

# Resources

- [Responding to microaggressions and bias](#): Disarming microaggressions slide
- [A guide to responding to microaggressions: Dr. Kevin Nadal](#)
- [NY Times Article on microaggressions](#)
- [Article: Exploring the hidden biases of development professionals](#)
- [Ted Talk: The Danger of a single story](#)