

Instructions

In the handout, read each statement in Column A. Think critically about how a person could interpret the statements as a “put down.” Then, draw a line connecting the statement to what you believe is the best possible interpretation from Column B. Be ready to explain each choice.

After you have finished matching the statements with the interpretations, rewrite the statements so that they do not contain a hidden or negative message. For example, the statement “How long have you been in this country?” implies that the speaker believes the person was born in another country. A neutral wording of the statement might be “Where did you grow up?” or “How long have you lived in this town?”

After you have rewritten the statements, answer the questions below.

1. Alvin Poussaint refers to the cumulative impact of experiencing microaggressions as “death by a thousand nicks.” Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Explain your answer.
2. When people discuss microaggressions, a common response is that they are “innocent acts” and that the person who experiences them should “let go of the incident” and “not make a big deal out of it.” Do you agree or disagree with this point of view? Explain your reasoning.
3. 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? Would it change the likelihood of your making a similar comment in the future? Why or why not?
4. Derald Wing Sue has argued that the impact of subtle prejudice, such as microaggressions, is more harmful than the impact of blatant discrimination. Do you agree or disagree with this proposition? Explain your answer.
5. Choose a microaggression from Column A. What do you think the possible intent was of the speaker? Does the intent change the impact of the statement for the person who experiences the microaggressions?