

Racial micro-interventions (individual level)

"Micro-interventions are interpersonal tools that are intended to counteract, change or stop microaggressions by subtly or overtly confronting and educating the perpetrator." (Sue et al., 2019)

Micro-interventions aim to

1. Highlight discrimination
2. Disarm (stopping the incident, showing disagreement, challenging views and comments, pointing out harm caused)
3. Educate

3 forms of micro-intervention

Highlight discrimination	
Undermine or name what had been communicated	<p><i>"Thank you. I hope my English is good, especially since I was born here."</i></p> <p><i>"Don't worry, he's not dangerous. He's really caring and well respected by us."</i></p> <p><i>"You make that assumption on the basis that she's Jewish."</i></p>
Challenge stereotypes	<p><i>"I'm hearing you describe a stereotype of someone of middle-eastern origin."</i></p> <p><i>"He might be black, but that doesn't make him aggressive or dangerous."</i></p> <p><i>"I'm not sure I see it that way"</i></p>
Ask for clarification	<p><i>"What do you mean by that?"</i></p> <p><i>"I'm wondering what you said about... Can you tell me a bit more about that?"</i></p> <p><i>"I'm thinking about ... What do you mean?"</i></p> <p><i>"Can you just explain that to me again?"</i></p>

Disarm	
Express disagreement	<p><i>"Ouch! I can't believe you just said that!"</i></p> <p><i>"I don't agree with what you just said."</i></p> <p><i>"Did you mean it to come out the way it sounded?"</i></p> <p><i>"I feel like I need to challenge what you said about..."</i></p> <p><i>"I think there might be another way of looking at this"</i></p>
State values and set limits	<p><i>"Respect and acceptance are important to me. I'm asking you to show respect for me by not making offensive comments."</i></p> <p><i>"I'm not sure that using that stereotype is helpful here/ we have to be careful about stereotyping when it affects people's opportunities/ self-esteem"</i></p>
Describe what is happening	<p><i>"So you're saying that that she is less likely to achieve, simply because she is black?"</i></p> <p><i>"It makes me feel uncomfortable when you say things like that."</i></p>

	<p><i>"You might want to say it more like this..."</i></p> <p><i>"Is what you mean that...?"</i></p>
Use non-verbal communication	Shake your head in disapproval, walk away, cover your mouth with your hand.
Interrupt and redirect	<p><i>"I'm going to stop you there. What you said makes me feel uncomfortable."</i></p> <p><i>"Ok, let's not go there. I don't want to hear that. Let's focus on discussing how we can help Ibrahim instead."</i></p> <p><i>"There's something about what you said that makes me feel a little uncomfortable - can we talk it through?"</i></p> <p><i>"I'm sorry but to me that's a racist/ homophobic/ sexist/ prejudiced remark and I feel very uncomfortable about it."</i></p> <p><i>"I'm bound by the local authorities Equal Opportunities policy and will have to report it"</i></p>
Remind other of rules & policies	<p><i>"We have a clear Equalities Policy in Barnet. This goes against the policy."</i></p> <p><i>"As a psychologist/ VS caseworker and an officer of the local authority, I am encouraged to challenge any perceived discrimination/ unfair thinking"</i></p>

Educate	
Point out similarities	<i>"That's a negative stereotype of black Africans. Did you know that Sawda also wants to be a teacher like you?"</i>
Speak to the person's values and principles	<p><i>"I know it's important to you to respect people's individual needs and values. Saying what you just said really undermines that."</i></p> <p><i>"Is this a reflection of the school ethos? How might this view/ practice affect the child's self-esteem?"</i></p> <p><i>"Have you ever been in a situation when you feel you've been judged unfairly?"</i></p>
Highlight the impact (rather than the intent)	<p><i>"I know you meant that as a joke, but that really offended Jahziah."</i></p> <p><i>"I know you meant well, but that really hurts."</i></p> <p><i>"We are going to have the most impact on a child if we work in partnership with parents. Sometimes this can be hard if it seems like we have different values or cultural styles, but we need to find a way/ show respect/ show an interest"</i></p> <p><i>"Different doesn't mean inferior"</i></p>
Promote empathy	<p><i>"The vast majority of Muslims are completely against terrorism. How would you feel if someone assumed something about you just because of your religion and ethnicity?"</i></p> <p><i>"Would you say that in front of the person? It's about having good manners/ respect/ valuing difference"</i></p>

	<p><i>"It's important to show respect for other people's differences"</i></p> <p><i>"We are role models for our students and need to think about the way we behave, the language we use and the messages we project. They will be picked up by young people so we want to be projecting the right thing."</i></p> <p><i>"We have an Equalities Policy and think very hard about how certain views or practises can impact on a child's development/ self-esteem/ progress/ opportunities"</i></p>
Signpost	<p><i>"Would it be useful to let you know about some of Barnet's Equalities and Diversity central training that is coming up? They help to raise awareness of cultural sensitivities/ different organisational issues, etc"</i></p>

When something is done or said out of ignorance, this is an opportunity to educate (rather than confront). Acknowledge that the intent was good, but the impact harmful e.g. "I know you meant well, but what you said really offended Jahziah". This helps to reduce defensiveness and offers learning.

Consider context

1. Pick your battles. Responding to frequent and ongoing microaggressions can be exhausting and impact on mental health (especially if you are a person of colour). Protect yourself by considering whether giving a response is right for you at that moment in time.
2. Consider where and when to use micro-interventions. Doing this in a public space may create defensiveness and further use of micro-aggressions. Responding in private and at a different time may be more beneficial.
3. Consider which type of response to give. Would the situation be best approached through education, disarming, or highlighting the discrimination? For example, if something was said out of ignorance, educate.
4. Adjust your response depending on your relationship with that person. For example, it might be easier and more effective to educate a friend or colleague, and to use a disarming approach with a stranger.
5. If giving a response puts you at risk, consider stepping away. Consider the potential consequences.

Taken from Sue et al. (2019)

Self-care & support

Antiracism work is exhausting and emotionally draining. It is important to seek support and build in self-care.

- Allow yourself the time to notice how you're feeling
- Build in self-care activities
- Talk to colleagues, friends, community groups and family
- Check in with colleagues doing this work
- Use supervision to reflect on the work and receive emotional & practical support
- Seek therapeutic support when needed
- Consider speaking with managers and reporting incidents
- Step-away when needed, take a break, set limits on how much of this work you do.

This handout is based on the paper by Sue et al. (2019) titled 'Disarming Racial Microaggressions: Microintervention Strategies for Targets, White Allies, and Bystanders', and draws upon the words and experiences of Amy Gibb, Parminder Chana & Eve Tobe (Educational Psychologists)