



Preventing Micro-aggression in workplace

FilmEU

24-10-2024

Giedrė Skupienė





2

Let's get to know each other

Giedrė Skupienė

When the head and heart are joint together - wisdom is born.

- Owner of „Gyvenimo Raktas“ The KEY.
- Psychologist, Lecturer, Consultant, Co-active coach and HR Professional with 20+ years of experience working in international companies.
- Skilled in Emotional Intelligence development, Co-Active Coaching, HR Management, Teams Management, Talents Development, Organizational, Cultural Development.
- Organizational culture development Practitioner (Human Synergistics International, 2022).
- Co-active coaching Practitioner (Schouten&Nelissen University, 2017 Amsterdam).
- EQ Practitioner (6seconds, 2016, Praha).
- EQ Network Leader in Lithuania since 2017.
- Executive Master of Business Administration at Baltic Management Institute (2015).
- Masters' degree in Organizational Psychology at Vilnius University (1999).

Objectives of the training:

- ▶ Get acquainted with the concept of micro-aggression;
- ▶ Recognize the different forms of micro-aggression manifestation;
- ▶ Understand the influence of micro-aggression on personality, teams, organization;
- ▶ Discover the ways of constructive resistance.



Valuable skills and Training Discussions Agreements

➤ Listen Fully

We will listen to what people say with their words, and we will listen to their feelings. We will be curious and open so we can hear everything each person is saying. Even if we want to express a different opinion, first we will listen carefully.

➤ Value Each Person

We will remember that every person has equal value, so every person has an equal right to her own opinions. We can disagree with ideas, and at the same time, we will respect the person sharing their ideas.

➤ Share the Time

We will keep our comments as simple and as brief as possible to ensure everyone has equal time to talk. We will be fully present to get the most from this training.

➤ Respect confidentiality

Definition of micro-aggression (psychological violence)

- Micro-aggressions are the verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional,
- that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages
- to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.
- It can be particularly stressful for people on the receiving end as they are easily denied by those committing them.
- The first step in addressing microaggressions is to recognize when a microaggression has occurred and what message it may be sending.
- **The context of the relationship and situation is critical.**

Micro-aggressions appear in four forms:

- ▶ **Micro-assault:** an explicit derogation; verbal/nonverbal; e.g. name-calling, avoidant behavior, purposeful discriminatory actions.
- ▶ **Micro-insult:** communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity; subtle snubs; hidden insulting message to the recipient.
- ▶ **Micro-invalidatation:** communications that exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of a person belonging to a particular group.
- ▶ **Environmental Micro-aggressions (Macro-Level):** assaults, insults and invalidations which are manifested on systemic and environmental level.

Discrimination

- ▶ A supervisor or person in authority making decisions related to hiring, firing, transferring, promoting, demoting, benefits, compensation, and other terms and conditions of employment, because of an employee's protected class status.
- ▶ Also discriminatory behavior of colleagues, influenced by the identity of the person.

Protected class status can include:

- ✓ race, color and national origin;
- ✓ gender (includes pregnancy-related conditions) or sexual orientation;
- ✓ religion;
- ✓ age;
- ✓ disability;
- ✓ marital status and family relationships;
- ✓ a person who uses any type of leave;
- ✓ genetic information (including family medical history);
- ✓ whistleblower.





Examples of discrimination:

- ▶ A supervisor refusing to hire a well qualified candidate because he is 'not right' nationality.
- ▶ Employer disciplines employee because she has to take time off to care for disabled child. He has not disciplined other workers who have had similar amounts of time off work.
- ▶ Discrimination against younger or other gender colleagues or students, e.g. ignoring, disregarding suggestions or making disrespectful comments.

Workplace Harassment

- ▶ Unwelcome, unwanted or offensive conduct based on or because of an employee's protected class status.
- ▶ Harassment becomes unlawful where:
 - Lasting offensive conduct becomes a condition of continued employment, or
 - The conduct is severe or pervasive enough to create a work environment that a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile, or abusive.

Examples of Workplace Harassment:

- ▶ An employee repeatedly addresses coworkers with derogatory comments or stereotypes related to their race or religion. For example, the employee calls a Hispanic coworker, "Beaner".
- ▶ Sexual harassment would be referring to an adult as a girl, doll, babe, honey, or as "hot", "sexy" etc.
- ▶ An employee tries to get coworker to resign by spreading untrue, malicious gossip about the coworker, because of the coworker's disability.

Workplace Bullying

- ▶ **Workplace bullying** is a persistent pattern of mistreatment from others in the workplace that causes either physical or emotional harm.
- ▶ Bullying is **psychological violence** often misclassified as “personality clashes”.
- ▶ It can include such tactics as verbal, nonverbal, psychological, and physical abuse, as well as humiliation.
- ▶ In the majority of cases, bullying has been done by someone who has authority over the victim. However, bullies can also be peers, and sometimes subordinates.
- ▶ **Mobbing** at work refers to a group of people engaged in different types of **harassment** and **bullying behavior** against a fellow co-worker. In other words, it's **group bullying** in the workplace.



13

Examples of psychological violence:

- Excluding and ignoring people and their contribution.
- Insulting person.
- Using nicknames, derogatory names.
- Spreading malicious rumors.
- Picking on or regularly undermining someone.
- Yelling, screaming or using offensive language.
- Threat, humiliation.
- Non-constructive, demeaning criticism.
- Blaming without facts.
- Downplay of achievements.
- Physical or verbal aggression.
- Offensive jokes.
- Deliberate misrepresentation of tasks, deadlines.
- Excessive monitoring of the work.
- Different requirements, rules for employees.

Impact of micro-aggression on personality

- Extensive research has documented the devastating psychological, physical, and work-related consequences typically suffered by victims of micro-aggression:
 - Mental health;
 - Physical health;
 - Lost self-confidence;
 - Lost of self-esteem;
 - High stress level;
 - Fears, anxiety, depression;
 - Powerlessness;
 - Disturbed sleep;
 - Risk of suicide;
 - Deteriorating work results;
 - Deteriorating personal relationships at home...

Impact of micro-aggression on team and organization

- The work-related impact of micro-aggression can result in:
 - Lower job performance;
 - Decreased job satisfaction and motivation;
 - Weakened organizational commitment;
 - Increased absenteeism.
 - Higher employee turnover;
 - Employees to be fearful of others;
 - Negative reputation of the organization;
 - Competences and potential of employees are not used properly;
 - Decreased employee confidence, effort and loyalty;
 - Poor teamwork;
 - So is created perverse organizational culture.

What can a person experiencing micro-aggression do?

- **Explain how others' behavior makes you feel;**
- Realize it's not your fault;
- Try to document evidence of what is happening;
- Be firm, not aggressive;
- Stick to the facts;
- Check with others;
- Do not react to the harasser;
- Contact for help manager or the person appointed to deal with such matters in the organization;
- Check the company's policy, where it is specified what to do in such a case;
- Contact a lawyer;
- Change job;
- Seek psychological help;
- Contact the institutions that can help;
- Ask relatives for help.



17

How do you know if someone is offended, or your conduct is unwelcome?

- ▶ **You don't** - just because someone seems to find conduct welcome or does not appear to be offended doesn't mean it is safe to assume that they aren't.



18

If someone doesn't like what I am doing or saying, why don't they just let me know?

- ▶ Some people are reluctant to complain about micro-aggression or to confront.
- ▶ The law does not require a victim to confront his or her harasser in order to have a claim.

Why people are often reluctant to speak up?

- ▶ People often are embarrassed about it and don't want to discuss it with anyone.
- ▶ They fear that the complaint won't be taken seriously.
- ▶ They fear reprisal from the harasser, especially if the harasser is their supervisor or another member of management.
- ▶ Because of fear of losing their job.
- ▶ Because of fear of retaliation.
- ▶ Because of fear of getting someone into trouble.
- ▶ They may be concerned about being labeled a troublemaker, especially if they are new on the job.
- ▶ They are afraid of being told they "asked for it."



20

Why people are often reluctant to speak up?

- ▶ They are told they should be flattered.
- ▶ They are told “Can’t you take a joke?” or “Boys will be boys,” or “You’ve got to expect that in a traditionally male job.”
- ▶ Some men are told when harassed by a woman “What’s wrong with you?”
- ▶ They are reluctant to talk to someone about it because no one else seems to mind the inappropriate behavior.
- ▶ They are unsure of their rights or who to talk to about it.
- ▶ They are afraid of being demoted, not promoted, or transferred.

The role of the supervisor/manager

- Prevention of micro-aggression conduct is very important.
- When it occurs take immediate corrective action before it becomes severe and pervasive.
- Spot it, stop it (if within your power/responsibility), document it, pass it on to HR, legal, your supervisor so formal investigation and action can occur.
- Encourage the reporting employee to follow all policies.



Scenario: An employee reports harassment to his/her superior and says, “I don’t want you to do anything about this. I just want you to listen and be aware of what is going on.”

How should the superior respond?

- ▶ A superior cannot promise to “just listen and be aware.”
- ▶ Once a superior receives a report of any kind of micro-aggression, a superior has an obligation to act.
- ▶ A superior has the responsibility to ensure the integrity of the workplace. A superior must exercise reasonable care to prevent and promptly correct any kind of micro-aggression they know about or should know about.

What can and have colleagues do?

- ▶ If you see inappropriate behavior - react, don't be silent.
- ▶ Offer help to the victim.
- ▶ Listen what colleagues are telling you.
- ▶ Report an event.
- ▶ Stay close to this co-worker if possible.

How should organization treat an employee accused of any kind of micro-aggression?

- ▶ An employee accused of discrimination, workplace harassment or other unethical behavior should be treated with professionalism and respect, as you would any employee.
- ▶ Just because an employee has been accused, does not mean the employee is guilty.
- ▶ The accused employee has a chance to defend him/herself and present information and witnesses.
- ▶ Company representatives must conduct a neutral investigation. Conclusions should not be shared until the investigation is complete.

Retaliation



- Retaliating against employees who speak about micro-aggression, file complaints, participate in investigations, or report observing micro-aggression is prohibited.
- If an employee believes he/she has been retaliated against, the employee should report the retaliatory behavior to their supervisor, another manager, or the Human Resource employees.
- Complaints of retaliation should be investigated promptly.

What are your take aways?

- ▶ Create an action plan, memo:
 - ✓ What do I have to remember and do?
 - ✓ What do I have to notice, not tolerate and not do myself?

Let's keep in touch!

Giedrė Skupienė

giedre@gyvenimoraktas.com

www.gyvenimoraktas.com

<https://www.linkedin.com/in/giedre-skupiene-gyvenimoraktas/>

+370 650 30009



Your questions?





Thank you for your
participation and
involvement!