

BEING AN UPSTANDER: THE WHYS AND HOWS

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Agenda

- What is an upstander?
- Why be an upstander?
- How can I be an upstander?
- Use micro-interventions
- Concluding comments
- Experiential practice

WHAT IS AN
UPSTANDER?



Definition: Bystander

- A person who
 - Is knowledgeable about unjust acts but does nothing to prevent the injustice
 - Complains, but fails to engage actively in the process to promote positive change
 - Elects to distance themselves or play it safe by minding their own business
 - Tends to resist change and disengage from the change process
 - Peer & Webster, 2016; Stein, 2016

Definition: Bystander Effect

- Bystander effect is a construct from social psychology and refers to the phenomenon that an individual's likelihood of helping decreases when passive bystanders are present in a critical situations
- Many real-life examples illustrate this effect
 - 1964 - Kitty Genovese was raped and murdered in Queens, New York. Several neighbors looked on, but no one intervened until it was too late.
 - 2009 - Dominik Brunner was murdered at a German train station by two 18-year-olds after he tried to help children who were attacked by these young criminals. Several passersby witnessed the murder, but nobody physically intervened.
 - Darley & Latane', 1968; Latane' & Darley, 1968, 1970; Latane' & Nida, 1981

Definition: Upstander

- When a bystander decides to ACT, they become an UPSTANDER – also referred to as a DEFENDER
- Upstanders are allies, supporters, and advocates for people and communities that share a different background or social identity than their own
 - Berkley IDEA lab, Padgett & Notar, 2013; Salmivalli, 2014

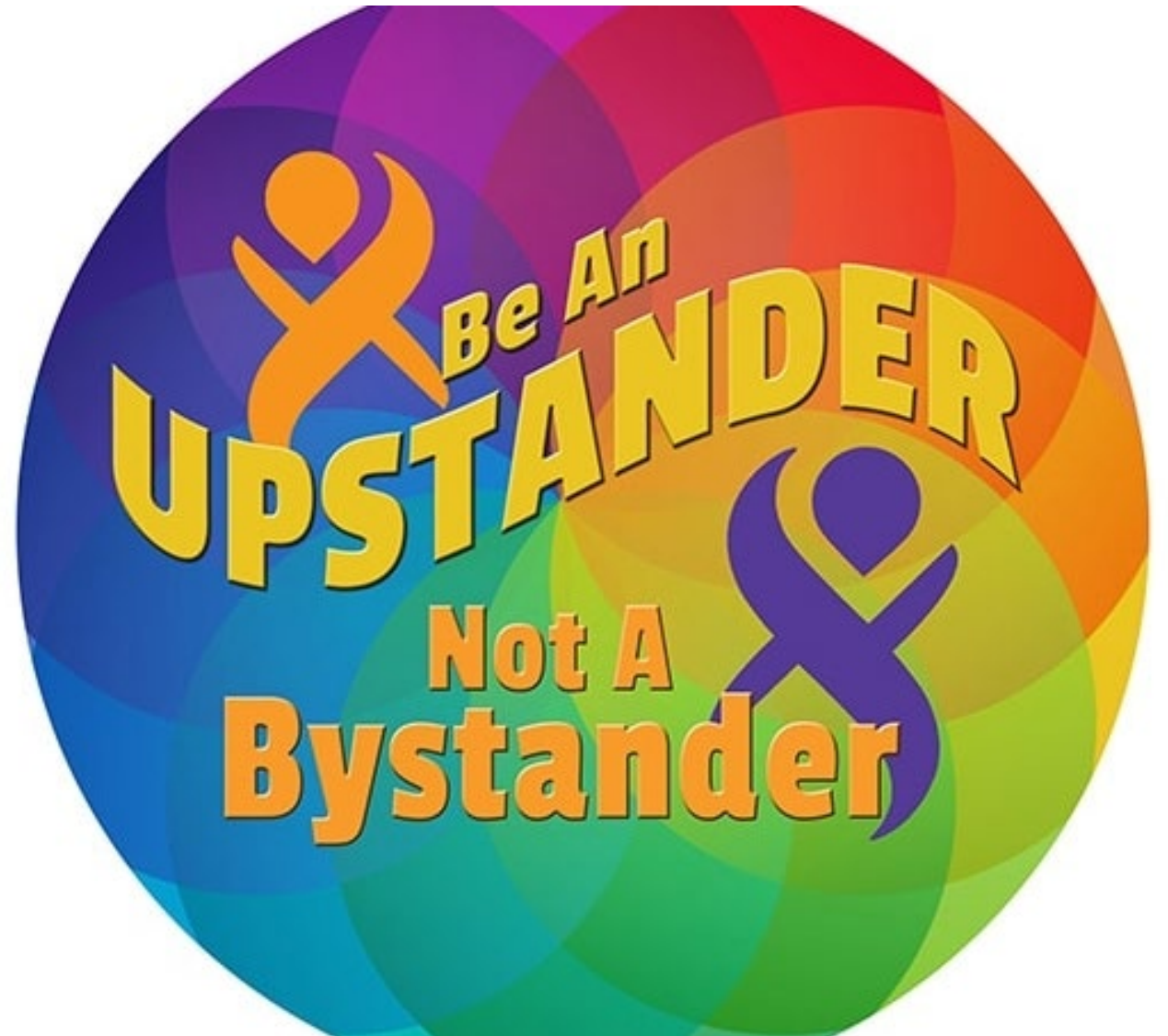
Definition: Upstander

- A person who
 - Acts when they see actions reflecting intolerance, mistreatment, or injustice
 - Speaks or acts in support of an individual or cause, intervening on behalf of a person being attacked or bullied
 - Chooses to become involved to help others
 - Takes a proactive role in engaging in change, despite personal risks and biases
 - Engages in dialogue to create a sense of community and commitment in hopes of influencing the common purpose
 - Works to create an anti-oppressive world
 - Peer & Webster, 2016

Upstander Traits

- Traits that make upstanders likely to act in the face of injustice
 - Are concerned with others' safety and well-being
 - Can consider others' perspective
 - Are empathic toward others
 - Have a strong moral compass and a strong sense of social responsibility
 - Are capable and self-confident
 - Proceed despite trepidation, but do so wisely
 - Fletcher, 2007; Franco & Zimbardo, 2006; Knight, 2017; Rudnicki et al., 2023; Shellenberger, 2012; Zimbardo, 2011

WHY
SHOULD
I BE AN
UPSTANDER?



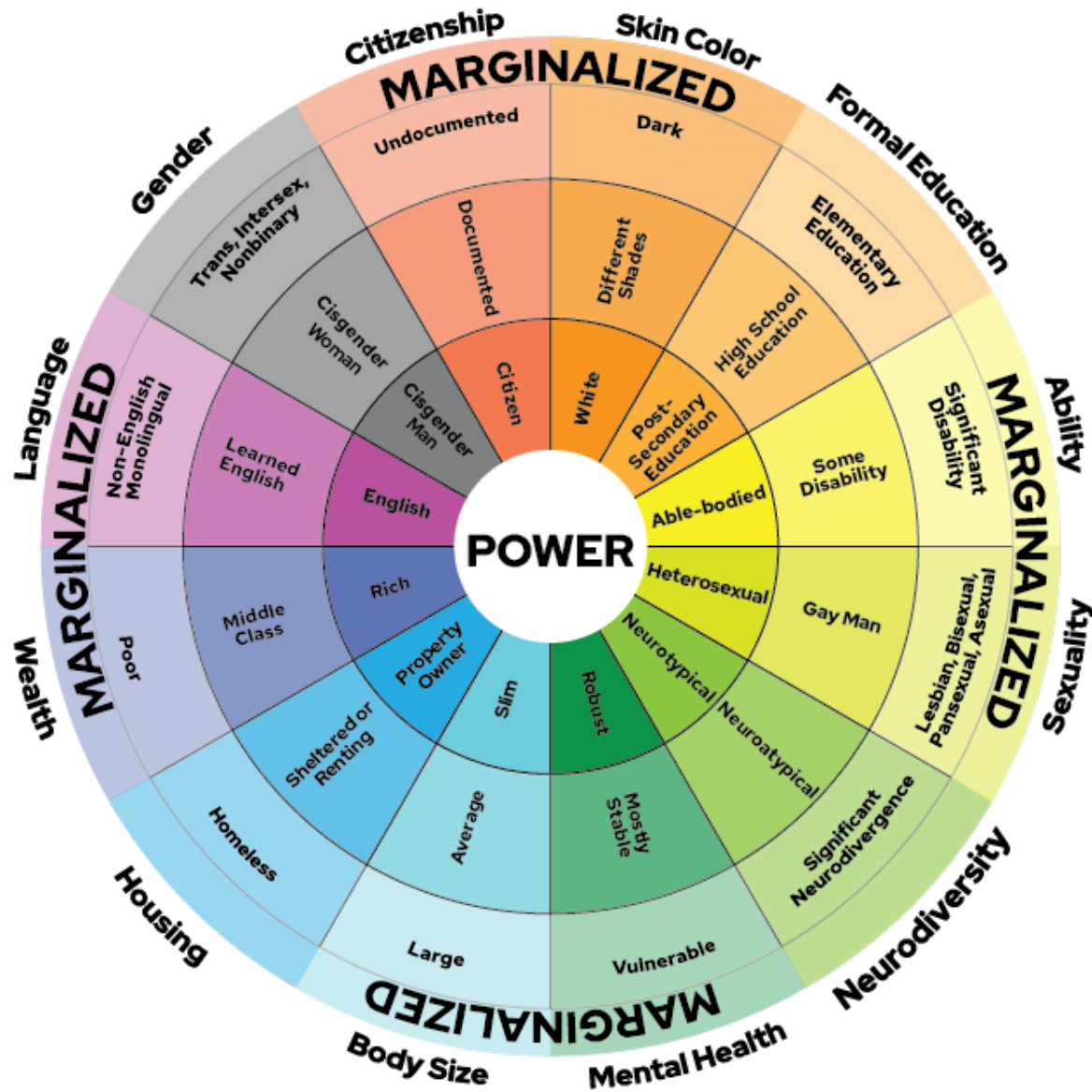
Rationale for Being an Upstander

- Microaggressions occur repeatedly in healthcare, academia, practice, and professional settings, as they do in all contexts, and they must be addressed
- Microaggressions
 - Are statements, actions, or incidents regarded as instances of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination or bias against members of a marginalized group
 - Demean targets on a personal or group level, communicate they are lesser human beings, suggest they do not belong with the majority group, threaten and intimidate, or relegate them to inferior status and treatment
 - Abdullah et al., 2021; Brown et al., 2020; Ho et al., 2020; Torres & Taknin, 2015; Sue, 2021

Rationale for Being an Upstander

- Microaggressions
 - May appear as microassaults (e.g., racist jokes), micro-insults (e.g., you look like a child, are you a real doctor?), and micro-invalidations (e.g., you got the job because of the diversity job), or innocent comments or compliments (e.g., your English is excellent)
 - Often are perpetrated by well-intentioned individuals unaware they are engaging in offensive or demeaning behaviors
 - Abdullah et al., 2021; Biggers et al., 2024; Brown et al., 2020; Ho et al., 2020; Torres & Taknin, 2015; Sue, 2021

Rationale for Being an Upstander



Adapted from James R Vanderwoerd ("Web of Oppression"), and Sylvia Duckworth ("Wheel of Power/Privilege")

WHEEL OF POWER

Rationale for Being an Upstander



Rationale for Being an Upstander

- Targets of microaggressions often experience
 - Vague discomfort that is difficult to explain
 - Feelings of alienation, disenfranchisement, “otherness”
 - A sense that they are “crazy” or “too sensitive”
 - Anger
 - Emotional exhaustion
 - Symptoms of depression (e.g., disrupted self-worth, sense of powerlessness), anxiety, and/or post-traumatic stress
 - Substance misuse
 - Concerns about backlash if they speak
 - Cancela et al., 2024; Marchi et al., 2023

Rationale for Being an Upstander

With all the murderous macroaggressions that have pervaded the last few months, it feels literally and figuratively trivial to focus on the micro. But this column is called Small Works. And we can see that microaggressions are not just symptoms of racism but a profound part of a systemic problem. The little things, when chalked up over a lifetime, amount to oppression on a grand scale.



Rationale for Being an Upstander

- Typically, in professional settings, targets of microaggressions are expected to
 - Endure these traumas and appear unscathed, as doing so at least historically has been seen as a badge of honor if one copes with it “well” through compartmentalization and minimization of the impact
 - Stand up for themselves, despite the risks of doing so and the psychological distress they experience that makes doing so even more challenging and risky
 - Brown et al., 2020; Ho et al., 2020

Rationale for Being an Upstander

- Microaggressions, along with threats and actual assaults, must NOT be tolerated in our workplaces – EVERYONE deserves the right to feel safe and protected in their workplace as well as EVERYWHERE
- We must be allies – it is not the sole responsibility of people from marginalized social identities who are being aggressed upon to stand up for what is right and sometimes when targeted, people cannot defend themselves or their community(ies)
 - Ho et al., 2020

Rationale for Being an Upstander

- Silence in the face of disrespect affects us all – there is a high price for silent collusion
 - Speaking up, even if it isn't done well, is better than perfecting in our mind what we could/should have said
 - When we speak on someone's behalf, we make a difference – the person knows they are not alone and we know we did the right thing
 - If we can't speak up, we must seek an ally
 - Aguilar, 2009

Rationale for Being an Upstander

- Well-intentioned upstanders can learn to be allies and help stop the onslaught of discrimination and bias in our communities and workplace settings
- Interventions from such allies can be powerful

Rationale for Being an Upstander

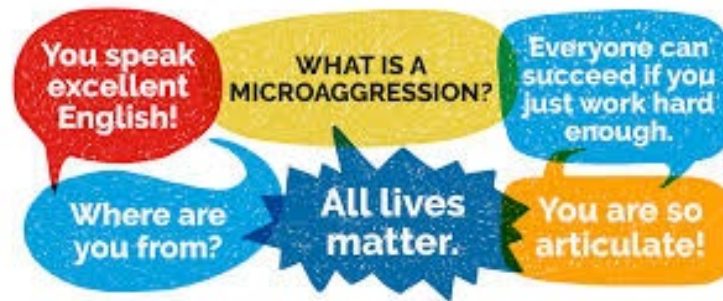
- Evidence that upstanders make a big difference
 - When upstanders intervene in bullying, there is > 50% chance of the bullying stopping
 - Black students report that the harm associated with online discrimination is mitigated when White students confront the discrimination
- Upstander behavior can have short-term positive effects and downstream can foster inclusion and promote equality
 - Ho et al., 2020; Hurd et al., 2021; Polanin et al., 2012

Rationale for Upstander Training

- Upstander training is effective
 - Increases the likelihood that people take action to reduce the impact of gender-based harassment
- People are more likely to be an upstander if they are aware of the harm microaggressions and discrimination causes, perceive social norms that support confronting discrimination, and receive guidance on what to say
 - Hurd et al., 2021; Potter & Moniyhan, 2011

Reflections/ Questions

- What are your thoughts about the value of being an upstander?
- When have you been an upstander and how has that experience been?
- Questions/comments thus far



HOW CAN
I BE AN
UPSTANDER?



Prepare to be an Upstander

- Prepare to be an upstander and be **accountable** for ensuring diversity, equity, and inclusion by
 - **Listening up** – learn, read, asks questions, and discuss to step into the shoes of someone from a different social identity group
 - **Showing up** – attend, participate actively, and contribute to diversity programs and initiatives
 - **Talking up** – advocate, open doors, make connections, and find opportunities for colleagues from different social backgrounds
 - **Speaking up** – identify and interrupt bias and stereotyping, whether conscious or unconscious, subtle or overt
 - Berkely IDEA Lab

How Can Upstander Behavior Be Increased?

- For us to intervene as an upstander, we must
 - Plan ahead – think ahead about how to intervene and practice/rehearse in advance
 - Notice the incident/observe the situation
 - Assess the situation
 - Determine if it is a microaggression or other threat and define it as such
 - Assume personal responsibility to help
 - Barnett et al., 2019; Dovidio & Pearson, 2018; Sue & Spanierman, 2020

How Can Upstander Behavior Be Increased?

- For us to intervene as an upstander, we must
 - Decide what action(s) to take – tailor approach to situation
 - Speak for ourselves (use the first person)
 - Target the behavior not the person
 - Employ a microintervention
 - Seek social support (e.g., ask for help to diffuse the situation, debrief)
 - Circle back to follow up
 - Barnett et al., 2019; Dovidio & Pearson, 2018; Nadal et al., 2021; Sue & Spanierman, 2020

Barriers to Being an Upstander

- ❖ Limited awareness of microaggressions
- ❖ Lack of competence in being an upstander
- ❖ Discomfort with conflict
- ❖ Difficulty navigating power dynamics and hierarchies
- ❖ Battle fatigue



Reflections/ Questions

- ❖ What have you found challenging about being an upstander?
- ❖ Questions/comments thus far



A microintervention can reach a small set of prejudice, but how do we add in the necessary boosts to elevate those who endure them? It's not just about kindness, but about being of use.



USE MICRO-INTERVENTIONS

Definition

- Everyday intentional or unintentional words or deeds directed toward the target of a microaggression aimed at
 - Validating their experiential reality
 - Conveying their value as a person
 - Affirming their social group identity
 - Supporting and encouraging them
 - Reassuring them they are not alone
 - Sue, 2019; Sue et al., 2021

Definition

- Micro-interventions are individual actions that
 - Are designed to be educational, not punitive
 - Can disarm, counteract, or neutralize the effects of microaggressions
 - Can be subtle or overt
- Will review 2 models of microinterventions
 - Sue et al., - Microintervention Strategies for Targets, Allies, and Bystanders
 - Ackerman-Barger et al., - Triangle Model

Approach #1 – Microinterventions by Sue et al

- 4 main categories of microinterventions
 - Sue, 2019; Sue et al., 2021

01

Make the
"invisible"
visible

02

Disarm the
microaggression

03

Educate the
perpetrator

04

Seek outside
help

Strategy #1: Make the “Invisible” Visible - Objectives

- Allows the target/ally/upstander to (a) describe what is happening in a nonthreatening way and (b) validate the feelings of the person being targeted by the offense
- Brings the microaggression to the forefront of the perpetrator’s awareness – bring attention to the subtle microaggression behind the perpetrator’s comment
- Indicates to the perpetrator that they behaved/said something offensive to you/ others
- Helps the perpetrator consider the impact and meaning of what was said/done or, in the case of the bystander, what was not said/done
 - Sue, 2019; Sue et al., 2021

Strategy #1: Make the “Invisible” Visible - Tactics

Ask

Ask for a clarification: “what exactly did you mean when you said...”

Restate or rephrase

Restate or rephrase the statement: “so what I heard you said is...”

Challenge

Challenge the stereotype: “we know that isn’t true...”

Depersonalize and describe

Depersonalize and describe: “I notice not everyone has had a chance to speak.”

Strategy #2: Disarm the Microaggression – Objectives

- Provides the target/ally/upstander a sense of control
- Stops or deflects the microaggression
- Forces the perpetrator to consider what they have just said or done
- Communicates disagreement or disapproval toward the perpetrator actions in the moment
- Preserve's the target's well-being
 - Sue, 2019; Sue et al., 2021

Strategy #2: Disarm the Microaggression - Tactics

Express

Express disagreement: "I don't agree with what you just said."

Use

Use an exclamation: "Ouch" or "Yikes"

Interrupt and Redirect

Interrupt and redirect: "Let's not go there" or "I think we need to take a timeout"

Remind

Remind them of the guidelines or culture: "Your comments are not in alignment with our organizational culture."

Strategy #3: Educate the Perpetrator - Objectives

- Allows the target/ally/upstander to express themselves while maintaining a relationship with the perpetrators
- Offers an opportunity to engage in one-on-one dialogue with the perpetrator to indicate how and why their speech and/or behavior is offensive to you and others
- Facilitates a more enlightening conversation that encourages the perpetrator to explore the origins of their beliefs and attitudes
- Lowers the defenses of the perpetrator and helps them recognize the impact of their words/actions
 - *May be the first intervention when a microaggression appears unintentional
 - Sue, 2019; Sue et al., 2021

Strategy #3: Educate the Perpetrator - Tactics

Differentiate

Differentiate between intent and impact: "Here's how what you said landed."

Reframe

Reframe the meaning of the statement: "Is there another way to look at the situation?"

Promote

Promote empathy: "The majority of people want the same thing as you."

Revisit

Revisit the incident later: "I want to discuss what happened yesterday."

Strategy #4: Seek Outside Support and Authoritative Help - Objectives

- Reminds targets/allies/upstanders they are not alone in this battle
- Empowers targets/allies/upstanders to partake in regular self-care to maintain psychological and physical wellness
- Sends a message to perpetrators at large that bigoted behavior will not be tolerated or accepted and ensures situations of discrimination and bias do not go unnoticed
 - Sue, 2019; Sue et al., 2021

Strategy #4: Seek Outside Support and Authoritative Help- Tactics

Alert	Alert leadership
Get Support	Develop a buddy system; Fortify self with connections with your community; Seek therapy/counseling; Find a support group
Debrief	Debrief and process the event or situation with a mentor, senior ally, and/or colleague/peer
Report	Make a formal report of the incident

Strategy #4: Seek Outside Support and Authoritative Help - Tactics

- Report incident
- Seek therapy/counseling
- Fortify self through spirituality/religion community
- Debrief and process the event or situation with a mentor or senior ally
 - Sue, 2019; Sue et al., 2021

Approach 2 - Triangle Model

- Triangle model
 - Aspirational
 - Challenges participants to practice responding to microaggressions as a bystander, target, and source
 - Improves knowledge, self-efficacy, and commitment to being an active bystander
 - [Association of American Medical Colleges' MedEd Portal](#)
 - Ackerman-Barger & Jacobs, 2020

Triangle Model: ARISE - Upstander

- Upstander – **ARISE** Approach
 - **A**wareness of microaggression
 - **R**espond with empathy
 - **I**nquiry of facts
 - **S**tatements that start with “I”
 - **E**ducate and **E**ngage
 - Ackerman-Barger & Jacobs, 2020

Triangle Model: ASSIST - Perpetrator

- Source or perpetrator – **ASSIST** Approach
 - **A**cknowledge your bias
 - **S**eek feedback
 - **S**ay you are sorry
 - **I**mpact not intent
 - **S**ay thank you
 - Ackerman-Barger & Jacobs, 2020

Triangle Model: ACTION - Target

- Recipient or target – **ACTION** Approach
 - **A**sk clarifying questions
 - **C**ome from a place of curiosity
 - **T**ell what you observed in a factual manner
 - **O**wn your thoughts and feelings around the situation – I feel X when you say Y because Z
 - **N**ext steps – determine how to proceed
 - May occur at a later point and may not be possible – do not want to place extra demands on the target
 - Ackerman-Barger & Jacobs, 2020

Microinterventions Considerations

- Pick battles wisely
 - Resource depleting
- Consider where and when to address the perpetrator
 - Public or private
- Adjust your response as situation warrants
 - Educate versus confront
- Be ware of relationship factors and dynamics with perpetrators
 - Different considerations for close friends/family vs acquaintances
 - Consider risk of negative outcomes for all groups

Effects of Microinterventions

- Create an inclusive, welcoming environment
- Discourage negative, discriminator behavior that is part of the “status quo”
- Encourage positive behaviors
- Enhance well-being and self-efficacy for all groups



Questions

- ❖ What questions/comments do you have about microinterventions?

According to Dr. Sue, the strategic goal of microinterventions are to:

1. MAKE the "INVISIBLE" VISIBLE
2. DISARM THE MICROAGGRESSION
3. EDUCATE THE OFFENDER
4. SEEK EXTERNAL SUPPORT WHEN NEEDED

CONCLUDING COMMENTS



WE MUST

- Embrace a systemic approach to
 - Center diversity, intersectionality, and social justice and create space for these topics to be examined and studied by scholars, taught, and discussed with patients
 - Address the effects of microaggressions on individuals and within the medical and academic health communities
- Provide adequate resources to help individuals unpack their traumas
 - Brown, 2020; Buchanan & Wiklund, 2020

WE MUST

- Ensure everyone in the system is trained to understand microaggressions directed toward individuals from historically marginalized groups – what they are, how they occur, how they are perpetrated, and how they can be prevented – UPSTANDER TRAINING
 - Brown, 2020

WE MUST

- Bond together and partner with each other to
 - Build awareness about needed changes
 - Support and encourage upstander behavior
 - Create a social context that does not tolerate intolerance and that favors those who defend victims of such intolerance
 - Puigvet et al., 2021

WE MUST

- Commit to being allies
 - Be proactive to prevent microaggressions
 - Intervene in the moment
- Be upstanders for social justice – it is critical for social justice transformation!
 - Knight, 2017

EXPERIENTIAL PRACTICE

Upstander Pledge

I am an UPstander.

I have the power to influence my peers.

I say something or do something when you need help.



I am "there" for you.

I will help you get the help you need.

You are not alone.

I have your back.



Break Out Groups: Safe and Brave Space

- Strive to create a safe, respectful, nonjudgmental and brave space
 - Maintain confidentiality (our stories and reactions stay, our learning leaves) - not recorded
 - Speak for yourselves using “I” statements (not “we” statements)
 - Listen actively with respect and compassion
 - Honor people’s courage and vulnerability in sharing and inquiring
 - Appreciate that dialogue can be complex due to a variety of factor, including power dynamics, but we are all here for similar reasons
 - Lean into discomfort
 - Strive to ensure there are no negative ramifications/retribution for honest sharing

Break Out Groups: Ground Rules

- Appoint 1 group facilitator
- Appoint 1 notetaker who provides INS the group's recommendations for moving forward as an organization in ways that empower upstanders and address microaggressions
- Discuss 1, 2, or 3 vignettes (any order)
 - Odd number groups – Vignette 1, 3, and 5
 - Even number groups – Vignette 2, 4, and 6
- Engage in respectful dialogue
- Be mindful of time so everyone who wants to speak can do so (30 minutes)
- Put on camera if possible

Break Out Groups: Questions

- What are your reactions to hearing this vignette?
- How might this situation impact all parties (e.g., target, perpetrator, witnesses, community)?
- What could you do and/or say if you are an upstander/ally hearing/hearing about this conversation? Which microintervention(s) could you use and why? What might make it challenging to respond with a microintervention?
- What are your personal takeaways from discussing this vignette (e.g., what did you learn about yourself, what could you do differently in the future)?
- Based on your discussion of this vignette, what do you recommend to INS as an organization moving forward to empower upstanders and mitigate/reduce/eliminate microaggressions within the INS community?

Vignette #1

- An early career neuropsychologist (ECP) is in a peer consultation group. While some members of the group include performance validity testing routinely, other members incorporate such measures more flexibly based on the presentation and questions being addressed. The ECP notices that whenever they seek input on measures to include in shortened batteries for BIPOC patients with limited financial resources that there tends to be an insistence in the peer consultation group that it is crucial to include a validity measure.

Vignette #2

- The neuropsychology postdoctoral fellow conducting the neuropsychological evaluation is of the same racial background as the patient. Throughout the assessment, the patient expresses gratitude about this similarity and states having someone do the testing that “looks like me” makes them feel more comfortable with the process. At the feedback session, the patient’s parents continually turn to the White supervisor to check out the accuracy of the feedback being given by the postdoctoral fellow. They also state, “while our son liked having someone test him who looks like us, we wonder if you (pointing to the postdoctoral fellow) really knew what you were doing.”

Vignette 3

- You attend a Grand Rounds presentation at your home/local institution where the presenter is a senior department Chair. During the presentation, the presenter reviews the history of neurology and neurosurgery and makes the following claims: (1) “Black people have smaller brains than White people”; (2) “Men have more grey matter than women so are better at math and women have more white matter than men, which explains their uncanny ability to multitask;” and (3) “There is no need for more research on the brains of transgendered people because their brains don’t look like their assigned sex or their gender identity.”

Vignette 4

- At an interdisciplinary conference at which professionals from multiple specialties were present and the patient and family were included to plan for next steps, the patient stated, “I did poorly on that test where she read the words and I had to learn them and say them back from memory because of her accent. Just give me somebody that speaks English and I can show you I will do better.”

Vignettes 5

- The pediatric neuropsychologist attends an Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting at the school with the child's parents and school system personnel. The neuropsychologist details the child's expressive language difficulties as well as her strengths. One teacher responds and says, "she just doesn't try very hard" and the counselor says, "I don't think the parents provide the child what she needs so it's not our problem, it's theirs." The parents become visibly distressed and start sharing all that they do to help and guide their daughter. The principal then steps in and says, "we aren't equipped to deal with disabled kids."

Vignette 6

- Following the Minnesota 2022 Conference to update Education and Training Guidelines in Clinical Neuropsychology, you notice that discussions on the Listserv regarding the proposed revisions were often quite derogatory and attacking about the revisions because of the (1) “overemphasis on DEI principles” and (2) inclusion of delegates at all levels of training including “people who are not credentialed and have not trained other neuropsychologists.”

THANKYOU

