

Using Mindfulness to Cope with Microaggressions and Workplace Stress



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60-second activity




Agenda



- ▶ Introduction & Impetus for this session
 - ▶ Why here? Why now?
- ▶ Microaggressions
- ▶ Workplace stressors
- ▶ Mindfulness
- ▶ Activity: Mindful Communication
- ▶ Discussion & Takeaways
- ▶ Conclusion



Why Here? Why Now?

- ▶ The overwhelming whiteness of librarianship
 - ▶ Lack of visible change in librarianship's demographics despite decades of diversity initiatives
 - ▶ A public resurgence of violent and racist actions and rhetoric connected to the presidential election
 - ▶ An extensive body of literature that clearly articulates negative lived experiences of library professionals
 - ▶ Questioning how we can create healthier organizations and reduce the trauma that is often inflicted upon our communities
 - ▶ Intersections between our individual research agendas
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“When I look at you, I don’t see color.”

“Where are you from? No, where are you *really* from?”



Microaggressions

“Why are you so quiet? Speak up more!”

“Oh, wow! You are so articulate.”



Definition

“Simply stated, microaggressions are brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they belong to a racial minority group”

(Sue et al, 2007, p. 273).



Timeline & Brief History



1970s

• Chester Pierce



1989

• Peggy Davis



1998

• Daniel Solórzano



2007

• Derald Wing Sue et al.



2011

• Kevin Nadal



2015

• Shandra Forrest-Bank & Jeffrey Jensen



Forms of Racial Microaggressions

Microassaults

“**conscious, deliberate**, and either subtle or explicit [...] meant to attack the group identity of the person or to **hurt/harm** the intended victim through name-calling, avoidant behavior, or purposeful discriminatory actions”

(Sue, 2010, p 28)

Microinsults

“communications or environmental cues that **exclude, negate, or nullify** the psychological **thoughts, feelings,** or experiential **reality** of certain groups”

(Sue, 2010, p 37)



Forms of Racial Microaggressions

Microinvalidations

“communications or environmental cues that **exclude, negate, or nullify** the psychological **thoughts, feelings,** or experiential **reality** of certain groups”

(Sue, 2010, p 37)



Increasing the Diversity Dialogue: Sharing Our Experiences with Microaggressions in Librarianship

Cynthia Mari Orozco (California State University Long Beach), Elvia Arroyo-Ramirez (Center for the Study of Political Graphics),
Rose L. Chou (American University), Annie Pho (University of Illinois at Chicago)

LISmicroaggressions.tumblr.com

Mission/Scope of the Blog

LIS Microaggressions was created to give librarians from marginalized communities a safe online space to share our experiences with microaggressions in the field and extend visibility to these issues. Moreover, the site was developed to increase dialogue around these issues and increase awareness around potentially damaging verbal and nonverbal communication and actions.

What is a microaggression?

Microaggressions are brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults toward individuals from marginalized communities. Microaggressions can be difficult to identify because they are more nuanced, subtle forms of prejudice. They may arise from the language we use with our peers, the assumptions we make of others, or perceived compliments.

Why is this important to the profession?

One characteristic of microaggressions is that often the microaggressor is not even aware of the problem, thus this project aims to bring visibility to the problem and create awareness of this commonplace issue. Moreover, we need to build constructive dialogue around issues of racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. in the LIS field as a catalyst for change.

Share Your Experiences with Microaggressions in the LIS Field Here!

I always seem to be the "token" librarian

You don't look Puerto Rican!

Assigned to search committees because I'm the only latin librarian

You were only admitted to this program because of your race.

Have you seen 'Memoirs of a Geisha'? You would LOVE it!

You don't sound Black

Your english is very good!

Professors will ask you to read after having my full name

My library director/assistant director said I was hired b/c I'm a minority

A patron told me "all Blacks should go back to Africa"

Everyone thinks I'm straight, so I have to set them straight :)

THE DIFFERENCE OF MY ETHNIC PROGRAM ALIENED I WAS AN ETHNIC STUDENT

I got assigned all the ethnic studies programs :)

I am deaf and was told not to speak so loudly, I can't hear myself

"I need to talk to a real librarian" because I don't look the part?

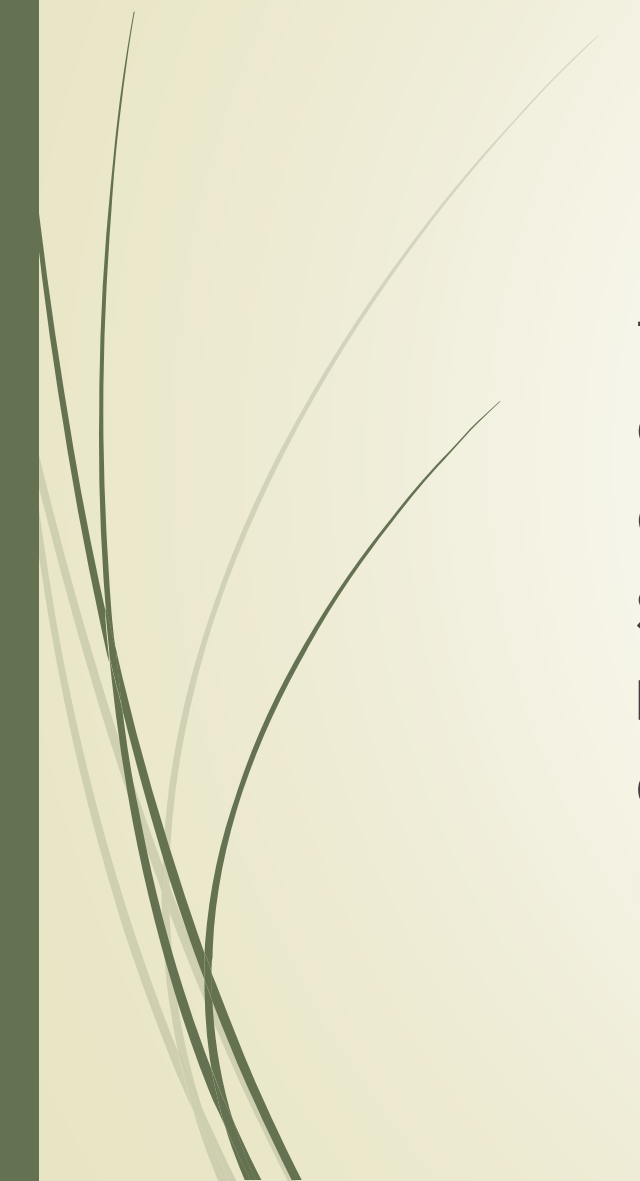
A prof was mad because I did not disclose my mental disability. She told me I should be on disability. officially

I'd like to talk to someone else...

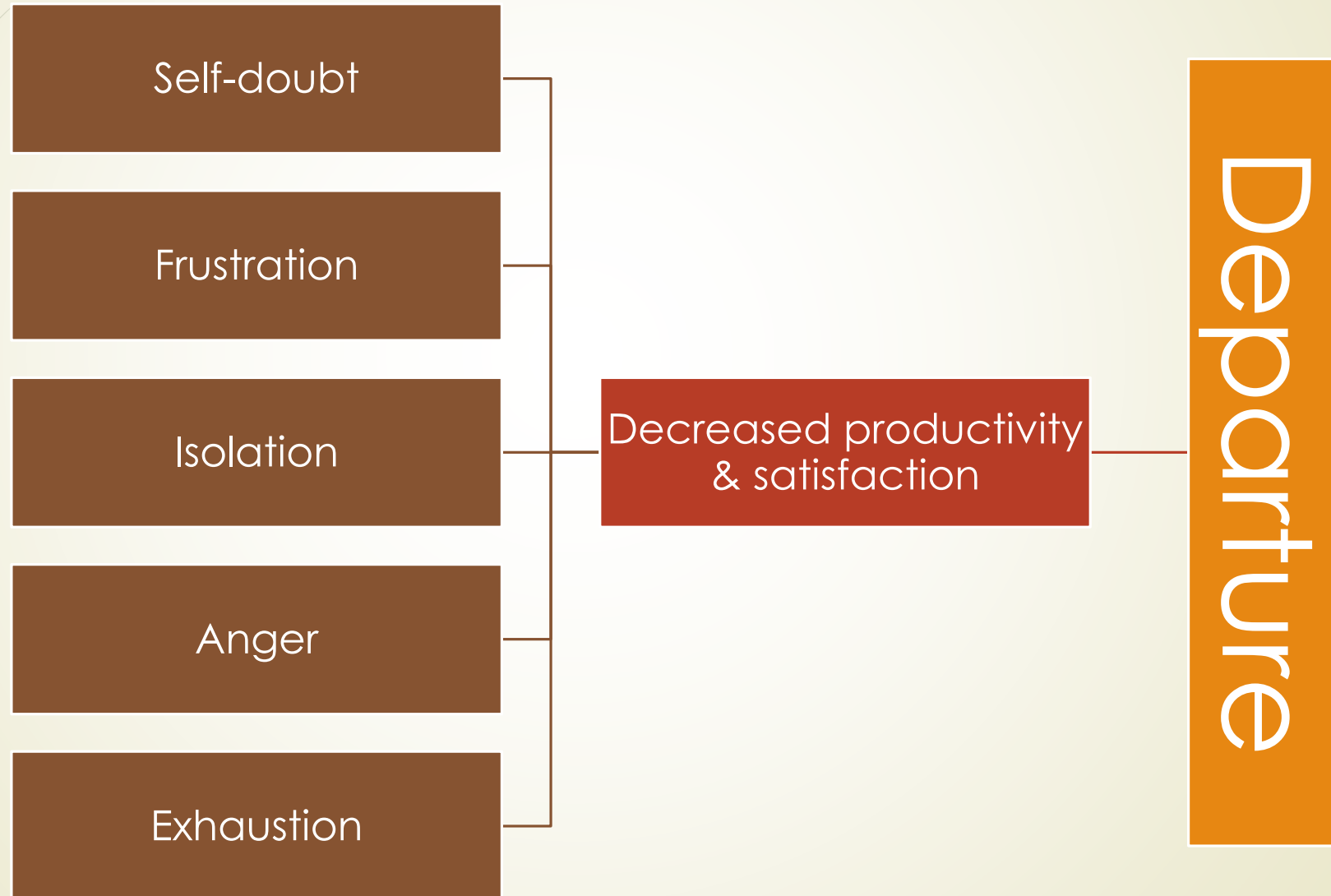


Racial Microaggressions

“The power of racial microaggressions lies in their **invisibility to the perpetrator** and, oftentimes, the recipient [...] Microaggressive acts can usually be explained away by seemingly nonbiased and valid reasons. For the recipient of a microaggression, however, **there is always the nagging question of whether it really happened**” (Sue et al., 2007, p. 275).



Effects & Consequences






Workplace Stressors



Workplace Stress Defined

“The harmful physical and emotional responses that occur when the requirements of the job do not match the capabilities, resources, or needs of the worker.” (CDC, 1999)






What Causes Workplace Stress?

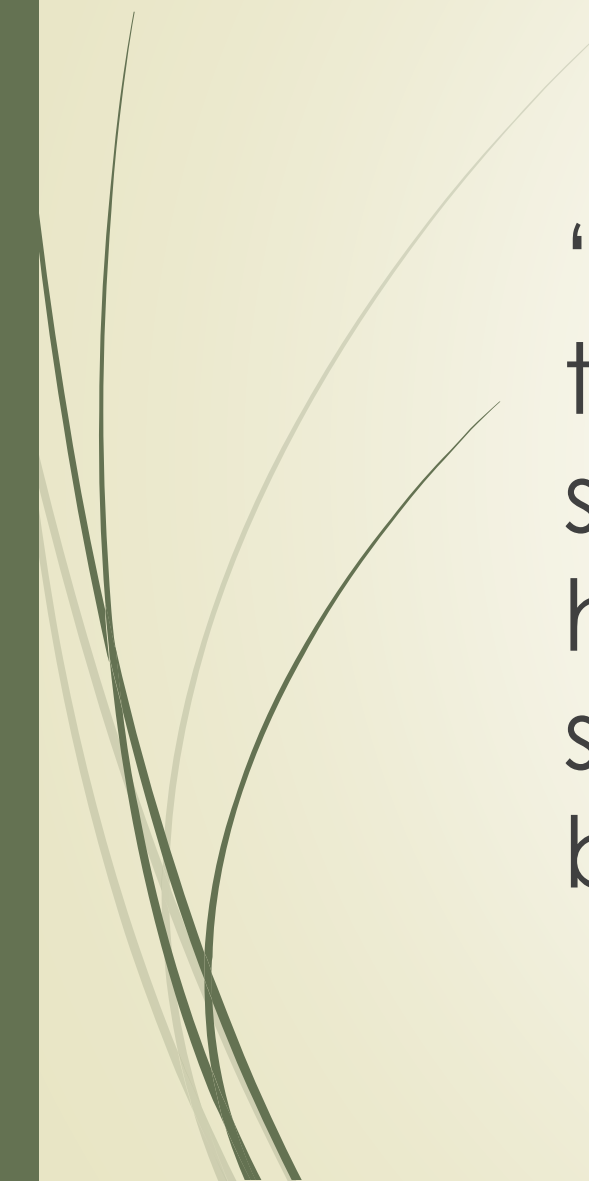

- ▶ The design of work tasks (conflicting job expectations)
- ▶ Work overload (excessive committee work related to “diversity)
- ▶ Management styles (micromanagement or other ineffective forms of leadership or teamwork)
- ▶ Interpersonal relationships
- ▶ Role ambiguity
- ▶ Lack of positive feedback/ recognition
- ▶ Lack of fairness (a mismatch between the stated organizational guiding principles and actual practice)



Incivility as workplace stressor

“Disrespectful behavior that undermines the dignity and self-esteem of employees and creates unnecessary suffering, indicating a lack of concern for the well-being of other and contrary to how individuals expect to be treated.” (Zauderer, 2002, p. 38)





“In every fire, even a burned out one, there are glowing embers. Our job sometimes, as caring people, is to help those we care for rekindle the spark and to stay afire without burning out.” (Bunge, 1989, p. 102)




Mindfulness





What is it?

- ▶ A state of awareness and a practice
 - ▶ It involves attending to the present moment and cultivating an attitude of curiosity, openness and acceptance of one's experience.
 - ▶ It involves presence, and intentionality
 - ▶ It is a secular (non-religious) practice and is backed by compelling scientific evidence.
- 



Why does it matter?

- ▶ Academic – improvements in cognitive performance, self-concept and engagement
- ▶ Mental and Behavioral Health - decreases in stress levels, symptoms of anxiety and depression; increases in emotional well-being and self compassion; and lowers propensity for self harm
- ▶ Social behavior – healthier responses to difficult situations; reduction of Implicit bias; and increases in compassionate responses to others



Reflective Listening & Mindful Inquiry

Activity




Mindful Listening & Inquiry

- ▶ “What I heard you say was.....”
- ▶ “Tell me more about what you meant by.....”
- ▶ “What angered you about what happened?”
- ▶ “What hurt you about what happened?”
- ▶ “What’s familiar about what happened?”
 - ▶ “How did that affect you? How does that affect you now”
- ▶ “What do you need/want”




9 Healthy Ways to Communicate

1. Reflect back what is being said. Use their words not yours.
 2. Begin where they are, not where you want them to be.
 3. Be curious and open to what they are trying to say.
 4. Notice what they are saying and what they are not.
 5. Emotionally relate to how they are feeling. Nurture the interaction.
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9 Healthy Ways to Communicate

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6. Notice how you are feeling. Be honest and authentic.
 7. Own how you are feeling (even if it is uncomfortable).
 8. Try to understand how what's described affects who they are and how that experience could impact this interaction with you.
 9. Stay with the process and the interaction. The focus is not on solutions.



Discussion

Takeaways and Questions



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Thank you!

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