

# Advancing a Bias-Free and Inclusive Culture: Subtle Acts of Exclusion

## What is a subtle act of exclusion (SAE)?

Subtle Acts of Exclusion, also known as microaggressions, are often unintentional, brief action or statement that communicates prejudice or discrimination based on someone's identity, such as their race, gender, or ethnicity. While SAE are often talked about in a racial context, anyone from a marginalized group can experience one.

## What to do if you notice a SAE?



Take a deep breath. Pause. Collect your thoughts before responding.



Acknowledge. Know and recognize that the other person's perspective is their reality and truth.



Ask questions. Give the benefit of the doubt. Ask the individual to clarify or elaborate further explain. This will provide you with more insight on their perspective.



Reframe. Propose a different way or perspective. "What if"



Directly respond to the problematic comment or language.



Revisit. Even if the moment has passed it's ok to revisit.

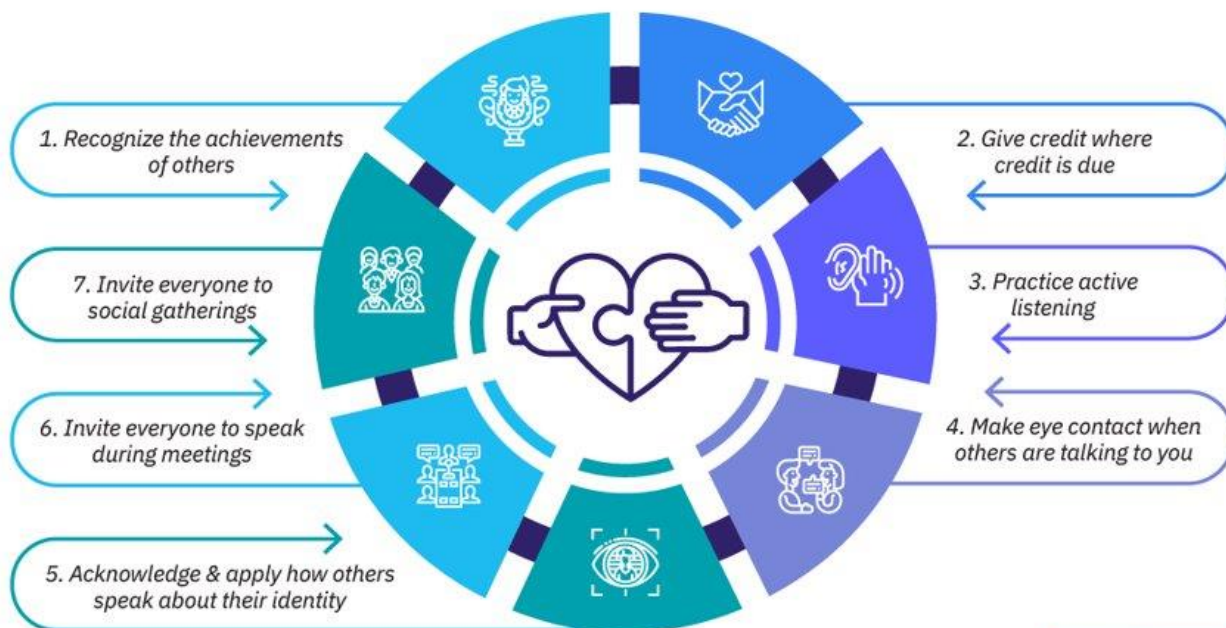


Check-in with offended and offender.

# What are micro-affirmations?

- One way to discourage subtle acts of exclusion is incorporating micro-affirmations in your day-to-day.
- Micro-affirmations are small acts such as nods, facial expressions, word choice and vocal tone that foster inclusion, support, listening and comfort to others in the workplace ([Employers Council](#), 2023).
- Using micro-affirmations can communicate to employees that they are welcome, visible, and capable of performing well.

## Examples of Microaffirmations



# Recommended Resources

## Internal Resources

- [Report Bias, sexual harassment and discrimination](#) through the Northwestern Office of Civil Rights and Title IX Compliance
- [Office of the Ombudsperson](#)

## External Resources

- [Professionalism: microaggression in the healthcare setting \(2021\)](#) by Odinakachukwu Ehie, et al.
- [Language Matters: Considering Microaggressions in Science \(2018\)](#) by Colin Harrison and Kimberly Tanner
- [Subtle Acts of Exclusion: How to Understand, Identify, and Stop Microaggressions](#) by Tiffany Janna and Michael Baran
- [The Microaggressions Triangle Model: A Humanistic Approach to Navigating Microaggressions in Health Professions Schools \(2020\)](#) by Ackerman-Barger, et al.

