



**IDEAS Learning Series**  
Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Anti-racism

A monthly webinar series that brings in experts from across academic medicine to help:

- Foster inclusive environments
- Create equitable advancement, promotion, and tenure policies
- Promote anti-racist policies, education, and institutional practices


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# Welcome

- All participants' audio and video are muted
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- This webinar is being recorded. It will be available in 3-5 business days on [www.aamc.org/ideas](http://www.aamc.org/ideas)



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# Welcome

- You can submit a question at any time using the Q&A panel at the bottom of your screen
- If you have unanswered questions at the close of the webinar, please email [ideas@aamc.org](mailto:ideas@aamc.org)

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# Upcoming IDEAS Webinars

**January 27**

**Disrupting Bullying in Academic Medicine**

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A large banner featuring a background of diverse human silhouettes in shades of orange, yellow, and grey. The silhouettes are of various ages and ethnicities, shown in profile. In the center, there is a white rectangular box containing the text 'IDEAS Learning Series' in bold, with 'Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Anti-racism' in smaller text below it. In the top right corner, the AAMC logo is displayed with the tagline 'Tomorrow's Doctors, Tomorrow's Cures®'. In the bottom right corner, the text 'Association of American Medical Colleges' is visible. At the bottom left, there is a small copyright notice: '© 2022 AAMC. May not be reproduced without permission.'

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## Today's Session



**Dr. Piri Ackerman-Barger**  
Associate Dean for Health  
Equity, Diversity and  
Inclusion  
University of California  
Davis Health



**Dr. Nicole Jacobs**  
Associate Dean, Diversity  
and Inclusion  
University of Nevada, Reno  
School  
of Medicine

### Presentation

**Addressing Microaggression in Academic Health: A  
Workshop for Inclusive Excellence**

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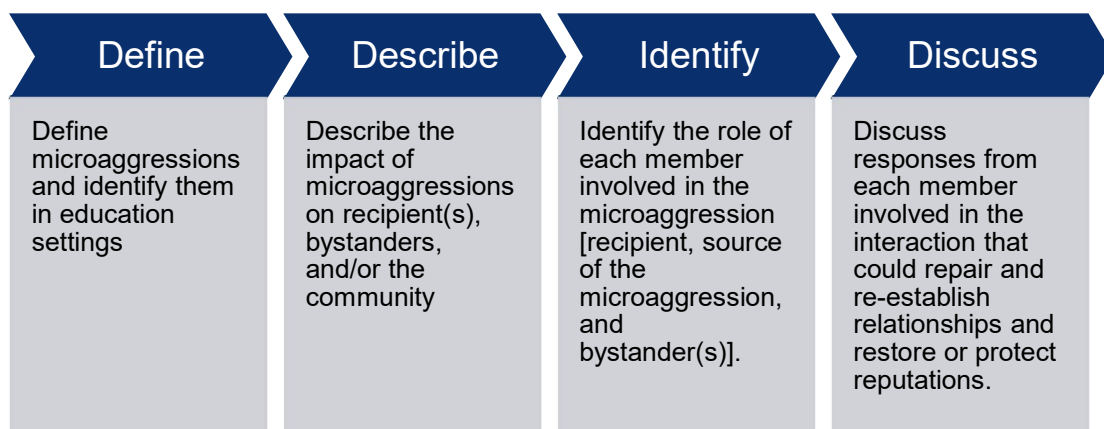
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## Learning Objectives



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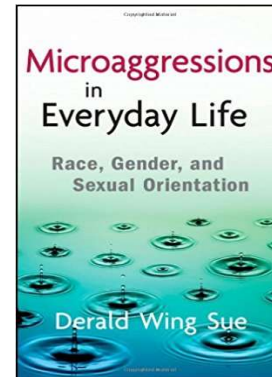


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## Definition of Microaggressions

Microaggressions are subtle statements and behaviors that consciously or unconsciously communicate denigrating messages to individuals or groups based on some aspect of their identity (Nadal, 2011, Sue, 2010).

Type	Definition
Micro-assaults	Intentionally and explicitly derogatory verbal or non-verbal attacks.
Micro-insults	Rude and insensitive subtle put-downs of someone's heritage or identity.
Micro-invalidations	Remarks that diminish, dismiss or negate the realities and histories of groups of people.



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Examples of Microaggressions	
<b>Alien in own land</b>	"Where are you from?" "You speak good English."
<b>Ascription of intelligence</b>	"Did you really get an A on that exam"?
<b>Color blindness</b>	"When I look at you, I don't see color." "America is a melting pot."
<b>Criminality</b>	Person of color (POC) being followed in a store White person clutching bag near POC
<b>Denial of individual racism</b>	"I have black/Asian/Hispanic friends."
<b>Myth of Meritocracy</b>	"Everyone can succeed if they just work hard"
<b>Myth of Diversity</b>	We had to lower our standards to admit students of color You were only admitted/hired as a diversity student/employee
<b>Pathologizing culture</b>	"You shouldn't be so loud/quiet, etc." Women being emotional or aggressive vs assertive
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> class citizen</b>	Assumption one is janitor, taxi driver, secretary etc.
<b>Environment</b>	No statues/pictures of POC in halls

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## Academic Health Microaggressions

- **Said to a Latino student:** "You are a credit to your race."
- **Said to a Black student:** "You were admitted because you are Black. It is really hard for White men to get admitted these days ."
- **Said to a Native American Student:** "Why don't you tell your classmates about the health issues of Native Americans."
- **Said to a Male Student:** "I didn't know men could be so caring"
- **Said about a student with they/them pronouns on their badge** "Young people these days can't even decide if they are a boy or girl".

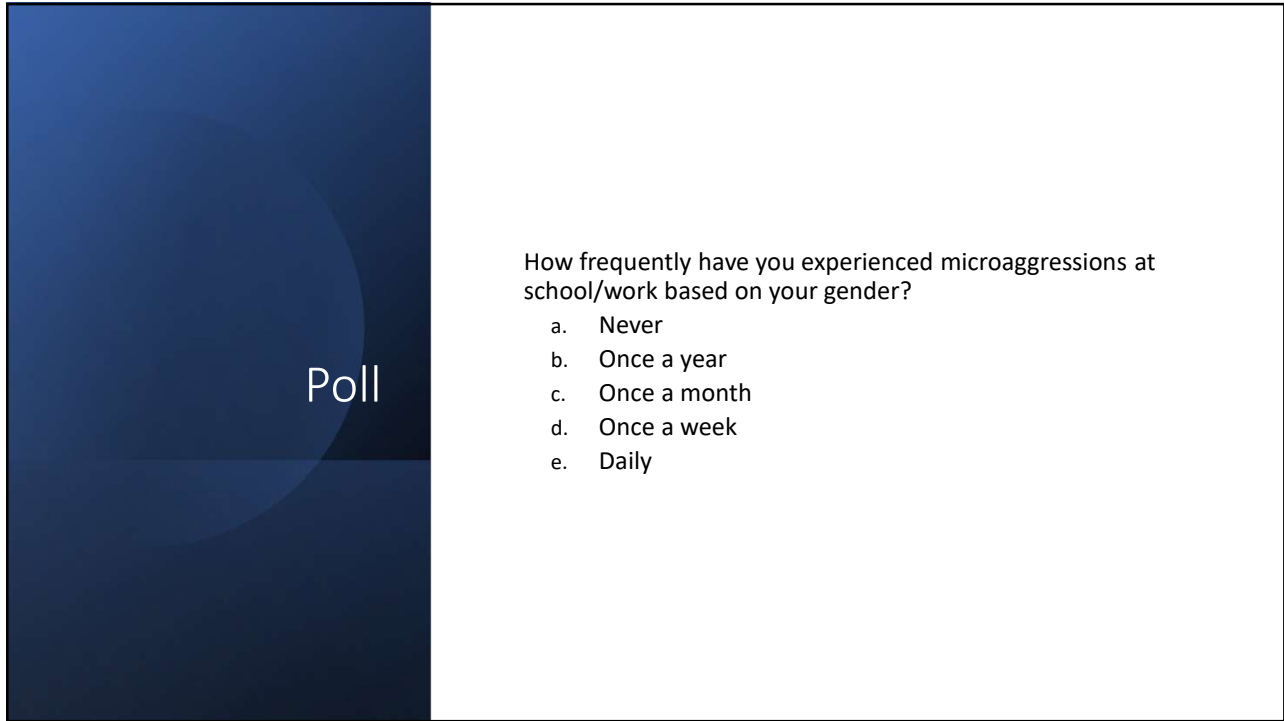
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## Microaggressions Are



- Not always consciously done.
- Powerful because they are subtle-sometimes invisible, especially to those who do not share the identity.
- Instances that cause the recipient to experience strong emotions, try to understand what was meant, and then decide how to respond.

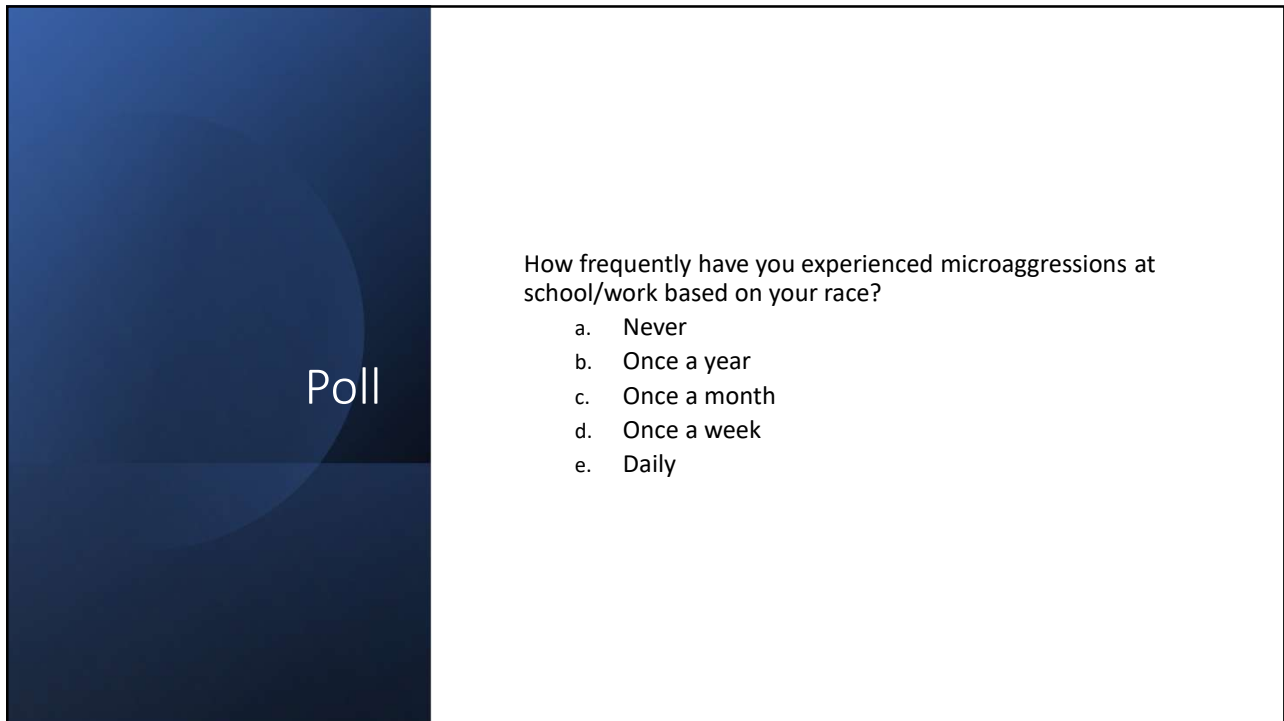
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A slide with a dark blue background on the left side containing a large, faint, semi-transparent circle and the word "Poll" in white. The right side is white and contains a poll question and five multiple-choice options.

How frequently have you experienced microaggressions at school/work based on your gender?

- a. Never
- b. Once a year
- c. Once a month
- d. Once a week
- e. Daily

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A slide with a dark blue background on the left side containing a large, faint, semi-transparent circle and the word "Poll" in white. The right side is white and contains a poll question and five multiple-choice options.

How frequently have you experienced microaggressions at school/work based on your race?

- a. Never
- b. Once a year
- c. Once a month
- d. Once a week
- e. Daily

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## Poll

How frequently have you experienced microaggressions at school/work based on other aspects of your identity (sexual orientation, gender identity, age, religion, political affiliation, ability status, height, weight, accent, etc.)?

- a. Never
- b. Once a year
- c. Once a month
- d. Once a week
- e. Daily

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## Health Impact of Microaggressions

- Cause mental health effects (depression and anxiety).  
*Compton and Shim, 2015; O'Keefe, et al., 2015; Sue, 2010; Torres, L., & Taknint, 2015; Torres-Harding, Torres & Yeo, 2020*
- Create physical health problems (Allostatic Load).  
*Geronimus, 2006, 2009; Compton and Shim, 2015, RWJF, 2017; Seeman et al. 1997.*
- Lack of trust in the healthcare system, means that people are less likely to seek healthcare.

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# Social and Cognitive Impact of Microaggressions

- ❖ Perpetuate stereotypes and passively allow society to devalue groups
- ❖ Cause energy to be diverted away from learning and/or productivity (cognitive load)



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## Goals of the Microaggressions Triangle Model



Humanistic Approach

Prevention of microaggressions

Promote inclusion excellence

Repair and reestablish relationships

Decide whether the interaction is a teachable moment or opportunity to promote inclusion

Restore reputations

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# What the Model Is not



An algorithm or roadmap, but a framework for making decisions about how to handle a microaggression

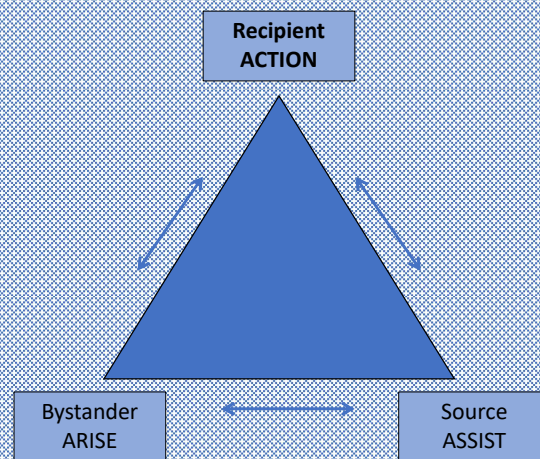
Appropriate for every situation, especially overt racism or discrimination.

About taking sides or deciding who is right or wrong, but to consider how an interaction could be moved forward to re-establish and restore relationships.

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## Roles in Microaggressions Scenarios



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## Example Scenario: No, Really?

*An African-American male nursing student, Rick, described an interaction with peers after an exam.*

“Classmates were asking, okay, what did you get on the exam? People responded, ‘I got an A, a B,’ or ‘I have retake it’—things like that. And I didn’t even want to mention it, but I was specifically asked what I had gotten, so I said, ‘I got a hundred percent on this exam.’ And people did not believe it for some reason. Even though other people had a similar grade, everyone was kind of surprised that I got such a high score and didn’t ‘I have to retake it’? I can’t help but wonder if it is because I am Black.”



Ackerman-Barger, K. & Jacobs, N.N. (2020, Dec.). The microaggressions triangle model: A humanistic approach to navigating microaggression in health professions schools. *Academic Medicine [Macy Foundation Supplement]*.

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## Recipient- ACTION Approach

- Ask clarifying questions
- Come from curiosity, not judgment
- Tell what you observed in a factual manner
- Impact exploration
- Own your own thoughts and feelings
- Next steps.

Cheung, F., Ganote, C. M., & Souza, T.J. (2016). Microaggressions and microresistance: Supporting and empowering students. In *Faculty Focus Special Report: Diversity and Inclusion in the College Classroom*. Magna Publication

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## When you are the Recipient: Notes

- ❖ It is important to understand that, when you are being mistreated, especially in your role as a student or resident, you are in a nearly impossible situation and many factors must be considered.
- ❖ Be careful to not respond in a way that makes the situation worse, or even makes you seem like the aggressor.
- ❖ Consider whether you are safe both physically and in terms of your status.
- ❖ Addressing the issue at a later time does not equate to letting it go. Seek the wise council of a trusted mentor or friend that can help you make an informed plan about how to respond.
- ❖ Addressing it in the moment is also an option, but only if your motivation is to uphold the principles of community and to take advantage of a teachable moment. If your motivation is emotion-based, there is a possibility that the situation will escalate.
- ❖ Reporting the incident gives the institution the opportunity to create a more supportive environment.

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## Recipient-Responses ACTION-Responses

**Ask a clarifying question.** For example: "You seem surprised that I received a high grade. Are you surprised?"

**Come from curiosity, not judgment.** For example: "I want to better understand your surprise, can you explain it to me?"

**Tell what you observed in a factual manner.** For example: "I noticed that when you asked some of the other students about their grade you did not express the same level of surprise."

**Impact exploration.** Discuss the impact of the statement. For example: "Ouch. Your surprise makes me feel like people doubt my ability and intellect."

**Own your thoughts and feelings** about the subject. For example: "It's difficult being the only Black student in our cohort. People often think I am here only to fulfill a diversity goal. That's hard because I have always done well in school."

**Next steps.** (If the source has been able to hear what you have shared, consider the following, which may help rebuild the relationship). For example: "Hey, let's go to class now."



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## Source- ASSIST Approach

**A**cknowledge your bias

**S**eek feedback and information

**S**ay you are sorry

**I**mpact not Intent

**S**ay **T**hank You

Ackerman-Barger, K. & Jacobs, N.N. (2020). The microaggressions triangle model: A humanistic approach to navigating microaggression in health professions

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### When You Are the Source-Notes

**Avoid becoming defensive:** Whether your intention was to hurt another person or not, and regardless of whether you and the recipient are seeing the situation differently this is a great opportunity for you to learn about someone else's experience. Be present and listen.

**Confirmation Bias** is a tendency to gather information or respond to a circumstance in a way that confirms an already established belief or idea.

**Commitment confirmation** supports confirmation bias. It is when our minds become attached to particular points of view, even when they are wrong, and can lead to a form of confidence bias or self-motivated reasoning. This is an over attachment to being right rather than a genuine seeking of the truth.

Ackerman-Barger, K. & Jacobs, N.N. (2020). The microaggressions triangle model: A humanistic approach to navigating microaggression in health professions schools. *Academic Medicine [Macy Foundation Supplement]*.

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## Source-Responses ASSIST

**Acknowledge your Bias.** A way to avoid becoming the source of microaggressions is by familiarizing ourselves with and mitigating our unconscious bias.

**Seek feedback.** For example, "I noticed when we were talking about exam grades, you became quiet. How was that interaction for you?"

**Say you are sorry.** Apologies can be difficult, because we often think of them as an admission of wrongdoing. An apology should be about recognizing someone else's pain.

**Impact, not intent.** Whether your intention was to hurt another person or not, this is a great opportunity for you to learn about someone else's experience. you could say: "Although it was not my intention to harm you, I see now how my questioning your score affected you and I am sorry."

**Say thank you.** For example, "Thank you for the feedback. I appreciate you taking the time to help me grow as a person."



Ackerman-Barger, K. & Jacobs, N.N. (2020). The microaggressions triangle model: A humanistic approach to navigating microaggression in health professions schools. *Academic Medicine [Macy Foundation Supplement]*.

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## Bystander- ARISE Approach

- Awareness of microaggression
- Respond with empathy
- Inquiry of facts
- Statements that start with "I"
- Educate and Engage

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## When You Are the Bystander-Notes

**Assess the Situation:** Every situation is different. Consider the safety of all individuals. Is this the time and place? What would be the best strategy for interrupting the interaction? How do I preserve the dignity of the individuals and the relationships?

**Rebuild:** During a microaggression there are threats to the reputations of all involved. The recipient may be seen as oversensitive, the source as racist, and the bystander(s) as a coward. Rebuilding gives all involved the opportunity to restore their reputations and repair.

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## Bystanders-Responses ARISE

**Awareness.** A bystander could have raised awareness of the situation by saying, "Your surprise about Rick's score may suggest a biased assumption."

**Respond with empathy and avoidance of judgment.** While it may be tempting to respond with the negative emotions that have been engendered by the interaction, approaching with empathy is critical because the goal is to rebuild community. Avoiding judgment means allowing others the grace to make mistakes, and to learn from their mistakes.

**Inquiry.** Approach the situation with curiosity and make inquiries. For example, "Can you explain your comment to me?" or "What did you mean by that?"

**Statements that start with I.** A bystander also can use "I" statements to talk about how the comment made them feel. For example: "I noticed that Rick seemed offended when you made that comment about his score and, honestly, I was uneasy as well."

**Educate and engage.** "I know you didn't intend to stereotype anyone, but as your friend, I want to let you know that what you said could be interpreted that way."



Ackerman-Barger, K. & Jacobs, N.N. (2020). The microaggressions triangle model: A humanistic approach to navigating microaggression in health professions schools. *Academic Medicine [Macy Foundation Supplement]*.

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## Check in with the recipient

Validate their experience and their feelings

- “That was not ok”
- “That is not how we do things here”
- “I can see how you would be really upset”
- “I’m really sorry that happened to you”

Ask what, if anything, they want you to do

- Just listen versus take action
- “How can I support you?”
- “If this happens again, how would you like me to respond?”

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## Case Scenario: They Haven't Kicked You Boys Out Yet?

• Consider the story of an incident as retold by two different students at two different interviews, unbeknownst to the other student. Rashid and Daevion are two first year medical students. They are the only two Black men in their cohort. They each described an interaction with a White male professor.

“So, me and a fellow classmate, who is also Black, were coming in early to get some last minute studying in before finals. And we ran into a professor that we had in Block 1. And I held the door for him, said, ‘Hi, how’s it going’ and then he’s like, ‘Oh, hi, how are you boys doing? They haven’t kicked you out yet?’ I didn’t know... was it unintentional or did it have deeper meaning? And me and my friend looked at each other and were in shock a little bit and didn’t know how to address it.

But we just went on and studied. But it was interesting because microaggressions don’t usually get to me but like I think with this one I was like, ‘Man!’, like, for 10 minutes instead of studying I was like, Ugh! Did he really just say that?” *Daevion*

“There was a time when I saw a previous professor who I consider a friend and I think he considers me a friend as well. And me and a classmate, he’s also African-American, were walking in the building. And he was like, ‘Oh, they haven’t kicked you all out yet? We’re friends, like, sarcasm whatever... But to somebody who isn’t like me, they could have easily been hurt by that, struck by that, triggered by that. And a bit of me was too. I was kinda like, ‘what?’” *Rashid*



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## Case Scenario: A Day in the Life of Female Surgeons

- Juana is a 25-year-old Latina who is on her Surgery clerkship in her third year of medical school. For the past two weeks, Juana has been rotating with Dr. Linda Watson, who has inspired her to specialize in surgery and go into academic medicine. Today, she is rotating with Dr. Joaquin Hernandez, her new surgery attending, and they are scrubbing in for a case along with Dr. Arash Hakim, a surgery resident. Dr. Hernandez asks Juana what specialty she wants to go into, and Juana eagerly replies that she plans to go into surgery. Dr. Hernandez responds, "It must be really hard to be a surgeon and a mom though." Juana talks about what a great role model Dr. Watson has been, especially around balancing her work and family life. Dr. Hernandez shrugs and replies, "Oh, I'm not saying it can't be done, I'm just saying that every time Dr. Watson is in the OR and her girls have a soccer game or recital, she has some really tough choices to make." Juana looks uncomfortably at Dr. Hakim and wonders to herself whether Dr. Hernandez has had any similar conversations with this resident, since fathers would likely have similar difficult decisions. Before anyone can say anything, Dr. Hernandez shrugs again and changes the topic of the conversation.

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