

HOW TO BE A GOOD HUMAN

MICROAGGRESSIONS IN THE WORKPLACE



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AGENDA

What is a microaggression?

Examples of microaggressions

What can you do about it?

Content Warning

- Sexism
- Racism
- Transphobia
- Homophobia
- Ageism
- Ableism
- Sexual harassment/assault
- Excessive use of Liz Lemon gifs

If this makes you go like...



...feel free to leave at any time

DISCLAIMER

I am a cis-gender, upper-middle class, bisexual, recently divorced, young, white woman with chronic health problems. These are my experiences until I say otherwise. I am not and will not try to interpret the problems of others in marginalized populations that I know nothing about; I am only stating quotes or paraphrasing things that my colleagues have told me and given me permission to anonymously use in this presentation.

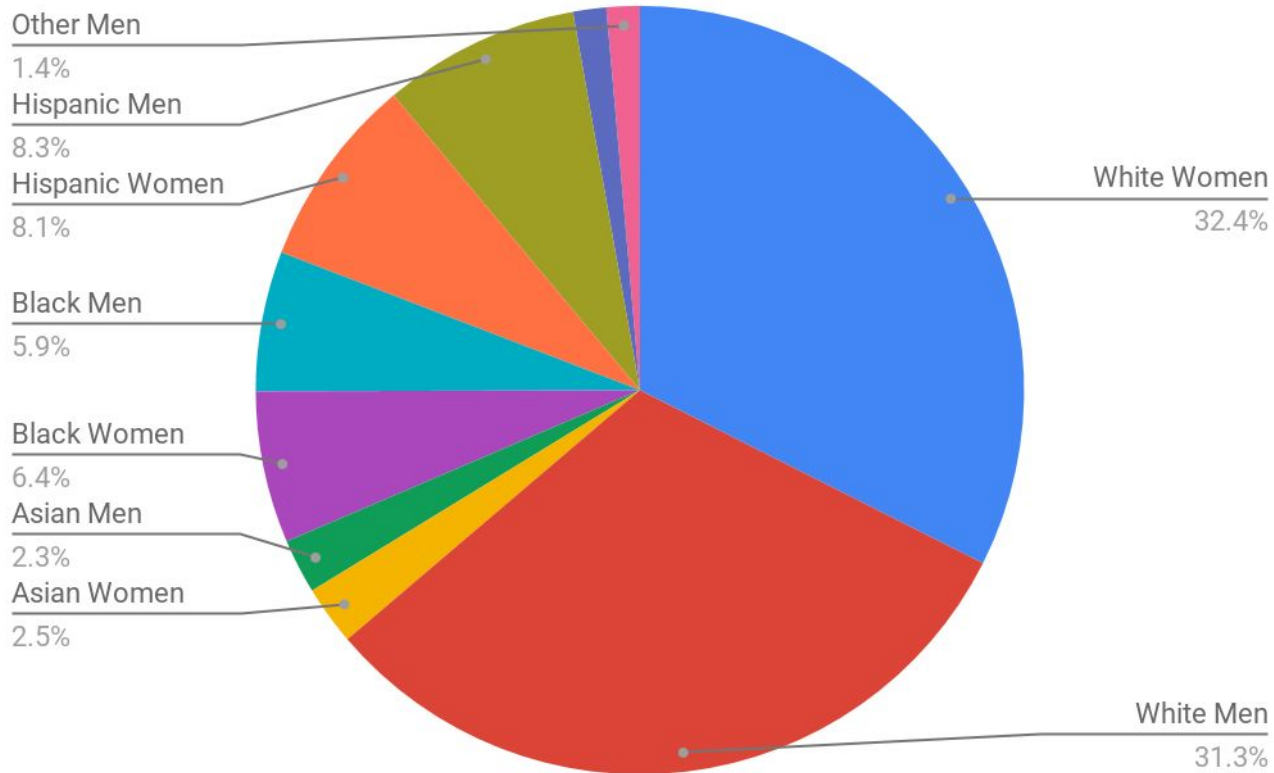
**Questions always
encouraged**

What is a Microaggression?

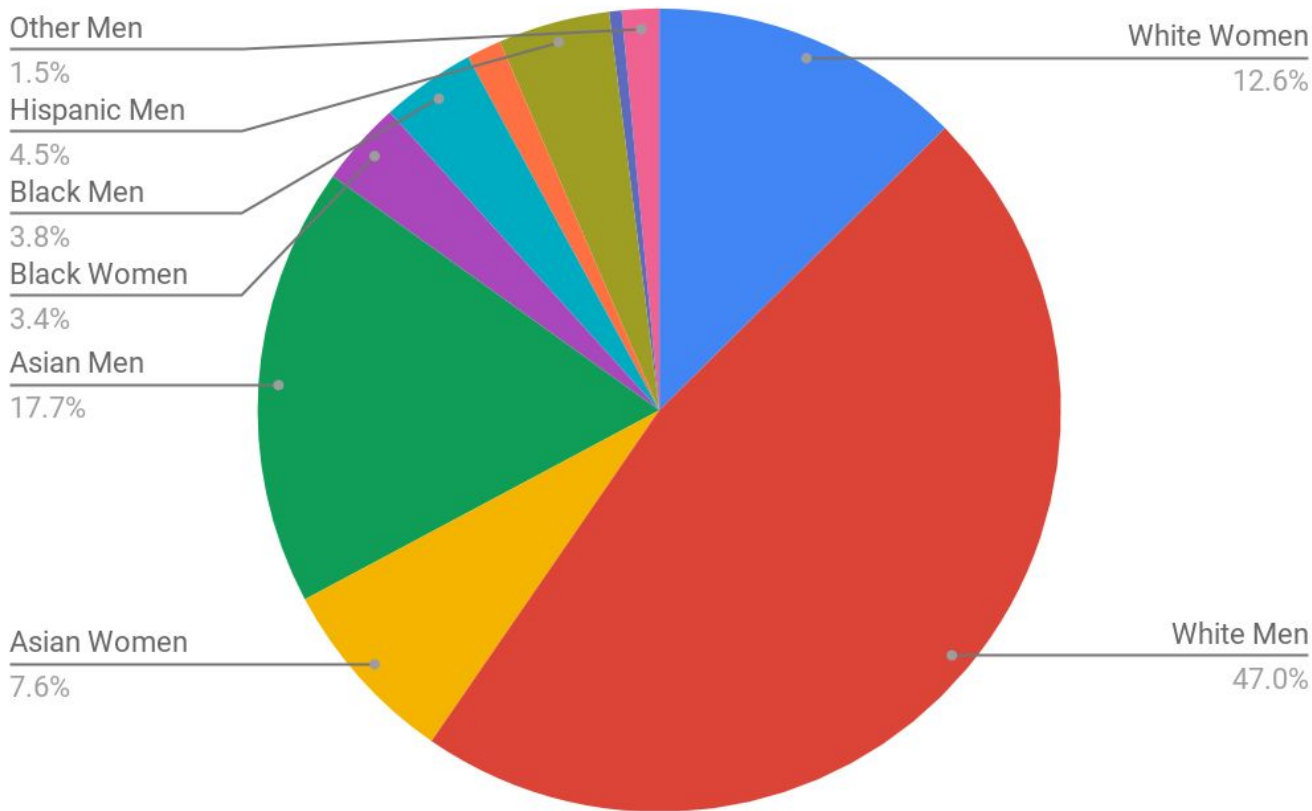
Types of Microaggressions

- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity
- LGBTQ+
- Age
- People with disabilities/health issues
- Socioeconomic status
- Religion
- Etc...

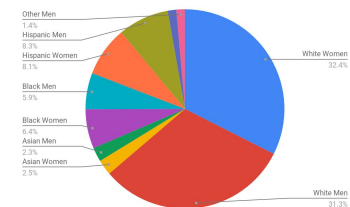
Demographics in the US



Representation in Tech in the US



Demographics in the US



Vocab

PRIVILEGE is about access.

UNDERREPRESENTATION is about numbers.

MARGINALIZATION is about treatment.

DIVERSITY is about variety.

INCLUSION is about experience.

Vocab

INTENT is what we mean.

IMPACT is the way in which it is received.

Questions?

GENDER

Vocab

GENDER - How a person identifies. Male, female, on a spectrum between that, or not on that spectrum at all.

SEX - Dealing with biology and chromosomes. What we are assigned at birth.

Vocab

CISGENDER (cis) - A person whose gender matches their sex assigned at birth.

TRANSGENDER (trans) - A person whose gender does not match their sex assigned at birth.

NONBINARY (enby) - A person whose gender does not fall on a male/female binary.

Using gender specific language

- Using he/him pronouns when creating user stories for a stock trading app
- Using she/her pronouns when referring to babies/young children in a developmental psychology class

Sexist office duties

- Party planning
- Making coffee
- Taking notes
- Cleaning



Kids / marriage

- “What are your plans long term? Will you stay home with the kids when you start a family?”
- “Your husband let you come out on the work night?”
- “I didn’t know you had a son! I thought you’d be out of the office more if you did.” (after seeing a picture of my nephew on my phone)

Comments about appearance

- “You have such a pretty face, but you look intimidating in meetings. It would be great if you could smile more.”
- “Can you wear your hair down for this meeting? It makes you look older and we need to be taken seriously.”
- “Wow, you actually look like a girl today!”

Tone policing

- “You’re just overreacting.”
- “You sound naggy. Can you watch your tone?”
- “Please try to control yourself next time. I know you feel strongly but you sounded angry.”
- “Don’t be such a grammar Nazi.”

Assuming you're not the manager / expert

- “Can I speak to the manager. No, the REAL manager.”
- “Are you sure you know how to do this?”
- “I know, but let me just show you to make sure you understand.”
- In an interview a candidate only spoke to my male colleagues, never making eye contact with me.

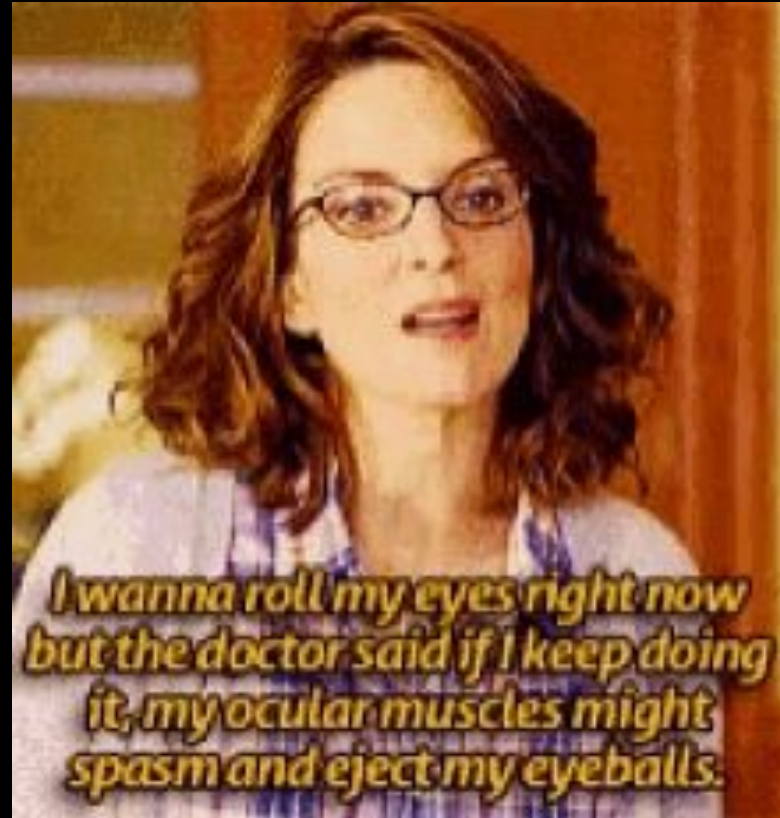
“Mansplaining”

- “It’s actually interesting how loan rates are calculated, you see...”
- “I think what Megan is saying...”
- “Well, here, let me show you.”



Pet Names

- Honey
- Sweetie
- Dear
- Sweetheart
- Darling
- Kiddo
- Baby
- Boo
- Sugar
- Sweetcheeks



And the not-so-micro

- “Is it that time of the month?”
- “If you weren’t young enough to be my daughter, I’d definitely ask you on a date.”
- “Are you sure you’re only 22? You seem much more experienced than that. You must have been ordering men around for years.”

EW

AGE

Age

- “Oh, you’re only 25? You seem so much older than that! You’re a baby!”
- “Is there someone more senior I can talk to?”
- “Hey, you’re the computer kid, right? Can you fix my printer?”

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Vocab

SEXUAL ORIENTATION - A person's sexual identity in relation to the gender or genders to which they're attracted.

BISEXUAL - Sexually attracted not exclusively to people of one particular gender

Sexual Orientation

- “Oh? You’re bi? I wouldn’t have expected that from someone as serious as you.”
- “How can you be bi? I thought you were married to a man. So like, it doesn’t really matter cuz you live like you’re straight.”

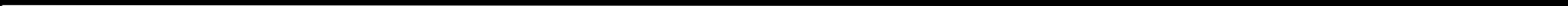
HEALTH ISSUES

Health Issues

- “You have a lot of appointments. We’re going to need to talk about this.”
- “You don’t look sick though.”



Are you uncomfortable?



**What if I told you I've
had to quit a job
because I didn't feel
safe?**

Questions?

**Now let's hear from
some of my
colleagues...**

RACE

Vocab

RACE - A powerful social category forged through oppression, slavery, and conquest. Genetic differences within any racial groups are often greater than differences *between* racial groups

ETHNICITY - Groups that share a common identity-based ancestry (i.e. Irish, Sioux, Fijian, etc.)

Race

- “What are you again?” or “Where are you from?”
- “Your fiancé’s white? Your kids are gonna look so cool.”
- “I hope my kids find someone exotic too.”
- “_____ is my spirit animal.”
- “Hey, you’re tiny, can you walk on my back?”

Race (specifically black)

- Walking into a building with 5 other people and being the only person asked for ID.
- “I’m so glad I don’t have to deal with your hair.”
- “You’re very eloquent.”

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Trans/Non-binary

- Constant misgendering of trans/non-binary co-workers
- Overly-aggressive apologies
- “But what’s your real name?”
- “Have you gotten your surgery yet?”

Random Other Stuff

- “You have it easy. I remember when I was your age.”
- “Oh they probably didn't mean anything by it.”
or “They meant well when they said that to you.”
- “So that's how many person-hours of work?”
“It'll be 10 man-hours.”
- “Oh, you're a dev?”

Breathe in

Questions?

HOW DOES THIS ACTUALLY IMPACT PEOPLE?



SPOON THEORY

Everyone has a certain number of spoons per day, say 50.

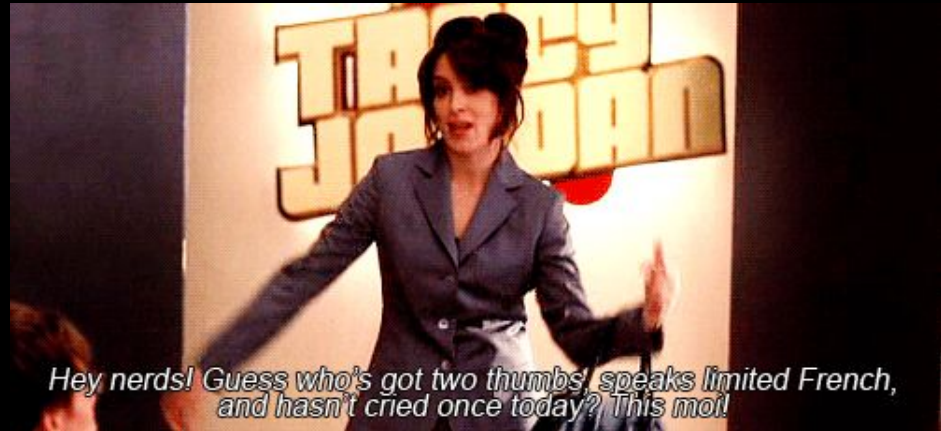
For me, as a person with depression, it takes me 10 spoons just to get out of bed, brush my teeth, and feed my cat. For you, that only takes one spoon.



**Or the nerdier
version...**

We're all goddamn wizards, but even we Level 20s have a limited number of spells to pull stuff off during the day.

Hard/emotional things take your higher level spells, then you only have cantrips left to get through the rest of the day.



Hey nerds! Guess who's got two thumbs, speaks limited French, and hasn't cried once today? This moi!

If you're in a place of privilege, do not offload the emotional responsibility onto the minority party.

**Shut.
That.
S*!t.
Down.**



Yeah, Liz, it does.

If you're being marginalized...

- Find your allies!
- If you have the emotional energy, educate your coworkers
- Don't be shy, address your concerns
- Speak with your manager (or maybe HR) if it's less-than-micro

(A word of warning, though. Know your company and whether HR is there for you or your company. I've been burned by this before.)

If you're an observer...

- Be an ally
- Approach the person one on one first
- Call out bad behavior when you see it
- Amplify the voices of others and then take a back seat
- Get involved!

If you need to be better...

(Spoiler alert: This is all of us.)

- Educate yourself!
- Apologize
- Feel embarrassed; it will help you do better
- Realize this is a learning experience

If you need to be better...

(Spoiler alert: This is all of us.)

- Don't force your help on to somebody who doesn't want it
- Approach people privately
- Remember that it's easier to discount microaggressions if you're coming from a position of power



THANK YOU

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PLURALSIGHT