



# Minority Fellowship Program

The National Board for Certified Counselors

## **A Clinician's Ethical Responsibility to Reduce Cultural, Sexual, and Gender Identity Microaggressions**

Webinar Follow-up Question and Answer Session With  
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### **Question from E. Jobbik:**

In my daily relationships: I want to be more informed about other cultures, other people and religious beliefs. When I think of approaching the subject and ask questions, then I am afraid I will use microaggressions. How [do I] open the conversations without offending the other person with my questions? Questions that really show I do not have a clue about the other person.

### **Answer from Presenter**

Kudos to you for engaging in these difficult discussions. I believe your earnest intention will be a good start to your approach. I would start by watching a few Youtube videos (search Derald Wing Sue) so that you have a basic foundation of things to be aware of. Second, I would engage in conversations with those you have already established a relationship with. Third, review some of the free resources that the ACA and APA have (Google Multicultural Practices and American Psychological Association). Fourth, don't practice on your clients, seek a consultation group with diverse members or those who are interested in having this type of discussion (there are often list-servs, professional networking groups via Facebook, etc. where you could place an ad).

### **Question from J. Johnson:**

Do you have any thoughts about ACE (asexual) culture? I find a temptation to associate this with isolative behaviors rather than orientation.

### **Answer from Presenter**

I am certainly not an expert in asexual culture. However, from the colleagues I have met who identify as such, and the resources I have found on the topic, I do believe this is a legitimate identity and can be intersectional within other identities. However, like many identities, it is important to differentiate aspects of an identity from potential problematic behaviors (such as avoidance). Keep in mind that there could be aspects of both, without delegitimizing the identity.

I hope this helps. Here are some resources: <https://www.glaad.org/amp/ace-guide-finding-your-community>,  
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2893352/>,  
[https://www.thetrevorproject.org/trvr\\_support\\_center/asexual/](https://www.thetrevorproject.org/trvr_support_center/asexual/)

I will update my presentation in the future to reflect these more contemporary frames via ACE.

**Question from J. Ponce:**

I identify as Deaf and can speak. I've worked with clients that are astonished that I can speak and tend to say "I never would have known you were Deaf. You speak very well"... What would an appropriate response be to that statement? I've found myself just smiling and nodding at them and moving on with the session.

**Answer from Presenter**

I can only imagine the frustration that so many people experience due to the microaggressions that exist surrounding ability issues. I hope you are able to find a way to therapeutically share with the client why this is microaggressive behavior. But, if it's not therapeutically helpful to bring it up, we sometimes have to roll with our clients' ignorance and then debrief with other professionals who can relate.

I wish you the best.

**Question from A. Vosburg:**

The counseling profession has a responsibility to demonstrate and promote positive change. How can we start this complicated but much-needed concern for changes?

**Answer from Presenter**

I appreciate your recognition of this very important work. I believe it begins on a personal level, with our interactions in our own social ecology, modeling for others and advocating for change. Then it requires connection and tenacity in affecting social change via changes in policy (start small – our own agencies, then our community, then our state, etc.). I hope you are also able to connect with like-minded individuals, as this will help in maintaining your resilience!

**Question from K. Webster:**

I find it difficult to address and intervene when inappropriate comments and general lack of cultural humility is expressed by individuals in positions of power (supervisors, directors, executives) due to interagency power dynamics. I've noticed a phenomenon of unearned self-certification that sounds like this: "Because I am a counselor or leader in the field, I am fully culturally competent."--despite an obvious lack of sociocultural communication skills. Any tips on addressing microaggressions communicated by individuals in positions of power within organizations?

**Answer from Presenter**

You are bringing up a good example of how microaggressions from those in power can have a greater impact. I empathize with your frustration and hope that you can find alliances with those who are like-minded or willing to advocate alongside you. I believe building these alliances, communicating the need for competency training (even under the guise of for your own benefit), and try communicating your concerns via a positive psychological framework "What I want more of, what is working" versus "the problem, the criticism." In this case, one example might be sharing directly to the person in power, "I really feel part of a valuable organization when we are all committed to further developing our cultural competency and therefore would appreciate more competency training for everyone in our organization." I know these things are easier said than done and I hope you are able to find novel ways to communicate your concerns directly to the individual(s). If it goes nowhere, then I encourage you to seek others you can enlist who might be able to advocate alongside you (board members, community leaders, etc.)

**Question from G. Wence-Munoz:**

We are in 2020, when you mention that we need to start "the dialogue" it almost feels that we are going back to the same discursivity about the topic of microaggressions, however, I am wondering how do we go from the discursivity to the praxis of stopping microaggressions?

**Answer from Presenter**

Excellent point indeed. Moving to that next paradigm involves a commitment to enacting change. This is foundational to much of our diversity efforts – overcoming the bystander effect, challenging implicit bias, building programs based on enhancing inclusivity efforts. I believe these often succeed via grassroots work, making change in our immediate community and then modeling for others. I also believe we have to accept the spirit that combating microaggressions will always be a “process” and not an “outcome.” Therefore it involves instilling a spirit of openness and dedication to self-growth.

**Question from M. Cabrera:**

I felt the need to comment I am concerned that the LGBTQQAAl image has misleading information. Transgender, being an ally, intersex are not a sexual orientations. Two-spirit is also more encompassing to ONLY indigenous people than being a sexual orientation.

**Answer from Presenter**

Thank-you for pointing out what needed to be changed in my presentation! You are right, the description needs historical context (that originally LGB was a sexual identity) but that the LGBTQIAP+ acronym has since expanded into personal identity – I have made the appropriate changes on a couple of slides to clear up that misinformation (my oversight) by labeling that category PERSONAL IDENTITY. I have removed Allies and 2-spirit as part of that mix, since those are separate issues, as you pointed out. In the future I will be focusing more on ACE identities, utilizing the Split Attraction Model. I will also point out how the acronym is used more as reference to the diversity surrounding personal identity and that it can become complicated rather quickly when attempting to define so narrowly. Thank-you again for pointing out my mistake!