

# 6 Tips for Mentors to Recognize and Respond to Microaggressions

## 1 Educate Yourself:

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Too often, minorities are compelled to speak for themselves or educate those in the majority culture. As an ally, you owe it to yourself to educate yourself about the history of racism and the very real consequences of racism, which can have detrimental effects on physical and emotional wellbeing of marginalized communities.



## 2 Listen to Others:

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It is likely you have an experience that doesn't match theirs, and that's fine. The point of being there is not to commiserate over similar experiences. Your goal is to learn about differences. Instead of comparing your experiences with theirs, try listening, asking a clarifying question, and appreciating their story.



## 3 Develop Cultural Competence:

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Cultural competence is a process of developing the skills to successfully partner with people from other groups. You should begin by reflecting on your worldview and how your various identities, including your race, have influenced your daily life. Be willing to hear feedback on how you're doing on your own journey. As an ally, you have the ability to make a significant impact on the lives of others and help mitigate feelings of hopelessness and helplessness.



## 4 Broaden Viewpoint/Educate Others:

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Challenge yourself and others to examine negative biases and make a conscious effort to learn more about that idea, individual, or group to understand how and why it makes you and them uncomfortable.



## 5 Build Skillful Responses

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It is important to respond carefully to racial microaggressions so as to educate people about their actions. In some cases, an aggressor may realize that they are communicating microaggressions, a form of racism.



## 6 Support Marginalized Groups:

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Empathize with the feelings of distrust and distress expressed by your students, since these reactions are important to acknowledging past hurt. It is important to validate and honor students' experiences and emotions instead of trying to convince them that they don't have a good reason for feeling this way anymore. It is best not to tell them their beliefs are irrelevant to their past experiences.



Neither allies nor solidarity exist as products or identities. The process of introspection and interrogation requires challenging beliefs and stereotypes, and is becoming more personal and professional. These processes are also complicated by intersectionality; it is impossible to isolate privileges and oppressions rooted in gender, race, class, age, ability, sexual orientation, documentation status, ethnicity, knowledge of the indigenous, etc. In each of these identities and social positions, we navigate our relationships and receive information about ourselves. With a commitment to self-education you can make a meaningful, possibly life-altering difference for youth who identify in marginalized communities.