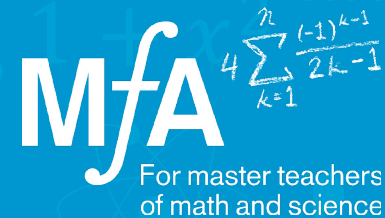


# MfA Master Teacher Guide: INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND PRACTICES AT MfA Interrupting Biases



All MfA Master Teachers have a responsibility to address biased language and behavior from ourselves and in our interactions with colleagues. To help all of us at MfA learn about how we can intervene and interrupt biased language and behavior, this guide offers insight into best practices while acknowledging that the below information only scratches the surface. We encourage all MfA Master Teachers to continue their learning around interrupting biases as well as the other inclusive language and practices presented in other documents in this series.

**In this guide, we'll define microaggressions and microinterventions and present two frameworks for interrupting biases.**

- ▶ **Defining Microaggressions and Microinterventions**
- ▶ **Calling Out Behavior - Calling In the Person**
- ▶ **Responding to Microaggressions: RAVEN Framework**

# Defining Microaggressions and Microinterventions

Many use the term “microaggression” to refer to biased language and behavior. Microaggressions are “brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group.”<sup>1</sup>

There are common barriers to combating microaggressions, including being oblivious, trying to minimize the harm or maintain harmony, working to avoid conflict, being fearful of repercussions, or simply not knowing what to do. We can work to overcome these barriers by learning to recognize microaggressions, creating norms that counter conflict avoidance, improving our ability to engage in racial dialogues, and obtaining the skills and tactics needed to respond to microaggressions.

To interrupt biases when they happen, we need to challenge them. We should *make them visible, educate perpetrators, disarm the microaggression, and seek external support.*<sup>2</sup>

At the very least, we can get into the habit of calling out bias when:

- There is an opportunity to explore deeper, make meaning together, and find a mutual sense of understanding across differences;
- We need to let someone know that their words or actions are unacceptable and will not be tolerated;
- We need to interrupt in order to prevent further harm;
- We need to hit the “pause” button and break the momentum; and
- We want to help imagine different perspectives, possibilities, or outcomes.

Calling out bias is a type of *microintervention*, or an everyday anti-bias action you can take to counteract, challenge, diminish, or neutralize microaggressions.<sup>3</sup> These can come in the form of:

- Affirmations: compliments, supports, or validations
- Protections: developing racial literacy, critical consciousness, or preparing for racism
- Challenges: confronting biased language, behavior, or practices

When faced with being a witness to microaggressions and other forms of bias, we need to think about our individual identities and how they impact our actions as we decide how best to respond. As bystanders, we can make a difference by supporting someone who is experiencing the bias and demonstrate to others in the space that we all have the power to make our community safer and more inclusive. However, not everyone may feel comfortable or confident to do this in the moment. There are additional ways to address microaggression and other forms of bias beyond the ideas presented below, including reaching out directly to MfA staff and providing feedback on course surveys.

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1 Sue, Derald Wing. *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation*. John Wiley & Sons, 2010.

2 Sue, D. W., Calle, C. Z., Mendez, N., Alsaidi, S., & Glaeser, E. (2020). *Microintervention Strategies: What You Can Do to Disarm and Dismantle Individual and Systemic Racism and Bias*. John Wiley & Sons.

3 Sue, D. W., Calle, C. Z., Mendez, N., Alsaidi, S., & Glaeser, E. (2020). *Microintervention Strategies: What You Can Do to Disarm and Dismantle Individual and Systemic Racism and Bias*. John Wiley & Sons.

## Calling Out Behavior - Calling In the Person<sup>4</sup>

We can affirm, protect, or challenge bias by calling someone out or calling someone in. The table below provides some examples of what you can say when faced with being a witness to a microaggression or other forms of biases.

I don't want to put you on the spot, but that comment makes me feel uncomfortable.	That's not our culture here. Those aren't our values.	It sounded like you said _____. Is that what you meant?
I wonder if you've considered the impact of your words.	What do you mean when you say _____?	When I hear you say _____, it makes me feel _____.
Wow. Nope. Ouch. That hurts. I need to stop you right there.	Is the fact that the person was Asian / Black / Latinx/ Trans relevant to your story?	It sounds like you're making some assumptions that we need to unpack a bit.
What sort of impact do you think your decision / comment / action might have?	How might someone else see this differently? Is it possible that someone might misinterpret your words / actions?	How might the impact of your words / actions differ from your intent?
It sounds like you are assuming _____. What if we assumed _____ instead?	How is _____ different from _____? What is the connection between _____ and _____?	How did you decide / determine / conclude _____?

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from [Calling In Calling Out](#) and [What did you just say? Responses to racist comments collected from the field](#) Created collectively by CFEEd grads across Oregon.

## Responding to Microaggressions: RAVEN Framework<sup>5</sup>

Another way of thinking about how to respond to microaggressions when they occur, we may consider using the RAVEN framework that is particularly useful when responding to bias in public space, such as our workshops. This five-step approach includes the following:

**R:** Redirect the interaction: *"I'd like to pause this conversation right here, because I'm concerned with the language that is being used."*

**A:** Ask a probing question: *"I think I heard you say that the student barely speaks English and doesn't belong in this class. What did you mean by that?"*

**V:** Value clarification: *"At the beginning of the workshop, we all agreed to create an environment that was safe and welcoming. The statement you just made is not aligned with these values."*

**E:** Emphasize your own thoughts and feelings using "I" statements: *"I was saddened to hear you say that about people from that neighborhood. I think someone from that community would be hurt by what you said."*

**N:** Suggest next steps to the aggressor to correct or change their behavior moving forward: *"Maybe you can offer an authentic apology to the person or persons who were targeted and be more mindful of their actions in the future. I have an article that talks about implicit bias and microaggressions that I can share with you."*

The RAVEN framework is not a sequential process, but rather a way to help guide our thinking and actions to disrupt unintentional microaggressions. Intentional bias requires a direct and stern response.

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<sup>5</sup> Wood, J. Luke, and Frank Harris. "How to Respond to Racial Microaggressions When They Occur." *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*. 5 May, 2020.

## Continued Learning

MfA is dedicated to building a professional community where teachers can learn from each other. This community is built on teacher-to-teacher collaboration, which happens when members of the community actively cultivate trust that supports productive and difficult conversations. Interrupting biases when they occur is one way to cultivate this type of community and may allow teachers to fully show up in MfA spaces. Holding ourselves and each other accountable helps to support productive dialogue and allows us to work towards building an equitable, inclusive, and anti-racist space.

Learning how to interrupt biases and getting comfortable doing so takes time. There are many resources available to continue learning, such as the [hollaback!](#) free bystander intervention training series and free [bystander guide](#). For more information on being anti-racist and how to interrupt biases, see [Being Antiracist](#), and continue reading for other strategies.

For suggestions, comments, or questions regarding this guide or any other resources, please contact MfA Director of Strategic Initiatives Eileen Murray at [emurray@mathforamerica.org](mailto:emurray@mathforamerica.org). If you would like to discuss a particular incident that occurred during an MfA event, you can reach out to Eileen or contact MfA Director of Professional Development Leah Hirsch at [lhirsch@mathforamerica.org](mailto:lhirsch@mathforamerica.org).