

Cheat Sheet Don't Let Microaggressions Slide

How to Speak Up—Respectfully and Effectively

What Are Microaggressions?

Subtle comments or actions that **invalidate, stereotype, or exclude**—often unintentionally.

- “You’re so articulate.”
- “Where are you *really* from?”
- Talking over or dismissing someone repeatedly

 Small moment. **Big impact.**

Why Silence Hurts

- Normalizes harmful behavior
- Erodes trust and psychological safety
- Signals acceptance—even when unintended

Not speaking up = the message still lands.

How to Speak Up in the Moment

Use the **PAUSE Framework** 

P — Pause 

Take a breath. Stay calm.

A — Ask 

“What did you mean by that?”

U — Use ‘I’ Statements 

“I felt uncomfortable hearing that.”

S — State the Impact 

“Comments like that can feel dismissive.”

E — Encourage Reflection

“Let’s think about another way to say this.”

If You’re an Ally

- Back up the person impacted
- Redirect the conversation
- Follow up privately with support

 Allyship = **action**, not intention.

What to Avoid

- Calling people out publicly 
- Assuming malicious intent 
- Letting discomfort stop you 

Respectful ≠ silent.

Why Speaking Up Matters

- Builds inclusive culture
- Strengthens team trust
- Models courageous leadership

Small moments create **lasting change**.

One-Line Go-To Phrase

“I want to pause on that—can we reframe it?”

Keep it simple. Keep it human