



American
Occupational Therapy
Association

Facing Difficult Conversations

Part 2

MODULE 3

Learning objectives



Difficult
Conversations

Welcome to Learning Module 3: Uncovering Microaggressions and Facing Difficult Conversations. In the last module we learned about addressing unconscious bias. In this module will seek to:

- Define microaggressions.
- Provide examples of microaggressions and unwanted behavior.
- Recommend methods to address both microaggressions and tackling difficult conversations.
- Present tools and resources to identify microaggressions and ways to suppress.





Facing difficult conversations

Module 3
Part 2



3-part framework

Difficult
Conversations

①

Acknowledge and validate.

“It sounds like, or it seems like...” This allows the emotion to be identified and gives room for the person to think logically to accept or reject and slow down the cognitive process to clearly express themselves.

②

Get curious with compassion.

Ask questions in a way that is both respectful and shows you're genuinely interested in understanding.

③

Joint problem-solve.

Conversations need to stay focused on the impact and outcome

Up for discussion

Difficult Conversations

Give yourself some time to process what's happened and think through your feelings and your next steps.

Next steps:

- **Share** your frustration with a trusted mentor or confidant.
 - Remember, this is not to gossip, but to get any necessary feedback on moving forward.
- **Write** out your feelings detailing what happened and how you felt.
 - Writing can help you outline a plan for a productive and calm conversation.



Up for discussion

Difficult Conversations

Planning for the conversation—Ask yourself the following questions:

- Who offended you?
- What is their role in the organization, and what is your working relationship?
 - Will the microaggression affect the ability to work productively and cooperatively together?
 - If not, then you may feel better after giving the situation some time and quietly reflecting on what happened. If a continued working relationship is important, then you'll need to give this person some feedback.



Up for discussion

Difficult Conversations

Executing—Plan the steps for this conversation:

- First, carefully think about word choice. Even in a calm setting, people will get defensive when given feedback on what was said or done that offended another person.
- Second, schedule the conversation in a private, neutral location at a convenient time for both parties.



Up for discussion

Difficult
Conversations



Facts



Feelings



Future

Executing—Plan the steps for this conversation.

Third, when discussing the situation, remember the three Fs:

- Focus on the facts detailing who, when, and where the incident took place.
- Be specific, and don't debate details.
- Emphasize observed specific behaviors.

- Communicate the emotion you felt based on the actions you described.
- Personalize and use "I" statements that describe how the behavior impacted you.

- Relay to the person what you'd like for the future regarding their behavior.

Sticking to the specifics and clearly communicating your feelings will increase the likelihood of diffusing potential tension during uncomfortable but important conversations.





Advocate support

**Module 3:
Uncovering Microaggressions
& Facing Difficult Conversations**



Be an advocate

Micro-
aggressions

An advocate is someone who acts, learns, listens, and yields their privilege. It is a powerful way to support diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

It is a choice. A choice to get involved. A choice to act. Recognize that silence and neutrality are NOT being an advocate.

For example, if you're out with a group of male students who are speaking inappropriately about a female student, not participating in the conversation or staying silent doesn't make you an ally or an advocate.

ADDRESS© Model to Intervene

Micro-
aggressions

- A** Acknowledge — something occurred
- D** Dialogue — in the moment or with someone else later
- D** Document — tell someone; use the Bias Reporting System or another reporting structure
- R** Redirect — the conversation
- E** Educate — the person
- S** Stop — the exclusionary behavior
- S** Support — the people impacted and make space to support yourself



Tools & resources

Module 3: Uncovering Microaggressions & Facing Difficult Conversations



Tools & resources

Micro-
aggressions

Visit aota.org for the DEI toolkit to take advantage of the following tools and resources:

- Course and Group Assessment Guide – Interrupting Interpersonal Aggressions/Microaggressions: Critical Skills for Creating High-Performing Inclusive Teams
- Speak Up: Responding to Everyday Bigotry
- Prepared statements when responding to microaggressions and bias
- Recognizing Microaggressions and the Messages They Send

AOTA DEI Toolkit

For more information, please see the DEI Toolkit for resources and assessment tools.

Visit: <https://www.aota.org/About-Occupational-Therapy/diversity.aspx>



References

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