

UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL

Everyday Exclusions

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Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Team

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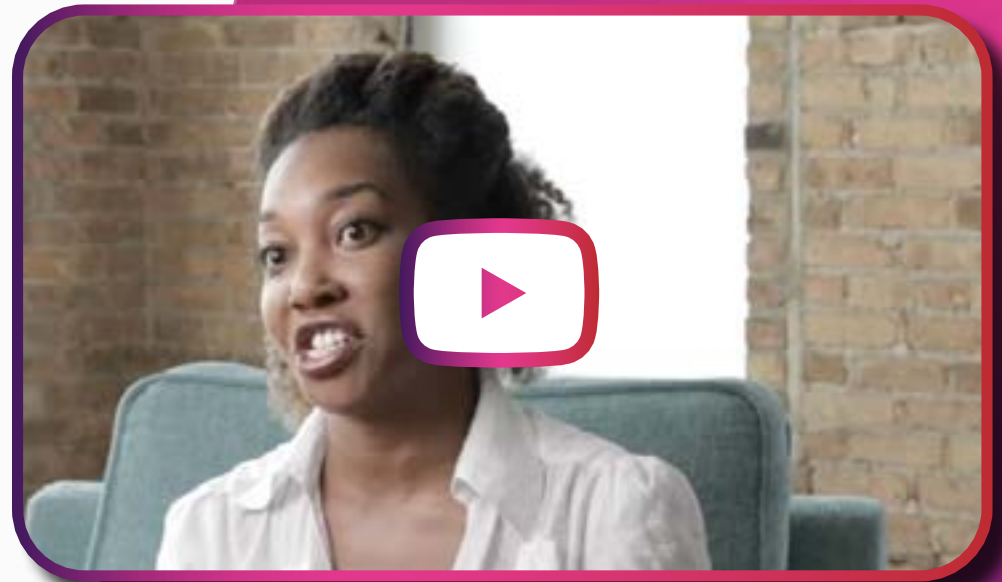
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What are everyday exclusions?

Everyday exclusions (also known as “microaggressions”) are the everyday insults and indignities that people from underrepresented groups experience as a result of their identity.

Everyday exclusions differ from more overt forms of prejudice and discrimination in that they can be harder to identify and people may even be unaware that they are doing them. However, it is exactly this that makes everyday exclusions so harmful – they are the daily reflections of social inequality and prejudice that even well-intentioned people make, and for this reason they can be extremely difficult for people who experience them to manage and respond to.

Watch this video to learn more about what everyday exclusions are, why they occur, and some examples of this behaviour.



www.youtube.com/watch?v=ho_WW7M5E3A

Examples of everyday exclusions

Examples

Everyday exclusions experienced by people who are racially minoritised

- Continually having a name pronounced incorrectly with no effort to get it right.
- Being told “you are well spoken and articulate” in a slightly surprised tone.
- Being asked “where are you really from?” - an assumption that the person is not British.
- Having an idea dismissed or ignored and then a White person makes the same suggestion and is given the credit.
- A non-Black person saying “can I touch your hair” or touching a Black person’s hair.
- Being the only person asked to produce workplace identification in a group of White colleagues.
- Being told “I don’t see colour” or “all lives matter” – this dismisses the lived experience of people who are racially minoritised.

Everyday exclusions experienced by women

- An assertive female manager being labelled as ‘bossy’ while her male counterpart is described as a ‘good leader’.
- A woman being interrupted or talked over during a meeting on several occasions and made to feel that their contribution is not valued.
- Assuming that a woman is a more junior role.
- Women being labelled as ‘getting emotional’ when talking passionately or challenging something in a workplace setting.

Everyday exclusions experienced by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and other sexual orientation and gender identities (LGBT+)

- Being told “you don’t look Trans”.
- Being told “you don’t act Gay”.
- Someone making no effort to use the correct pronouns, even when they have been asked to.
- An assumption that a Bisexual person will be promiscuous.
- Assuming that someone’s partner is the opposite sex.

Everyday exclusions experienced by people with disabilities

- Being told “you don’t look disabled”.
- Being told “we all get depressed sometimes, chin up”.
- Assuming someone with a disability needs assistance instead of asking; for example, pushing someone’s wheelchair or guiding someone with a Visual Impairment without asking them if they need assistance.
- Being told “You are so inspiring for overcoming your disability”.

The impact of everyday exclusions

When considering everyday exclusions, it is important to separate intent from impact. Everyday exclusions can be intentional or unintentional, however the impact remains the same. Everyday exclusions “other” people and make people feel like they do not belong. They also have a significant impact on the physical and mental health of those experiencing such behaviour. Studies have shown that the daily stress experienced by everyday exclusions can result in:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Decreased self-esteem
- Lack of confidence
- High blood pressure
- Paranoia
- Sleep difficulties

Watch the video to learn more about the impact that repeated exposure to everyday exclusions can have.



www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDd3bzA7450

What to do if you experience everyday exclusions

Choosing if and how you want to respond when you experience everyday exclusions can depend on a number of factors. It is important to remember that there is no “right” way to respond, and the most important thing to do is to look after yourself and your wellbeing. If you do decide you want to challenge an everyday exclusion that you have experienced, you can follow the suggested steps below:

1. Set the scene by describing the situation so the person is aware of the incident you are referring to.
2. Objectively describe the behaviour and get clarification about what was said/their behaviour.
3. Explain the impact and how it made you feel.

You can also contact a [Stand Up Speak Out \(SUSO\) Advocate](#) for confidential advice, and seek support from the [Staff Counselling Service](#) or the [Employee Assistance Programme](#).

Watch the video to find out more about everyday exclusions and what you can do when you experience them.



www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzyL96LZdHU

What to do if you witness everyday exclusions

If you witness everyday exclusions, it is important to **Stand Up and Speak Out** against this behaviour. We encourage all of our staff and students to be active bystanders and to call out unacceptable behaviour with the 4 D's:

1. Direct action: Directly intervene and challenge the individual responsible for the behaviour or support the person experiencing the behaviour.
2. Distraction: De-escalate the situation by engaging the individual responsible for the behaviour or the person experiencing the behaviour.
3. Delegation: Find someone who could act as an ally or someone who is in a senior position to intervene or support your intervention.
4. Delay: Wait until the behaviour stops or the situation ends and then approach the individual who experienced the behaviour to check they are ok.

While it can be difficult to challenge someone on something they have said or done, doing so is vital to creating a more inclusive environment. It is not enough to simply not engage in everyday exclusions, we must also call them out when they occur.



What to do if you are responsible for everyday exclusions

While it can be difficult to hear that we have engaged in everyday exclusions, especially if we did so unintentionally, it is important to take this seriously, and learn from it.

If someone approaches you about making an everyday exclusion, consider the tips below:

- Pause and take a breath - it is natural to feel defensive when we are challenged about our behaviour, especially when we have caused offense without meaning to. However, what is important is how you have made someone feel, rather than your intentions.
- Do not become defensive or invalidate the person's experience by focusing on your intent – even if you did not mean what you said or did, you have still caused hurt and it is important to recognise this. You may have privileges that make it difficult to understand where the hurt is coming from, however this does not mean that your behaviour was not harmful. Instead of trying to explain what you meant, listen and try to understand the impact of what you said.
- Commit to doing better – we all make mistakes, however it is what we do after making mistakes that is important. Commit to learning more about structural and systemic discrimination, language and terminology, and the experiences of underrepresented groups to avoid repeating this behaviour in the future.
- Sincerely apologise, but do not overdo it. If you continue to apologise and explain how bad you feel, this makes the experience about you, rather than the person who experienced the everyday exclusion.



References and resources

For more information on everyday exclusions, please see the resources below:

Harvard Business Review (2020) When and How to Respond to Microaggressions.

Available from: <https://hbr.org/2020/07/when-and-how-to-respond-to-microaggressions>

Harvard Business Review (2020) You've Been Called Out for a Microaggression. What Do You Do?

Available from: <https://hbr.org/2020/07/youve-been-called-out-for-a-microaggression-what-do-you-do?registration=success>

Harvard Business Review (2022) We Need to Retire the Term "Microaggressions".

Available from: <https://hbr.org/2022/03/we-need-to-retire-the-term-microaggressions>

Imperial College London (2022) Examples of Microaggressions.

Available from: <https://www.imperial.ac.uk/media/imperial-college/faculty-of-engineering/public/Resource---Examples-of-Microaggressions.pdf>.

Nadal, K. L. (2014) A Guide to Responding to Microaggressions. *CUNY FORUM* [online]. 2 (1), pp.71-76.

Oluo, I. (2018) *So you want to talk about race*. New York: Seal Press.

Psychology Today (2010) *Microaggressions: More Than Just Race*.

Available from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/gb/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life/201011/microaggressions-more-just-race>

Sue, D. W. (2010) *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender and Sexual Orientation* [online]. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons

Team Sass Productions (2021) How I deal with microaggressions at work. *YouTube* [video].

01 June. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzyL96LZdHU>.

TEDx Talks (2021) Dismantling Microaggressions Through the Power of Connection. *YouTube* [video].

02 April. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJWkSBtUag8>.

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