**Setting Expectations & Tips for All in Small Groups (modified from the Guide for Inclusive Teaching at Columbia University)**

**Please ensure to go over this entire sheet with students. Although it is a faculty tip sheet, there is information in this document that is important for students to be aware of and important for accountability of both faculty and students in this process of collaborative self-improvement. No one is perfect, but we are all committed to these principles. Students will not do what small group leaders do not do; please model these tips as intentionally as possible during sessions.**

**Basic principles of small groups:**

1. **Be aware of your own stereotypes**

Take the Implicit Association Test. <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

1. **Key point: Treat each student as an individual**

**Create a welcoming environment for ALL students. Treat each individual student with equal respect, pronouncing their names correctly asking for and employing the pronouns they use, and supporting their unique abilities and experiences. Make eye contact with all students. Call on all students equally.**

**When inviting student participation, do not make assumptions about students’ membership in any demographic groups. Allow students to self-identify when they feel comfortable doing so. Likewise, do not expect individuals to speak for the experience of an entire group; step in if students have this expectation of their peers.**

1. **Avoid** **making assumptions about students’ abilities based on stereotypes.**

When interacting with students, be mindful of existing stereotypes and take care not to perpetuate them (for example, “I’m offering a special tutorial because I know women struggle with math”). Instead, focus on behavioral and controllable actions (for example, “Please come to office hours, so we can practice a few additional problems”).

**4. Convey the same level of confidence in the abilities of all your students.**

As you take care not to perpetuate stereotypes, be cautious about being over-protective of or unduly strict toward any group of or individual students. Be even-handed in acknowledging students’ accomplishments and areas for growth. Emphasize high standards with verbal assurances that you will help them succeed, and put supports in place to help them meet those standards (see Principle 2).

**5. Address challenging classroom moments head-on.**

* Take responsibility for addressing challenging classroom moments, such as microaggressions, offensive and alienating comments, behaviors, and attitudes. Work to turn difficult moments into teachable moments, asking students to stop and reflect critically on assumptions and positions. When such moments occur, be sure to give adequate time and space to name and discuss the anxiety in the room.
* When difficult moments occur, prompt students to keep discussions focused on issues or comments, not individuals. Do not attribute motives or intentions behind the person voicing or committing the offensive or alienating act—rather, focus on the comment, behavior, or attitude itself, and acknowledge the effect it has on others. Ask students to use “I” statements when discussing difficult issues (for example, “I think that comment minimizes the issue,” or “I feel hurt by that line of thought, and here’s why...”), which can help to build and maintain a healthy student rapport.

**6. Ask for feedback.**

* **“**What questions or concerns do you have about classroom climate?”
* “Have you found any actions or words of the instructor or your peers offensive? How?”
* “How comfortable do you feel participating in this class?”
* What makes class participation easy or difficult for you?

**Specific examples of microaggressions to recognize:**

**Denial of racial reality/Denial of Individual Racism/Sexism/Heterosexism** (e.g. dismissing- whether directly or inadvertently- claims that race was relevant to understanding a student’s experience); a statement made when bias is denied

* + “I’m not racist. I have several Black friends...My friend is Puerto Rican ... I voted for Obama ... My girlfriend is Asian, etc.”
  + “I’m not homophobic, I have gay friends!”
  + “As a woman, I know what you go through as a racial minority.”
  + To a person of color: “Are you sure you were being followed in the store?”
  + “They probably didn’t mean it like that.”
  + “It was just a joke, relax”
  + “Just to play devil’s advocate… (proceeds to invalidate other student’s experience)” or “Just hypothetically…”
  + “We don’t know both sides” or “How can we say for sure this was racially motivated”

**Ascription of intelligence** (e.g. unintelligent or smarter than average based on appearance or accent)

* + “You are a credit to your race.”
  + “You are so articulate.” or “You sound white.”
  + Asking an Asian person to help with a Math or Science problem.

**Toxic positivity**- excessive and ineffective overgeneralization of a happy, optimistic state across all situations, resulting in denial, minimization of the other student’s feelings

* “Our society loves Black people! Look at how many successful people there are in music and sports!”
* “Everyone just needs to love each other.”
* “We need to focus on all the good in the world, and not complain about everything”
* “You should focus on the positive right now. Look at how many people are coming out to support this movement”
* “It’s a lot better now than in the past!”

**Color Blindness-** Statements that indicate that a White person does not want to acknowledge race

* + “I don’t see color.”
  + “America is a melting pot.”
  + “There is only one race, the human race.”

**Myth of meritocracy** - Statements which assert that race does not play a role in life successes, or implying that affirmative action is the reason for BIPOC success

* + “I believe the most qualified person should get the job.”
  + “Everyone can succeed in this society, if they work hard enough.”
  + “Of course he’ll get tenure, even though he hasn’t published much—he’s Black!”
  + “Men and women have equal opportunities for achievement.”
  + “Gender plays no part in who we hire.”
  + “America is the land of opportunity.”
  + “Everyone can succeed in this society, if they work  
    hard enough.”
  + “Affirmative action is racist.”

Sources:

* <https://www.washington.edu/teaching/topics/inclusive-teaching/addressing-microaggressions-in-the-classroom/>
* <https://academicaffairs.ucsc.edu/events/documents/Microaggressions_Examples_Arial_2014_11_12.pdf>
* <https://www.sph.umn.edu/site/docs/hewg/microaggressions.pdf>
* <https://diversity.cupahr.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Microaggressions.pdf>

**Tools/Strategies to address microaggressions:**

**Disarm:**  Perpetrators of microaggressions typically [fear being perceived —](http://ctl.yale.edu/sites/default/files/basic-page-supplementary-materials-files/race_talk_the_psychology_of_racial_dialogues.pdf) or worse, revealed — as racist. Explain that the conversation might get uncomfortable for them but that what they just said or did was uncomfortable for others. Invite them to sit alongside the group in the awkwardness of their words or deeds while you get to the root of their behavior together.

**Defy**: Challenge the individual to clarify their statement or action. Use a probing question, such as “*How do you mean that?*” This gives them a chance to check themselves as they unpack what happened, present an opportunity to better gauge the perpetrator’s intent. Reframe the conversation around the [impact](https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/05/health/racial-microaggressions-examples-responses-wellness/index.html) of the microaggression. Explain how it was initially interpreted and why. If they continue to assert that they “*didn’t mean it like that*,” remind them that you appreciate their willingness to clarify their intent and hope they appreciate your willingness to clarify their impact.

***Five strategies to share with students when confronting microaggressions***

1)Understand your racial/cultural identity

2) Acknowledge and be open to admitting your racial biases

3) Validate and facilitate discussion of feelings

4) Control the process, not the content, of the dialogue

5) Validate, encourage and express admiration and appreciation to participants who speak when it feels unsafe to do so

**KEY POINT**

**“A note of advice for non-Black allies old and new: The work of allyship is difficult. You will make mistakes as you learn — and you will always be learning. For anyone accused of committing a microaggression or counseling someone who has been accused, here are a few notes on how to respond:**

* Remember that intent does not supersede impact.
* Seek to understand the experiences of BIPOC individuals without making them responsible for your edification.
* Believe your Black colleagues when they choose to share their insights; don’t get defensive or play devil’s advocate.
* Center the experiences and voices of students from marginalized backgrounds without overburdening or tokenizing them.
* Get comfortable rethinking much of what you thought to be true about the world and your workplace and accept that you have likely been complicit in producing inequity.”

**Sources:**

[**https://hbr.org/2020/07/when-and-how-to-respond-to-microaggressions**](https://hbr.org/2020/07/when-and-how-to-respond-to-microaggressions)

[**https://ct.counseling.org/2015/12/race-talk-and-facilitating-difficult-racial-dialogues/**](https://ct.counseling.org/2015/12/race-talk-and-facilitating-difficult-racial-dialogues/)

**Tips for the beginning of each small group session**

1. **Clearly communicate goals, objectives and expectations.** Students should set personal learning goals at the beginning of each session.
2. **Explain the assessment criteria and review the assessment form with the students.**
3. **Commit to providing timely feedback in person and via written evaluation**
4. **Establish community agreements and discussion guidelines**

Establish collective agreements about what constitutes a supportive and inclusive teaching environment to give students a sense of responsibility for the classroom climate. This can also help you regain control in “heated” classroom moments. Working with students to create agreed-upon guidelines for all actors in the course, discussing what contributes to and detracts from inclusive learning environments, and reiterating the importance of abiding by the community agreements reinforces the importance of inclusive environments for everyone. (See below for some student generated guidelines. Ask your students to develop more.) Set up processes to get feedback on the course climate, explicitly address tensions when they arise, and when possible, turn tension and debate into learning opportunities for students.

**5 Guidelines for Productive Group Discussions:**

1. Listen respectfully.
   1. Share airtime. Do not interrupt. Be an active listener - do not just think about your next response while someone else is talking. Take the activities seriously and be willing to learn.
2. Use “I” statements.
   1. Use statements like “I believe”, “I think”, “I feel…” to avoid generalizations. Do not make assumptions. Do not expect individuals to speak for their group.
3. Assume best intention, but own your impact. Impact supersedes intent.
   1. We are all participating in this group with the same goal of engaging to improve our community. Mistakes are an opportunity to learn and grow.
   2. Even though we are assuming best intention, be aware of the impact your words have on others. Take responsibility and be willing to learn from that impact.
   3. Can use “ouch, oops” to address times when someone is negatively impacted by someone else’s words: If a person is hurt by what someone else has said, that person can say “ouch” in order to draw attention to and explain the impact of the words. The other person then says “oops” and acknowledges their impact. [Whether or not you choose to use this exact phrase is up to the group - it is just meant to provide a framework to have these sometimes difficult discussions.]
   4. “Call in vs call out” - ask follow-up questions
4. “What is said here, stays here; what is learned here, leaves with you”
   1. Confidentiality!

*\*Add your own rules, too\* - allow group members to collaborate on any additional rules they would like to be a part of the discussion*