



Microaggressions and How to Address Them
Virginia Board of Health
Blue Ridge Health District Staff Day
November 5, 2021



OUR MISSION

The Partnership for Southern Equity (PSE) advances policies and institutional actions that promote **racial equity and shared prosperity** for all in the growth of metropolitan Atlanta and the American South.



Just Energy



Just Growth



Just Opportunity



Just Health





Meet Your Facilitators:

- **Arlene Parker-Goldson, Just Health Consultant**
- **Aundrea Hickson, Just Health Program Associate**
- **Robyn Bussey, Just Health Director**
- **Abbie Cohen, Just Health Health and Racial Equity Research Fellow**
- **Jonathan Santos, Just Health Health Equity Research Intern**





AN INVITATION TO A BRAVE SPACE

Together we will create brave space

Because there is no such thing as a “safe space”

We exist in the real world

We all carry scars and we have all caused wounds.

In this space

We seek to turn down the volume of the outside world.

We amplify voices that fight to be heard elsewhere,

We call each other to more truth and love

We have the right to start somewhere and continue to grow.

We have the responsibility to examine what we think we know.

We will not be perfect.

It will not always be what we wish it to be

But

It will be our brave space together,

And

We will work on it side by side.

by Micky Scottbey Jones





RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

- Make Space, Take Space
- Intent does not negate impact
- Be the expert of your experience, use “I” statements
- Challenge your beliefs
- Respect is non-negotiable
- Listen to understand, not to respond



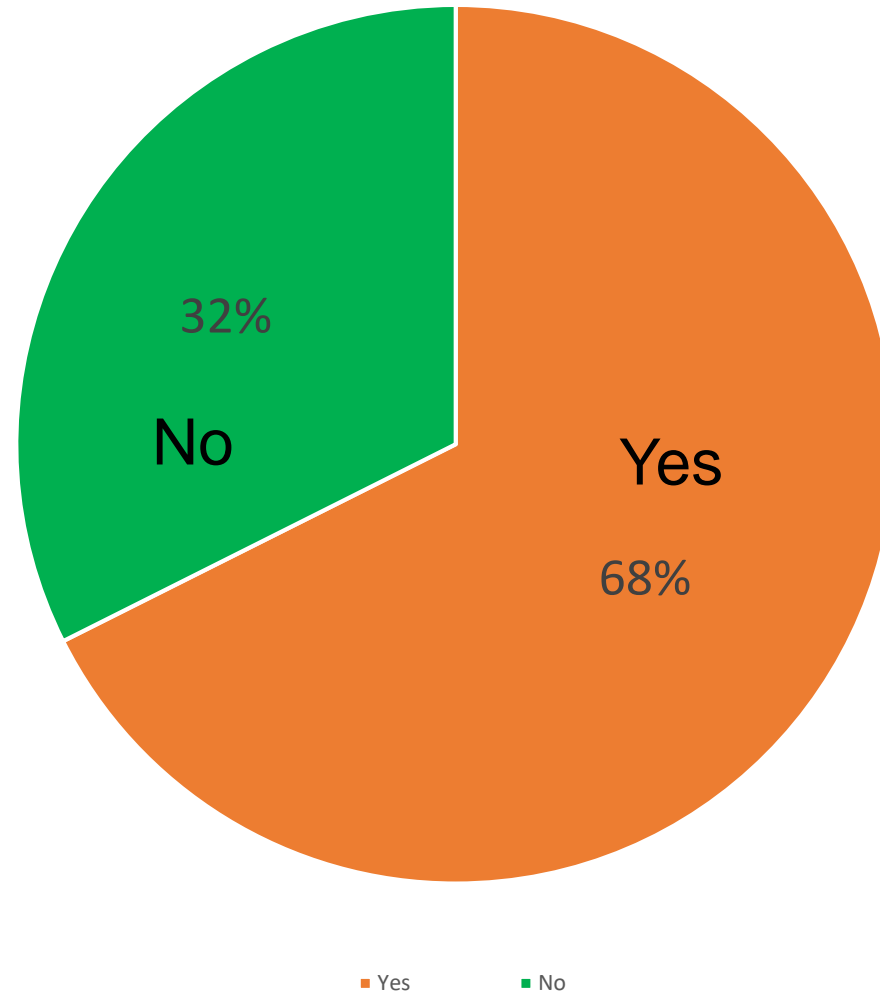


We asked, you answered





Have you experienced indirect or subtle discrimination in the workplace?





\ ,mī-krō-ə-'gre-shən \

“small acts of aggression that may not seem aggressive from the outside, but over time wear the receiver down”

Subtle

Passive Aggressive

Intention

Statements and Actions

Create a hostile environment

Unsure

“The subtle manifestation of prejudices/biases.”

“I do not know what it is”

“Passive aggressive comments and actions that someone has at the workplace. Being nice to someone’s face but harboring ill will towards projects, people or ideas.”





What resonates when you hear the term?

"When I hear someone's experienced a microaggression, I get frustrated that people aren't doing the needed self-reflection to understand why a question or comment they make is inappropriate and contributes to the cyclical nature of oppression certain individuals experience."

"Not being able to call it out sometimes, feeling misunderstood, gas light, making excuses for people because they "didn't mean it like that" or "they don't know any better"

"It validates the experiences of minorities and the subtle racism/homophobia/ableism/etc that they face."

"Sometimes harder to recognize ... "death by a thousand small cuts"





“Microaggressions are...

brief, commonplace, daily verbal, behavioral, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual orientation, and religious slights or insults to the target person or group.” –





Microaggressions occur in three ways:

Microassaults are conscious, deliberate forms of discriminatory practice that are intended to harm, and most closely resemble traditional forms of discrimination.

Microinsults include snubs, gestures, and verbal slights.

Microinvalidations serve to exclude, negate, or nullify the psychological thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality of certain groups.





WE MEAN MICROAGGRESSIONS.





IS THIS A MICROAGGRESSION?



During a conference call with a client, an Asian-American staff member introduces herself. The client, a white woman, says, “oh I just love your name, where are you from, what country are you from?” The staff member says, “I was born here, in Augusta, GA.” The client does not acknowledge this, and repeats her question asking about the staff member’s name and country of origin. Another staff member interrupts and begins the meeting.

A female employee shares her concerns about a project, and its possible negative impacts on an under-resourced community during a team meeting. Afterward, a male coworker tells her that maybe she shouldn't be so emotional at work and if she were to calm down, perhaps her concerns would be taken more seriously.

During a virtual meeting, an employee introduces themselves and shares that their pronouns are them/they. Like all the other employees, they have also shared their pronouns in their “Zoom window” along with their name. The person facilitating the meeting continues to refer to the employee as “he/him”, even after being corrected.



Let's Talk About It...





Your Experiences with Microaggressions in the Workplace

"A white man told me (a Black woman) that he was told not to make Black women upset because Black women are mean."

"You would be pretty if you smiled." "That skirt makes you look sexy."

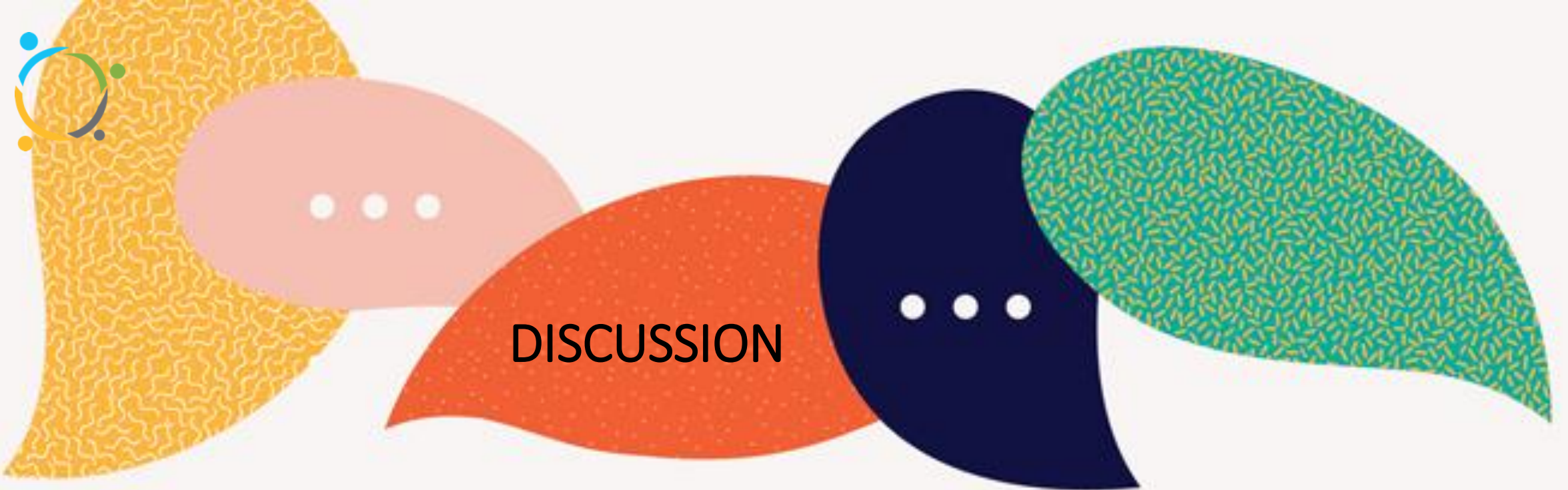
"When someone uses their authority position to bully you and continue to harass you about minor issues (work related if you made an error doing a job function) and they are not treating your fellow colleagues the same way who may have made the same errors."

"Multiple employees have invited themselves to either touch my hair when styled differently as well as comment on my hair in a way that I felt was inappropriate i.e. a Caucasian employee saying "I like your weave" after getting my hair braided. Another instance of microaggression was a Caucasian employee expressing that they "did not understand why African Americans got tattoos because it's not like you could see them."

"I have personally never experienced microaggressions, but I know they are happening, so maybe I am not doing a good job recognizing them"

Race Religion Gender Nationality Hierarchy Ageism





DISCUSSION





What is resonating with you?

Does this reflect your experience? If so, in what way?

How could've these microaggressions been addressed?





IT HAPPENED, NOW WHAT?



ADDRESSING MICROAGGRESSIONS BY US AND TO US





Centers the person who experienced the harm

Centers the person who caused the harm

IMPACT >

INTENT

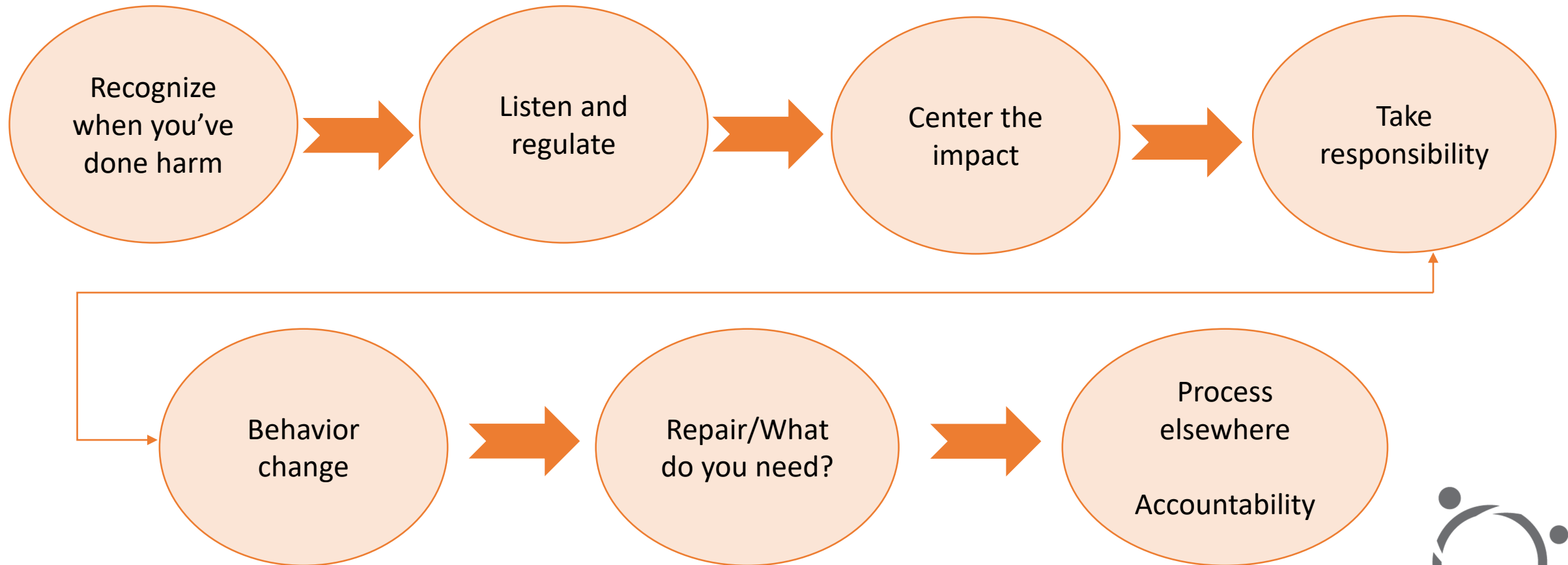
Allows for learning and repair

Stops opportunities for learning and repair





Components of an Apology





FOUR PARTS TO
ACCOUNTABILITY

SELF
REFLECTION

APOLOGY

REPAIR

CHANGED
BEHAVIOR



“True accountability is not only apologizing, understanding the impact your actions have caused on yourself and others, making amends or reparations to the harmed parties; but most importantly, true accountability is changing your behavior so that the harm, violence, abuse does not happen again.”

MIA MINGUS

For more, visit <http://bit.ly/BAC2020>





How to Give a GENUINE Apology

1. Address it as soon as possible
2. Be genuine
3. Give your full attention
4. Treat it as sacred
5. Be proactive
6. Build a culture of accountability
7. Let go of outcome and control
8. PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE





How to Give a GENUINE Apology

"I apologize that I continue to mispronounce your name. I can't imagine how hurtful that makes you feel, because you have told me multiple times how to properly say your name. I will work to not mispronounce your name again."

"I am sorry about the offhand remark I made about your (hair, clothing, etc.). It was inappropriate. It is my fault that I didn't consider the impact my comment could have. I commit to being more thoughtful about comments before I say anything."





What can you do individually and as an organization to try to prevent microaggressions and repair when they occur?



A man in a grey suit and a woman in a brown dress are standing side-by-side against a dark blue background. The man is on the left, looking slightly to the right. The woman is on the right, looking forward. The image is slightly blurred.

MICROAGGRESSIONS

EXPLAINED WITH MOVIES



Reflections



What are you “squared away” with?

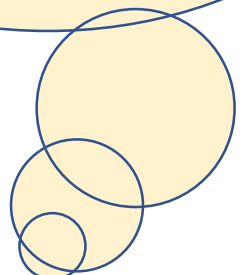


What is still “circling around” for you?





**Where there is
discomfort, there is
an opportunity for
growth.**



THANK YOU!

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Learn more about the Partnership for Southern Equity (PSE):

- www.psequity.org
- www.atlantaequityatlas.com
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TOGETHER WE PROSPER