



Belonging and Excellence for All (BE4ALL) is a joint effort by SMART, SMACNA, and the ITI to create an industry-wide culture where everyone is welcome and belongs, including those from historically underrepresented groups, and where we all strive for the highest standards of performance and professionalism, resulting in a thriving unionized sheet metal industry that affirms the dignity and worth of us all. These Toolbox Talks are in support of this mission.

## BE4ALL Toolbox Talk

### Microaggressions

#### WHAT IS A MICROAGGRESSION?

The dictionary definition is "a comment or action that subtly and often unconsciously or unintentionally expresses a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group".

You may be unaware when you say or do something that can cause harm. However, your intentions do not always determine the impact of your actions. Microaggressions can make people feel like outsiders and reinforce harmful stereotypes, even if unintended. This can cause an otherwise positive work environment to feel uninviting for people who are targeted. A hostile environment keeps everyone from performing their best.

Here are a few examples of what microaggressions may sound or look like:

**"I don't see color. We're all just people."** While this may be intended as a declaration of anti-racism, it dismisses the significance of someone's racial or ethnic identity and their unique experiences related to it.

**"Where are you REALLY from?"** This assumes that a person does not belong based on their appearance, reinforcing the idea that they are not a true member of their current community.

**"That's so gay."** This uses a person's sexual orientation as a derogatory term, perpetuates harmful stereotypes, and can create a hostile or unwelcoming environment for LGBTQ+ individuals.

**Not all microaggressions are verbal.** Sometimes, it's a hostile environment or a person's body language that give away thinly veiled biases. For example, someone acting shocked to walk into a job interview and find that the CEO is a woman. Or, more blatantly, someone changing seats on the subway in an effort to avoid sitting next to someone of another race.

#### How can you help prevent microaggressions?

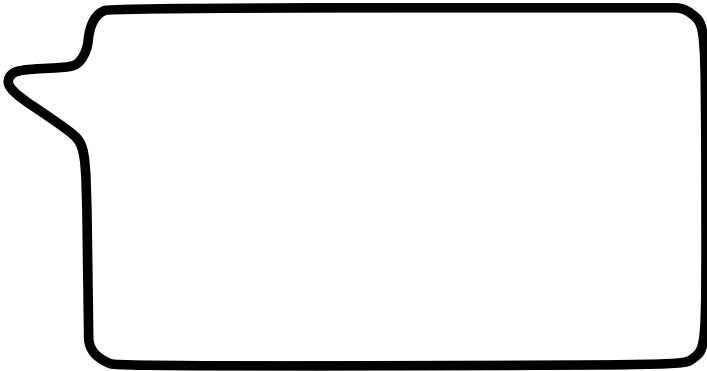
- **It starts with you:** Examine how your actions/words may impact others' feelings. Be open to new ideas and be willing to ask questions that may help you understand other perspectives.
- **Recognition:** We can't prevent or interrupt what we don't see. Learn how to recognize microaggressions and ask yourself, "what is the intention of this question or comment?" Is it to build someone up or bring them down?
- **Don't let it slide:** Confrontation can be intimidating, but if you hear someone else making a harmful remark it's important to let that person know in a respectful manner their comment was inappropriate. If you hear someone else speaking up, be sure to voice your support as well.
- **Education:** Both a tool of prevention and a tool of change, education can keep microaggressions from occurring to begin with but can also be used as intervention after a microaggression has occurred. Explaining to someone why their comment or action was hurtful can help them to do better in the future.
- **Put yourself in other's shoes:** Don't make assumptions that people's life experiences are the same as yours.



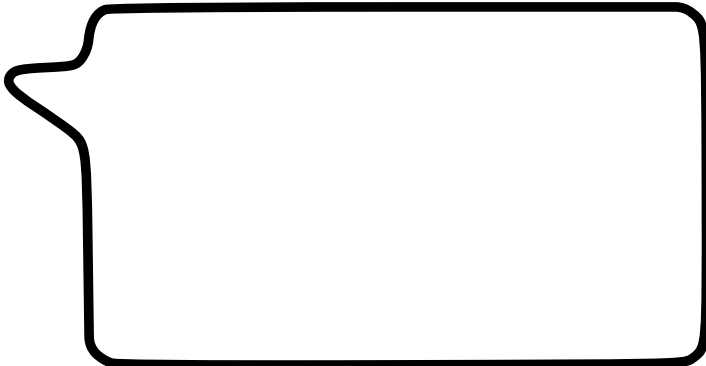
**Remember,  
there is nothing  
*micro* about  
microaggressions.**

**STAFF CONVERSATION & NOTES:**

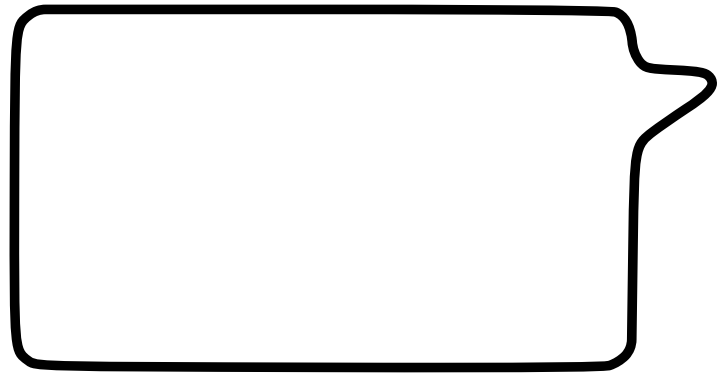
**If someone were to confront you for saying something harmful, how could you react in a way that is productive and not defensive?**



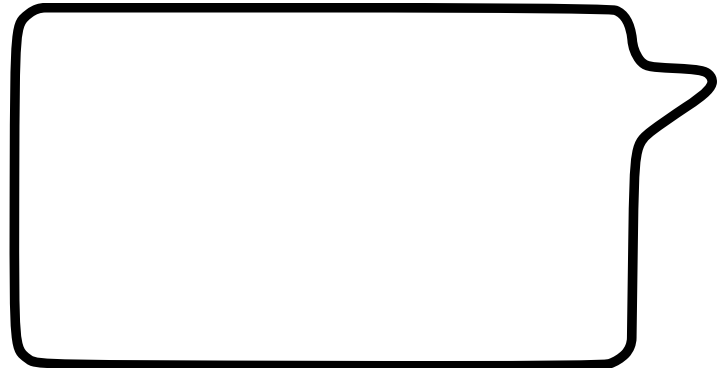
**How might you make your workplace more inclusive, welcoming, and kind towards marginalized groups?**



**As an ally, how might you help intervene in the instance that you overhear one coworker partaking in a microaggression aimed at another coworker?**



**What are some steps that you can take to recognize bias within yourself?**



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*Microaggressions*  
SURVEY**

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