

Do Now

Offensive Language, microaggressions + bullying



Hannah and Eve were choosing snacks in their local shop. Hannah noticed that, unlike Eve, she was quite closely watched by a security guard, and at one point, followed around the store while she picked items.

'Did you notice that?' Asked Hannah. 'He was following me, but hardly looked at you. I'm going to talk to the store manager about this.'

Discuss: Why might Hannah think the security guard's behaviour was odd?

Come on, Han,
I want my Twix-fix



What do you think we mean when we talk about microaggressions and offensive language?

When we talk about these two terms what we mean is...



Learning outcomes:

To recognise bullying, and its impact, in all its forms and the impact of stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination on individuals and relationships.

Microaggressions - A statement, action, or incident regarded as an instance of indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalised group.

Offensive language – legally this means any utterance which is obscene, indecent, insulting, hurtful, disgusting, morally repugnant, or which breaches commonly accepted standards of decent and proper speech.

The girls did ask to speak to the store manager. She called over the security guard and asked him to explain to the girls why he so closely followed Hannah but not Eve.

This was his response (right).

'Sorry girls, we've had a spate of shoplifters lately, and we've had orders from head office to keep a close watch on anyone who enters the store wearing big coats with lots of pockets in them.'



What we've just looked at is an instance which is commonly given as an example of as a **microaggression**. In this case, if Hannah was correct, it would have been a racial microaggression. In this case it wasn't. The problem, as we will discover with microaggressions, is that they are often hard to prove, as by their nature they are very subtle (micro). Sometimes they are real. Sometimes, they are just coincidental actions, which mean nothing. Offensive language, however, is far easier to pinpoint and prove.



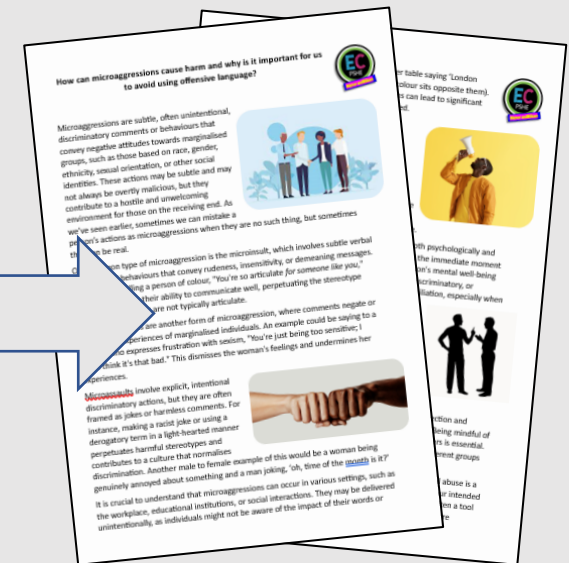
This is a clip which shows the problems we have with microaggressions and how statements people make can be interpreted different ways (see teacher note in slide notes). It is silly and not be imitated but makes the point perfectly: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6rEMInV3IfQ>

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So far, we've looked at a lighter side of microaggressions and why we have to be careful when saying something is a microaggression. Let's read about this in more detail now, as well as an introduction to offensive language and its wider links to bullying.

THORNDEN THREE READING!
Please follow the text closely in your booklet





How can microaggressions cause harm and why is it important for us to avoid using offensive language?

Microaggressions are small, often unintentional comments or actions that make someone feel judged, excluded, or disrespected because of who they are — for example, their race, gender, sexuality, or background. They might not seem harmful on their own, but over time they can make people feel unwelcome and create a hostile environment.

There are different types of microaggressions.

1. Microinsults are subtle remarks that sound like compliments but actually carry stereotypes — for example, telling someone of colour, *“You’re so articulate for someone like you.”*
2. Microinvalidations dismiss someone’s experiences, such as saying to a woman who describes sexism, *“You’re overreacting.”*
3. Microassaults are more obvious or deliberate — like making a racist or sexist joke and pretending it’s “just banter.”

Sometimes, people say things that sound like microaggressions without meaning to offend — for example, an older relative making an outdated or ignorant comment. However, even unintentional comments can still hurt. The more often these happen, the greater the emotional and psychological impact on the person being targeted, leading to stress, low confidence, or feeling like they don’t belong.



How can microaggressions cause harm and why is it important for us to avoid using offensive language?

To reduce harm, we need to be aware of how our words and actions affect others. This involves education, empathy, and learning about people's different experiences. Schools, workplaces, and communities all have a role in creating inclusive, respectful environments where people feel valued.

While microaggressions can be subtle, offensive language is more direct. Using racist, sexist, homophobic, or discriminatory words can cause deep emotional pain and long-lasting damage to someone's mental wellbeing. It reinforces harmful stereotypes and can make people feel isolated, ashamed, or unsafe.

Being mindful of our language helps prevent harm. We can all reflect on the words we use, learn why certain phrases are offensive, and make conscious choices to communicate with respect and kindness.

There is also a strong link between offensive language and bullying. Verbal abuse — such as insults, name-calling, or slurs — is one of the most common forms of bullying. Repeated exposure to offensive language can lead to anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. Schools and workplaces should have a zero-tolerance approach to discriminatory language, promote empathy, and support anyone who experiences or witnesses it.

By thinking before we speak, challenging discrimination, and showing understanding, we can help make our communities safer, fairer, and kinder for everyone.

Now answer the questions in your booklet



1. What are microaggressions, and how do they contribute to a hostile environment for marginalised groups?
2. Provide examples of microinsults and explain how they perpetuate stereotypes.
3. Why is it easy to mistake an innocent action as a microaggression?
4. Explain the concept of microassaults and give an example of how they may manifest in everyday interactions.
5. Why is it crucial to address microaggressions in various settings, such as the workplace and educational institutions?
6. How can education, awareness, and cultural competence contribute to addressing and preventing microaggressions?
7. In what ways does offensive language harm individuals psychologically and emotionally?
8. Give an example of how offensive language, particularly racial slurs, can contribute to a hostile environment.
9. How can self-reflection and education help individuals avoid using offensive language?
10. Explain the link between offensive language and bullying, and why addressing this connection is important in fostering respectful environments.

consequences for the victim's mental health, leading to increased stress, anxiety, and even depression.

To address the link between offensive language and bullying, it is crucial to create environments that foster respect and promote a zero-tolerance policy for discriminatory language. Education programs can help raise awareness about the impact of offensive language, emphasizing the importance of empathy and kindness. Encouraging open communication and providing support for those who experience offensive language can contribute to the prevention and mitigation of bullying behaviours.

Questions:

1. What are microaggressions, and how do they contribute to a hostile environment for marginalized groups?
2. Provide examples of microinsults and explain how they perpetuate stereotypes.
3. Why is it easy to mistake an innocent action as a microaggression?
4. Explain the concept of disproportionality and give an example of how they may manifest in everyday interactions.
5. Why is it crucial to address microaggressions in various settings, such as the workplace and educational institutions?
6. How can education, awareness, and cultural competence contribute to addressing and preventing microaggressions?
7. In what ways does offensive language harm individuals psychologically and emotionally?
8. Give an example of how offensive language, particularly racial slurs, can contribute to a hostile environment.
9. How can self-reflection and education help individuals avoid using offensive language?
10. Explain the link between offensive language and bullying, and why addressing this connection is important in fostering respectful environments.



Year 11 Autumn 2 RSE – Knowledge Check

Confidence Scale:

1 = Not confident at all | 5 = Very confident

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, how confident do you feel that you can explain the concept of consent in image sharing and the risks linked to deepfakes and AI-generated content?
2. On a scale of 1 to 5, how confident do you feel that you can describe how the media can sexualise individuals and the potential impact this has on relationships and self-image?
3. On a scale of 1 to 5, how confident do you feel that you can assess how language, including microaggressions, can contribute to a culture of disrespect or harm?
4. On a scale of 1 to 5, how confident do you feel that you can understand how offensive language and bullying are connected and why both must be addressed?
5. On a scale of 1 to 5, how confident do you feel that you can identify the potential benefits and risks of online dating, including how to stay safe on first dates?
6. On a scale of 1 to 5, how confident do you feel that you can describe the role of pleasure in healthy sexual relationships, including the importance of consent and mutual respect?
7. On a scale of 1 to 5, how confident do you feel that you can explain the importance of using correct pronouns and inclusive language in supporting identity and equality?
8. On a scale of 1 to 5, how confident do you feel that you can understand the responsibilities and emotional considerations involved in becoming a parent?
9. On a scale of 1 to 5, how confident do you feel that you can discuss societal trends in parenthood, such as the declining UK birth rate and rising childcare costs?
10. On a scale of 1 to 5, how confident do you feel that you can apply what you've learned to make respectful and safe decisions in your future relationships?



Yr11 RSE Autumn 2 Knowledge Check



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Useful helplines and charities:

[Young Minds](#). Child and adolescent mental health charity for teens struggling with any subject. Call: 0808 802 5544

[Teen Line | Teens Support hotline - Connect, talk, get help!](#) Teen Line's highly trained teen listeners provide support, resources and hope to any teen who is struggling.

[SANE](#). National out-of hours mental health charity offering emotional support, guidance and information. Call: 0300 304 7000 (4.30pm to 10.30pm)

[Samaritans](#). Samaritans provide 24-hour online and phone support to people in distress. Call: 116 123



Reporting a Concern at Thornden School

- It is important to us that all of you feel safe, happy and belong at Thornden.
- We also know that sometimes it is not as easy as simply telling a member of staff
- It could be:
 - A friend you are worried about
 - Someone being unkind to you
 - Something you have heard and think we should know

How can you report anything you are worried about?

- Speak to a member of staff or parent / carer
- Visit the Well Being Den or Head of Year area
- On Satchel each week you will be sent a link to a form to share any worries you have
- On our school website homepage there is a 'Report a Concern' link.
- In the Student Bulletin there is a 'Report a Concern' link
- On all school desktops there is a 'Report a Concern' logo to click and report anything

Need Support? You're Not Alone



If anything in today's lesson has affected you, or you want to talk to someone, there is help available.

Mental Health & Low Mood

YoungMinds – <https://www.youngminds.org.uk>

Kooth – <https://www.kooth.com>

Mind – <https://www.mind.org.uk>

Apps That Can Help

Calm – For mindfulness and sleep.

Headspace – Meditation and stress relief.

Clear Fear – Manage anxiety (designed for young people).

MeeTwo – Anonymously talk to other teens, moderated by experts.

Talk to Someone

Your Tutor or Head of Year – We're here to help.

Wellbeing Team and School Nurse

Report a Concern on Satchel

Safeguarding Team with the Purple lanyards

Eating Concerns

Beat Eating Disorders –

<https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk>

NHS Live Well – Eating Disorders –

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/eating-disorders/>

Healthy Lifestyle

NHS Every Mind Matters – <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters>

Change4Life – <https://www.nhs.uk/change4life>