



Microaggressions are Like Mosquito Bites Exercise  
Jesús Treviño, Ph.D. Senior Diversity Officer  
The Lind Group

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**Background:** Some educators use the metaphor of a mosquito bite to educate about microaggressions. That is, microaggressions are like getting a mosquito bite. One bite is not going to hurt or kill you. But, what if you belong to a group that gets many mosquito bites (microaggressions). You might not die (maybe), but it sure does hurt.

**Exercise:** Clear a space in the center of the room to allow students to move around. Have two students pretend to be mosquitos (buy some pointed party hats and have the students place them over the students noses to simulate a mosquito stinger). Next tell the class that they are to avoid the mosquitos. Have the mosquitos chase the students and any body who is stung (touched like in the game of “Tag”), has to sit down. Run the exercise until the class gets the point of mosquito bites.

It is important that you do not tell the class that you are exploring microaggressions prior to running the exercise. Just run the exercise so that they are kept guessing about what is transpiring. This will keep them engaged.

**Processing:** Explain the metaphor above of the mosquito to introduce microaggressions. Define the term, provide examples, and discuss the following questions as a class or in small groups (or add your own questions).

- 1). What communities on campus are the targets of microaggressions? Which communities get more microaggressions?
- 2). What are examples of those microaggressions?
- 3). Have any one of you ever been the recipient of microaggressions?
- 4). How did it feel? Can you get sick or hurt by lots of microaggressions? How so?
- 5). Have any one of you ever perpetuated microaggressions?

In the large group processing, also have a discussion of microaffirmations to give the students a sense of actions that counter microaggressions.

Notes: The exercise will get the students moving, have a little fun, and become engaged. Be aware that some microaggressions are very hurtful and maybe a trigger for students. Of course, establish guidelines for processing the exercise, discuss possible triggers for students, and discuss any other dynamics that are a usual part of discussing issues of diversity. Be aware of disabilities and plan accordingly to be as inclusive as possible. Make sure the students do not get hurt when moving around during the exercise.

For questions, contact me: Jesús Treviño, Ph.D. Senior Diversity Officer at:  
[jgt@thelindgroup.com](mailto:jgt@thelindgroup.com) or Facebook at: The Leadership in Diversity Group, LLC.