

Bias Awareness & Anti-Racism  
Facilitated by:  
Rumeet Billan, PhD & Elizabeth Charles, PhD(c)

**Activity 1: The Trusted 10 (at home and at work)**

On your device, make a list of the 10 people within your personal life that you trust the most. For each of the people that you identify, note down the following things (if you don't know, just note that you don't know and keep going):

- Their gender
- Their race
- Their age
- Their sexual orientation
- Whether they live with a disability
- Whether they are a first generation Canadian
- Their education

Now, make a new list of the 10 people you work with most closely in your job. For each of the people you identify, note down the same things as above (again, if you don't know, just note that you don't know and keep going).

**Questions**

- What do you notice about the people you have an affinity for in your personal life? How diverse is this group, and why do you think this is so?
- What do you notice about the people you work most closely with in your job? How diverse is this group, and why do you think this is so?
- What differences do you find between your Trusted 10 in your personal life compared to your Trusted 10 at work?
- Are there aspects of the lived experience that you think you could have noted that would have changed your opinion? If so, what are they?

This activity was adapted from "[Unconscious bias – 3 great exercises to use in your training](#)" by Debra Stevens, published June 14, 2018.

## **Activity 2: Comfort in Social Situations (in the Workplace)**

Read the following statements and rate what you think your comfort level would be in each situation using a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = very comfortable and 5 = very uncomfortable). There are no right or wrong answers. Simply be honest with yourself and do not over-think the situations. However, the way you answer the questions may be different depending on your own social group membership, such as your race, gender, age, or ability status. In some cases, you may not think a situation is personally applicable; if so, mark "N/A" in the space provided. After you have completed all sections, follow the instructions to create a total score for each section.

### **Section A:**

- You find out your coworker is in an interracial relationship with a Black person.
- You realize you are the only person of your race when you visit a community.
- Your new doctor went to medical school at the University of the West Indies in Trinidad.
- You go into a Chinese restaurant where all the patrons and employees are Asian.

### **Section B:**

- You find out your co-worker's husband is choosing to be a stay-at-home dad.
- You greet someone but can't determine their gender.
- You take your car in for repairs and find that the lead mechanic is a woman.
- You see a businessman getting a manicure.

### **Section C:**

- You are standing in line behind a deaf person at a fast food restaurant.
- Your coworker is married to someone with Asperger's.
- You watch someone who does not have a visible disability park in an accessible parking spot.
- You don't know whether to help a partially sighted person cross the street.

### **Section D:**

- You see two men holding hands.
- You move in next door to a same-sex couple with two children.
- A person of the same sex gives you his or her phone number.
- You see two females kiss lovingly in public.

### **Section E:**

- There is a 30 year age difference between you and a new coworker.
- In your role as a volunteer, you are assigned to call older people for medication reminders.
- Your 65-year-old landlord wears a hearing aid and often has difficulty understanding you.
- Your 70-year-old next door neighbor can never remember your name.

### **Scoring your Results**

Compute your total for each section by adding up the numbers from your responses. If you marked an item "N/A," score it as a "3" before computing your total score for that section. Higher numbers indicate greater discomfort with social situations in that section.

### **Questions**

- On which section did you score the lowest? Highest? Or are all your scores similar? Why do you think that happened? Do you feel surprised, disappointed, or satisfied by your results? Why?
- What experiences have you had that may have contributed to the way you answered the questions?
- Think about your own social group memberships. How do you think the answers for each section would be different for dominant group members compared to minority group members? Explain your reasoning.
- What does it mean if someone reports feeling uncomfortable in the situations described on the questionnaire? Does it suggest that the person is biased against certain social groups? Why or why not?

This activity was adapted from the [Subtle Prejudice Activity](#), Breaking the Prejudice Habit, 2014, Ball State University.

### Activity 3: Microaggressions

Read each statement in Column A in the table below. Think critically about how a person could interpret the statements as a “put down.” Then, determine what you believe is the best possible interpretation of the statement from Column A based on the choices from Column B. Be ready to explain each choice. After you have finished matching the statements with the interpretations, rewrite the statements so that they do not contain a hidden or negative message. For example, the statement “How long have you been in this country?” implies that the speaker believes the person was born in another country. A neutral wording of the statement might be “Where did you grow up?” or “How long have you lived in this town?”

<b>Column A</b>	<b>Column B</b>
“You are a credit to your race”	Everyone has enough money for common items.
“You can succeed if you try hard enough”	I am not racist.
“The only race is the human race”	Everyone from your group acts the same.
(A White woman to a Black woman) “As a woman, I understand what you experience as a minority”	You should assimilate to the dominant culture.
“No, where are you really from?”	You should conform to your expected role.
“I don’t see colour”	You are not Canadian.
“You don’t even seem Black”	People of your background are unintelligent.
(A White person to others) “I have lots of Black friends”	Your experience as a minority are no different from everyone else’s.

"Everyone take out your smartphones. Let's take a poll."	I'm not racist because I'm oppressed like you.
(To a female graduate student) "You sure are opinionated."	Your experiences as a minority as invalid.

## Questions

- Alvin Poussaint refers to the cumulative impact of experiencing microaggressions as "death by a thousand nicks." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Explain your answer.
- When people discuss microaggressions, a common response is that they are "innocentacts" and that the person who experiences them should "let go of the incident" and "not make a big deal out of it." Do you agree or disagree with this point of view? Explain your reasoning.
- If a person from a marginalized group pointed out to you that one of your comments was a microaggression, how would you respond at the time? Would it change the likelihood of your making a similar comment in the future? Why or why not?
- Derald Wing Sue has argued that the impact of subtle prejudice, such as microaggressions, is more harmful than the impact of blatant discrimination. Do you agree or disagree with this proposition? Explain your answer.
- Choose a microaggression from Column A. What do you think the possible intent was of the speaker? Does the intent change the impact of the statement for the person who experiences the microaggressions?

This activity was adapted from the [Microaggression Activity](#), *Breaking the Prejudice Habit*, 2014, Ball State University.