



LEAN IN

How Latinas can respond to microaggressions

Lean In Circle Discussion Guide

The
Women
at Work
Collection

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Meeting agenda

approx 90 mins

Member updates

15 mins

Watch video

7 mins

Icebreaker

10 mins

Activities

- Activity 1: Reviewing strategies
- Activity 2: Workshopping responses
- Activity 3: Mitigating the impact

15 mins

15 mins

15 mins

One Action

10 mins

For Circles with only 60 mins, here are suggestions to shorten this agenda:

- Encourage members to watch the video in advance
- Spend 5 mins on member updates
- Spend 10 mins on activity 1 and activity 3

Getting started

Member updates

2 mins or less per member

15-20 mins depending on group size

Go around your Circle and share personal updates. As a general rule, personal updates should be brief and focus on big changes and important decisions in your life. (It's OK not to have one every month!) If you have a One Action update, share that with your Circle.

Watch video

7 mins

Icebreaker

10 mins

Read aloud to the group: I'm going to read a list of some common microaggressions faced by Latinas in non-Latin workplaces. Raise your hand if this has happened to you:

- You felt judged for your accent or manner of speaking
- Someone questioned your abilities or judged you as less than capable at your job
- You were ignored or spoken over in a meeting
- You were left out of social events or meetings due to your race
- Someone talked negatively about people who share your background
- Someone else got credit for your idea or work
- Others made assumptions about your culture or nationality (e.g., someone asked you, "Where are you really from?")
- Someone assumed you wanted to prioritize your family responsibilities over work
- Someone assumed you were more junior or less educated than you are
- Someone commented how good your English is
- Someone judged you for not speaking Spanish

Continue activity on next page

Icebreaker (continued)

10 mins

- Someone judged you for speaking Spanish in the workplace
- You received comments on your emotional state

Discuss icebreaker

- What did you learn from seeing other people's responses?
- Did anything surprise you?
- How did you feel about the experiences your fellow Circle members shared?
- Have you experienced any kinds of disrespect at work that aren't on the list?



“I’ve heard a million times, ‘You’re so articulate, you don’t look like what you sound like.’ Again, I’ll hold a mirror up to the person and ask, ‘What makes you say that? What were you expecting?’”

Yesenia Reyes, managing director, consulting firm, Texas, USA (she/her)

Activity 1: Reviewing strategies

15 mins

Read aloud to the group: The kinds of disrespect we just talked about can be a common experience for many Latinas women in non-Latin contexts. Your experiences will vary depending on your ancestry and ethnic background, but there are some themes and stereotypes that come up time and again.

Before we dive into this activity, know that it's always okay to **not** respond to a microaggression. The burden shouldn't always be on Latinas to advocate for change. It's fine to just focus on staying safe and taking good care of yourself. But if you do want to respond, research shows it can make you feel more empowered and in control.

Here are the main research-based strategies for responding:

- **State the facts** (e.g., tell someone your job title or qualifications in a simple, direct way and then move the conversation on)
- **Ask a question** that encourages the person to question their assumptions (e.g., researchers recommend asking, "What makes you say that?")
- **Follow up privately** with the person later, so that you have a chance to prepare.

Discuss as a group:

- Which of these responses have you used in real life?
- How effective were they? What was the impact of your response?
- Are there any other types of response to workplace disrespect that you would recommend?
- Which responses do you think would be most helpful to use in the future?

Activity 2: Workshopping responses

15 mins

- Think of time when you experienced a microaggression and wish you'd responded differently—or responded at all.
- Go around the room and have everyone share with the group what happened and what they wish they'd done differently.
 - Then, if you feel comfortable, ask other group members for their advice—what would they say in that situation?

“I’ve received many microaggressions over the years, and I’ve gotten better about speaking up. Early in my career, I would just shut down and be intimidated. Culturally, my father was the dominant person in the home, and when he raised his voice or when he wanted something, my mother would quiet down and I would quiet down. So when I got to the workplace, if a man interrupted me, I found myself doing the same thing, but knowing it was wrong, knowing that I need to be speaking up. But I didn’t have the courage. It wasn’t until I started to get involved with Lean In, and I started to learn about women being more interrupted in meetings than men are, that I became more able to speak up for myself.”

Anna Dapelo-Garcia, executive, healthcare industry, Lean In Network Leader, California, USA (she/her)



Activity 3: Mitigating the impact

15 mins

- Discuss as a group: How has the experience of workplace microaggressions impacted you?
 - Have your physical and mental health been affected?
- What strategies have helped mitigate the impact (e.g., talking to others, reminding yourself of your worth, basic self-care)?
 - What does self-care in your professional life look like? What does it look like in your personal life?
- Consider setting up a group chat with others in this group to share stories, advice, empathy, and validation (e.g., a Slack channel or WhatsApp group).
 - Research shows there are tremendous mental health benefits in talking to others who share important aspects of your identity about any disrespect you face at work.

One Action

10 mins

- Think about one strategy you could use to mitigate the impact of workplace microaggressions in your own life (e.g., self-care or setting up a group chat to share stories).
- Commit to implementing this strategy the next time you experience workplace bias or disrespect.
- Share your commitment with your Circle (spending 1 minute or less per member).
- When you meet next time, you can check in and discuss how well the strategy worked.

Congratulations on a great meeting!

Notes

Notes