



Micro affirmations make people feel valued, supported and included. They are “apparently small acts, which are often ephemeral and hard to see... often unconscious but very effective, which occur whenever people wish to help others to succeed”
Mary Rowe, PhD, Massachusetts Institute of Technology



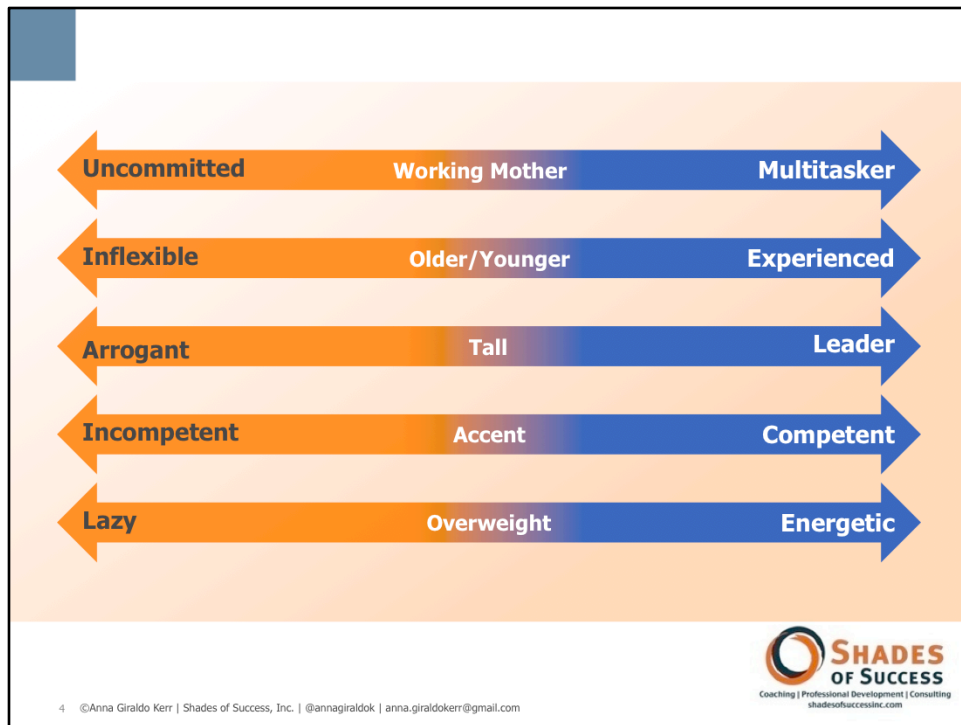
Micro affirmations counter micro inequities in three ways:

1. The two cannot take place simultaneously.
2. The positive effect of micro affirmations tends to snowball and mitigate the effects of micro inequities and microaggressions. Data point: ratio to mitigate effects: 3 to 7 positive to 1 negative depending on impact.
3. Micro-affirmations model behavior and positive outcomes that others can see and easily replicate.

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This is how we generally process micro messages (the umbrella term for both microaggressions, micro inequities and micro affirmations). The event takes place and it registers in our brain (cognition). We attach an emotion/feeling to the interpretation we assign to event (anger, joy, confusion, disbelief). The primary emotion/feeling triggers an action.



How to handle microaggressions? How to start developing a micro affirming mindset/behavior?

Start by checking your biases. Here are some general examples of assumptions made on a daily basis.



Project Implicit®

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/>



Role



Context

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Other suggestions to assess your unconscious biases:

1. Read the book, *Blind Spot*, authored by psychologist Banaji and Greenwald.
2. Take the Project Implicit test, created by the authors mentioned in 1.
3. Audit your environment:
 1. What is your primary role in the micro messages dynamic? Sender? Receiver? Bystander?
 2. In what context do you experience (in any of the 3 roles, not just as a receiver) microaggressions or micro affirmations?
 3. It is generally helpful to take notes in some form to identify patterns. Some questions that might help:
 1. Describe event – just facts.
 2. Describe emotions/feelings experienced.
 3. What was your role? Sender, receiver, bystander.
 4. Who played other role(s)?
 5. Describe context: how many involved; relationship; first-time or ongoing issue; reaction of others involved.



Two ways to develop a micro affirming mindset and behaviors.

Affiliation

Purpose: to be treated as a colleague; feeling of belonging.

Addresses the issue of feeling invisible.

Individually: opening door and making eye contact; gestures to include others.

Organizationally: Develop and implement policies, programs and processes that foster inclusion.

Autonomy

Purpose: to have the freedom to make key decisions and influence important matters. Addresses the issue of competence. Key ingredients: respect and trust.

Individually: delegating key tasks; if trust is still in the works, develop a mentoring partnership.

Organizationally: Develop and implement systems, policies, programs and processes to foster innovation and collaboration



Awareness is the first step. The next step to develop skills to manage microaggressions while learning to become micro affirming until it becomes part of our unconscious behavior. Be the change you want in this world.

Warning: It is easy to become paranoid and a vigilante about this topic. Don't!

Wishing you an exciting journey,
Anna

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