




**NHRMA 24**

86TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE + TRADESHOW

**CS48**

# **Micro-Messages: Small Signals, Significant Consequence**



*“Never underestimate the power of small.”  
Stephen Young, *Micro Messaging: Why Great  
Leadership is Beyond Words**

# Micro-Messages: Small Signals, Significant Consequences

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## Learning Objectives

- Identify types of micro-messages
- Recognize the impact of micro-messages on people in the workplace
- Describe actions we can take to respond to and ensure we are not sending negative micro-messages
- Use microadvantages to improve relationships.
- Consider actions we can take to educate others on micro-messages to improve our workplaces



## Micro messages

Small, subtle and often unintentional messages we send and receive verbally and non-verbally. We subconsciously communicate values and expectations that can be supportive or negative.

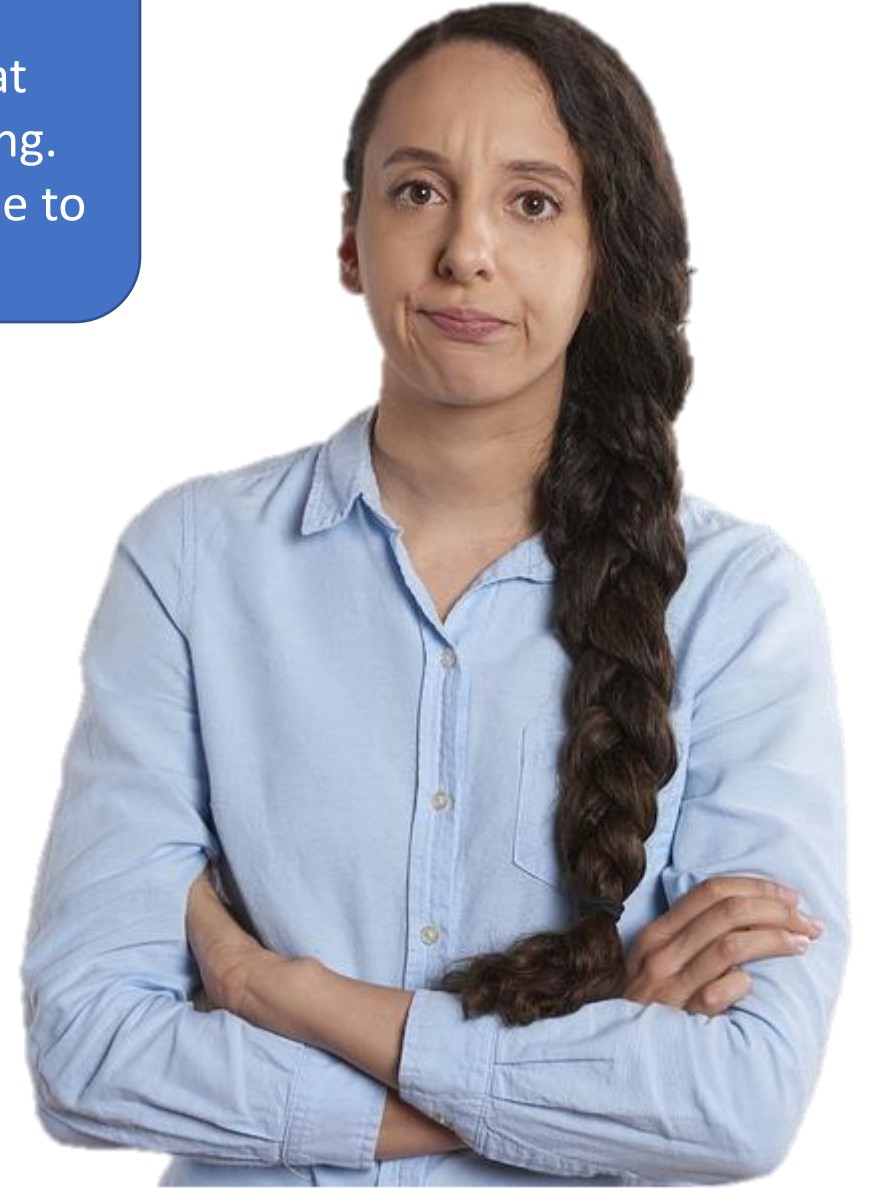
## Micro behaviors

Small, semiconscious messages we send and receive when we relate with others. They can be positive or negative and are conveyed through facial expressions, tone of voice, hand gestures, choice of words, proximity, questions, interaction, and eye contact.



## Micro expression

A micro expression is a brief, involuntary facial expression that crosses peoples' faces that disclose the emotion they are feeling. Unlike regular sustained facial expressions, it's almost impossible to fake a micro expression.



## Micro aggressions

Can be overt or covert. Intentional or unintentional. Brief, everyday interactions that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative prejudicial insults or snubs toward any group, especially culturally marginalized groups.

### Micro assaults

Overt, conscious, intentional actions or slurs

### Micro insults

Verbal & non-verbal communications that subtly convey rudeness or insensitivity toward a person's racial heritage or identity

### Micro invalidation

Communication that subtly excludes or negates thoughts, feelings, or experiences of marginalized groups



## Micro inequities

Ways in which individuals are either singled out, disregarded, ignored, or not valued based on an unchangeable characteristic such as race or gender.

**26%**

Experienced  
micro  
aggressions  
at work

**36%**

Witnessed  
micro  
aggressions  
at work

**22%**

Are unsure  
about micro  
aggressions  
at work

**2 in 10**

Witnessed  
leaders  
address  
micro  
aggressions



# Impacts of Negative Micro messaging

A woman with dark hair, wearing a black blazer over a white top, is seated at a table in a meeting. She has a distressed expression, with her hands pressed against her forehead. In the background, several other people are standing around the table, some holding pens and papers, suggesting a collaborative work environment. The overall scene is dimly lit, with a soft, slightly desaturated color palette.

- Psychological
- Performance
- Organizational

# Micro advantages

Positive Micro messages

## Micro affirmations

Subtle or apparently small recognition of a person's value and accomplishments. They may be public recognition, referring positively someone's work, or praising someone on the spot.

## Micro inclusions

Small, symbolic actions to include someone who has been excluded or made feel as an outsider. Asking someone who has been interrupted to share their ideas is one example.



Round 1

Name/role

Tenure

Responsibilities

A work challenge

Round 2

Previous role

Organization

Responsibilities

Project/work completed

1 Speaker, 1 Listener



# How to Respond

- Personal introspection
- Assess your response

# Tips for Positive Outcomes

- Focus on the event, not the person.
- Use “I” statements to share feelings and impact “I felt x when you said y”
- Check your emotions first.
- Ask for more information “Help me understand what you meant by that.”
- Clarify what you heard. “From my perspective, you meant that. . . “
- Explore the intent “What was your intent?”
- Share your desired outcome. “Can we agree that (state your boundary)?”



# Other Possible Actions

- Educate the offender
- Escalate to third party
- Witness a micro aggression
- Are accused of micro inequities



# Leverage Micro advantages for good

A photograph of two men shaking hands in a modern office setting. The man on the left is wearing glasses and a light-colored sweater, while the man on the right is wearing a dark shirt and jeans. They are both smiling and appear to be in a positive interaction. The background shows a bright, open-plan office with a kitchen area.

- Actively solicit opinions
- Connect on a personal level
- Constantly ask questions
- Attribute/credit ideas
- Monitor your facial expressions
- Actively listen to all
- Draw in participation
- Monitor personal greetings
- Respond constructively to disagreements
- Limit interruptions

# What about HR?

- Recognize micro aggressions & micro inequities.
- Foster an environment that encourages employees to speak up & build awareness in the moment.
- Create psychological safety for addressing these issues without blame.
- Introduce education & resources.
- Lead by example.

*Did you know? According to Carnegie Mellon study, 26% of employed people with disabilities have experienced discomfort or a negative reaction from a supervisor, co-worker or customer in their current job.*





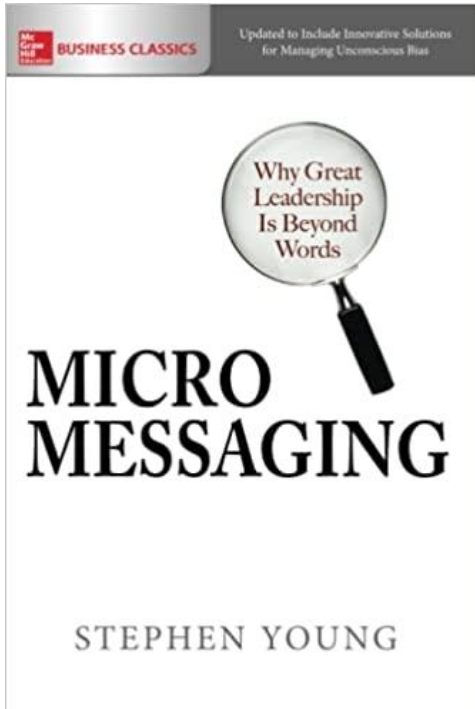


Name one action you will take as a result of today's discussion.

“The power to drive change is with ants, not elephants. The power of the small has always held the force to alter our lives . . . the smallest micromessages can either kill relationships or your career, or, if managed well, make it stellar.”

*Stephen Young, Micro Messaging: Why Great Leadership is Beyond Words*

# References



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Thank you