SAFER PLACES NB | Tips on Recognizing and Preventing Microaggressions

Research on sexual harassment in the workplace shows that in addition to "old-fashioned" blatant sexually explicit behaviours, vulnerable individuals such as members of the LBGTQ2S community may also experience more subtle forms of harassment referred to as "microaggressions". This fosters a hostile and stressful "social climate" (known as a poisoned workplace).

What does microaggression look like, whether intentional or unintentional?

- Brief but commonplace indignities directed against LGBTQ2S employees
- Stereotyping members of the LGBTQ2S community (E.g. "That was such a gay movie")
- Exclusively promoting heteronormative behaviours and expectations
- Ostracizing, ignoring and excluding LGBTQ2S employees
- Stigmatizing LGBTQ2S employees with slights and insults (verbal or behavior)

Creating inclusive, respectful and positive work environments for everyone

- Promote supportive work environments.
- Identify and remove potential barriers for LGBTQ2S individuals in your hiring practices.
- Create an external reputation for your company as open and inclusive for LGBTQ2S people.
- Ensure that employees feel positively connected to your organization.
- Mitigate the workplace effects of interpersonal ostracism
- Include ways to deal with microaggressions in your harassment policies.
- Use inclusive gender-neutral language.
- Implement diversity training.
- Promote an overall respectful work environment
- Provide appropriate opportunities to voluntarily disclose or self-identify at work as LGBTQ2S. respecting privacy and confidentiality protocols.

- Consult and listen to LGBTQ2S people and groups and their experiences and recommendations.
- Take a trauma-informed approach to addressing harassment.
- Experiment with recommended small-scale local change rather than enforcing top-down management or HR initiatives.
- Educate managers, supervisors, and employees by:
  - Sharing definitions of different sexual orientations, gender identities and gender expressions.
  - Bringing in a guest speaker to talk about diversity.
  - Supporting participation of employees with local LLGBTQ2S organizations and events.
  - Encouraging support networks (formal or informal, personal and professional)
  - Sharing LGBTQ2S friendly resources and services.

What actions can you suggest for recognizing and preventing microaggressions in your workplace?