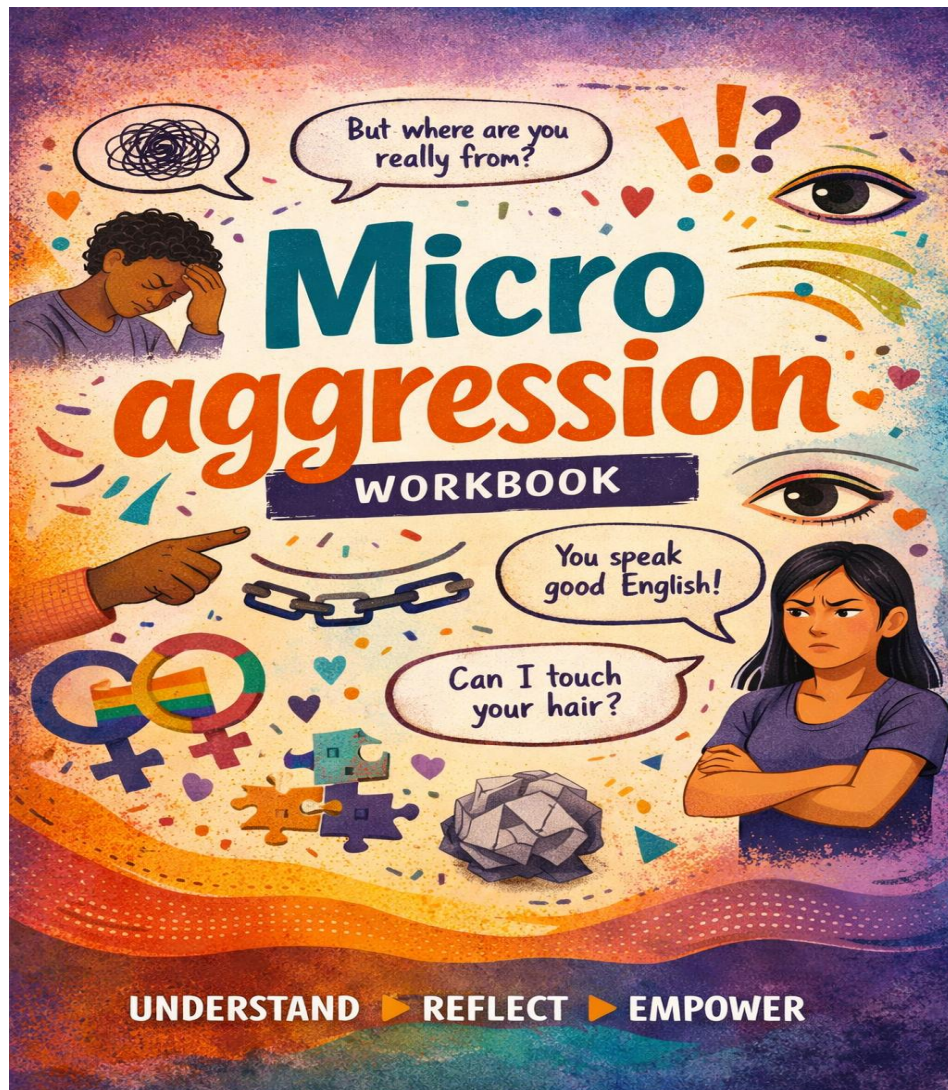


MICROAGGRESSION SURVIVAL WORKBOOK

Tools, scripts, and emotional literacy for navigating identity-based harm



By Margaret Lewis

[Diversity, Wellbeing & Inclusive](#)

Why This Workbook Exists

Microaggressions are not “small”. They are accumulated identity-based harms that affect confidence, belonging, and emotional safety.

This workbook provides:

- Clear language for understanding what happened
- Tools to regulate your nervous system
- Scripts for responding
- Strategies for self-advocacy
- Reflection prompts
- Culturally grounded emotional literacy tools

Everything is trauma-informed, accessible, and designed for real-world situations.

WHAT ARE MICROAGGRESSIONS?

Definition

Microaggressions are subtle, everyday behaviours or comments that communicate bias, exclusion, or disrespect toward someone's identity.

They may be:

- Verbal — comments, jokes, “compliments”
- Behavioural — exclusion, avoidance, dismissiveness
- Environmental — lack of representation, biased systems

Why They Hurt

Microaggressions can:

- Trigger the nervous system
- Reinforce stereotypes
- Undermine confidence
- Create chronic stress
- Signal “you don't belong here”

Common Types


- Assumptions about intelligence
- Comments about appearance or hair
- Exoticising or othering
- Gender-based expectations
- Age-based dismissal
- Neurodivergence minimisation
- Cultural invalidation

THE NERVOUS SYSTEM & MICROAGGRESSIONS


Microaggressions often activate:

- Fight
- Flight
- Freeze
- Fawn
- Shutdown


This workbook uses three motif-based tools:

 Tide Tools — Emotional Waves

For overwhelm, rising emotion, or sudden activation.

 Lantern Tools — Clarity & Grounding

For confusion, fogginess, or self-doubt.

 Harbour Tools — Safety & Recovery

For aftercare, reflection, and rebuilding.

TIDE TOOLS: REGULATING IN THE MOMENT

The 10-Second Reset

1. Drop your shoulders
2. Exhale slowly
3. Press your feet into the floor
4. Name one thing you can see
5. Name one thing you can feel
6. Repeat: "I am safe. I can respond later."

The Micro-Pause

Use when you need time to think.

Phrases:

- "Let's pause there."
- "I need a moment to think about that."
- "I'm not sure how to respond right now."

The Boundary Breath

Inhale: "This is not mine."

Exhale: "I release it."

LANTERN TOOLS: MAKING SENSE OF WHAT HAPPENED

The Three-Question Clarity Check

1. What was said or done?
2. What did it imply about my identity?
3. What impact did it have on me?

The “Is It Me?” Reframe

- Would I minimise this if it happened to someone else?
- Does this fit a pattern I’ve seen before?
- Does this align with stereotypes I’ve been subjected to?

The Pattern Map

Record:

- Who said it
- Context
- Frequency
- Impact

Patterns reveal truth.

SCRIPTS FOR RESPONDING

Choose the tone that fits your safety, energy, and environment.

A. Gentle / Educational

- “I know you may not have meant harm, but that comment reinforces a stereotype.”
- “Let me share how that landed for me.”

B. Direct / Clear

- “That comment was inappropriate.”
- “Please don’t say that to me again.”

C. Boundary-Setting

- “I’m not comfortable with that.”
- “Let’s keep identity-based comments out of this conversation.”

D. Reflective / Accountability-Focused

- “What made you think that was okay to say?”
- “How do you think that comment might impact someone like me?”

E. Professional / Workplace-Safe

- “I’d like to revisit that comment — it didn’t feel appropriate.”
- “I’d appreciate it if we could avoid comments about identity.”

WHEN YOU CAN'T RESPOND IN THE MOMENT

Delayed-response templates:

- "I've been thinking about what was said earlier, and I need to address it."
- "That comment stayed with me, and I want to explain why it was harmful."
- "I didn't feel able to speak up at the time, but that remark wasn't appropriate."

HARBOUR TOOLS: AFTERCARE & RECOVERY

1. The Decompression Ritual

Choose one:

- A walk
- A warm drink
- A grounding playlist
- A call with someone safe
- A journaling moment

2. The Self-Validation Script

- “My feelings are valid.”
- “What happened was real.”
- “I deserve respect.”

3. The Identity Re-Anchor

Write:

- Three things you love about your identity
- Three strengths you carry
- Three ways your culture enriches your life

WORKPLACE ESCALATION PATHWAYS

Step 1 — Document

Record:

- Date
- Time
- What was said
- Who witnessed it
- Impact

Step 2 — Speak to Someone Safe

Examples:

- Manager
- HR
- Union rep
- Trusted colleague

Step 3 — Formal Pathways

Depending on your workplace:

- Grievance
- Mediation
- HR investigation
- Occupational health

REFLECTION EXERCISES

1. Identity Map

List:

- Your cultural identity
- Your strengths
- Your values
- Your boundaries

2. Harm vs. Intention Reflection

Write:

- What happened
- How it affected you
- What you need moving forward

3. Reclaiming Your Voice

Complete:

- "I deserve..."
- "I will no longer tolerate..."
- "I am learning to..."
- "My identity is..."

YOUR LANTERN STATEMENT

Write a guiding statement for yourself.

Examples:

- “My identity is not up for debate.”
- “I honour my culture and protect my peace.”
- “I choose clarity, boundaries, and self-respect.”