

Scenario 1: The “Where Are You Really From?” Question

Context

During a team check-in, a colleague asks another teammate, “Where are you from?”

After hearing the answer, they follow up with, “No, where are you really from?”

Type of Subtle Act of Exclusion:

You do not belong.

You are a curiosity.

Scenario Reflection Prompts

What impact might this question have, even if the intent was friendly?

What assumptions are embedded in the follow-up question?

If you witnessed this exchange, what would feel like a constructive way to respond?

These responses are examples—not scripts. The goal is to practice language that reduces harm, invites learning, and strengthens relationships, even when conversations feel uncomfortable.

Scenario 2: Ideas Ignored, Then Praised

Context

In a meeting, one team member proposes an idea. The group moves on without discussion.

Later, another colleague restates the same idea and receives positive feedback and credit.

Type of Subtle Act of Exclusion:

- You don't belong.
- You are inadequate.

Scenario Reflection Prompts

1. What messages are sent when ideas are acknowledged selectively?
2. How might this pattern affect participation over time?
3. What options exist for addressing this in real time versus afterward?

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Example Responses -Scenario #1

If You Are the Target

- **Naming impact without accusation:** “I’m from Allentown. When people ask that follow-up question, it sometimes makes me feel like I’m not being seen as fully belonging.”
- **Setting a boundary:** “I’m happy to share more about myself, but I prefer not to be asked that way—it can land differently than intended.”

If You Are an Ally or Observer

- **Pausing the moment:** “I want to pause for a second – questions like that can sometimes feel excluding, even when curiosity is the intent.”
- **Redirecting respectfully:** “Maybe we can get to know more about each other without focusing on where someone ‘comes from.’”

If You Are the Initiator (After Feedback)

- **Receiving accountability:** “Thank you for explaining that. I didn’t realize the impact, and I appreciate the chance to learn.”

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Scenario 2: Ideas Ignored, Then Praised- Example Responses

If You Are the Target

- Re-entering the conversation: “I shared a similar idea earlier—could I add a bit more context to it?”
- Addressing it later: “I noticed my idea didn’t get much traction earlier, but it came back later. I’d like to talk about how we credit ideas in meetings.”

If You Are an Ally

- Amplifying in real time: “I want to highlight that this idea connects to what [Name] raised earlier.”
- Restoring credit: “This was [Name]’s point earlier—can we make sure they’re included in the discussion?”

If You Are a Leader or Facilitator

- Modeling inclusive behavior: “Let’s pause for a moment—I want to acknowledge whose idea this originally was.”

Setting a norm: “I want to be intentional about making sure everyone’s contributions are recognized.”

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Scenario 3: “You’re So Articulate”

Context

After a presentation, a colleague tells a coworker from a marginalized group, “You’re so articulate,” intending it as praise.

Type of Subtle Act of Exclusion:

- You (or people like you) are inadequate.
- You are not an individual.
- You don't belong.

Scenario Reflection Prompts

1. Why might this comment land differently than intended?
2. What assumptions might be underlying the compliment?
3. How could feedback be reframed to focus on skills or content instead?

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Scenario 4: Repeatedly Mispronouncing a Name

Context

A team member's name is repeatedly mispronounced in meetings, even after corrections.

Others notice but no one addresses it directly.

Type of Subtle Act of Exclusion:

- You are invisible.
- You are a burden.

Scenario Reflection Prompts

1. What impact can repeated mispronunciation have over time?
2. What responsibility do observers have in moments like this?
3. How can leaders set a clear norm without shaming anyone?

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Scenario 3: “You’re So Articulate” - Example Responses

If You Are the Target

- **Naming the experience:** “I know that was meant kindly, but comments like that can feel surprising or uncomfortable, given how they’re often used.”
- **Redirecting feedback:** “I’d love feedback on the content or structure of the presentation— that’s most helpful for me.”

If You Are an Ally

- **Reframing praise:** “What stood out to me was how clearly the key points were organized.”
- **Gently naming impact:** “That phrase can land differently for people— specific feedback can be really powerful.”

If You Are the Initiator (Reflecting Later)

- **Shifting language:** “I realize now I could have been more specific about what I appreciated— thanks for helping me think about that.”

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Scenario 4: Repeatedly Mispronouncing a Name - Example Responses

If You Are the Target

- **Direct but calm correction:** “It’s pronounced [Name]. It’s important to me that it’s said correctly.”
- **Following up privately:** “I’ve noticed my name is often mispronounced— it would mean a lot if we could get it right.”

If You Are an Ally

- **In-the-moment support:** “Just to clarify, it’s pronounced [Name].”
- **Reinforcing importance:** “Getting names right helps everyone feel respected.”

If You Are a Leader or Facilitator

- **Setting expectations:** “Let’s take a moment to make sure we’re pronouncing names correctly— this matters.”
- **Modeling accountability:** “Thank you for correcting us. We’ll make a point to get it right going forward.”

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