



Common Ground Meditation Center Ethics and Reconciliation Policy (ERP)

NOTE: In 2023, Common Ground's Board of Directors requested that its Ethics Committee review and update Common Ground's original 2009 Ethics and Reconciliation Policy (ERP) to reflect changes at Common Ground and in the larger community.

This revised ERP document was approved by Common Ground's Board of Directors on 1/28/2024.

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Common Ground Meditation Center

Ethics and Reconciliation Policy (ERP)

Introduction: Conflicts, Healing, and Reconciliation

Conflicts will inevitably arise within the Common Ground (CG) Meditation Center community. The health of our community is not measured by the presence or absence of conflict, but rather by our willingness to find effective, responsible, and compassionate resolutions to interpersonal tensions and intrapersonal confusion when they arise. The intention to attend to and learn from conflict is a clear application of Buddhist practice and precepts in our daily lives. Without this intention, practice can become simply a comfort rather than a deep transformative vehicle for our lives.

Buddhist conflict resolution is not based on good or bad, blame or guilt, winning or losing, offenders or victims. Rather, it is based on opening and responding to the suffering of all concerned. Hurt, fear, and anger are treated respectfully in a reconciliation process where everyone is encouraged to speak honestly and completely about their own direct experiences and feelings. We value inquiry over distraction, acknowledgment of unskillful or harmful acts over denial, reconciliation over estrangement, forgiveness over resentment, and insight over lack of wisdom. The process of reaching such a resolution can be difficult, but these experiences can also lead to profound insights.

In addition to the principles of Buddhist conflict resolution, Common Ground's [Guiding Principles and Practices](#), [Commitment to Unraveling Oppression](#), and [Ethical Standards for Harmonious Community Life](#) all serve to support and guide our community's conflict resolution and reconciliation practices.

Common Ground's Ethics Committee and Ethics and Reconciliation Council (EAR Council)

Common Ground's Board of Directors appointed an Ethics Committee to create ethics and reconciliation policies and procedures for the organization that reflect Common Ground's values and principles. In addition, the Board has designated a small group of respected senior practitioners to serve as Common Ground's Ethics and Reconciliation Council (EAR Council). The purpose of the EAR Council is threefold: 1) to assist Common Ground in implementing its ethics and reconciliation policies; 2) to provide resources and informal counsel to help navigate the often-difficult process of resolving conflicts; and 3) to assist in any formal grievance procedures.

The EAR Council is available to any community member, leader, teacher, or facilitator who would like confidential help in dealing with conflicts, grievances, or ethical concerns within the Common Ground community.

The EAR Council serves to foster an environment of responsibility and integrity and to treat all parties involved with compassion, fairness, and respect.

EAR Council Informal Consultation

When someone contacts the Ethics and Reconciliation (EAR) Council seeking support, information, or guidance, our commitment as EAR Council members and dharma practitioners is to listen mindfully and with compassion to what is being shared. Reflecting on how we might be of help, we aspire to hold space for both intention and impact and understand how the involved individuals may be affected. This can often include feeling hurt, misunderstood, invisible, or invalidated. Relating skillfully to whatever is present can deepen intimacy, growth, and understanding of ourselves and how we relate to others. The way we show up or don't, can create healing or harm.

The EAR Council is available to:

- Facilitate deeper personal reflection
- Serve as a sounding board
- Offer guidance on how to best resolve a conflict or grievance
- Assist in finding greater clarity about an issue
- Offer other supportive means of addressing or working with conflict or difficulties

Other avenues exist at Common Ground to explore, address, and resolve conflicts, including speaking with Common Ground's guiding teachers, Mark Nunberg, mark@commongroundmeditation.org, or Shelly Graf, shelly@commongroundmeditation.org. In addition, the EAR Council has prepared an extensive list of [resources](#) in the Appendices to assist and support community members, leaders, and facilitators interested in exploring wise and compassionate means of addressing and resolving conflicts and seeking reconciliation.

EAR Council Formal Grievance Process

On the rare occasion that allegations of a serious ethical breach are raised, a [Formal Grievance Procedure](#) (Appendix VII) may be implemented. Any Common Ground participant who believes that they have been subjected to, or who is aware of, any form of serious ethical misconduct or harassment involving a Common Ground leader, teacher, facilitator, or participant is encouraged to set up a meeting with an EAR Council member to voice their concerns. The EAR

Council is available to discuss these concerns and to help provide information about Common Ground's ethics guidelines and policies and, as needed, how to file a formal grievance.

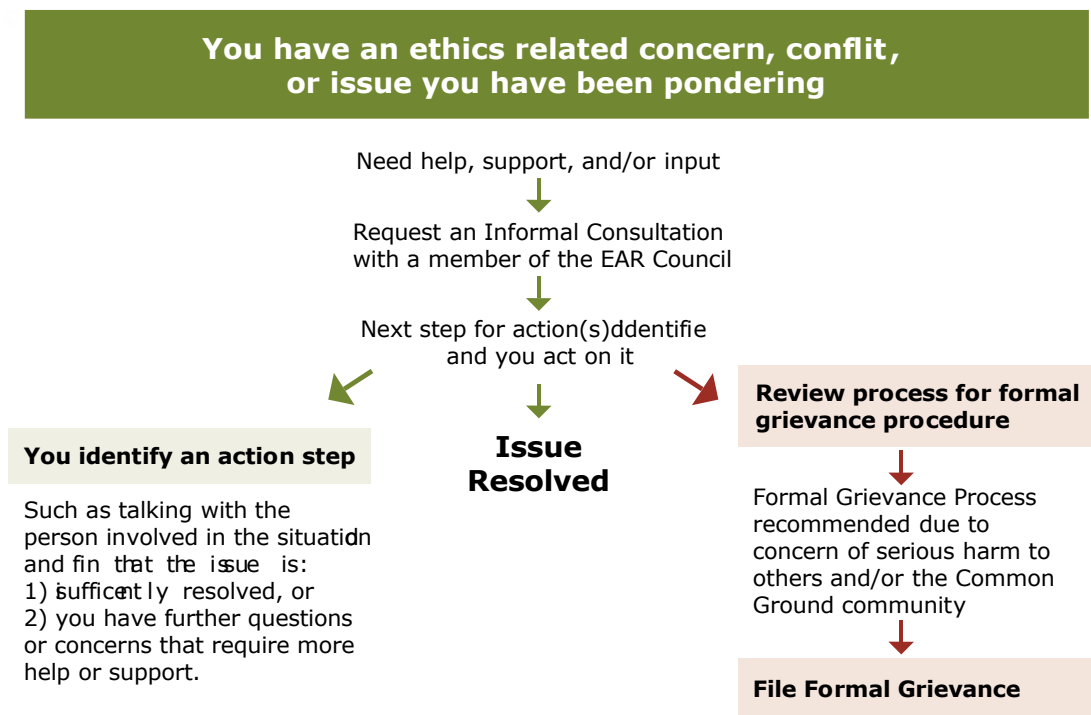
Common Ground's Ethics and Reconciliation Council Process

The following graphic was created to assist you in understanding how you might utilize the Ethics and Reconciliation process when dealing with a conflict or addressing a grievance.

When an issue arises, we recommend you take the first crucial step of engaging in inquiry about the issue. You may want to clarify the issue by self-reflecting, journaling, and/or talking to a trusted friend. Is it more about a dharma question? You may discuss your issue with a dharma teacher and find that the issue is sufficiently resolved, or an action step may be recommended, such as an EAR Council Consultation. Is it personal or interpersonal/relational? Ethical? Ethical concerns usually have to do with the potential for harm involving the self, other(s), and/or the community if left unattended.

Guiding Values for the Process

- Individual responsibility and mutual respect
- Practice of the precepts
- Willingness to risk discomfort with difficult situations or emotions
- Opening and responding to the suffering of all concerned



EAR Council Conflict of Interest and Privacy Policies

Conflict of Interest Policy

Because Common Ground is a relatively small organization, many participants and leaders have multiple roles and relationships within the community. Any parties concerned about potential conflict of interest or bias should inform an EAR Council member or the Chair of the Ethics Committee. Conflict of interest charges or concerns will be addressed at the joint meeting of the Ethics Committee and the Board of Directors (discussed later in this document under “Formal Grievance Procedure”).

When addressing any matters related to allegations of serious ethical breaches or ethical concerns, we aspire to maintain the highest standards of objectivity, impartiality, and integrity throughout the processes. Throughout the informal consultations and formal grievance proceedings, any member(s) of the EAR Council, Ethics Committee, *ad hoc* team, or Board of Directors who feels that they cannot be objective and impartial for any reason should excuse themselves from the proceedings.

Privacy Policy

The EAR council will take great care to safeguard the information you share with them. For informal consultations with the EAR Council, information will remain confidential.

Under rare circumstances when a concern involves a serious risk of harm, the EAR Council may provide information to the Guiding Teachers and the Board of Directors and recommend initiation of a Formal Grievance Procedure or other appropriate action. They will inform you if they make any such disclosures.

In cases of a Formal Grievance Procedure, the Guiding Teachers, Ethics Committee, *ad hoc* investigation team, and Board of Directors will have access to the information (unless allegations of ethical misconduct have been raised against any of these individuals). All efforts will be made to be discreet and respect privacy to the extent possible.

Meet Common Ground’s Ethics Committee and EAR Council Members

Jean Choe, a past Board member, served on the Common Ground Ethics Committee since 2007 and EAR Council member since 2009. She holds a PhD in Clinical/Community Psychology and has been a practicing clinician for over two decades.

Phillip Cryan currently serves as Vice Chair of Common Ground's Board of Directors. In addition, the Board appointed him to be on CG Ethics Committee since 2022. He serves as Executive Vice President of SEIU Healthcare Minnesota, a union of more than 40,000 healthcare workers across the state.

Mariann Johnson, a past Board member, has served on the Common Ground Ethics Committee since 2004 and a member of the EAR Council since 2009. She has an extensive experience as a mediator and organizational consultant. She currently teaches Mindfulness and Wellbeing at Bakken Center for Spirituality and Healing, University of Minnesota.

Kyoko Katayama has served on the CG Ethics Committee since 2004, and became its Chair in 2007, and a member of EAR Council since 2009. She holds a master's degree in social work, and Ph.D. in Transpersonal and Cross-cultural Psychology. She was a psychotherapist for over thirty years. She retired in 2016.

How to Contact the EAR Council

You may contact EAR Council members at EARCouncil@commongroundmeditation.org.

The Current Members of the Ethics Committee
[from the left: Phillip Cryan, Mariann Johnson,
Jean Choe, & Kyoko Katayama]



The Current Members of the EAR Council
[from the left: Jean Choe, Kyoko Katayama,
and Mariann Johnson]

APPENDICES

Common Ground Community Resources for Addressing Conflicts and for Healing and Reconciliation

Appendix I	A Brief History of Common Ground Ethics Committee and EAR Council
Appendix II	Reconciliation Principles from Pali Canon
Appendix III	Suggestions for Approaching and Resolving Conflicts Ethical Dilemmas
Appendix IV	Navigating Microaggressions Toward Clarity and Healing: Application of the Buddha’s Teaching on Right Speech, by Jean Choe/ Ethics Committee
Appendix V	Beginning Anew: How to Breathe New Life and Compassion Into Your Relationships. By Thich Nhat Hanh
Appendix VI	Listening from a Space of Silence
Appendix VII	Formal Grievance Procedure
Appendix VIII	Other Resources

APPENDIX I

A Brief History of Common Ground Ethics Committee and EAR Council (2002-2024)

2002 Common Ground Became a Non-Profit and Formed a Board of Directors

Common Ground Meditation Center received official non-profit status. Mark Nunberg and Wynn Fricke, the founders of the Center, invited several longtime practitioners to form the first Board of Directors, which began to create guidelines and documents for the Center's governance.

April 2004 Board Retreat and Appointment of the Ethics Committee

At the retreat, the Board identified a list of principles and values. They decided to create an Ethics Committee to further define and clarify the seminal work of the Board. The Board appointed a committee of five: Mark Nunberg, the Guiding Teacher; Craig Vollmar, Chair of the Board; and community members Mariann Johnson, Wendy Morris, and Kyoko Katayama.

October 2004 Ethics Committee Began Ongoing Meetings

Once the first draft of the Principles and Values statement was submitted to the Board in January 2005, the Ethics Committee began preliminary work towards the creation of an Ethics and Reconciliation (EAR) Policy. The committee members reviewed the EAR policies of other Buddhist centers around the country, read ***Safe Harbor: Guidelines, Process and Resources for Ethics and Right Conduct in Buddhist Communities***, and interviewed ethics committee members of other insight meditation centers, such as Gil Fronsda.

April 2005 Board-Approved Principles and Values Draft Adopted as the Center's Guiding Principles & Practice

May 2005 A First Draft of the Ethics and Reconciliation Policy

In May 2005, the Ethics Committee completed the first draft of the Ethics and Reconciliation Policy. At that time, they were envisioning drafting a simple grievance procedure. They soon discovered that there was nothing simple about ethics policies and procedures. They discussed many issues and ramifications beyond the scope of a grievance procedure, asking: how does this serve an individual member? How does this promote the safety and integrity of the whole community? What are the responsibilities of the Guiding Teacher, the Board, and this committee when it comes to the safety and well-being of our community and its individual members? The committee began to see a need for clear and concise guidelines for applying the policies. Thus, in the summer of 2008, they began drafting a companion document to the EAR policy: the ***Ethics and Reconciliation Council Member Procedure Manual***. The policy document is the broad overview about how we at Common Ground approach ethical concerns and conflicts, and the manual provides a step-by-step guide to operationalizing our policy and

procedures. The policy document is intended for the community at large as an information source. The procedure manual is intended for the EAR Council and the Board.

April 2008 First Draft of the EAR Procedure Manual

The committee created the first draft of the procedure manual. There were significant changes in the committee membership: Mark Nunberg and Wendy Morris resigned, and the Board appointed Jean Choe and Jessie Ware as new committee members, with Kyoko Katayama as the Chair.

**May 2009 Board Approved the EAR Policies and the Procedure Manual
Ethics Committee's Role Shifts to the EAR Council**

Once the Board approved and adopted the documents, the work of the Ethics Committee was completed. The committee members' primary role shifted to that of the EAR Council to serve the community.

2009- 2023 Ethics Committee Serves as the Center's EAR Council

2022 Review of EAR Policy and EAR Council Role

The Board recognized that more than a dozen years had passed since the creation of the original Ethics Policy and there have been many changes internally at the Center and in the larger society. The Board wanted to make sure that the Ethics Policy and the EAR Council composition reflected pertinent changes and served the current community. The Board requested that the Ethics Committee, now comprised of Kyoko Katayama (the Chair), Jean Choe, and Mariann Johnson, review and update the policy to reflect such changes. The Board appointed Phillip Cryan as a Board representative to join the Ethics Committee.

**2023 - 2024 Revision of the EAR Policy and Review of the EAR Council's Role and
Composition**

APPENDIX II

Reconciliation Principles from Pali Canon

The Buddha created values and principles that encourage all parties to enter into reconciliation by the use of right speech and to engage in the honest and responsible self-reflection basic to all mindfulness practice.

1. We are always responsible for our conscious choices.
2. We should always put ourselves in the other person's place.
3. All beings are worthy of respect.
4. We should regard those who point out our faults as if they were pointing to our treasure.
5. There are no higher purposes –such as non-dual reality– that excuse breaking the basic precepts of ethical behavior.

APPENDIX III

Suggestions for Approaching and Resolving Conflicts and Ethical Dilemmas

The following are suggestions for approaching and resolving conflicts. EAR Council members are trained to assist you in applying these guidelines.

- Choose Right Intention. Reflect: Are you motivated by kindness rather than vengeance? Are you concerned for the well-being of all parties concerned? Do you have a sincere desire to reconcile?
- Speak words that are true, timely, gentle, to the point, and prompted by kindness.
- Whenever possible, speak simply and clearly about your feelings and needs.
- Take responsibility for your vulnerabilities and emotional triggers in relationships with others.
- Avoid interpretations and generalizations and stick to the particulars of the actual situations.
- Take calm, deliberate, and adequate time to listen to each other. Restate what was spoken until each party feels fully heard.
- Reflect on how you may have contributed to a conflict.
- Reflect on how the other person may have experienced you.

APPENDIX IV

Navigating Microaggressions Toward Clarity and Healing: Application of the Buddha's Teaching on Right Speech

Common Ground Meditation Center, Jean Choe/ Ethics Committee

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When someone contacts the Ethics and Reconciliation (EAR) Council seeking support, information, or guidance, our commitment as EAR Council members and dharma practitioners is to listen mindfully and with compassion to what is being shared.

We recognize that transgressions, such as microaggressions, can and do occur in daily life and within the Common Ground Meditation Center community. A microaggression can be understood as an everyday, subtle or direct, intentional or unintentional transgression against a member of a historically marginalized community. The person who is committing the microaggression may be unaware that they have acted in an offensive, exclusionary, or demeaning manner. We know that when these experiences inevitably come up, the first reactive response is often toward avoidance, justification, defensiveness, shame, or dismissiveness. Although facing microaggressions can feel complicated, messy, humbling, and uncomfortable, these experiences can be powerful opportunities for mindful practice, healing, and courage. Relating skillfully can deepen intimacy, growth, and understanding of ourselves and how we relate to others.

This commitment to skillfully and mindfully navigating microaggressions and exploring dynamics related to power and privilege, subjugation and voice can help to reveal biases, blind spots, and unexamined, invisible, or shadow parts of our identity and worldviews.

Most of us would agree that when a larger societal injustice occurs, it is our ethical responsibility to use our voice to call out these injustices. With an equal commitment, we can also explore within ourselves how we might use our voice (or silence) when a microaggression occurs (either by oneself or another). For those of us who have been the recipient of a microaggression, we can aspire to navigate the difficulty with courage, clarity, and deep compassion. What do we do when an injustice comes in the form of receiving or witnessing a subtle or veiled offensive comment? When is silence or speaking out skillful? When might it be the cause of harm?

One of the practice aspirations of the Noble Eightfold Path is Right Speech. When communicating with others, the Buddha's guideline is to ask: 1) Is it true? 2) Is it helpful? 3) Is it timely? 4) Is it necessary? and 5) Is it kind? This can be a wise guide in how we might navigate microaggressions.

It is important to understand the difference between intention and impact. No matter how good or wholesome one's intention may be, it's possible that the impact on the receiver can be that of distress, hurt, or feeling "othered."

We do not know what we don't know, especially when it comes to the impact of our speech and behaviors on others. It takes courage, honesty, and humility to recognize the impact of our speech and actions both on our own hearts and on one another. As human beings, we have both a desire and a need to show up authentically and to be in connection with others. It is in this spirit that we offer some specific ways to apply the guidelines on Right Speech. May some of the suggestions help you in thoughtfully navigating microaggressions and move towards healing and learning for all parties concerned. Please utilize them in whatever way is helpful.

When You Have Experienced A Microaggression By Another

1. Remember that you have a say in defining what this incident will mean for you, your life, and how you feel around this person and the Common Ground Meditation Center.
2. If/when you notice a microaggression has occurred, stay open to the experience, reflect with attentiveness, honesty, and tenderness and talk with safe and trusted others as needed to help get support and clarity on how to proceed.
3. Allow yourself to feel what you feel without judgment. Microaggressions can evoke feelings of self-judgment, self-doubt, anger, disappointment, frustration, aggravation, confusion, embarrassment, humiliation, exhaustion, shame, or something else. Any emotion is legitimate. Recognize that this incident may also evoke a feeling of cumulative impact related to multiple microaggressions that have occurred in your life.
4. Experiences of hurt may not always be the sign that a microaggression has occurred. It is important not to jump to a conclusion. To be hurt means you are suffering and your pain needs attending to. It is good to examine the feeling of hurt with curiosity and care until you have a clearer sense of what it is that the pain illuminates or asks of you.
5. To the extent that this reflection question feels relevant to your experience, "Are you identifying too strongly with the pain or the sense of being a victim such that it is not leading to freedom and healing?"
6. Determine whether or not to respond.
 - Affirm to yourself that it's ok to respond and it is equally ok to let it go.
 - Consider how much of an investment you want to make in addressing the microaggression and the importance of the issue and the relationship to you. Don't pressure yourself to respond to every incident or to always stay silent.
 - If you decide to respond, is it better to respond immediately or later?
 - If you respond, what might you need to feel supported and emotionally safe?
 - If you respond, how will this affect your relationship with this person?
 - If you don't respond, how will this affect you internally and/or with this person? In the Common Ground environment and sangha?
7. Consider how, when, and where you could address the microaggression.

- Would this be one-on-one? Would talking with Common Ground leaders help, either with support or guidance on how to skillfully navigate this? Could the EAR Council assist you? If a Common Ground leader committed the microaggression, what might you need for support?
- How can the elements of Right Speech assist you in knowing how to deal with this situation?

If You Received Feedback That You Engaged In A Microaggression

You may become aware that you inadvertently committed a microaggression. If someone approaches you and expresses a concern about something you said or did, the following may be some helpful things to consider.

1. Check-In with Yourself

- Practice both radical honesty and deep humility, particularly related to unexamined and invisible power and privileges you hold, of which you may or may not be aware.
- Notice any feelings of defensiveness, shame, or attachment to identity that may arise and how those thoughts and feelings may inhibit you from exploring this further. Acknowledge these thoughts and emotions without letting them guide your actions.
- Remind yourself that microaggressions are about actions and their impacts, not intentions.
- Remember that any person, even an “ally,” can perform a microaggression and that does not mean you are racist or a -xxx-phobe.
- Now that a concern has been communicated to you, it’s up to you how you deal with it, and this matters a lot! How you bear witness, take accountability, and hold (or not) safe space matters.
- While this is nuanced and requires deep reflection, there may be circumstances where a person’s feeling of hurt may not actually be caused by a microaggression. In other words, the person’s hurt may have a different origin/cause than your words or action. If this may be the situation, consider how you can acknowledge the pain of the other while taking care of yourself. Don’t feel compelled to quickly apologize if it does not feel authentic. Do consider, especially if you are in a majority or dominant cultural group, if you are in denial of your privilege and power in the relational dynamic. Apology can take the form of acknowledging impact and your ignorance of historical trauma and subjugation.
- Would talking with Common Ground leaders help, either with support or guidance on how to skillfully navigate this? Could the EAR Council assist you?

2. Listen

- Practice listening with an open heart.
- Do your best to understand the impact you had on someone, rather than focusing on the intention behind your comment/behavior (e.g., “I was only joking”, “I meant well.”).

3. Acknowledge the Microaggression

- Acknowledge verbally that the other person's feelings are valid.
- Acknowledge verbally that your comment/behavior had a negative impact, even though it wasn't your intention (if this is the case).

4. Apologize

- Apologize for the **impact** of your comment/behavior.
- Remind yourself that the goal of your apology is to communicate that you acknowledge your mistake, not to receive forgiveness.
- You may not receive reassurance, or this may not end with equanimity on all sides, and that's okay.

5. Practice Self-Compassion

- Remember that all humans make mistakes and acknowledging these mistakes is really difficult. If you were able to listen, acknowledge, and apologize for your comment/behavior, you handled this in the best way you could.

When You Are In A Majority Group And/Or Are A Leader At Common Ground And Have Observed A Microaggression

Consider these self-reflection questions:

- If I don't respond, will I regret not saying something? In what ways might my silence be causing harm to myself and others?
- If I don't respond, does that convey that I accept the behavior or statement?
- If I choose not to respond, am I falsely justifying my silence as a noble, mindful, or skillful action?
- What does courage, right speech, and skillful action look like with regard to observing a microaggression?
- If I do want to confront the microaggressor, what is my intention, and what am I trying to accomplish?
- If I address the comment/behavior in public, will this lead to defensiveness? Or a backlash?
- Would it be better to address the comment/behavior now, as a model for others, or is it better to raise the issue later when the person may be more receptive (in private) and/or would not feel publicly shamed?
- If I do or don't address this microaggression, despite seeing it unfold, what is the impact on the sangha? On my own heart? Others in marginalized groups? How do we model or show up for others to help promote a sense of safety and inclusivity for all?
- How do we hold both intention and impact mindfully, skillfully, and with compassion?
- Would talking with Common Ground leaders help, either with support or guidance on how to skillfully navigate this? Could the EAR Council assist you?

This handout was developed by a review of various articles and resources on microaggressions (see below), as well as discussions with dharma practitioners and others representing various diverse historically marginalized and subjugated groups.

Allies and Microaggressions: When You See Microaggressions Occurring Against Colleagues, How Should You Respond? Kerry Ann Rockquemore, April 13, 2016

<https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2016/04/13/how-be-ally-someone-experiencing-microaggressions-essay>

Anti-Racism Action Guide: Recognizing and Responding to Microaggressions

https://med.emory.edu/departments/psychiatry/_documents/_documents1/microaggressions.pdf

Dear Anti-Racist Allies: Here's How to Respond to Microaggressions

By Kristen Rogers, CNN, Updated 4:57 AM EDT, Sat June 6, 2020

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/05/health/racial-microaggressions-examples-responses-wellness/index.html>

Did You Really Just Say That? Here's Advice on How to Confront Microaggressions, Whether You're a Target, Bystander or Perpetrator

By Rebecca A. Clay, January 2017, Vol 48, No. 1

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2017/01/microaggressions>

Disarming Racial Microaggressions: Microintervention Strategies for Targets, White Allies, and Bystanders

By Derald Wing Sue, Sarah Alsaidi, Michael N. Awad, Elizabeth Glaeser, Cassandra Z. Calle, and Narolyn Mendez Teachers College, Columbia University

American Psychologist © 2019 American Psychological Association 2019, Vol. 74, No. 1, 128–142

<https://www.aauw.org/app/uploads/2020/11/Sue-Alsaidi-et-al.-2019-copy.pdf>

Examples of Verbal and Non-Verbal Microaggressions

Office of the Mayor, Cambridge, MA, 2019

<https://www.cambridgema.gov/-/media/Files/officeofthemayor/2019/deepmicroaggressionsworksheetfilledin012619.pdf>

Everything You Need to Know About Microaggressions and How to Prevent Them From Happening.

By [Crystal Martin](#) and [McKenzie Jean-Philippe](#) Published: Jun 11, 2020

<https://www.oprahdaily.com/life/relationships-love/a26294696/what-is-microaggression/>

Healing the Wounds of Microaggressions

Wendy Millstine, October 8, 2022

<http://www.racialjusticeallies.org/healing-the-wounds-of-micro-aggressions/>

How Bystanders Can Shut Down Microaggressions: How Can You Effectively Intervene When You See Someone Being Targeted for An Aspect of Their Identity? Psychologists Studying Intergroup Relations and Perspective-Taking Offer Their Advice.

Zara Abrams, September 1, 2021

<https://www.apa.org/monitor/2021/09/feature-bystanders-microaggressions>

Microaggressions Are a Big Deal: How to Talk Them Out And When to Walk Away

Andrew Limbong, June 9, 2020

<https://www.npr.org/2020/06/08/872371063/microaggressions-are-a-big-deal-how-to-talk-them-out-and-when-to-walk-away>

The Microaggressions Project

<https://www.microaggressions.com>

Recognizing and Interrupting Microaggressions

Kathy Obear, Ed.D, *Center for Transformation & Change*

www.drkathyobear.com | Kathy@drkathyobear.com

<https://drkathyobear.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Microaggressions-Handout-Formatted.pdf>

This Is the Right Way to Respond to Microaggressions at Work

By [Rachel Murray of She Geeks Out for Culture Amp](#)

<https://www.themuse.com/advice/how-to-respond-microaggressions-at-work>

When and How to Respond To Microaggressions

by [Ella F. Washington](#), [Alison Hall Birch](#), and [Laura Morgan Roberts](#)

July 03, 2020 (Harvard Business Review)

<https://hbr.org/2020/07/when-and-how-to-respond-to-microaggressions>

When Good Intentions Aren't Enough: Microaggressions In Our Churches

by Rev . Dr. Angela Yarber

<https://www.believeoutloud.com/voices/article/when-good-intentions-arent-enough-microaggressions-in-our-churches/>

APPENDIX V

Beginning Anew:

How to breathe new life and compassion into your relationships.

By Thich Nhat Hanh

As human beings, we all make mistakes. Our unskillful thoughts, words, and actions cause harm to ourselves and those around us. Often, when we hurt others or are hurt by them, because of our pride we make no effort to reconcile or renew our relationships. Without reconciliation, we cannot deepen our understanding and we only cause more suffering.

Our practice is to renew our relationships on a regular basis. Every week we have time to go to concerts, cinema, shopping, and many other activities, but we rarely find the time to renew our relationships with the people who are close to us, our family members, friends, and colleagues.

The practice of Beginning Anew is a practice of reconciliation. Beginning Anew can be practiced between two people or as a group. As one person speaks, the other person practices deep listening without interrupting, allowing the first person to speak from the depths of her heart.

In Beginning Anew we have three steps: sharing appreciation, expressing regret, and expressing hurt and difficulties. In the first step, sharing appreciation, we practice to recognize and acknowledge the positive attributes of the other person. Every one of us has both wholesome and unwholesome seeds. When we express our appreciation for the other person's positive qualities, we give him the opportunity to recognize the positive qualities in our own consciousness.

For instance, perhaps our son is very kind and hardworking. He studies well and often helps us out. But once in a while he makes a mistake, and we correct him strongly right away. Yet because we have not told him how much we appreciate him, when we correct him, he hears only our criticism and blame. In this situation our relationship will be difficult. To improve the situation, we practice sharing our appreciation. If our son is doing well in school, we compliment him. We practice in the same way with our partner, husband, wife, friends, and other people in our life. We can share our appreciation with each other at any time.

The second step of Beginning Anew is expressing regret. We take this opportunity to share with the other person our regrets for the things we have done or said that might have caused him pain. This requires humility and the willingness to let go of our own pain and pride.

In the third step of Beginning Anew, we express our own hurt with mindful, loving speech, without blaming or criticizing. We speak in such a way that the other person can listen and receive our words. If we blame and condemn the other person, his heart will close and he will not be able to hear us. We ask the other person to help us to understand why he has spoken as he has, acted as he has to cause us so much pain. Perhaps at a later time he can share with us so that we can understand more deeply. If a strong emotion arises in us while we are expressing our suffering, we should simply stop and come back to our breathing until the emotion subsides. The other person can support us by following his breathing until we are ready to continue.

We can enjoy practicing Beginning Anew with our partner, our family, or our colleagues regularly. By doing this practice we will prevent small misunderstandings from accumulating. Rather, we will take care of them as they arise. At the same time, we cultivate our awareness and appreciation for the positive qualities our loved ones bring to our life. With understanding, all things become possible.

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Thich Nhat Hanh is a Buddhist monk, poet, peace activist, and the author of more than 100 books, including the national bestsellers 'Anger' and 'Living Buddha, Living Christ.' He lived in [Plum Village](#), a monastic community in southwestern France.

APPENDIX VI

Listening From a Space of Silence

Can one listen without any conclusion, without any comparison or judgment, just listen, as you would listen to music, to something which you really feel you love? Then you not only listen with your mind, your intellect, but you also listen from your heart, you listen with care, objectively, sanely, you listen with attention to find out.

I think there is an art to listening, which is to listen completely, without any motive, because a motive in listening is a distraction. If you can listen with complete attention, then there is no resistance, either to your own thoughts or to what is being said – which does not mean that you will be mesmerized by the words. But it is only the very silent, quiet mind that finds out what is true, not a mind which is furiously active, thinking, resisting.

~ Krishnamurti

Impediments to listening from silence

If we can be mindfully aware of what arises as we listen, we will not be drawn into identifying with these distracting thoughts when they enter the mind. When you are listening to someone, become non-judgmentally aware every time the mind does any of the following:

1. Judges what the other person is saying
2. Creates ideas of how to “fix” the issue the person is presenting or how to “fix” the person being listened to
3. Reflects on how the issues being presented are similar to the issues you are experiencing in your own life
4. Thinks about the past or future
5. Conceives of how you will respond to what the person is communicating

As each of these thought processes are recognized, allow them to immediately pass out of consciousness, and go back to listening from the space of silence.

It is only those patterns of mind which we are unaware of that can deflect our ability to listen from a place of presence. When we do listen from this clear and open space and wait until the other person has completed their thoughts before we decide on how to respond, our reply is typically relevant, open-hearted, meaningful, and gives the other person the wonderful experience of being heard.

~ Matt Flickstein

Unless we look deeply into ourselves, this practice will not be easy. If there is a lot of suffering in you, it is difficult to listen to other people or to say nice things to them. First you have to look deeply into the nature of your anger, despair, and suffering to free yourself, so you can be available to others.

Suppose you have some kind of internal formation regarding a member of your family or community, and you don't feel joyful being with that person. You can talk to her about simple things, but you don't feel comfortable talking with her about anything deep. Then one day,

while doing housework, you notice that the other person is not doing anything at all, is not sharing the work that needs to be done, and you begin to feel uneasy. "Why am I doing so much and she isn't doing anything? She should be working." Because of this comparison, you lose your happiness. But instead of telling the other person, "Please, Sister, come and help with the work," you say to yourself, "She is an adult. Why should I have to say something to her? She should be more responsible!" You think that way because you already have some internal formation about the other person. The shortest way is always the direct way. "B" can go to "A" and say, "Sister, please come and help." But you do not do that. You keep it to yourself and blame the other person.

The next time the same thing happens, your feeling is even more intense. Your internal formation grows little by little, until you suffer so much that you need to talk about it with a third person. You are looking for sympathy in order to share the suffering. So, instead of talking directly to "A," you talk to "C." You look for "C" because you think that "C" is an ally who will agree that "A" is not behaving well at all.

If you are "C," what should you do? If you already have some internal formations concerning "A," you will probably be glad to hear that someone else feels the same. Talking to each other may make you feel better. You are becoming allies -- "B" and "C" against "A." Suddenly "B" and "C" feel close to each other, and both of you feel some distance from "A." "A" will notice that.

"A" may be very nice. She would be capable of responding directly to "B" if "B" could express her feelings to her. But "A" does not know about "B's" resentment. She just feels some kind of cooling down between herself and "B," without knowing why. She notices that "B" and "C" are becoming close, while both of them look at her coldly. So she thinks, "If they don't want me, I don't need them." She steps farther back from them, and the situation worsens. A triangle has been set up.

If I were "C," first of all, I would listen to "B" attentively, understanding that "B" needs to share her suffering. Knowing that the direct way is the shortest way, I would encourage "B" to speak directly to "A." If "B" is unable to do this, I would offer to speak to "A" on "B's" behalf, either with "B" present, or alone.

But, most important, I would not transmit to anyone else what "B" tells me in confidence. If I am not mindful, I may tell others what I now know about "B's" feelings, and soon the family or the community will be a mess. If I do these things -- encourage "B" to speak directly with "A" or speak with "A" on "B's" behalf, and not tell anyone else what "B" has told me -- I will be able to break the triangle. This may help solve the problem, and bring peace and joy back into the family, the community, and the society.

If, in the community, you see that someone is having difficulty with someone else, you have to help right away. The longer things drag on, the more difficult they are to solve. The best way to help is to practice mindful speech and deep listening. The Fourth Precept can bring peace, understanding, and happiness to people. The universal door is a wonderful door. You will be

reborn in a lotus flower and help others, including your family, your community, and your society, be born there also.

Reconciliation is a deep practice that we can do with our listening and our mindful speech. To reconcile means to bring peace and happiness to nations, people, and members of our family. This is the work of a bodhisattva. In order to reconcile, you have to possess the art of deep listening, and you also have to master the art of loving speech. You have to refrain from aligning yourself with one party so that you are able to understand both parties. This is a difficult practice.

The work of reconciliation is not diplomatic work alone... You have to use your body, your time, and your life to do the work of reconciliation. You do it in many ways, and you can be suppressed by the people you are trying to help. You have to listen and understand the suffering of one side, and then go and listen to the suffering of the other side. Then you will be able to tell each side, in turn, about the suffering being endured by the other side. That kind of work is crucial, and it takes courage.

Adopted from For a Future To Be Possible by THICH NHAT HANH

APPENDIX VII

Formal Grievance Procedure

This Formal Grievance Procedure has been set in place to address allegations of serious ethical misconduct by persons in the Common Ground community. Our intention is to be respectful, attentive, and compassionate with both the person making the allegation and the person against whom the allegation is made.

The following is the process for requesting a Formal Grievance Procedure.

1. Community Member Contacts an EAR Council Member for an Initial Consultation

The EAR Council member will assist the community member in assessing the situation and will inform them of the steps involved in a Formal Grievance Procedure.

2. Community Member Writes a Letter of Request for Formal Grievance Procedure

A letter requesting a Formal Grievance Procedure should be sent to Common Ground Meditation Center (Attn: Ethics Committee Chairperson) and should include:

- A clear statement requesting a formal procedure
- The names of all the people involved in the grievance
- A description of the alleged behavior sufficient enough to decide whether the grievance warrants an investigation
- A history of attempts, if any, to resolve the concern through other means
- A general statement about the resolution or outcome desired

3. Ethics Committee and Board of Directors Investigate the Grievance

Upon receipt of the letter requesting a Formal Grievance Procedure, the Chair of the Ethics Committee will immediately inform the Guiding Teacher and the Chair of the Board. The Chair of the Ethics Committee will work with the two of them to set up a joint meeting of the Ethics Committee and the Board of Directors. In addition, the Guiding Teacher, the Board Chair, and the Ethics Committee Chair will together determine what information needs to be gathered before the initial meeting, and whether any parties named in the grievance should be notified prior to the joint Board/Ethics Committee meeting.

The Board Chair will convene the meeting and will request the Ethics Committee Chair to present the letter of request for a Formal Grievance Procedure and facilitate the discussion regarding the content of the grievance. A quorum of the Board and at least three members of the Ethics Committee will be present to review the grievance and discuss a course of action at this meeting. The Board will formally vote on how to proceed with the grievance. Options include:

- Creation of an *ad hoc* team to investigate the matter
- Decision about when and how to best to notify all parties named in the grievance
- Dismissal of the grievance based on the lack of merits of the charge

Within two weeks of the receipt of the letter, the Chair of the Ethics Committee will convey in writing to the involved parties (i.e., person(s) raising the grievance and the one(s) alleged to have committed the serious ethical breach) the Board's decision and outline the process to be followed.

If an *ad hoc* team is created, it will include one or more members of the Board of Directors and the Ethics Committee, with the Board designating one of the team members as the facilitator. As appropriate, people with special expertise or resources relevant to the grievance may be invited on the team.

The *ad hoc* team is responsible for:

- Investigating the matter
- Interviewing the person initiating the grievance, others involved in the grievance, and additional people who may provide pertinent information
- Summarizing their findings
- Presenting findings to the Common Ground Board of Directors
- Making preliminary recommendations to the Common Ground Board of Directors

4. Outcome

The Common Ground Board of Directors will review the findings and recommendations and assess each situation fully. The Board may elect to accept or reject all or some of the recommendations and will act to preserve and/or restore the health and safety of the community and its members.

Board actions may include but are not limited to:

- A reconciliation process for those involved
- Corrective action designed to protect the community
- Preventive and healing practices

Within two weeks of the Board's decision, all parties mentioned in the grievance will be notified of the Board's decision in writing.

Under certain circumstances, the Board or the Ethics Committee, as requested by the Board, may communicate to the Common Ground community the outcome of the Formal Grievance Procedure. This communication may include any healing measures under way and steps being taken to prevent similar matters from rising to this level in the future.

Record Keeping and Privacy Policy for the Formal Grievance Procedure

The Ethics Committee and the Board of Directors will keep written records of all grievances,

investigations, and outcomes filed in the Board's and Ethics Committee's formal records. Every person who makes a statement at any stage in the investigation should understand that his or her statement may become part of a written record. The record may be reviewed by the members of the Board and the Ethics Committee, and, in some instances, during legal proceedings. For the safety and the wellbeing of the community, the Board may choose to disclose parts of the formal record.

APPENDIX VIII

Other Suggested Resources for Addressing Conflicts and for Healing and Reconciliation

Additional resources for addressing conflict and cultivating harmonious relationships may be found in the library at Common Ground Meditation Center, or on Common Ground's [website](#) under "Resources" and "Audio/Video."