

Oopsisms can occur with individuals within the same group or outside one's group. In other words, oopsisms do not discriminate. One of my workshop participants stated that oopsisms are inclusive of everyone. Consider statements such as "I am going to jew you down," "did you come in on the short bus," "you got gyped," and "that's so retarded."

Sadly, I have heard these phrases from people of various backgrounds, dominant and marginalized.

Just the word "oops" makes the topic of diversity more receptive and less of a finger-pointing approach. It suggests a blunder or misunderstanding and conveys that we all can fall victim to our words. While

microaggressions and oopsisms are very similar, the connotation of a word can be powerful. After conducting a workshop or classroom module on oopsisms, students and workshop participants come to share their oopsisms experiences. I have never had someone approach me wanting to share their microaggressions.

A tenet of oopsism is people should be given the benefit of the doubt when intentional or unintentional moments occur and offered grace. I suggest we make contentious moments teachable moments.

Recently, Lizzo recorded a song with the word "spaz" in it. Social media quickly educated her about

the term and accused her of ableism. However, her fans didn't want to cancel her but wanted to make it a teachable moment. Lizzo responded by sincerely and profusely apologizing and re-recorded the song without the disrespectful word. Wow, what if more of us were open to this approach? Are you teachable?

Our words are powerful, and when coupled with insensitive behavior, intentional or not, they can convey disrespect for others and lead to stress, anxiety, depression, headaches, and high blood pressure. A recent study conducted in partnership with Fortune magazine found that 7 out of 10 workers (70%) stated that they would be upset by a

microaggression and half said they would consider leaving their job.

Microaggressions and oopsisms are widespread. I am conducting my workshops: "**#Oopsism: Effectively Communicating Across Cultures in the 21st Century**" in Rochester, and during the workshops, we will discuss ways to recognize and respond to oopsisms.

— Terry A. Nelson, Ph.D., MBA

1. Wing Sue D. Microaggressions: More than just race. https://www.uua.org/files/pdf/m/microaggressions_by_derald_wing_sue_ph.d..pdf

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AUGUST 2023: ROCHESTER, MINNESOTA SEMINARS: **#Oopsism: Effectively Communicating Across Cultures in the 21st Century**

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