



Microaggressions Against Adoptees

Cam Lee Small, MS, LPCC

Microaggressions against adoptees:

"WHERE ARE YOU REALLY FROM?"

Assumes a lack of belonging, to families or communities, often questioning an adoptee's ethnic or geographical roots.

"DO YOU KNOW YOUR REAL PARENTS?"

Suggesting that adoptees' have "real" and non-real parents, which can undermine their connections with any members of their family constellation.

"YOU'RE SO LUCKY TO BE ADOPTED."

This can minimize the complexities of relinquishment and family separation and may overlook the challenges adoptees can face.

Microaggressions against adoptees:

"WHY DON'T YOU LOOK LIKE YOUR FAMILY?"

Highlighting physical differences can suggest a lack of legitimacy of an adoptee's family relationships.

"YOU SHOULD BE GRATEFUL FOR YOUR ADOPTION"

Assumes that adoptees should feel indebted to certain degrees, which can invalidate other feelings about their lived experience.

"THERE'S NO NEED TO WORRY ABOUT YOUR FAMILY HISTORY."

Oversimplifies the significance of personal history and may invalidate an adoptee's desires to connect with their roots.

Microaggressions against adoptees:

"WHEN ARE YOU GOING TO FIND YOUR 'REAL' FAMILY?"

Suggests that adoptee's connections with adoptive family are not valid and pressures adoptees to engage in searching for birth families, despite their interest and comfort level.

"YOU'RE NOT LIKE OTHER ADOPTED PEOPLE I'VE MET."

This can isolate adoptees by suggesting they need to conform to a certain stereotype or narrative.

"ADOPTION IS THE SAME AS BEING IN FOSTER CARE."

Reduces the unique experiences of adoptees and foster youth into indistinguishable perspectives and can minimize different aspects of the child welfare system.

1) Who cares, what's the big deal?

2) These subtle, seemingly benign and often unintentional daily slights can add up. Comments that convey some kind of bias, discrimination, or prejudice toward marginalized experiences.

3) What can you do about it?

4) For adoptees, whether it's recognizing and giving space for your feelings/reactions, choosing to set boundaries and/or educate, seek out support from those you trust, engage with questions or not engage at all, document the experience for advocacy-related needs, raise awareness where you can, or simply receive a boost of self care where you can, I'd want adoptees to know they're not alone and they're not powerless to respond in the face of such encounters.

5) For parents and allies, you can find ways to support and give access to those options. Get creative, get involved, even if it means giving and holding open space without expectations or judgment. I can tell you from personal experience, the daily, subtle, even unintentional affirmations of love and support can also add up, and can make a difference in more ways you can imagine. Thanks in advance for that.

-Cam

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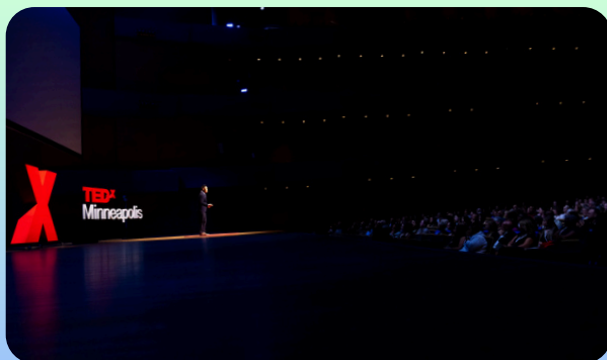
Cam earned his Master's in Counseling Psychology from University of Madison-Wisconsin. He is both an alum and **curriculum facilitator for the Permanency & Adoption Competency Certificate** through the Center for Adoption Support and Education and University of Minnesota School of Social Work. He is partnered as a vetted clinician both with Foster Adopt MN and the post-masters directory curated by Training for Adoption Competency.

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