



THE HIDDEN COST OF FITTING IN: NAVIGATING MICROAGGRESSIONS IN THE WORKPLACE



THE SILENT WEIGHT OF WORDS



Nia had always loved her job. As one of the few Black women at a prestigious marketing firm, she took pride in her work and the creativity she brought to her team. But over time, the small, seemingly harmless comments began to chip away at her confidence.

“You’re so well-spoken,” her colleague Sarah had said one day, surprise evident in her voice.

At first, Nia brushed it off. But then came the other comments:

“Wow, your hair is so interesting! Can I touch it?”

“You don’t sound Black at all!”

“I didn’t think you’d like indie music.”

Each statement was delivered with a smile, disguised as a compliment, but they left Nia feeling othered—like an outsider in a space she had worked hard to belong to.

One day, during a brainstorming session, she pitched an idea inspired by Black culture. The room fell silent before her manager responded, “That’s a little too urban for our audience.”

That was the moment Nia felt it—the weight of microaggressions pressing down on her, making her question her worth, her voice, and her place in the company. Over time, anxiety crept in. She second-guessed herself in meetings, withdrew from office social events, and started feeling mentally exhausted.

It wasn’t until she spoke with a culturally competent therapist that she realized she wasn’t imagining things. These experiences were real, and they had a name—microaggressions. Through therapy, Nia learned to set boundaries, find affirming spaces, and validate her own experiences. She discovered that she wasn’t alone and that her feelings were valid.

With time, she regained her confidence. She started addressing microaggressions when they happened, educating her peers, and advocating for diversity in her workplace. Therapy didn't change the world around her overnight, but it gave her the tools to navigate it without losing herself.

LESSON

Microaggressions may seem minor, but their impact is real. They shape self-esteem, confidence, and emotional well-being. Your feelings are valid, your experiences matter, and you deserve to take up space.

Have you ever faced microaggressions? How did you handle them? Let's talk.