

The Psychology of **Unintentional Insensitivity**

Presented by Paul Thornton & Whitney Hashimoto
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“Your words and actions will offend people. It’s not that you planned to - sometimes people will twist your intention by choosing to perceive things with malice.”

—**Dodinsky**



Our Plan for Today

01

What is it?

Definition and examples of unintentional insensitivity.

02

Contributors

Causes of unintentional insensitivity.

03

Impact

Impact of unintentional insensitivity.

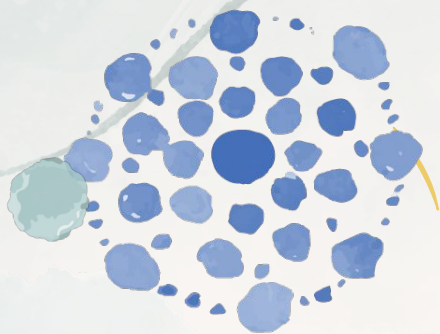
04

Solutions

How to avoid being unintentionally insensitive and what to do when it happens.



Definition & Examples of Unintentional Insensitivity



Definition:

Any behavior that unintentionally offends or results in emotional injury to others.



Examples:

- Failing to use preferred pronouns
- Using offensive or outdated slang or terminology
- “Positive” stereotyping
- Cultural appropriation



Breakout Rooms

In small groups, share your experiences with unintentional insensitivity. This could be a time someone may have inadvertently offended you, or a situation in which you accidentally offended someone else.



Contributors

Implicit Bias

Biases that we don't know we have.

Personality

Some of our personality traits/facets may predispose us to behaving insensitively.

Ignorance

Sometimes we aren't even aware of what might offend others.

Carelessness

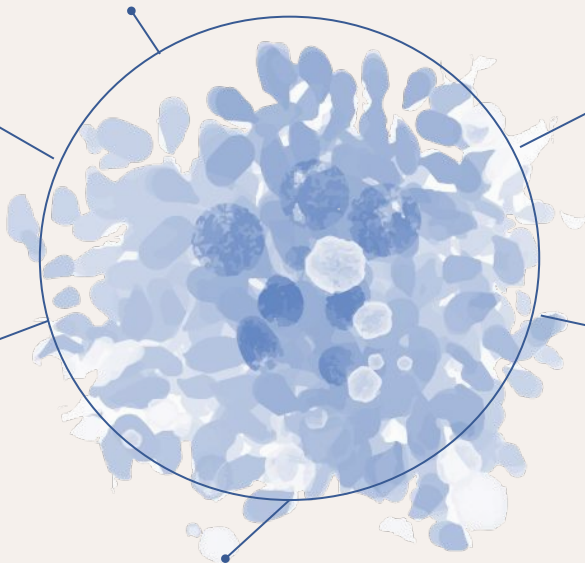
Even the best of us will occasionally screw up.

Lack of Social Skills or Low EQ

A lack of communication or social skills or low emotional intelligence may cause us to behave insensitively.

Anxiety/Difficult Emotions

When we are anxious or dealing with our own emotional challenges, we may say/do things that we ordinarily wouldn't.



Impact of Unintentional Insensitivity

- **Misunderstandings**
- **Hurt feelings**
- **Broken trust**
- **Resentment**
- **Embarrassment**
- **Distancing**
- **Indignation**
- **Defensiveness**
- **Retaliation**



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**“I’ll not willingly offend, nor be easily
offended; what’s amiss I’ll strive to mend,
and endure what can’t be mended.”**

—Isaac Watts



Solutions

Practice Mindfulness

By maintaining presence and awareness, we are more attuned to the moment and less likely to do or say careless or hurtful things.

Exercise Humility

We have to accept that we will inevitably do/say something unintentionally insensitive. We must be willing to make amends and forgive ourselves.

Learn to Manage our Emotions

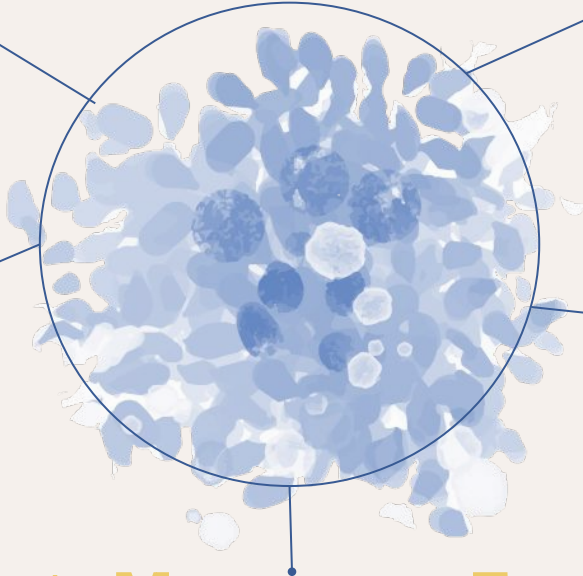
The more stable and calm we are, the more we are able to maintain mindfulness and respond thoughtfully to others.

Learn & Grow

We can increase our awareness by educating ourselves about other views, cultures, genders, sexual orientations, beliefs, etc.

Improve our EQ, Communication, & Social Skills

Social skills and emotional intelligence can be honed and increased with practice.





Defense Mechanisms **vs.** Non-Defensive Responses

Attack

Retaliate directly or indirectly.

Distort

Change the insensitive information.

Avoid

Withdraw from the offender or offensive information.

Seek More Info

Ask questions.

“Agree”

Acknowledge perceptual differences.



Thanks!



Do you have any questions?

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