Consciously Addressing Unconscious Bias

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Our purpose today

• Understand unconscious bias and different types of biases that exist

• Become more aware of our own biases

• Learn specific skills to address your biases

• Receive tools to convert this practice into action
Acknowledgements

• You chose to be here
• You care about others
• We all have biases
• We all make mistakes
• Change requires intention and action

Agreements

• Make it useful
• Yes, and...
• Confidentiality
• Anything else?
What was the first thing you noticed about me?

What we notice in few seconds

- Gender
- Race and Ethnicity
- Age
- Status
- Trustworthy-ness
- Charisma
- Leadership potential
- Social habits
- Intelligence
What is unconscious bias?

Group Sorting
Learned Stereotypes
Automatic
Unintentional
Deeply engrained
Influences behavior

Ask yourself…

What don’t I know?
What am I assuming?
Why did I think this way?
Racist babies

3 months:
• Show a positive bias toward attractive faces (Langlois, 1987)

6 months:
• Interested in skin color and gender differences (Bisson et al., 1955-1989)
• Able to “discriminate between different races” (Katz & Kofkin, 1997)

24 months:
• Notice and ask about differences (Bisson et al.)

Bias in children

1947 Doll Test

Majority of 3-7 year old children assigned positive characteristics to white dolls

2010 Test

White and Black children, as a whole, still showed preferred bias towards whiteness, but far less for black children.

75% of white families do NOT address race with their children

75% of black families address race with their children
Unconscious Bias

• Shaped by our personal experiences,

• Attitudes of family, friends and others, living and working environments,

• Culture: media, movies, and books

Developed over the course of a lifetime, beginning at an early age.

Thumb Activity

Match up with a partner.

Every time you pin your partner's thumb for three seconds, you get a point.

Keep count!

Image source: https://www.usip.org

Resource: Jeff Mio, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona
http://breakingsprejudice.org/teaching/group-activities/thumb-war-activity.html
Did you notice?

Notice that the instructions did not say the activity is a competition

Notice that there were no limits to the number of points each person could earn

Notice that participants who took turns holding each others’ thumb for 3 seconds usually earn more points than those who compete

Notice that the instructions did not say you cannot talk to one another

Implications of Unconscious Bias

• We tend to see an individual as a representation of a particular group rather than as an individual.

• We tend to favor, prefer, and associate positive characteristics with members of the group to which we belong.

• We tend to associate negative characteristics with or disfavor members of groups to which we do not belong.

These tendencies are the foundation of stereotyping, prejudice and, ultimately, may result in discriminatory decisions or actions, even if those decisions or actions might not be what we consciously intend or acknowledge.
Addressing bias in children (and ourselves)

- Don’t ignore just because it makes you uncomfortable
- Encourage questions
- Offer many ways for exposure to people from different backgrounds
- Encourage them to value friends who come from different backgrounds
- Look at your own attitude & how you describe other people
- Discuss images in the media

Implicit vs Unconscious Bias

**Unconscious bias** refers to automatic bias that we are unaware of, and which happens outside of our control to help make quick judgments and assessments of people and situations, influenced by our background, cultural environment and personal experiences.

**Implicit bias** refers to the same area, but as we are being made increasingly aware of them, we are responsible for them. We all need to recognise and acknowledge our biases and find ways to mitigate their impact on our behaviour and decisions.

*Source: Dave Nagel/Getty Images*
A young boy gets into a car accident with his father. He ends up at a trauma center, in need of an urgent operation. The surgeon sees him, approaches the boy and his father, and says, “I can’t operate on him. He’s my son.”
Ask yourself…

What don’t I know?

What am I assuming?

Why did I think this way?
Different Types of Biases

Confirmation bias

Looking for information that supports our beliefs, and ignoring details to the contrary

"I trust this site to tell the truth."
Perception bias

Stereotyping people based on a group they belong to

Affinity bias

Only receptive to people to people who are like themselves
Conformity Bias / Bandwagon Effect

Doing something primarily because other people are doing it, regardless of your own beliefs

Beauty Bias / Halo Effect

Assuming everything about a person must be great because you like something about them
Contrast Effect

Assessing similar things and compare them with one another, rather than looking at each based on their own merits

Selection Bias

Bias that results from an under-representative sample
Attribution Bias

Systematic errors people make when evaluating our own and/or other people’s behaviors

Share Out

Think of an example when someone made an negative and incorrect assumption about you.

How did that make you feel?

Now imagine if many people who you have encountered made the same assumption every single day of your life? What effect would it have on you today?
Microaggressions

**What is said:**
- “Where are you from? No really?”
- “You speak English well.”
- “Everyone take out your smart phones.”
- “You throw like a girl.”
- “That’s retarded.”
- “You don’t even seem Asian.”

**How it is received:**
- You’re not American
- Your appearance/background dictates your skills or knowledge (or lack of)
- Everyone has enough money for common items
- Feminine traits are undesirable.
- People with disabilities are less important, likeable, or competent.
- Everyone from your group acts the same.

What do you think the possible intent was of the speaker? Does the intent change the impact of the statement?

Microaggressions and their impact

- Performance
- Mental health
- Disengagement
- Induce imposter syndrome
- Stereotype Threat – constant fear of validating a stereotype
- Feeling excluded and alienated

*Microaggressions point out cultural difference in ways that put the recipient’s non-conformity into sharp relief, often causing anxiety and crises of belonging on the recipient.*

Source: https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/09/microaggressions-matter/406090/
Hand Exercise

Raise your hand if you are right-handed

Raise your hand if you wake up in the morning thinking... “right-handed people are awesome!”

Source: Steven Jones, Ph.D. 2008

Hand Exercise

Right-handed people DO wake up to a world where everything is awesome for them. This is a privilege you didn’t have to think about, ask/work for, certainly didn’t earn.

- Computers set up with the mouse and number pad
- Fridge, scissors, door knobs
- Shaking hands
- Pledging to the flag
- School desks
- Reading backwards
- Driving
- Pushing a ball point pen (not pulling)

Source: Marina Gialanella University of Michigan
Don’t Blame the Canary

Consider the Environment

• Is it set up so individuals can thrive?
• Does it offer multiple ways for individuals with different needs to be able to participate?
• Whose perspectives are we missing?

Adjusting Cultural Norms and Standards

• Perfectionism vs. Culture of appreciation
• Sense of urgency vs. developing realistic workplans
• Quantity vs. Quality
• Written communication vs. other forms of communication
• Power hoarding vs. inclusive leadership
• Either/or thinking vs. acknowledging multiple viewpoints
• Being polite vs. addressing conflict directly
• Individualism vs. Collectivism
• Bigger/More mentality vs. “Seventh Generation” thinking
• Objectivity vs. Accepting different viewpoints

Source: Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, ChangeWork, 2001
http://cwsworkshop.org/PARC_site_B/dr-culture.html
Universal Design: creates more access for all

A design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability.

Source: http://universaldesign.ie

Why creating an inclusive space matters

Heterogeneous Groups

- Can lead to awkward exchanges
- Can have more perceptions of conflict
- Can be difficult to understand others’ ideas

However...

- Individuals can play various roles (leader, innovator, communicator, etc)
- Can lead to more information processing
- Can lead to a higher degree of creativity
- More exchange of different perspectives
- Better group problem solving
- New ideas can emerge, individuals can learn from one another, and they may discover a solution to a problem in the process.
Unconscious to Conscious

Unconscious bias is like a habit that can be reduced through a combination of:

• Awareness
• Concern about the effects of that bias, and
• Application of strategies to reduce bias

Source: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3603687/

Build Awareness

• The first step is to acknowledge that we all have unconscious biases.
• Take the Project Implicit IAT – a web based test that measures the strength of associations between concepts and evaluations. https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/
• Participate in trainings and other educational programs aimed at raising awareness about implicit biases and their impact.
• Build positive new relationships with individual members of groups outside your own.
• Consider the attributes of the individual apart from their group and focus on what you have in common.
Understand Effects

• Take in a different perspective of the person. Try to understand from their perspective what they encounter and what adaptive techniques they might use to function successfully.

• Hold yourself responsible. Do not dismiss your accountability simply because implicit biases are triggered automatically without our conscious awareness.

• Remind yourself that an inclusive culture leads to better buy-in, stimulates creativity, and help find solutions that benefits all
Apply Strategies to Reduce and Interrupt

• Practice Individuation – take the time to learn about people who you perceive to be different than you.

• Practice counter-stereotypic imaging – do a media audit, counter negative stereotypes of under-represented and marginalized groups

• Improve decision making process
  • “blind” yourself so you make decisions based on relevant information
  • Use checklists to slow down decision making and encourage deliberate thinking

• Build new mental associations and these interventions must be consistently and continuously applied.

Worksheet

“Breaking the habit” of implicit bias requires learning about the contexts that activate the bias and how to replace the biased responses with responses that reflect one’s nonprejudiced goals.

I have a bias against... _________________________________

I assume these three things

1. _________________________________

2. _________________________________

3. _________________________________

I am concerned about this bias because...

______________________________
Worksheet page 2  \textit{Individuation, perspective taking, and stereotype replacement}

I think that the individual to whom I have a bias against would feel

____________________________________

Some positive examples of individuals of the group I have a bias against

____________________________________

Here are ways I can increase opportunities for contact with groups I have bias against

____________________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________

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