

Strategies for Protecting Yourself from the Effects of Unconscious Biases

Check for double-standards

- When we don't like the way someone is acting, or feel ourselves reacting negatively to someone's behavior, we can take a minute and imagine how we would feel if someone different acted in the same way.
- For example, if a woman is being assertive and we feel she is being disrespectful; imagine a man doing the same thing. Would it still seem disrespectful?
- By checking for double standards like these, we can prevent our unconscious biases from unfairly judging someone else.

Evaluate your skepticism

- People automatically want to avoid things that are distressing.
- When we combine this with our automatic tendency towards confirmation bias, ignoring evidence when it doesn't fit with what we believe, or want to believe, we are at risk for ignoring the evidence of discrimination and forgetting about training like this one.
- When someone tells you about exclusion and discriminatory experiences, believe them until proven wrong. Catch yourself seeking alternate explanations.

Commit to self-care. Learn emotion-shifting skills to prevent negative and promote positive emotions,

- Studies have found that our unconscious biases are more likely to affect us when we are busy, tired, feeling anxious or stressed, or generally depleted.
- This is because conscious thought takes a great deal of effort and unconscious thought is effortless and automatic
- One of the best things you can do for yourself, and to prevent unconscious bias from affecting your behavior, is to learn and consistently use stress reduction and emotion-shifting strategies.
- Examples:
 - deep abdominal breathing
 - progressive relaxation.
 - mindfulness techniques

Build partnerships

- Our brains automatically divide people into ingroup and outgroup members.
- Once someone is in our ingroup, our brains are less likely to rely on unconscious biases. We also automatically view and treat ingroup members better than outgroup members.
- Including someone as part of our ingroup is a powerful strategy to prevent negative unconscious bias and makes it easier to build partnerships with them.
- There are a few simple ways to make someone part of your ingroup.
 - Discover what you have in common.
 - Remember that as humans, we have much more commonalities than differences. Take a moment to find what you share with someone else.
 - Use inclusive language. use words like we, us and our instead of I, you, us or them.
 - Focus on your common goal. Try to think of yourself and patient as a team, working toward a common goal.

Practice Perspective-Taking

- Many studies have found that taking a moment to try to see things from the other person's perspective or imagining yourself in their shoes helps prevent unconscious bias.
- Perspective-taking is a skill that can be learned and will become second nature if you make a point of practicing it as often as you can – with family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers.
- Check the accuracy of how you imagine the perspective of others. For instance, you could say:
 - "I am wondering how I might see it if I were looking through your eyes..."
 - or
 - "I was imagining being in your shoes, and it occurred to me that I would feel this way. Am I close?"
- Taking a moment to see a situation from another person's perspective reduces unconscious biases and has been shown to improve interactions overall. Having more of these positive interactions can also help reduce unconscious biases in the long-term.