

WHY THIS MATTERS?

Leaders play an important role in addressing the ways that biases negatively impact their team. Biases can cause harm, resistance to change, poor decisions, and discriminatory practices. Understanding and shifting biases begins by examining and mitigating our own biases. It is only by engaging in this shared responsibility that we support a productive and healthy workplace, and can dismantle structural racism and inequities that are perpetuated in institutional policies and practices.

WHAT IS IMPLICIT BIAS?

Implicit biases are mental processes that operate outside of our consciousness. Biases are caused by mental shortcuts that allow us to make inferences without a lot of deliberation and/or reflection. They affect our attitudes, actions, and decisions. Biases are developed over time and are informed by social location (the combination of factors such as gender, race, social class, age, ability, and sexual orientation), personal experiences and preferences, through the direct and indirect messages that surround us, and through institutional structures.

DID YOU KNOW?

There are more than 50 types of cognitive biases, which influence our thinking and behaviours! Here are a few that may impact your success:



Status Quo Bias

We tend to prefer things to stay the same and have a desire to return to how it "worked" before.

"Working remotely is new, therefore it can't be as effective."



Anchoring Bias

We rely heavily on the first piece of information introduced or initial experiences when making decisions.

"The first roll-out of our new digital tool seemed to work OK – so it must be good for everyone."



Confirmation Bias

We tend to find and remember information that confirms our perceptions, ignoring information that contradicts our beliefs.

"Most of these studies support my understanding!"



False Consensus Effect

We believe more people agree with us or are more like us in their beliefs than actually the case.

"Everybody thinks that!"



Proximity Bias

We make incorrect assumptions that those we can see working are more productive and dedicated than those we cannot see working.

"If I can't see someone working in the office, they are probably putting in less effort into work while working remotely."

HOW TO REDUCE THE IMPACT OF YOUR BIAS?

1. Increase Your Self-Awareness | We all have biases, so pay attention to how they impact your attitudes, thinking, and decisions. When you recognize that bias has influenced your thinking, reflect on where it might come from and how you can mitigate the bias in the future. Consider how your biases may be causing harm to individual team members, team cohesion, and collaboration, or may be getting in the way of adapting and being successful in a hybrid environment. Acknowledge your biases and be open with your team about the ways you are challenging them.

2. Shift Your Mindset | It is possible to increase bias awareness and to shift our biases over time. Put intentional practices in place to counteract the tendency towards bias. Proactively challenge your biases by thinking more reflectively about, and challenging, your own attitudes and behaviours. Engage with people who are different from yourself with curiosity and openness. Listen actively and for understanding. Engage in training sessions and seek support in addressing your biases.

3. Challenge Assumptions and Build New Habits Together | At first, it might be uncomfortable for you to manage a hybrid team - in part due to your preconceived judgements, biases, and comfort level of how things "should" or "have" been done. Team members might also have biases that influence their thinking about the hybrid workplace. For example, there may be a perception that in-office team members receive more attention and advancement opportunities without processes in place to counteract this. Establish team ground rules that will support a safe-space and will encourage conversations that allow alternative perspectives and viewpoints. Review processes, attitudes, and team ground rules and norms that may be harmful or discriminatory. Ask why and why not often. Be aware that biases occur more often when we are stressed, emotional, or tired. Seek feedback from your team to build better habits and model a reflective mindset that challenges bias.

SHARE KNOWLEDGE

Working in a hybrid environment may be new for many people, and it will take time to learn how to best facilitate healthy and productive practices. You are not alone in this transition to a hybrid work environment. Some of us have more experience leading hybrid teams than others. We encourage you to talk openly about your successes and challenges. Share your ideas, tips, and tools with your colleagues. Be curious, ask questions, and seek support.

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

Human Resources, Health, Safety and Environment (HRHSE) offers a range of options for you to learn more about setting expectations, like team norms and ground rules, and holding your team accountable to them. We also offer extensive workshops and programs focused on leadership development.

Learn more about our leadership and professional development programming on the [HRHSE website](#).

RESOURCES & REFERENCES

Articles

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- Academic Impressions. "DEI Foundations: Implicit Bias in Higher Education." (29 min).
- Academic Impressions, "See Something, Say Something: Building Your Capacity to Respond to Bias." (53 min).
- CCDI Webinar. "A deeper dive on the brain and the science of unconscious bias" (60 min).

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