

The Truth About Unconscious Bias

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No matter who you are or where you are from, no matter your race or ethnicity, age, or gender identity, we all share one thing – unconscious bias.

WHAT IS UNCONSCIOUS BIAS?

Simply put, unconscious bias, also known as implicit bias, is our human brain naturally categorizing people by gender, social background, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or education.



NOT ALL BIAS IS BAD

We begin to develop these biases from an early age which continue to develop throughout our lives through various life experiences and exposure to a broader range of people.

These biases exist deep within our subconscious brain, yet they can significantly impact the way we communicate with the people in our world.

Bias itself is a normal function of the human brain, and as humans evolved, our unconscious biases and judgments became vital to our survival. The ability to subconsciously sort people into categories and pre-judge situations still helps us make rapid decisions that can be lifesaving.

THE FLIP SIDE OF THE COIN

The biases that shape the way we view and interact with people affect our personal lives and at work. So, while bias is expected, often without even realizing it, we display certain biases in the workplace that are hurtful, harmful, and discriminatory.

From the interview process to engaging in a conversation with the coworker in the next cubicle or speaking to a patient on the phone, we have a chance every day to become better versions of ourselves and work to remove unconscious biases in the workplace.

Knowing the different types of biases and actively questioning your preconceptions is a fantastic way to begin the process for all of our everyday interactions.

Some examples of workplace unconscious bias are:

- [Gender bias](#)
- [Ageism](#)
- [Name bias](#)
- [Beauty bias](#)
- [Confirmation bias](#)
- [Affinity bias](#)
- [Perception bias](#)



[Anurag Gupta: What Can We Save By Breaking Unconscious Bias: Video](#)

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS AND HEALTHCARE

There is no question that unconscious bias affects the way medical providers interact with patients. Since everyone, even clinicians, have them, these unconscious preconceptions about a patient can naturally come through in patient-provider communications.

The presence of unconscious bias among clinicians suggests that it could play a role in health care disparities just as it plays a role in differential outcomes elsewhere in society.

Though most people never intend harmful bias, to help prevent negative patient outcomes, it is important that as clinicians, we regularly evaluate our patient interactions to help ensure that biases do not negatively affect the level of care they receive.

WHAT I MEANT WAS...

On occasion, any person may struggle with the correct thing to say in an awkward moment. For instance, instead of saying the well intentioned phrase, "I don't see color," which invalidates the accomplishments and lessens the value of the contributions of a person or race of people.

Instead, you could say, "I'm doing my best to understand," or simply be honest and say, "I need help with how to address this."

Overall, we need to consider our messaging to each other, using inclusive statements that welcome others and embrace multiculturalism or other differences.

Offering respect, recognition, honesty, and approaching people with humility, openness, and curiosity can lead to greater self awareness and an ability to approach difficult conversations with genuine authenticity.

