

Are you aware of your unconscious bias?



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You may not realise it, but we are all biased.

Our **brains make judgements and decisions about people and situations really quickly**, without us being aware that this is happening.

No matter how unbiased we think we are, we often have negative opinions about people who are outside our own group. They may negatively influence the decisions that we make, and they may not be as objective as we think.



What is unconscious bias?

Research suggests that we instinctively categorise people using criteria such as age, ethnicity, gender, education, disability, sexual orientation, accent, social background and job title.

This can lead us to **make assumptions and decisions based on our biases**, and we have a tendency to rely on stereotypes, even if we don't consciously believe in them.

Biases can sneak into every encounter we have, from the language used in communications to the decisions we make.

Stereotypes and unconscious bias can lead to awkward interactions lacking warmth or civility and intentional or unconscious avoidance. More extreme forms can lead to discrimination, tension and conflict, hostility, harassment, or even aggression.

Although it's widely recognised that diversity of thought and innovation in an organisation are key to success, **our unconscious preferences for people who are like us.**

How to overcome your unconscious bias

By increasing our awareness of unconscious bias, we can minimise the influence on our own decision making and our relationships with other people.

Here are some top tips for avoiding unconscious bias:

- **Recognise that you have biases** and identify what they are
- **Don't trust first impressions**
- **Stop, think and be mindful** – use your ability to think consciously so that you make impartial decisions
- **Be aware of your language and your body language** – and carefully reflect on how someone may feel and behave when exposed to those cues (how we perceive people's actions affects how we feel and therefore how we interact with them)
- **Be empathetic** at all times
- **Focus on the positive behaviour** of people and not negative stereotypes
- **Challenge negative assumptions** and stereotypes – take a contrary view
- Ask yourself **'why'** and **'why not'** often
- **Try to work with a wider range of people** and get to know them as individuals
- **Avoid words and phrases that may cause upset or offence**, such as personal opinions on politics, religion, gender, race or custom
- **Check words that may show unconscious bias** or stereotyping, and adjust appropriately – such as using the terminology 'Chairperson' or 'Chair' instead of using 'Chairman'
- Make sure any **imagery accompanying your communications is inclusive** and diverse
- Follow our **Equality, Diversity & Inclusion and Harassment & Bullying policies** and procedures

Remember

The more exposed we are to other groups, the less likely we are to feel prejudice against them.

If you'd like to learn more about Unconscious Bias please email

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and request access to our volunteer's training module.