



# Overcoming Unconscious Bias

Every moment, our brains take in vast amounts of information. To make sense of it, our brains automatically and unconsciously group and categorize the information to identify patterns and generalizations – leading to unconscious biases that can influence how we treat each other. No matter how unbiased we think we are, we have unconscious positive and negative opinions about people based on their race, ethnicity, physical abilities, learning styles, age, gender, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, weight, height, dress, and much more. Such as social status, education level, and politics. We overcome our biases when we recognize them, expose ourselves to ideas that challenge them, and consciously take steps to interrupt them when they arise. When we proactively address our biases, we can make progress toward a more respectful and inclusive community.

## Strategies for Overcoming Unconscious Bias

<p><b>Recognizing bias</b></p>	<p>Take implicit bias tests: <a href="https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/">https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/</a></p> <p>When you have an automatic (immediate) negative reaction to someone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pause to identify the negative reaction (distrust, fear, discomfort, disgust, etc.)</li> <li>• Identify the source of the negative reaction (person’s race, faith, disability, obesity, etc.)</li> <li>• Analyze the situation to determine if the person’s behavior warrants the reaction</li> <li>• Name the type of bias that the reaction-source could represent</li> </ul>
<p><b>Challenging bias</b></p>	<p>Expand your exposure to the out-group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Read books and watch movies that depict people as humans rather than stereotypes</li> <li>• Identify individuals in the out-group whom you admire</li> <li>• Join a club, volunteer for an organization, or attend cultural events with diversity</li> <li>• At work or outside, have conversations with people who are different from you</li> </ul> <p>When you have an automatic (immediate) negative reaction to someone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you observe a negative behavior, attribute this to the individual (not the group)</li> <li>• Consider whether you would react the same to the negative behavior if the person were in your in-group</li> <li>• Pause to notice positive traits about the person</li> </ul>
<p><b>Interrupting and replacing bias</b></p>	<p>Develop core values and objective criteria for evaluating people’s behavior and work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavior: Honest, ethical, respectful, etc.</li> <li>• Work: Accurate, complete, well organized, timely, etc.</li> </ul> <p>When you witness microaggressions and other bias-based actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be an active bystander or upstander (as you are able)</li> <li>• Break the silence; hold other people accountable (as you are able)</li> </ul> <p>When you have an automatic (immediate) negative reaction to someone:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Notice and set aside the negative reaction</li> <li>• Provide your full attention</li> <li>• Respectfully ask questions for clarification</li> <li>• Acknowledge the individual’s strengths and contributions (microaffirmations)</li> </ul>

## Content

### TED Talks

Tiffany Jana: *The Power of Privilege*

Melinda Epler: *Three Ways to Be a Better Ally in the Workplace*

Ashlee Marie Preston: *Effective Allyship*

### Books

*Blind Spot: Hidden Biases of Good People*, by Mahzarin Banaji and Anthony Greenwald, 2016

*Overcoming Bias*, by Tiffany Jana and Matthew Freeman, 2016

*The Person You Mean to Be*, by Dolly Chung, 2018

*White Fragility*, by Robin Diangelo, 2018

## Definitions

<b>Bias</b>	Preference for one thing over another; can be positive, neutral, or negative; can be conscious, semiconscious, or unconscious
<b>In-group, out-group</b>	Group of people who share our particular traits or qualities (in-group) or who do not share these traits or qualities (out-group)
<b>Microaffirmation</b>	Seemingly small act that affirms or supports a target person or group
<b>Microaggression</b>	<p>Brief and commonplace verbal, behavioral, or environmental indignity, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicates hostile, derogatory, or negative message to a target person or group; often dismissed by dominant group as innocent or innocuous</p> <p><i>Micro-insult</i>: Communication that conveys rudeness/insensitivity and demeans a person’s identity; often unconscious</p> <p><i>Micro-assault</i>: Explicitly hostile verbal, nonverbal, or environmental attack meant to hurt the target; often conscious</p> <p><i>Micro-invalidating</i>: Communication that excludes, negates, or nullifies the thoughts, feelings, or realities of a target of microaggression; often unconscious</p>
<b>Privilege</b>	An unearned right, advantage, or immunity granted based on having a particular trait (such as white race, male gender, physical abilities, etc.); all individuals have a mix of privileges to varying degrees; existence of privilege has no bearing on a person’s worth or character
<b>Stereotype</b>	<p>Widely held overgeneralized or oversimplified belief about a category of people or thing; can be positive, neutral, or negative; can be conscious, semiconscious, or unconscious</p> <p><i>Note: Stereotype is a belief, whereas bias is a preference.</i></p>