

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS HANDBOOK

BUILDING AWARENESS TO BUILD INCLUSION

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A CURIOUS CATALYST PUBLICATION

ISO 9001:2015 CERTIFIED

IMPLEMENTATION PARTNER - INDIA

DIVERSITY FORUM DEI TOOLKIT

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INTRODUCTION

EVERY DECISION WE MAKE — FROM WHO WE HIRE, TO WHO WE PROMOTE, TO WHOSE OPINION WE TRUST — IS SHAPED BY UNSEEN FORCES CALLED UNCONSCIOUS BIASES.

THEY ARE NOT ALWAYS MALICIOUS OR DELIBERATE; THEY ARE SIMPLY SHORTCUTS OUR BRAIN TAKES TO PROCESS INFORMATION QUICKLY.

BUT IN WORKPLACES, THESE SHORTCUTS CAN LEAD TO LONG-TERM INEQUITIES. THEY CAN DETERMINE WHO GETS HEARD, WHO GETS HIRED, AND WHO GETS LEFT OUT.

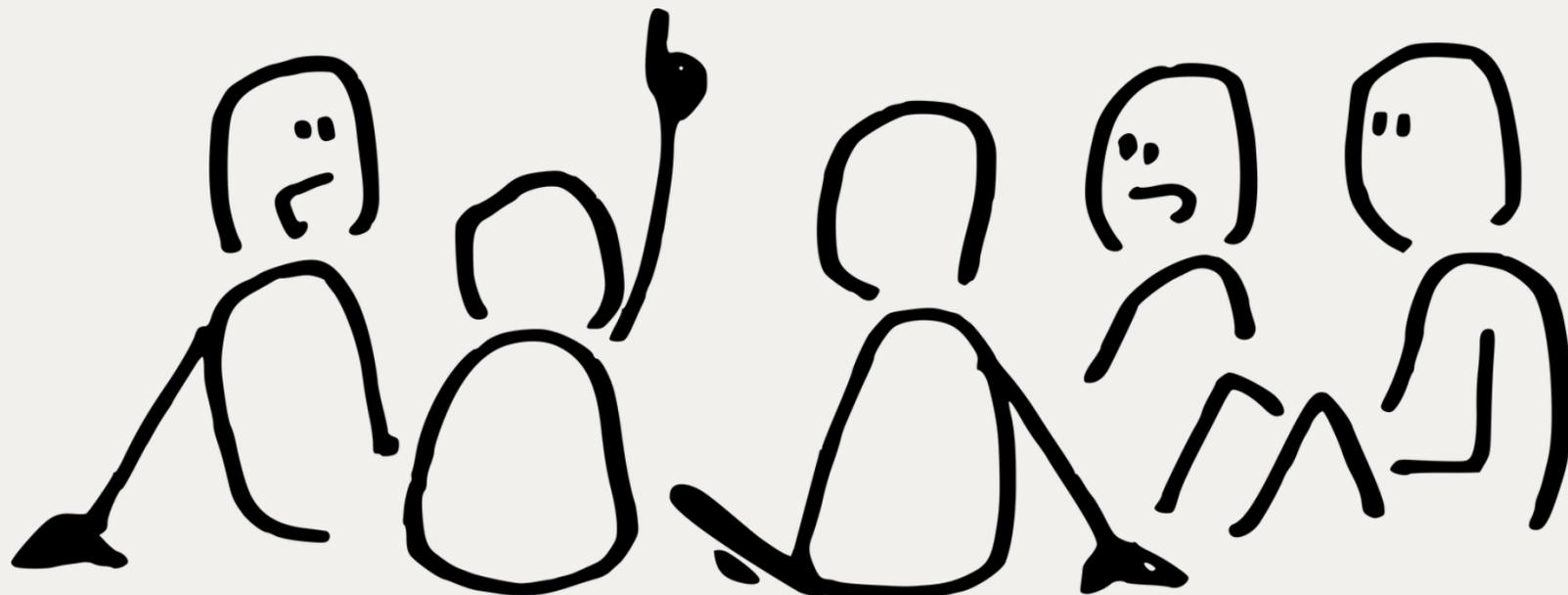
THIS HANDBOOK HELPS LEADERS, HR PROFESSIONALS, AND EMPLOYEES UNDERSTAND UNCONSCIOUS BIAS AND ITS IMPACT, WHILE OFFERING TOOLS TO CREATE FAIRER, MORE INCLUSIVE WORKPLACES — THE KIND THAT INSPIRE TRUST, INNOVATION, AND COLLABORATION.

WHAT IS UNCONSCIOUS BIAS?

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS REFERS TO THE AUTOMATIC JUDGMENTS AND STEREOTYPES WE MAKE ABOUT PEOPLE BASED ON THEIR GENDER, AGE, ETHNICITY, APPEARANCE, LANGUAGE, EDUCATION, OR BACKGROUND — WITHOUT BEING AWARE OF IT.

THESE BIASES COME FROM CULTURAL CONDITIONING, PERSONAL EXPERIENCES, AND SOCIETAL INFLUENCES.

THEY ARE FAST, UNINTENTIONAL, AND DEEPLY INGRAINED.



Common Workplace biases

→ Affinity Bias:

Preferring people who are like us — same school, language, hobbies, or background.

→ Perception bias

These stereotypes lead us to make snap judgments about people without getting to know them.

→ Confirmation bias

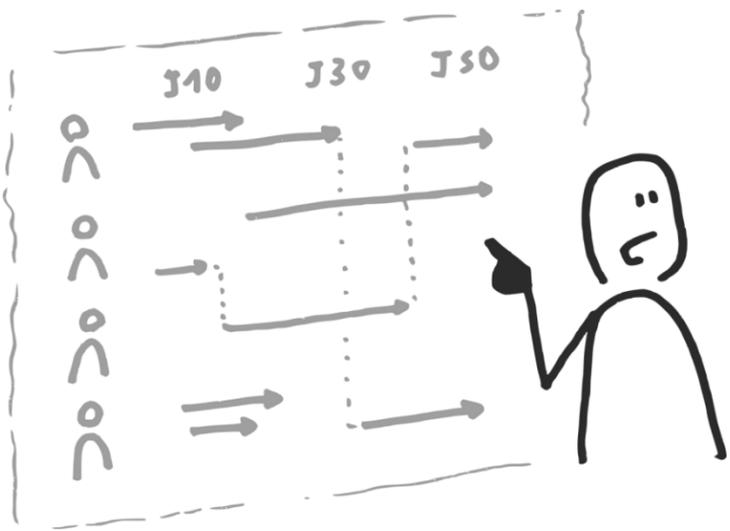
Seeking information that confirms our pre-existing beliefs about someone.

→ Appearance Bias

Judging professionalism based on looks, attire, or weight.

→ Gender Bias

Making assumptions about roles or competence based on gender.



Impact of UB

01

On Individuals

- Reduced confidence or belonging among employees who feel “different.”
- Emotional exhaustion from constantly code-switching to “fit in.”
- Career stagnation despite performance or skill.

02

On teams:

- Homogeneity of thought — teams look and think alike.
- Exclusion of new or dissenting perspectives.
- Miscommunication, reduced collaboration, and psychological distance

03

On Organisations:

- Loss of diverse talent and innovation.
- Lower engagement and higher attrition.
- Reputational and legal risks related to bias or discrimination.

Case

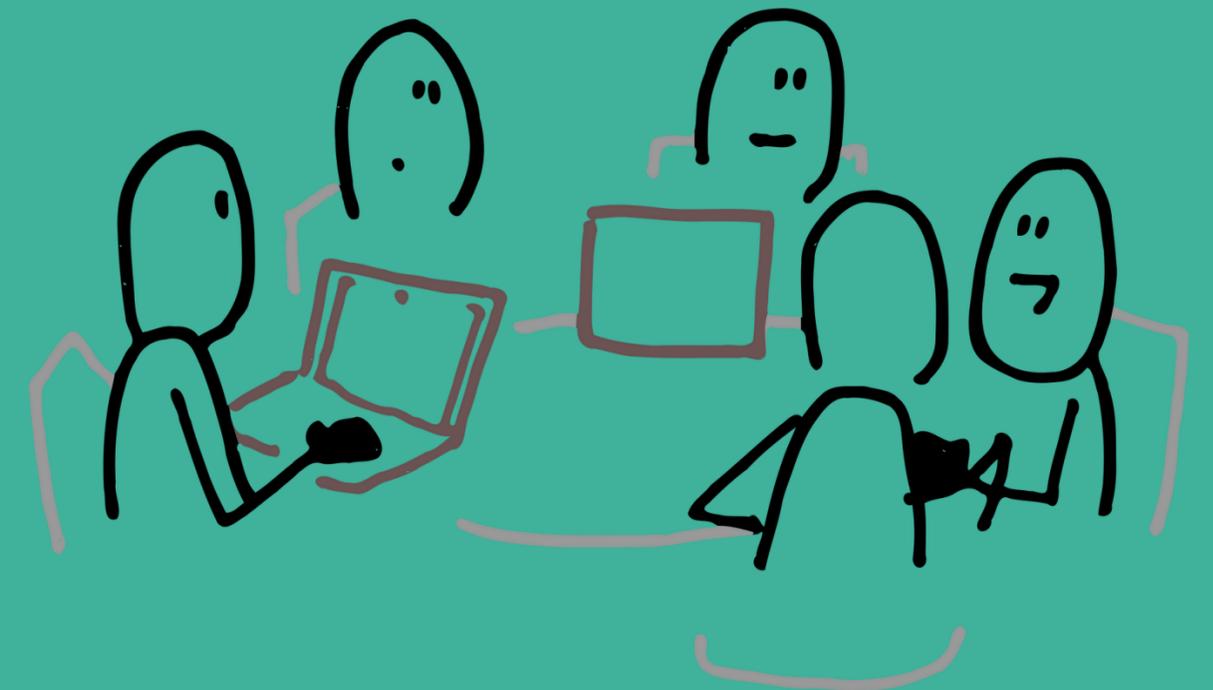
Scenario:

During annual appraisals, Amit, a manager, tends to give higher ratings to team members he regularly socialises with — those from his alma mater or local community. Others, despite strong performance, feel their work goes unnoticed.

Type of Bias: *Affinity Bias*

Impact:

Creates feelings of exclusion and mistrust in the team.
Limits diverse perspectives in leadership pipelines.
Encourages conformity over competence.



Case

Rohan, a high-performing marketing professional, avoids sharing personal details at work. When he once mentioned attending a Pride event, a colleague joked, “We didn’t know you were into that!”

Another added, “You don’t look gay.”

Since then, Rohan has become quieter in meetings and avoids social gatherings.

Type of Bias: *LGBTQIA+ Bias & Microaggressions*

Impact:

Rohan feels unsafe expressing his authentic self. His participation drops, leading to reduced visibility. The workplace loses out on his creativity and input.



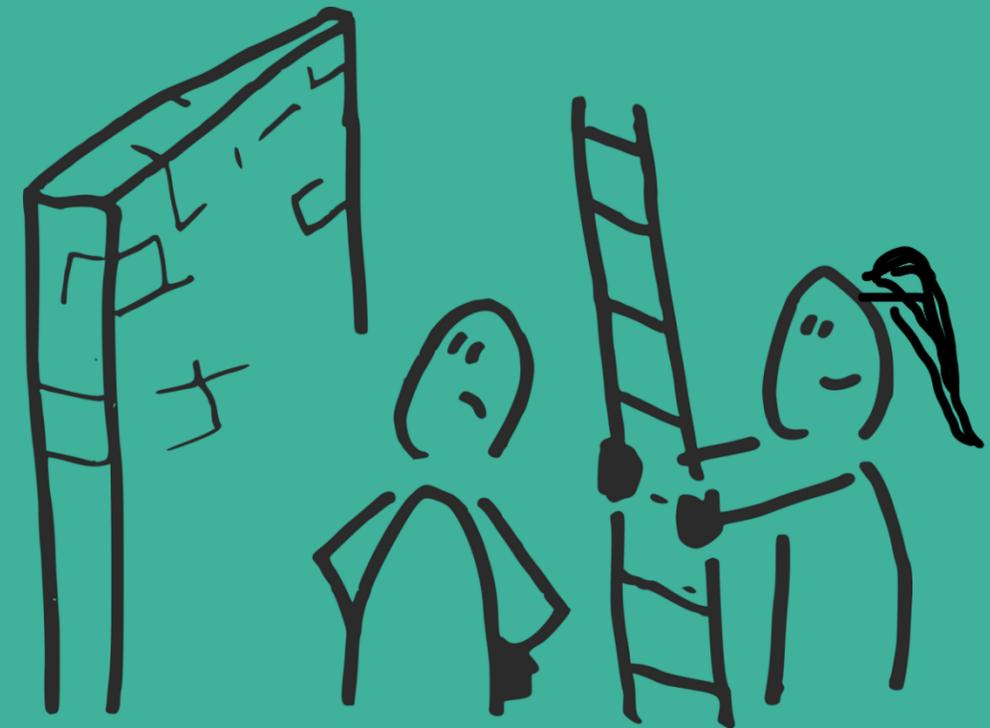
Case

Ankita, a senior project engineer, is repeatedly assigned back-office coordination instead of on-site work. Her manager assumes that field assignments would be “too hectic” for her. A male colleague with similar experience is chosen instead. Ankita feels overlooked and undervalued — despite being fully capable and willing to travel.

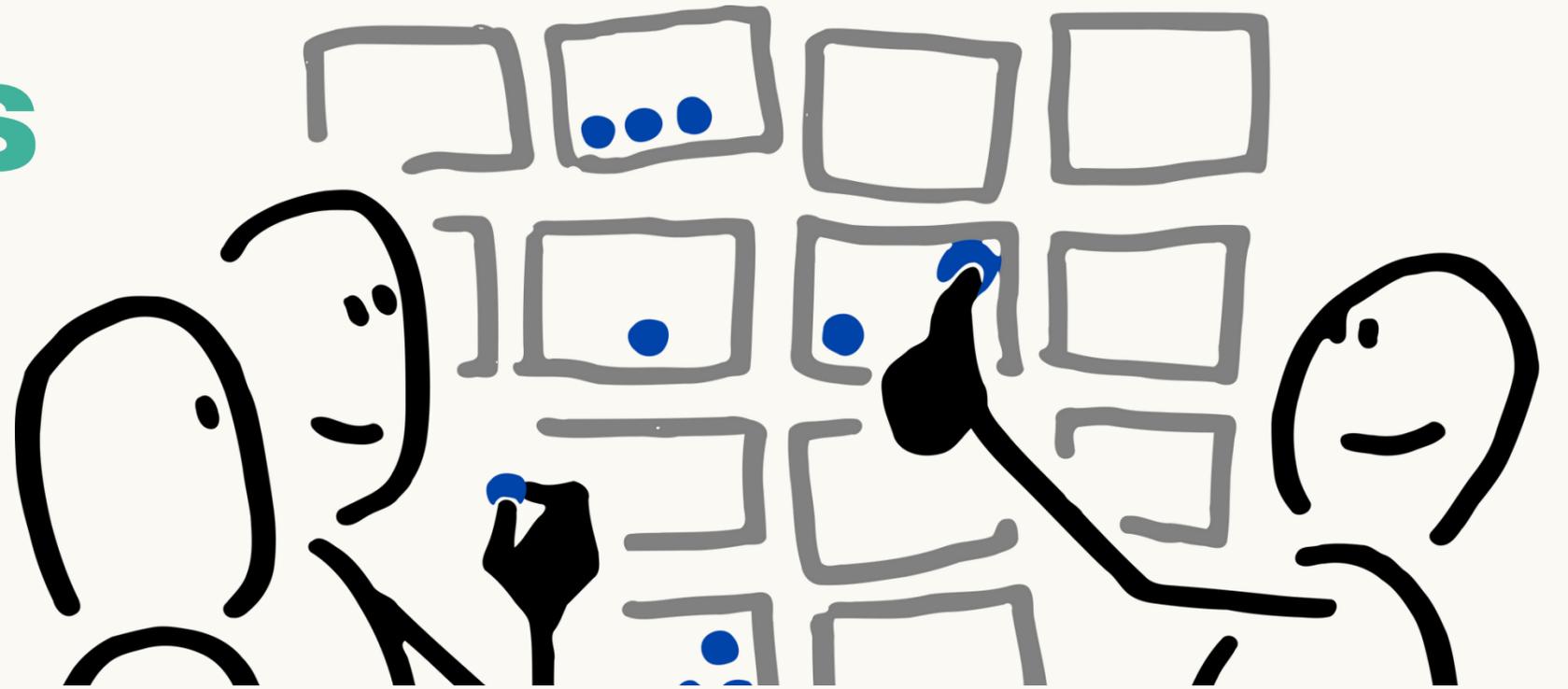
Type of Bias: *Gender Bias*

Impact:

Ankita’s career progression stalls, leading to demotivation. The team misses out on her experience and insights. Reinforces the stereotype that women are less reliable on site



Advantages of bias free workplace



Higher Productivity

Inclusive teams feel psychologically safe, leading to higher creativity and collaboration.

Better Decision-Making

Diverse voices reduce blind spots and groupthink, resulting in stronger business outcomes.

Improved Reputation

Bias-free environments build trust — with employees, customers, and stakeholders alike.

Higher Retention

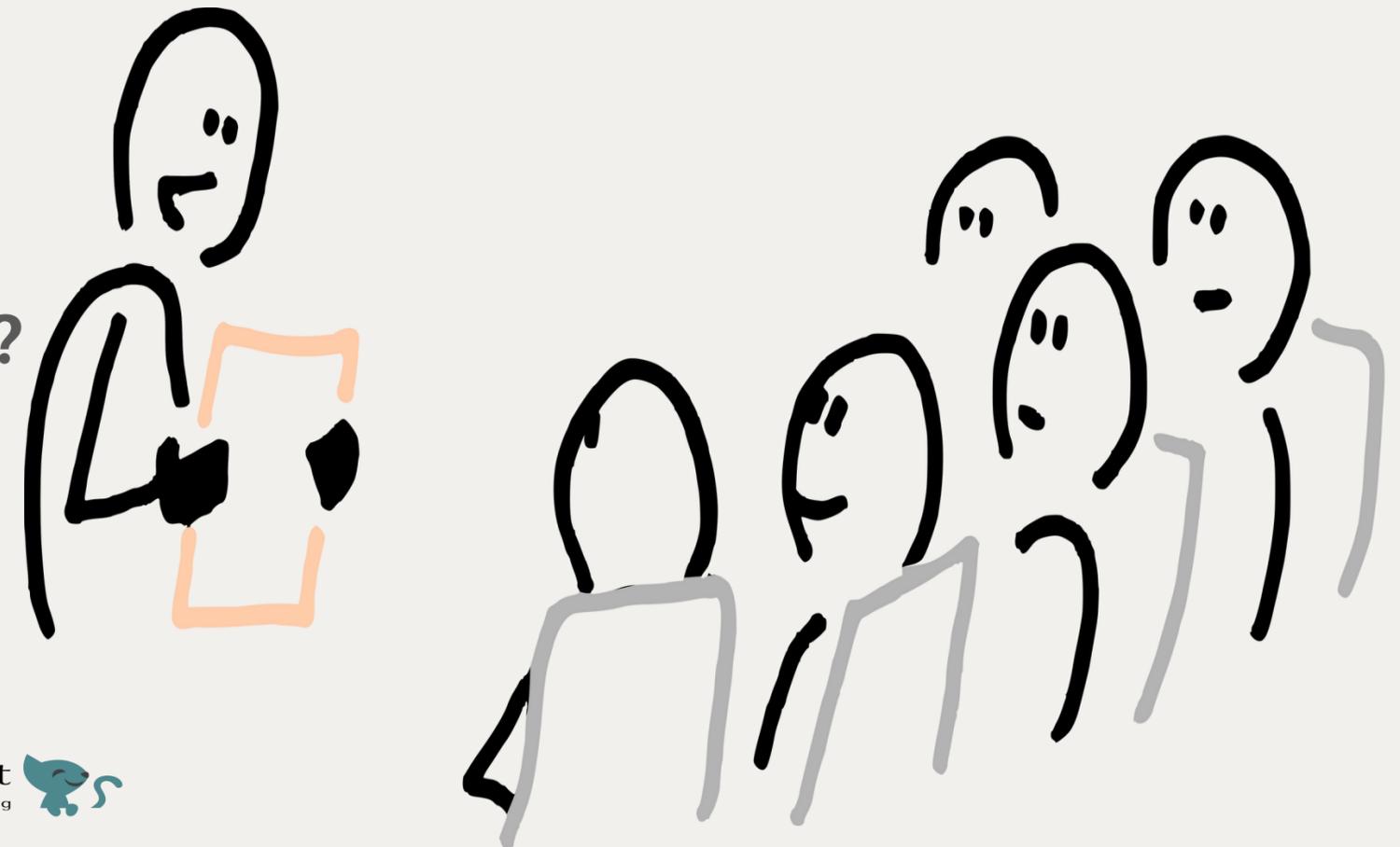
When employees feel seen and valued, they stay longer and perform better.

Unconscious Bias for Leaders

Leaders are powerful mirrors of organisational behaviour.
When they are self-aware, teams follow suit.

Leadership Reflection Questions

1. Whose voices do I hear most often in meetings?
2. Do I mentor people who are similar to me?
3. How diverse are the people I promote or recommend?



conclusion

Awareness of bias is not a destination — it's a discipline.

A truly inclusive organisation isn't one that claims to be fair, but one that constantly questions how fair it really is.

When we see people not through our filters but for who they truly are — we create workplaces that are not just productive, but human.

Inclusion doesn't happen by accident. It happens by awareness, intent, and everyday action.



Unconscious Bias

Microaggressions and Allyship



Gender Sensitization & Intersectionality

DEI Council Trainings



Inclusive Leadership Practices

Disability Sensitization



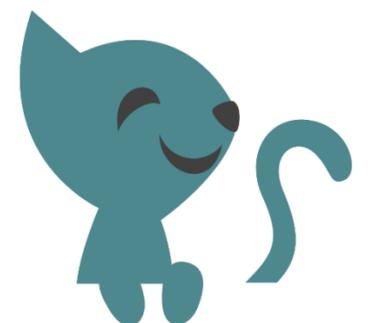
Women Leadership Programme

At Curious Catalyst, we design experiential learning interventions to help organisations move from awareness to action.

Our Unconscious Bias and DEI Programs combine neuroscience, story telling, and real Indian workplace examples to create lasting mindset shifts

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Connect with us

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