

5 Ways to Mitigate Unconscious Bias

Subconscious bias refers to the attitudes, preferences, approaches or stereotypes that affect our understanding, decisions and actions in an unconscious manner. These biases - involuntarily and activated without intentional awareness - can include both favorable and unfavorable evaluations. Unconscious preferences influence the way we engage with others.

Here are five ways to mitigate unconscious bias.

1: Recognize and accept that everyone has biases

To have bias is to be human. It is a primal survival instinct. It is not necessarily bad to have biases, but we need to identify and remove potential negative effects biases may cause. Biases may not be based on rational reality, but rather on a social or emotional construction created somewhere in your past.

2. Shine a light on yourself

Humans have three times more capacity to think about their own thinking than other high level primates. Yet this gift is often taken for granted. Develop a capacity to shine a light on yourself. The more we observe ourselves, the more we are aware of how the lens we see through affects our behavior toward other people.

3. Practice constructive uncertainty

This is especially helpful when we are "certainly certain that we are certain." In other words, change exclamation points to question marks. Check the assumptions and "truths" you have about yourself and others. Ask questions from a non-judgmental place. Sometimes sleeping on a decision, or consulting with others, makes all the difference.

4. Explore awkwardness and discomfort

It's OK to feel outside your comfort zone or to be unsure of what to feel, do or say. In a world in which people mostly back away from discomfort and awkwardness, that could be the source of the greatest learning.



5. Learn about people

Engage with people you consider "others" - who may fall out of your comfort zone. Create ways to give and receive feedback. Consciously try to learn about other cultures to dispel stereotypes. Ask for feedback when you are unsure about what your behavior displays. Give feedback when you see displays that might be awkward.