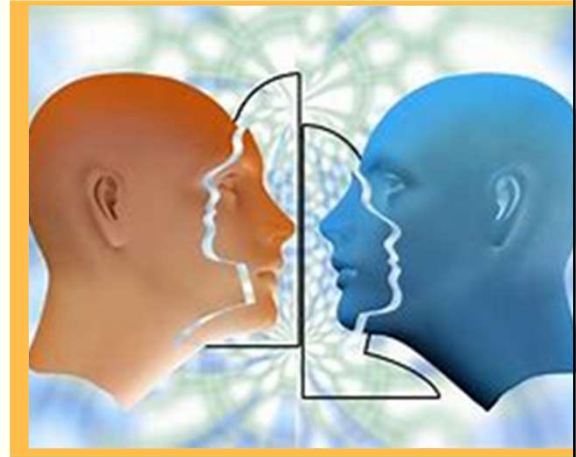


UNCOVERING OUR HIDDEN BIASES: HOW TO SEE THE UNSEEN

Frances Patterson, PhD, LADAC II, MAC, DAC, QCS



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Objectives

1. Explain and provide examples of the concept of selective perception and different types of bias.
2. Demonstrate how common cognitive biases operate, why they are adopted, and their key roles.
3. Introduce the three (3) characteristics of implicit bias.
4. Equip participants with a methodology for accurately identifying and addressing unconscious biases.

2

Selective Perception

- People selectively interpret what they see on the basis of interests, background, experience and attitudes
- **Organizational Behavior (OB) Factor** affects perception
 - Common shortcuts in judging others: process of how the brain organizes and interprets sensory impressions to give meaning to one's environment
- People tend to hear or see what they want or expect to hear or see

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Unconscious biases

- Also known as **implicit biases**:
- Inherent/learned stereotypes about people that **everyone** forms without even realizing it
- Implicit bias: attitudes or stereotypes affecting one's understanding, actions, and decisions outside of conscious awareness
- They are triggered involuntarily, without one's awareness or intentional control

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3 Characteristics of Implicit Bias (DuShaw Hockett – Tedx)

1. We don't know we have it – it operates on a subconscious level
2. It often is contrary to a conscious, stated belief – behavior is inconsistent with stated beliefs
3. Triggered in rapid, automatic mental associations (ex. Word association, picture association)



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“Each person is at each moment capable of remembering all that has ever happened to him and of perceiving everything that is happening everywhere in the universe. The function of the brain and nervous system is to protect us from being overwhelmed and confused by this mass of largely useless and irrelevant knowledge, by shutting out most of what we should otherwise perceive or remember at any moment, and leaving only that very small and special selection which is likely to be practically useful.”

— Aldous Huxley, *The Doors of Perception*

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COGNITIVE BIASES



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Adapted from **How Does Implicit Bias Influence Behavior? Explanations and Impacts of Unconscious Bias**

published on VeryWell.com By [Kendra Cherry](#) Updated on September 18, 2020

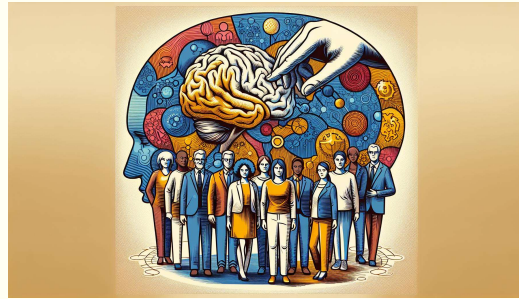
- **Implicit bias:** an **unconscious** association, belief, or attitude **toward any social group**.
- Remember! This is almost entirely on an **unconscious level**
 - A person may state explicit disapproval of certain attitudes or beliefs and at the same time have similar biases on an **unconscious level** which **may not align** with their own sense of self and personal identity.
- We might like to believe that we are not susceptible to these biases and stereotypes, but **we all do it**, whether we like it or not
- ***Does not mean** you are necessarily prejudiced or inclined to discriminate against other people.*
- ***What it means is...**your brain is working in a way that makes **associations** and **generalizations**, **to make sense of the world***

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Then...What's going on?

Natural for the brain to sift, sort, and categorize information about the world which leads to the **formation of implicit biases**.

- We are susceptible to bias because of:
 - We tend to seek out patterns.
 - We like to take shortcuts.
 - Our experience and social conditioning play a role.



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COMMON COGNITIVE BIASES



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The Confirmation Bias

- Tendency to more often listen to or seek out information that confirms our existing beliefs.
- Through this bias, people tend to favor information that reinforces the things they already think or believe.

Examples include:

1. Only paying attention to information that confirms your beliefs about issues such as gun control and global warming
2. Only following people on social media who share your viewpoints or scanning Facebook/social media profiles for evidence that what you think about a person is true.
3. Choosing news sources that present stories that support your views
4. Refusing to listen to the opposing side
5. Not considering all of the facts in a logical and rational manner

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Favor information that reinforces the things they already think or believe.



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The Hindsight Bias

- Tend to see events, even random ones, as more predictable than they are.
- Commonly referred to as the **"I knew it all along"** phenomenon.

Examples include:

1. Insisting that you knew who was going to win a football game once the event is over
2. Believing that you knew all along that one political candidate was going to win an election
3. Saying that you knew you weren't going to win the lottery after the numbers were drawn
4. Stating you knew a client would end up getting arrested again after they were rearrested

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"I knew it all along" phenomenon



"ALTHOUGH WE GAVE HIM ALL OF THAT MONEY AND SUPPORT, I ALWAYS HAD MY DOUBTS THAT JIM COULD BUILD HIS OWN HELICOPTER."

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The Anchoring Bias

- Tendency to be **overly influenced by the first piece of information** that we hear (or see).

Some examples:

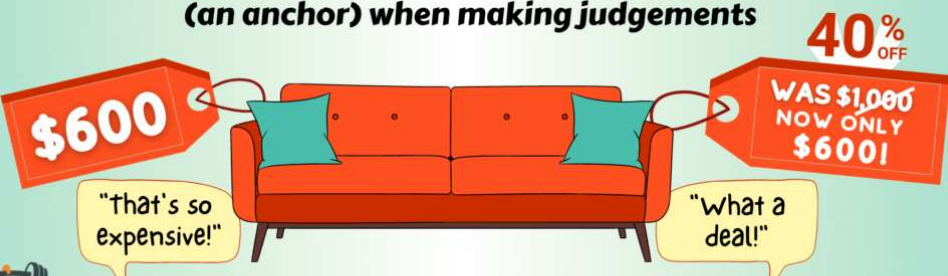
1. The first number voiced during a price negotiation typically becomes the anchoring point from which all further negotiations are based.
 2. Hearing a random number can influence estimates on completely unrelated topics.
 3. Counselors/therapists can become susceptible to the anchoring bias when diagnosing clients. The counselor's first impressions of the client often create an anchoring point that can sometimes incorrectly influence all subsequent diagnostic assessments.
- The existence of the anchoring bias is well documented but its causes are not fully understood. Some research suggests that the source of the anchor information may play a role. Factors like training and mood seem to also have an influence.

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The first number voiced during a price negotiation typically becomes the anchoring point

Anchoring Effect

Tendency to rely on an initial piece of information (an anchor) when making judgements



The illustration shows a red couch with two teal pillows. To the left of the couch is a red price tag that says '\$600'. A speech bubble from the couch says 'That's so expensive!'. To the right of the couch is another red price tag that says '40% OFF', 'WAS \$1,000', and 'NOW ONLY \$600!'. A speech bubble from the couch says 'What a deal!'. Below the couch is a logo for 'Thinking Is Power' featuring a stylized figure with a barbell.

Tip: Awareness is key!
Then slow down and give yourself time to make a decision.

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The Misinformation Effect

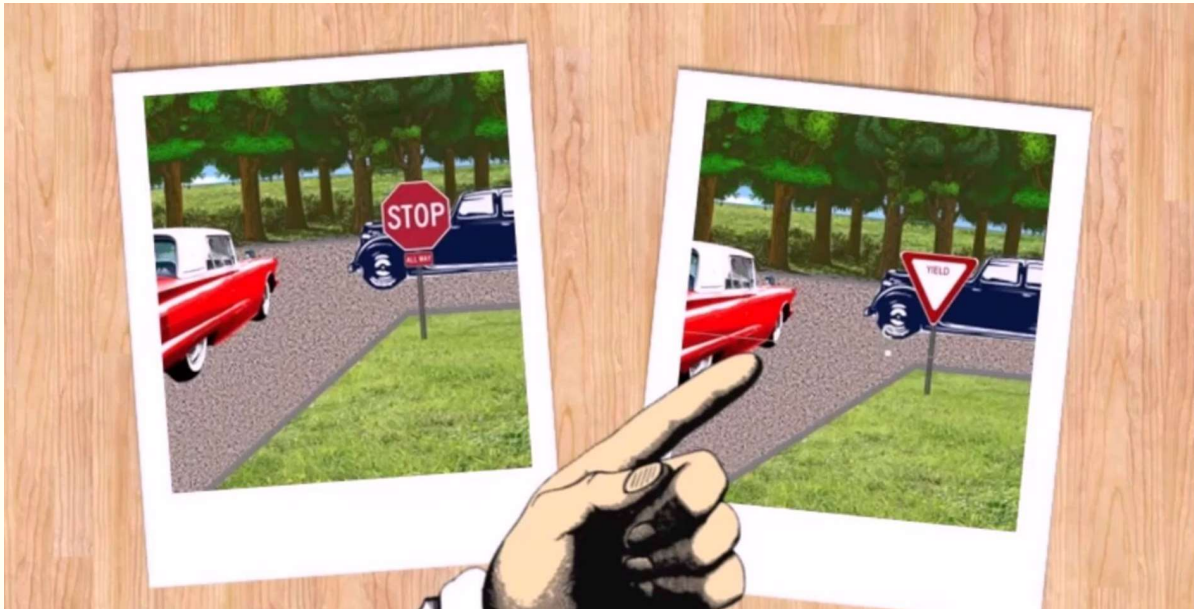
- Tendency for memories to be **heavily influenced by things that happened after the actual event itself.**
- A person who witnesses a car accident or crime might believe that their recollection is crystal clear, but researchers have found that memory is surprisingly susceptible to even very subtle influences.

For example:

1. Research has shown that simply asking questions about an event can change someone's memories of what happened.
2. Watching television coverage or social media may change how people remember the event.
3. Hearing other people talk about a memory from their perspective may change your memory of what transpired.

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Misinformation effect



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The Actor-Observer Bias

- Tendency to **attribute our actions to external influences and other people's actions to internal ones.**
 - How we perceive others and attribute their actions hinges on many variables, but may be heavily influenced by whether we are the actor or the observer in a situation.

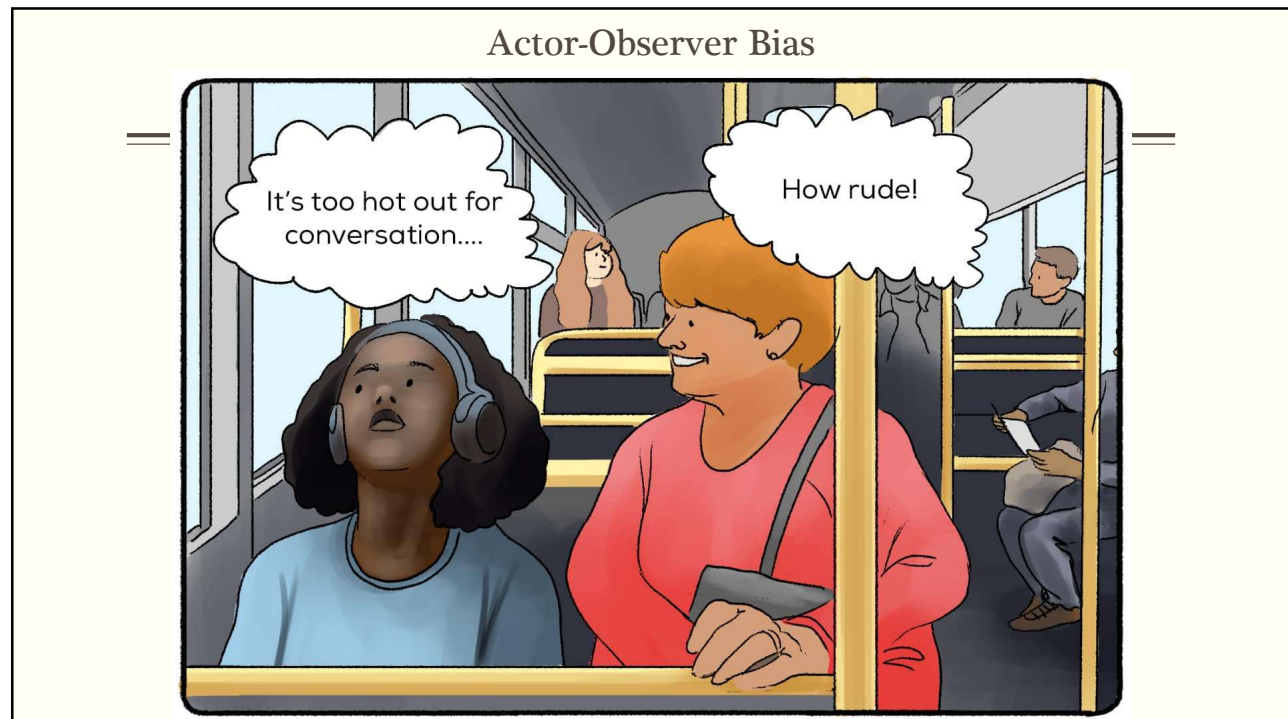
When it comes to our own actions, we are often far too likely to attribute things to **external influences.** For example:

1. You might complain that you botched an important meeting because you had jet lag.
2. You might say you failed an exam because the teacher posed too many trick questions.

When it comes to explaining other people's actions, we are far more likely to attribute their behaviors to **internal causes.** For example:

1. A colleague screwed up an important presentation because he's lazy and incompetent (not because he also had jet lag).
2. A fellow student bombed a test because they lack diligence and intelligence (and not because they took the same test as you with all those trick questions)

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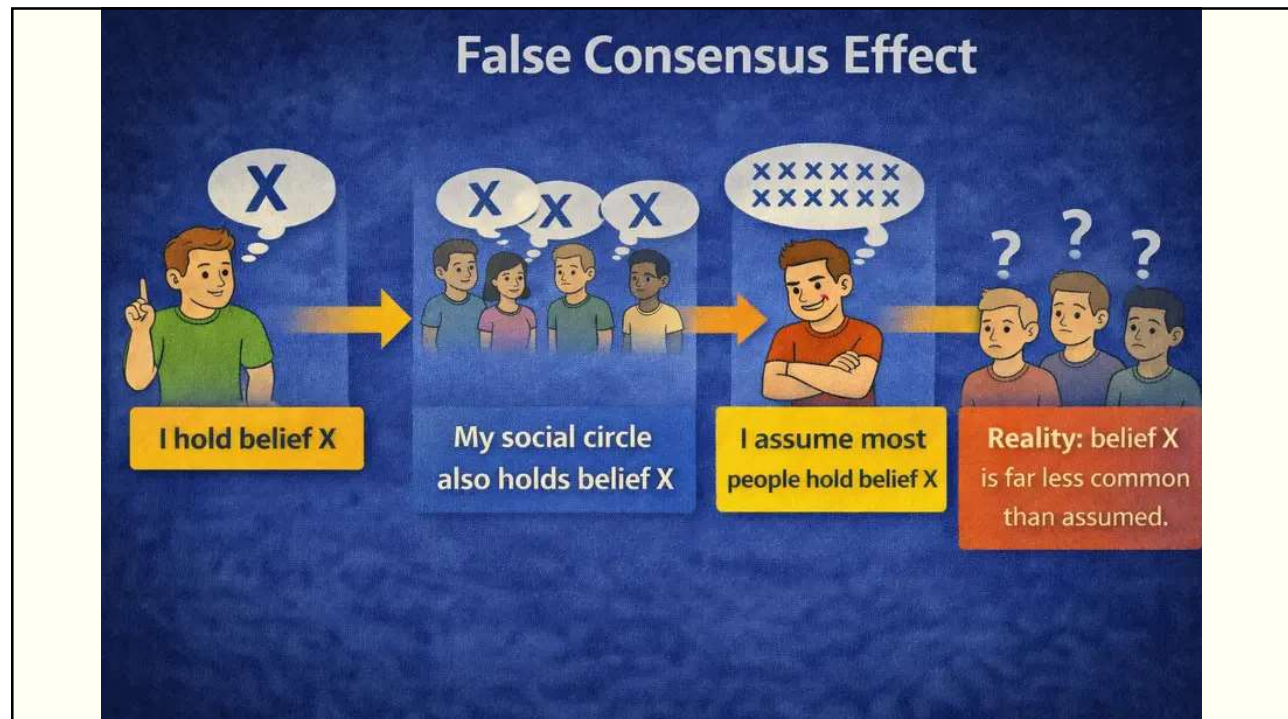
The False Consensus Effect

- Tendency people have to **overestimate** how much other people agree with their own beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, and values.

For example:

1. Thinking that other people share your opinion on controversial topics
 2. Overestimating the number of people who are similar to you
 3. Believing that the majority of people share your preferences
- Researchers believe this happens for several reasons:
 - We spend the most time with family and friends who often tend to share very similar opinions and beliefs. Therefore, we start to think that this way of thinking is the majority opinion, even when we are with people who are not among our group of family and friends.
 - It leads to generalizations: "Everybody smokes weed"
 - Another reason this bias happens so easily is that believing that other people are just like us is good for our self-esteem. It helps us to feel "normal" and keep a positive view of ourselves in relation to other people.

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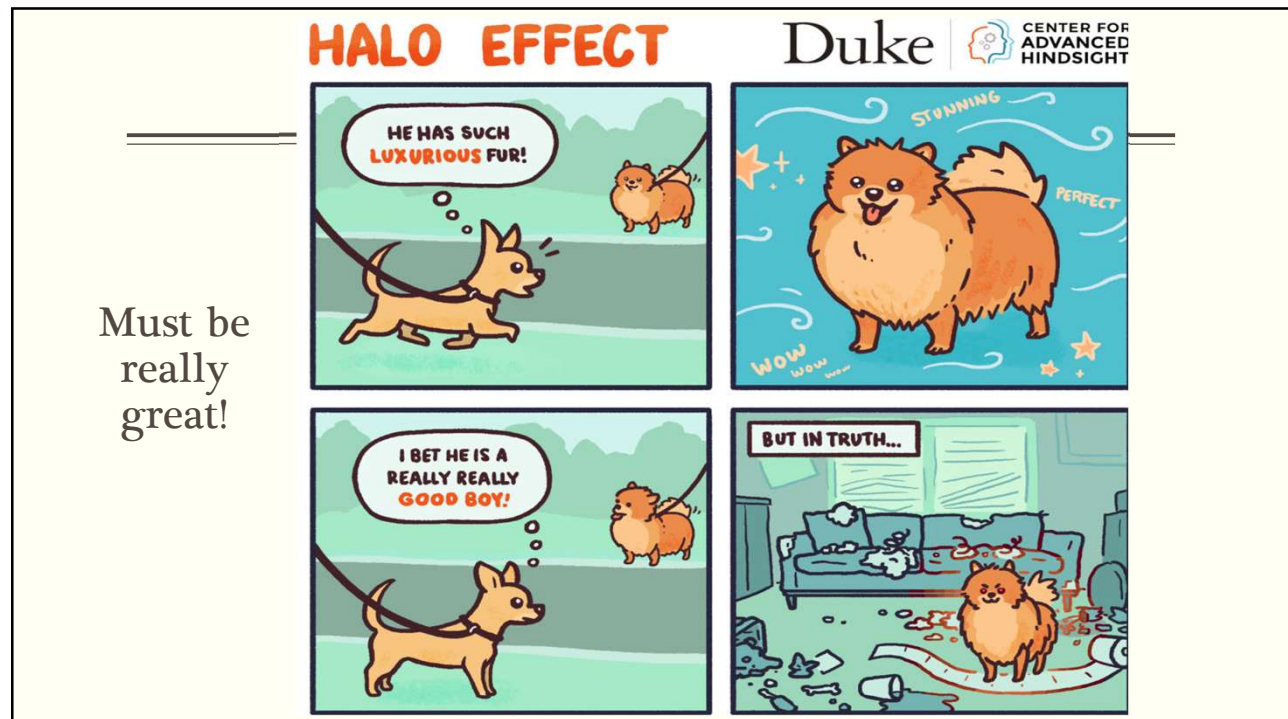


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The Halo/Horn Effect

- **Halo:** Tendency for an **initial impression of a person to influence what we think of them overall**. We are either influenced by or use the halo to influence others almost every day.
 - Also known as the "physical attractiveness stereotype" or the "what is beautiful is 'good' principle"
- Examples of Halo: **positive initial impression**
 1. Thinking people who are good-looking are also smarter, kinder, and funnier than less attractive people
 2. Believing that products marketed by attractive people are also more valuable
- **Horn:** opposite of Halo – **negative initial impression**
- Example of Horn: Someone thinks a person with a heavy accent or speech impediment is not very smart
- One factor that may influence this effect is our tendency to want to be correct. If our initial impression of someone was positive, we want to look for proof that our assessment was accurate. It also helps people avoid experiencing cognitive dissonance, which involves holding contradictory beliefs.

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The Self-Serving Bias

- Tendency for people to **tend to give themselves credit for successes** but **lay the blame for failures on external causes**.
 - When one does well on a project, they probably assume that it's because they worked hard. When things don't turn well, they are more likely to blame it on circumstances or bad luck.
- Some examples of this:
 1. Attributing good grades to being smart or studying hard
 2. Believing your athletic performance is due to practice and hard work
 3. Thinking you got the job because of your merits

This **can be influenced by** a variety of factors.

- a) Age and sex have been shown play a part.
- b) Older people are more likely to take credit for their successes,
- c) Men are more likely to pin their failures on outside forces.

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Self-Serving Bias



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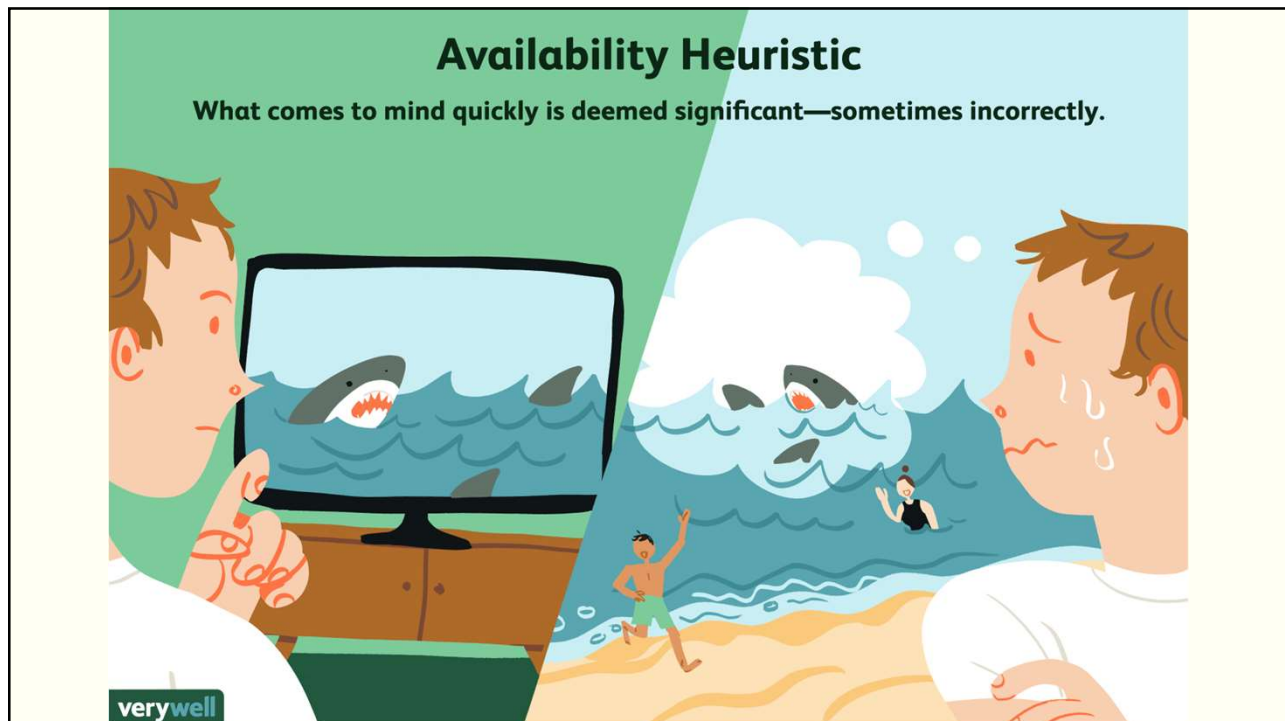
The Availability Heuristic

- Tendency to **estimate the probability of something happening based on how many examples readily come to mind.**
- Some examples:
 1. After seeing several news reports of car thefts in your neighborhood, you might start to believe that such crimes are more common than they are.
 2. You might believe that plane crashes are more common than they really are because you can easily think of several examples.
- **Mental shortcut designed to save us time when we are trying to determine risk.**

Problem with relying on this way of thinking is that it **often leads to poor estimates and bad decisions.**

- a) Marijuana users who have never known anyone to have marijuana-related physical or mental illness might underestimate the health risks of using marijuana.
- b) If a person has two sisters and three neighbors who have had breast cancer, they might believe it is even more common than statistics show.
- c) Operates on the notion that, **if something can be recalled, it must be important**, or at least more important than alternative solutions not as readily recalled, is inherently biased toward recently acquired information.

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The Optimism Bias

- Tendency to **overestimate** the likelihood that good things will happen to us while **underestimating** the probability that negative events will impact us. Basically, people tend to be too optimistic for their own good.

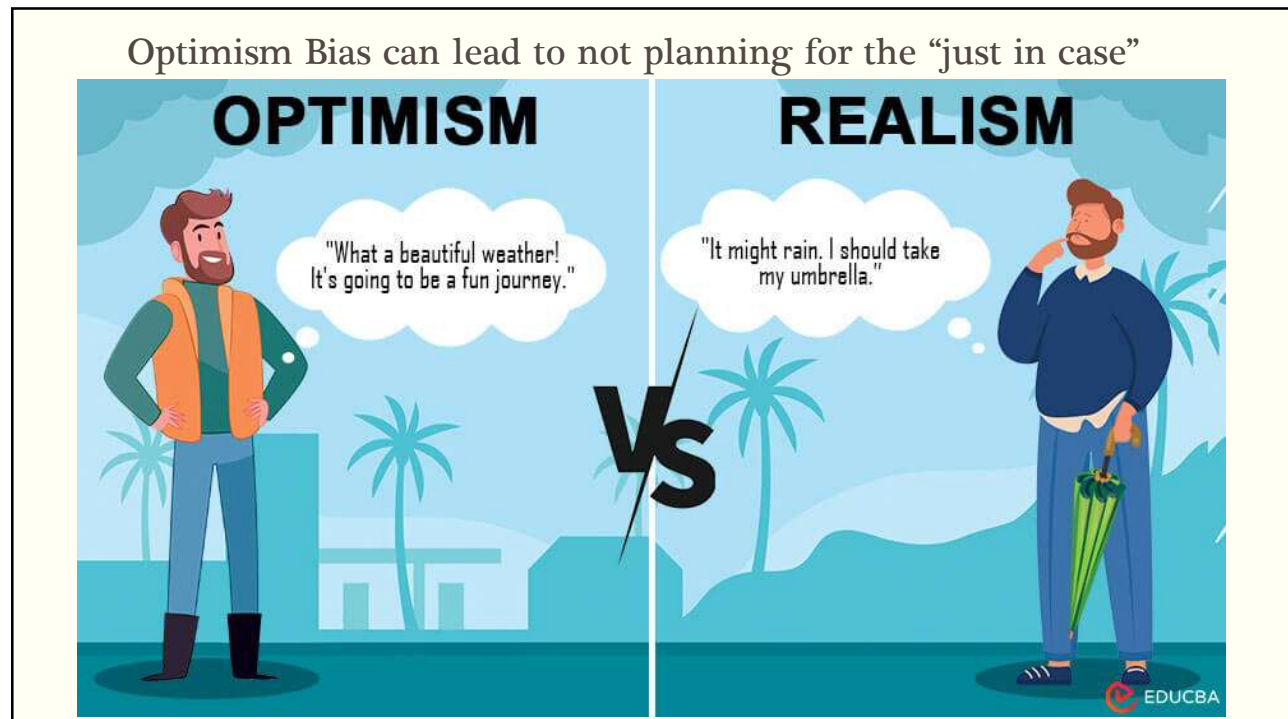
For example:

- One may assume that negative events won't affect them such as: Divorce, Job loss, Illness, Death

Is rooted in the availability heuristic:

- If you can think of examples of bad things happening to other people it seems more likely that others will be affected by negative events.
- Can lead people to take more health risks like smoking, eating poorly, or not wearing a seat belt.
- **Bad news:** research has found that this bias is incredibly difficult to reduce.
- **Good news:** helps create a sense of anticipation for the future, giving people the hope and motivation they need to pursue their goals.

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Additional Bias Types

Normative bias. Have an idea of how things ought to be or how a person should be, that affects one's ability to see positives of things that are outside of these definitions.

Performance bias. Overestimating someone's abilities based on background, such as by associating a person's name with experience in their field.

Performance and attribution bias. Attributing the success of someone from a high performance group **to their abilities**, and attributing the success of someone from a low performance group **to the help they received from other people**.

Stereotype bias. Doubting someone's commitment to their chosen field because of things like their age, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, family status, or disability.

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ACTIVITY – 10 TRUSTED PEOPLE

Paper in the center of your table
Take a few minutes to fill in the information



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Affinity or Ingroup Bias

- Tendency/Preference for people like ourselves
- Research studies show, in general, people extend greater trust, greater positive regard, cooperation, and empathy to their “ingroup” members compared with outgroup members.
- Largely instinctive and unconscious



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Implicit Bias Summary

- ✓ Attitudes or stereotypes
- ✓ Affect our understanding, actions, and decisions
- ✓ Unconscious manner
- ✓ Activated involuntarily
- ✓ Beneath an individual's awareness or intentional control.
- Unconscious biases: **inherent or learned stereotypes about people that everyone forms without realizing it.**
- **Biases** may be held by an individual, group, or institution and can have negative or positive consequences.
- Biases, conscious or unconscious, not limited to ethnicity and race, although racial bias and discrimination are well documented, biases may exist toward any social group.
- **There is no shame or blame in unconscious bias as it's not stemming from any fault in the individual.**

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First impressions are made in the first 7 seconds of meeting someone



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Is bias always bad? Positive Bias...

1. Tendency to overestimate when good things will happen. Normally seen as a good thing. Just because it's positive, doesn't mean we should ignore the 'bias' part.
2. They affect **the way you view people**, including someone you have never met before.
3. Many people assume bias must be negative. A positive characteristic still affects the way you see and interact with people.
4. **Can be as harmful as a negative bias.** Any type of cognitive bias is unfair to the people who are on the receiving end.



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Positive Bias...

5. People use bias because we don't like uncertainty
6. We put people into tiny boxes because it makes life easier.
7. Labelling people makes it much less likely that you will understand their humanity.
8. Using boxes is a shorthand for the huge numbers of people we are likely to meet throughout our life. **It can serve a purpose in helping us store first impressions**



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The first perception wins

- People have difficulty changing first impressions. A positive bias works in the same way; what you **ass-u-me** of a person is what you think of them.
- First impression doesn't tell us about the person we meet.
- First impressions...well.....first. **How do you change them?**
- What you perceive is what you draw towards you.
- Very limiting. If you don't avoid it, you will lose out on a lot of what makes people who they are.
- Positive bias may feel better than negative bias. Does not mean it's good to have.
- **Biases keep us from fully realizing the potential in both ourselves and the people around us.**

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Storehouse of memories

- *Many researchers suggest that unconscious bias occurs automatically as the brain makes quick judgments based on past experiences and background. As a result of unconscious biases, certain people benefit and other people are penalized.*
- *In contrast, deliberate prejudices are defined as conscious bias (or explicit bias).*
[https://www.vanderbilt.edu/youatvu/#:~:text=Many%20researchers%20suggest%20that%20unconscious,bias%20\(or%20explicit%20bias\)](https://www.vanderbilt.edu/youatvu/#:~:text=Many%20researchers%20suggest%20that%20unconscious,bias%20(or%20explicit%20bias))
- **How Does Media Influence Us?**
- **How Do Our Parents And Grandparent Influence Us?**
- Previous generations like our parents and grandparents teach us the responsibilities we have as women and men, young vs. old, etc.
- The “shoulds” we have are passed down in an unconscious collection of information

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What are you looking for?

- If you are looking for the negative...
 - If you are looking for the positive...
- First impressions of clients
- Get the Diagnosis right...get treatment right
 - Get the Diagnosis wrong...get treatment wrong
- Client perception
- Guilt: I made a mistake
 - Shame: I am a mistake



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New Client

- You have a client coming in for an initial A&D assessment.
- Here's what you know from the information obtained when they called in for an appointment.
- Name: Jamie Rodríguez
- Age: 27
- Reason for appointment: Referred for an assessment from a judge, due to a drug possession charge and domestic assault charge
- No current intoxication or history of withdrawal symptoms
- No current mental health crises
- No health insurance
- Currently unemployed

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Implicit Association Tests

- [Project Implicit \(harvard.edu\)](https://projectimplicit.org/)
- Examples of tests you can take:
 - Skin tone
 - Weapons
 - Race
 - Sexuality
 - Religion
 - Disability
 - Weight
 - Transgender

This test is controversial

It was developed by researchers at Harvard and identifies what kinds of implicit associations a person makes.

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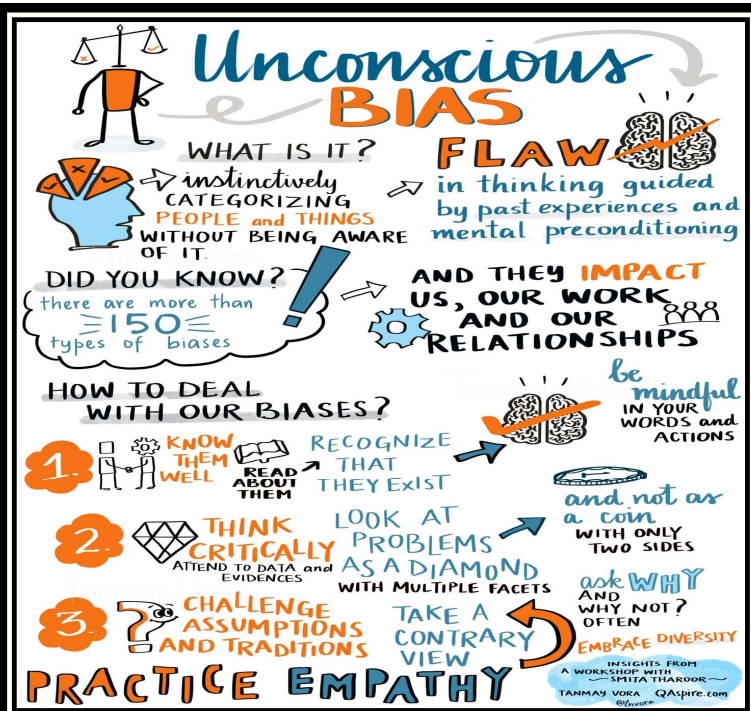
Overcoming Unconscious Bias

1. Identifying Your Biases
2. Pay attention to your reactions to people, news, social media posts, etc.
3. Take the Implicit Associations Test
4. Label stereotypes that impact your biases
5. Combat your positive stereotypes as well.
6. Learn about the different types of bias.
7. List ways that unconscious and hidden biases impact your behavior.

UNCONSCIOUS BIASES



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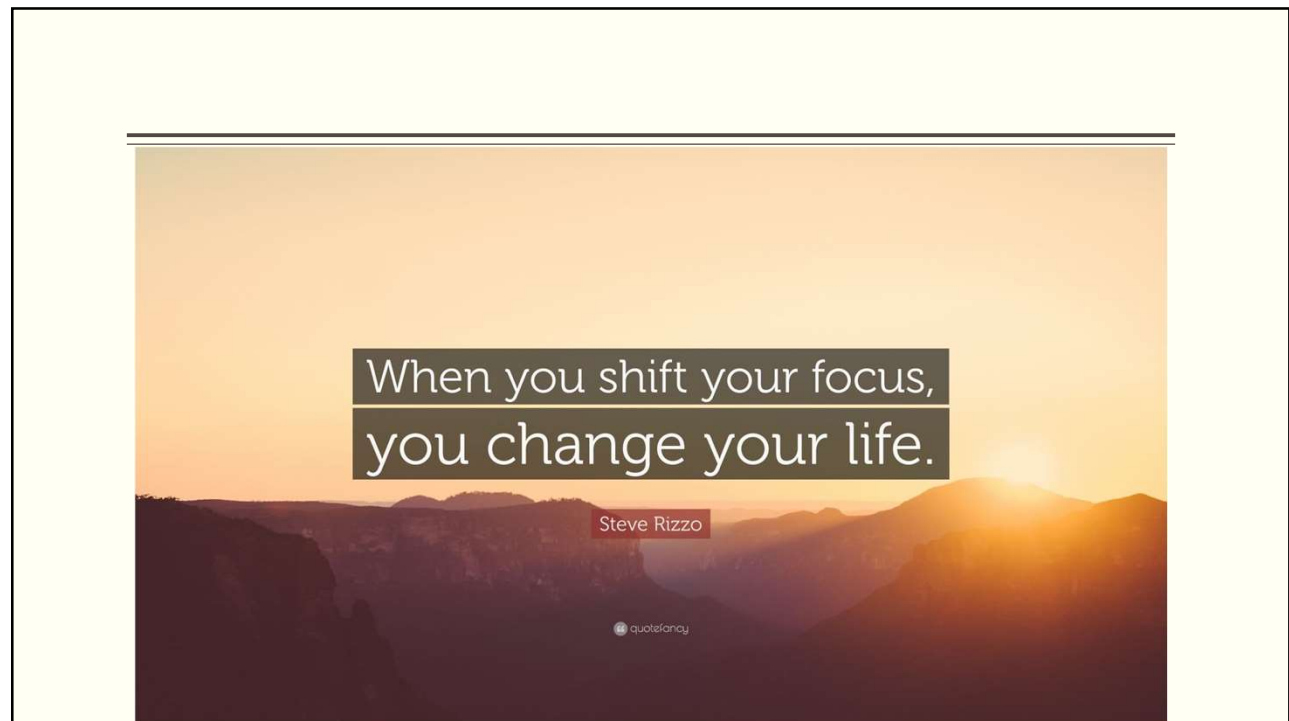
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To Summarize Reducing Implicit Bias

How to Reduce Implicit Bias: How Does Implicit Bias Influence Behavior? Explanations and Impacts of Unconscious Bias
Kendra Cherry Updated on September 18, 2020 Medically reviewed by Akeem Marsh MD

- **Focus on seeing people as individuals.**
 - Rather than focusing on stereotypes to define people, spend time considering them on a more personal, individual level
- **Work on consciously changing your stereotypes.**
 - If you do recognize that your response to a person might be rooted in biases or stereotypes, make an effort to consciously adjust your response.
- **Take time to pause and reflect.**
 - In order to reduce reflexive reactions, take time to reflect on potential biases and replace them with positive examples of the stereotyped group.
- **Adjust your perspective.**
 - Try seeing things from another person's point of view. How would you respond if you were in the same position? What factors might contribute to how a person acts in a particular setting or situation?
- **Increase your exposure.**
 - Spend more time with people of different racial backgrounds. Learn about their culture by attending community events or exhibits.
- **Practice mindfulness.**
 - Try meditation, yoga, or focused breathing to increase mindfulness and become more aware of your thoughts and actions.

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