

confronting implicit bias

nine tactics to ensure your actions line
up with your intentions



version 2.1

CHANGEWORKS

you care about fairness...

But sometimes, despite your best intentions, the impacts of your actions aren't fair.

One reason for that is implicit bias. The bad news is that implicit bias operates without you being consciously aware of it.

The good news is that you can take conscious steps to reduce implicit bias and to minimize its effects.

You can bring your impact in line with your intentions.

This guide will show you how.

Color scheme not working for you? We want this information to be accessible to everyone. Download a high-contrast version of this guide at bit.ly/implicit-bias-high-contrast

what is implicit bias?

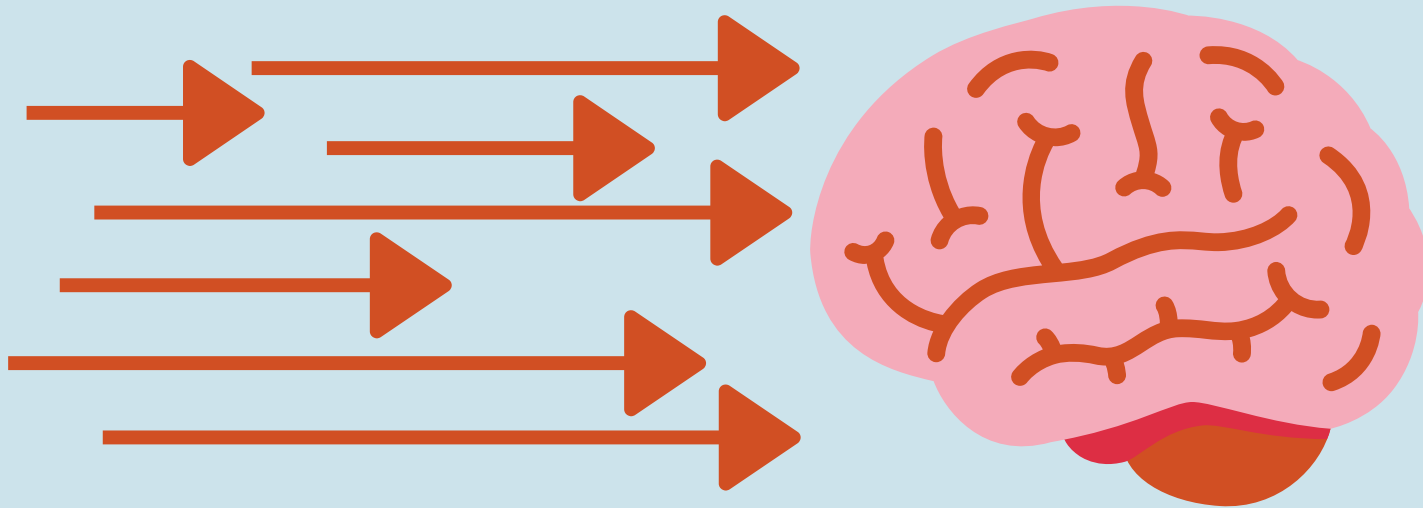
bias is prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another.

explicit bias refers to the attitudes and beliefs we have about a person or group on a conscious level.

implicit bias refers to the attitudes and beliefs we have that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.

everybody has bias

Bias, both explicit and implicit, is how our brain manages the overwhelming amount of information it needs to process every waking minute.



There is no shame in having implicit bias. And knowing we have it, we can take steps to make sure it doesn't lead us astray.

bias can affect behavior in ways we don't intend

50%

higher chance that a job applicant with a traditionally White name will get a call back over an applicant with a traditionally Black name¹

75%

of 6-8th graders who drew a man when asked to "draw a scientist" ²

everyone is harmed by implicit bias



Think back to the statistic on the previous page about qualified applicants getting passed over for interviews because they have a traditionally Black name.

Who is harmed in this scenario?

The applicants for sure, but the employer is also harmed by missing out on qualified candidates. The other employees are harmed as well by missing out on qualified coworkers.

Everyone is harmed when implicit bias excludes qualified people. Everyone benefits when our workplaces and communities become more fair.

DEBIASING

reducing your
implicit bias and
its impacts

anti bias tactic 1: intergroup contact

You can decrease your implicit bias by increasing your contact with other groups. This is hard given racial separation in the US. Among White Americans, 91% of their social networks are also White.³ As a first step, diversify your media to include books, podcasts, and shows by and about people of different backgrounds.

RESEARCH SHOWS:

When researchers asked White undergraduates at the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) to consider Black individuals as part of the same in-group (UCSB students), they found reduced implicit bias and increased positive attitudes.⁴

anti bias tactic 2: countering stereotypes

When you see an image or message that reinforces negative stereotypes, say "That's wrong!" Really, say it out loud. This helps re-train your brain to reject harmful implicit biases.

RESEARCH SHOWS:
A meaningful negation such as "That's wrong!" is more effective than a neutral one such as "no" in reducing implicit bias.⁵

anti bias tactic 3: mindfulness

You've heard that mindfulness can help you reduce stress, manage pain, and improve quality of life. By helping you make less reactive choices, mindfulness can also help you stop you from acting on implicit bias.

RESEARCH SHOWS:
Participants who listen to a single, ten-minute mindfulness audio recording before tests that show implicit bias exhibit significantly less implicit bias than control group participants.⁶

BIAS MITIGATION

**creating rules to
stop implicit bias
from affecting
your behavior**

anti bias tactic 4: anonymize applications

If an applicant's name, hometown, or alma mater give your brain unconscious cues that trigger bias, you can mitigate this process by anonymizing applications so that candidates rise or fall on their qualifications, not your biases.

IN THE REAL WORLD:

To address bias, many orchestras use anonymous auditions in which the musician play from behind a screen. When they made this change they saw an immediate uptick in the the number of women hired. Gender diversity increased further when the auditions were changed so that the evaluators did not hear the musician walk in so they couldn't tell if the musician was wearing heels or not. ⁷

anti bias tactic 5: outcome-based criteria

Often hiring processes come down to subjective criteria such as "culture fit," which gives implicit bias a prime chance to rear its head. Instead, create clear, outcome-based criteria and standard interviews to evaluate candidates.⁸

WATCH OUT!

Sometimes objective criteria can carry with them other forms of bias. For example, even though Whites and Blacks use and sell illegal drugs at roughly the same rate, Black men and women are more likely to be arrested and incarcerated for drug-related crimes. Therefore, a "neutral" standard such as "no drug convictions" may still produce unequal results.⁹

anti bias tactic 6: create inclusive rules

What rules can you make now that prevent implicit bias from popping up? These are most effective as if/then plans:

- For men: "If I am invited to speak on an all-male panel, I will decline. "
- For women: "If I am the only woman invited to speak on a panel, I will suggest 3 other qualified women for the panel as well."
- "If I am recruiting for a high-value assignment, I will ensure I have a list of 3 candidates of color for the role."

IN THE REAL WORLD

Google found that one of the key indicators of team effectiveness is psychological safety. One way to cultivate that is to promote equality in conversational turn taking. When you create a rule like "I will make sure everyone has had a chance to speak before I end the meeting," you not only mitigate bias, you improve outcomes for everybody.¹⁰

anti bias tactic 7: pause and justify

When making "people" decisions like who to hire, promote, or give a high-value assignment, don't just go with the first decision to come to mind. Pause, then justify your decision. At a minimum, pause and write down your reasons. Better yet, share them with a group, ideally a diverse group. This gives your rational brain time to work and mitigate your unconscious bias.

RESEARCH SAYS

Our explicit, conscious beliefs and values can operate *simultaneously and independently* of our unconscious biases. Creating opportunities for these explicit, inclusive beliefs to function can counter unconscious bias.¹¹

COMPENSATING FOR BIAS

rebalancing the
scales to make up
for implicit bias

anti bias tactic 8: expand the pool

You want to be fair when hiring, contracting, etc., but you know that bias will come in. You can compensate for that effect by expanding the pool through proactive and intentional outreach.

WATCH OUT!

Don't pad a hiring pool with people you will never hire in the first place. Diverse, qualified candidates are out there—make sure they are in your applicant pool as well.

anti bias tactic 9: diversify decision makers

Everybody has implicit bias. Usually negative implicit bias is greater for those who do not share your identity. That's one reason why diversity of decision makers is so important — it helps compensate for each individual's biases. Ensure decision making teams have a broad diversity of people on them.¹²

QUOTED:

Van Jones says, "If you are 'one up,' you tend to have blind spots. If you are 'one down,' you tend to have sore spots."

When you diversify your decision makers you can catch each others' blind spots.

YOU

**can make a
difference**

awareness isn't enough

In this guide we've covered a lot of research about implicit bias and how to mitigate it. There's one more piece of research to share.

Just knowing about implicit bias isn't enough to address it. You have to take specific actions like those described in this guide.

So make a plan. Identify the first step you can take. Celebrate when you've completed it. Then take the next step.

**what is one thing you can do
in the next week to confront
implicit bias?**

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next steps

Change Works Consulting offers training, coaching, and consultation to help you build more diverse, inclusive, and productive teams.

Schedule a free initial consultation to find out if Change Works can work for you.

www.changeworksllc.com/schedule-a-consultation
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