

UNDERSTANDING IMPLICIT BIAS



Samaritan
Health Services



COURSE OBJECTIVES

This course will help you:



- Describe the origins of implicit or unconscious bias
- Explain how implicit associations can impact our workplace
- Uncover some of your own unconscious biases
- Learn strategies to address your biases.

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PURPOSE FOR TRAINING

Understanding and overcoming barriers that might prevent us from creating a just and inclusive organizational culture is central to our mission.

*IMPLICIT BIAS can derail even the best of our intentions. As such, understanding what implicit bias is, how it works, and how we can consciously and proactively take steps to mitigate its impact, is vital to creating a just and inclusive organization. "Implicit bias has the potential to impact not only outcomes of care, but also whether patients will return for services or even seek care at the organization in the first place."**

*Institute for Healthcare Improvement

Assignment of this training has been sponsored and approved by the SHS Equity & Inclusion Council.

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KEY TERMS & DEFINITIONS



Stereotype: An exaggerated belief, image or distorted truth about a person or group. A generalization that allows for little or no individual differences or social variation.



Implicit Bias: Associating stereotypes or attitudes with people without our conscious awareness.



Explicit Bias: Conscious attitudes and beliefs about a person or group, often arising as the direct result of a perceived threat.



Microaggressions: Everyday verbal, non-verbal and environmental slights, snubs, or insults - whether intentional or unintentional - that communicate hostile, derogatory or negative messages to individuals based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

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SECTION ONE

**ORGANIZATIONAL
& INDIVIDUAL
GROWTH**

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**GETTING REAL
ABOUT BIAS**

**GROWTH REQUIRES
DISCOMFORT**

OUR COMMITMENT

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SAMARITAN'S COMMITMENT



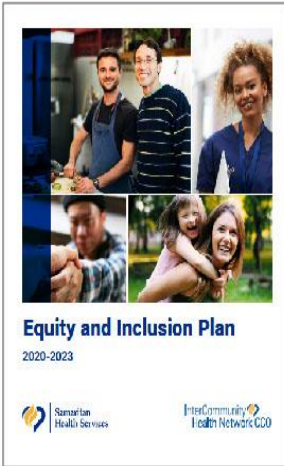
SHS IS COMMITTED TO...

- the creation of a just, equitable, inclusive and responsive healthcare delivery system
- treating all patients, employees, members and partners with compassion, respect and dignity
- making everyone feel safe, welcome and supported
- ensuring that all people can reach their full potential for health.

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SAMARITAN'S EQUITY & INCLUSION PLAN

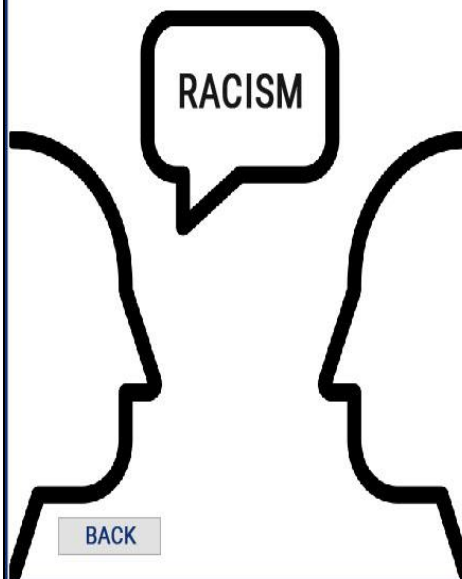


- At SHS, we understand that creating a diverse and inclusive culture takes time and requires discipline, high expectations and accountability.
- Understanding and accepting our biases is not an overnight or comfortable process. As such, we are working very intentionally to ensure bias is proactively addressed within our organization.
- Computer-based equity and inclusion trainings such as this one are only one tactic in Samaritan's overarching plan to create a just and inclusive culture. Click [here](#) to review our full Equity and Inclusion Plan.

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GROWTH OFTEN REQUIRES DISCOMFORT



The language of diversity often makes people uncomfortable.

- Words like discrimination, oppression, dominance, subordination, racism and privilege often cause negative reactions. When people speak these words, others begin to focus on what it means for them.

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GROWTH OFTEN REQUIRES DISCOMFORT

- It is easier to become defensive and argue the meaning than it is to learn how the language of diversity affects others and impacts all aspects of our lives. But if we can't talk productively about the issue then we can't do anything about it.
- Thank you for your willingness to explore the impact of implicit bias on your own actions and decisions throughout this module and in your life. We truly do build healthier communities together!



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CONSCIOUSLY LEAN INTO DISCOMFORT



- An understanding of unconscious bias requires awareness, introspection, authenticity, humility, compassion and a WILLINGNESS TO ACT.
- To increase your ability to think productively about these issues, and take action, take notice of any defensiveness and LEAN INTO YOUR DISCOMFORT. This requires a desire to know, motivation to become informed, opportunities to practice and the willingness to correct your mistakes.

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THE SUM OF OUR PARTS

- Implicit bias is part of a larger system that maintains institutional inequities and perpetuates biases. However, institutions are made up of individuals, and these individuals hold unconscious biases. In this way, unconscious bias at the individual level contributes to the larger systemic issue.
- It is, therefore, important that each of us embraces P.R.I.D.E. and addresses our own unconscious biases. By not doing so, there can be a temptation to depersonalize the work, blame the system, and feel as though we are the exception to unconscious bias.



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EMBRACING A PARADIGM SHIFT

Traditionally, it has been assumed that patterns of discriminatory behavior in organizations are conscious; that people who know better do the right thing, and those who don't cause bias. As a result, we have developed a "good person vs. bad person" understanding of diversity and inclusion.

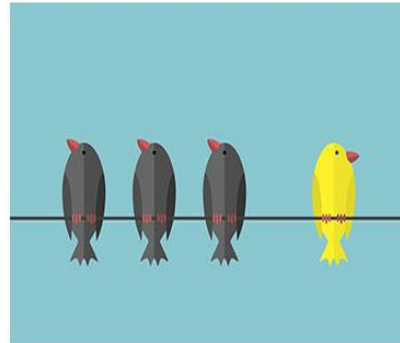


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EMBRACING A PARADIGM SHIFT

- There is no doubt that people sometimes make choices to discriminate due to underlying negative feelings or feelings of superiority.
- *More times than not, however, people make choices that discriminate against one group and in favor of another without even realizing they are doing it.*
- Oftentimes these choices contradict their conscious belief that they are being unbiased in their decision-making.



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GETTING REAL ABOUT BIAS

Percentage of people who have hidden biases:

100%

We Are All Biased

Human beings, at some level, need bias to survive. EVERYONE is biased toward something, somebody, or some group. Unconscious or hidden beliefs underlie a great deal of our behavior, actions and decisions.

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

A PERSON WHO BEHAVES IN A NON-INCLUSIVE OR EVEN DISCRIMINATORY WAY DOES NOT HAVE TO HAVE NEGATIVE INTENT.

In fact, supporting and embracing diversity and inclusion on a conscious level may have little or no impact on our unconscious beliefs and behavior and little to do with our success in producing fair and equitable results.

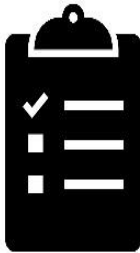
Which means...

WE CANNOT RELY ON SUBJECTIVE ASSESSMENTS OF ATTITUDE, EITHER INDIVIDUALLY OR COLLECTIVELY, TO DETERMINE WHETHER WE ARE FUNCTIONING IN INCLUSIVE WAYS.

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SECTION ONE REVIEW



- WE ARE ALL BIASED
- Biases can be positive or negative
- Biases are reinforced through social settings and mass media
- Biases can manifest as stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination
- Mitigating our biases requires honesty and a willingness to act

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SECTION TWO

**BRINGING
IMPLICIT BIAS
TO LIFE**

HIDDEN BIAS

**UNCONSCIOUS
COGNITION**


**IMPLICIT
ASSOCIATIONS**

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IMPLICIT ASSOCIATIONS

- Our brain's ability to make connections between two concepts is known as **ASSOCIATIVE LEARNING**.
- Through conditioning our minds associate characteristics such as leadership or criminality with aspects of people's identity like race or gender. For example, because CEOs of large companies have historically been older white men this may be the first image that comes to mind when we think of someone in this role.



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IMPLICIT ASSOCIATIONS



- People internalize associations at a very young age and our childhood experiences engrain them in our minds.
- Even if we hold beliefs that value equity and fair treatment we can still be implicitly influenced by those messages we already received.
- *If we are aware of the implicit associations we hold we can be mindful of our biases or inclinations, and intentionally try to stop them.*

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BRINGING IMPLICIT BIAS TO LIFE

Bring the concept of implicit bias to life by trying some of these quick exercises:

WORD ASSOCIATION

COMPREHENSION

STROOP TASK

BELIEVE IT OR NOT

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WORD ASSOCIATION

Think or say aloud the word that should go in the blank:

Young _____
Night _____
Black _____

Obviously there was nothing difficult about that exercise. You probably had a response ready right away. That is the power of our implicit cognition and lightning fast associations!
When faced with incomplete information we rely on associative memory to quickly fill in the gaps.



It's also important to know that most people have the same response and that various groups of people often share similar associations which we refer to as "norms" or "stereotypes."

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COMPREHENSION

Please read the following paragraph out loud:

If you can read this paragraph, it's because our minds are very good at putting together pieces of information in a way that is easy for us to make sense of. Our minds do this automatically, without our conscious control.



This was a horribly misspelled paragraph, yet you were able to read it without much difficulty at all. ***Your unconscious cognition automatically made sense of the paragraph based on your ability to associate it with words you already know.***

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STROOP TASK



In a few seconds you will see random words appear in the black box. Say aloud the COLOR of each word, not what the word says. Remember, just say the color of the word, don't read the words themselves!

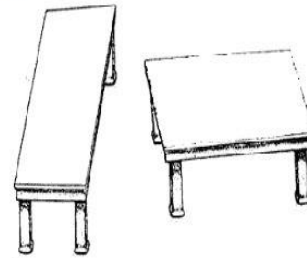
The task was simple at the start because the color and the word matched. Your implicit inclination to read the word aligned with your explicit directions to say the color. However, your automatic inclination to read the words might have made the exercise more difficult later on. *This simple exercise helps to demonstrate how our explicit and implicit goals can and do diverge.*

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BELIEVE IT OR NOT

Look at the picture opposite. Which of the table tops is bigger?
Or are they the same size and shape?

You probably said that the table on the left is longer and narrower. But is it? If you took a piece of paper, traced the table top on the left and placed it on top of the table on the right, you would see that they are in fact identical. To avoid scratching your monitor you'll just have to take our word for it!



This is best described as a cognitive illusion. When we look at the picture we don't even consider that we might be seeing something different than what is obviously right in front of us. Unconscious bias works in a similar way. *We make assumptions and determinations about what is real every moment of every day. Only occasionally do we realize how subjective those determinations are, and how much they are impacted not by what is in front of us, but by what we interpret is in front of us.*

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BRINGING IMPLICIT BIAS TO LIFE



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- These exercises demonstrated the automatic, adaptive and associative nature of our implicit processing. When faced with otherwise ambiguous or confusing content our brains try to quickly make sense of it by relying on associations we've stored in our memory.
- *These stored associations don't have to be based on accurate and logical information. By just seeing concepts grouped together repeatedly, we can internalize associations that are skewed, distorted and inaccurate.*

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BRINGING IMPLICIT BIAS TO LIFE



- There are limits to the amount of information we can process at any given time.
- On average we can only consciously process between 5 and 9 stimuli at a time, so we rely heavily on our implicit cognition to move through the world.
- While we would like to think we are rational and logical adults the reality is that a lot of our thinking occurs unconsciously without our intention and control.
- *Uncovering our biases and understanding their effects on our life and others is critical to ensuring that our intentions and outcomes align.*

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AN EXAMPLE OF UNCONSCIOUS ASSUMPTIONS AFFECTING BEHAVIOR

Without realizing it you may speak slowly and loudly when introducing yourself to an elderly person.

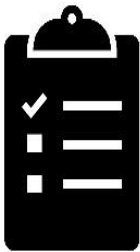
- Your behavior is a result of an unconscious assumption that older people process information slowly and have a hearing impairment.
- This is an implicit bias.

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SECTION TWO REVIEW



- We make assumptions about what is real every moment of every day.
- When faced with incomplete information our **ASSOCIATIVE MEMORY** automatically fills in the blanks.
- Our stored associations are not always based on accurate information.
- Our explicit and implicit goals can and do diverge.
- We can be mindful of our implicit associations and biases and intentionally try to **MITIGATE** them.

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SECTION THREE

BUILDING BLOCKS

WHY DOES IT
MATTER?

WHAT ARE THE
ORIGINS OF
BIAS?

WHAT IS IMPLICIT BIAS?

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WHAT IS IMPLICIT BIAS?

- **Implicit bias** refers to attitudes, both positive and negative, and stereotypes that we hold outside of our conscious awareness.
- These biases affect our understanding, actions and decisions in an unconscious manner. Even if we don't endorse them they can unintentionally influence our thinking.
- **Implicit bias does NOT** refer to those beliefs we are aware of but conceal or suppress in an effort to appear non-biased.



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EXPLICIT BIAS: ZERO TOLERANCE



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- Considering implicit bias doesn't take away from the importance of addressing explicit or direct instances of discrimination. There are still cases where people are consciously hateful, hurtful and biased. These instances still need to be watched for and addressed.
- However, the effects of implicit, explicit and institutional bias are informed by and contribute to each other. It is important to recognize that the concept of unconscious bias does not only apply to "them" but **TO ALL OF US**.

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THE NECESSARY PURPOSE OF BIAS

- Human beings need bias to survive. We go out in the world every day and make automatic and unconscious decisions about what is safe, appropriate, etc.
- Functioning like a danger detector our unconscious decides whether or not something or someone is safe before we can consciously make a determination.
- When the object, animal or person is assessed to be dangerous, a fight or flight fear response occurs. From a survival standpoint this is a necessary trait.

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THE POWER OF UNCONSCIOUS BIAS



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- Our **PRIMARY** way of looking at and encountering the world is driven by a hard-wired pattern of making unconscious decisions.
- The unconscious is far larger and more powerful than the conscious. Like an iceberg, **FAR MORE** lies under the surface than above.
- We are exposed to approximately 11 million pieces of information at any one time but our brains can only functionally deal with about 40! To filter out the rest we have developed a **PERCEPTUAL LENS**.

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THE PERCEPTUAL LENS

- Our **PERCEPTUAL LENS** filters out certain things and lets others in depending on the perceptions, preferences and biases we have formed throughout our lifetime.
- Our perceptive lens allows us to see certain things and miss others. It filters the evidence we collect largely supporting our already held points-of-view while disproving viewpoints with which we disagree.
- We call this phenomenon **CONFIRMATIONAL BEHAVIOR**.

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CONFIRMATIONAL BEHAVIOR: OUR SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECIES



- Confirmational behavior occurs unconsciously in both positive and negative ways. It confirms erroneous stereotypes and negatively impacts our decisions and actions. For example, it might lead us to hire a less qualified candidate or give an unfair (inflated or overly critical) performance review.
- We believe our decisions are consistent with our conscious beliefs when in fact ***our unconscious is often running the show***. Our minds automatically justify our decisions, blinding us to the true source, or deeply ingrained beliefs, behind them. Our concealed unconscious perceptions govern many of the most important decisions we make and have a profound effect on peoples' lives.

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WHY ARE IMPLICIT BIASES PROBLEMATIC?



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- It is possible to form implicit evaluations based on inaccurate information or stereotypes of people, objects, and ideas.
- Implicit biases can impact our decisions, perceptions and behaviors making it more difficult for us to live up to our values of equity and fairness.
- Actions resulting from our implicit biases can create real-world barriers to equity and opportunity often conflicting with our intentions and explicit beliefs.

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SCENARIOS: IMPLICIT BIAS IN ACTION

Click on the buttons below to see how unconscious patterns can impact business decisions and play out in ways that are so subtle they are hard to even spot.

NAME THAT BIAS

AFFINITY BIAS

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SCENARIO: NAME THAT BIAS



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Even names can unconsciously impact people's decision-making. Researchers at MIT and the University of Chicago, studying labor market discrimination, found that even in companies aggressively seeking diversity, applicants with "typically white" names received **50% more callbacks** than those with "typically black" names.

Even more strikingly, there was virtually no difference between the numbers of callbacks received by highly skilled versus average "typically black" named candidates. In fact, average "typically white" named candidates received more callbacks than highly skilled "typically black" named candidates.

SCENARIO: AFFINITY BIAS

Imagine you are conducting an interview with two people, we'll call them Bob and Jane.

Bob reminds you of yourself when you were younger, or of someone you know and like. You have that sense of familiarity or chemistry. You instantly like him, and though you are not aware of why, your mind finds justifications. He seems genuine. I like how he conducts himself.

Because you feel an affinity toward him, you want to put him at ease. You tell him to take a breath and reassure him when he sounds nervous at the start of the interview. An interaction that took no more than a few seconds. He nails your opening question and he's off and running.

Next, you sit down with Jane. There is nothing negative about her, just no real connection. It's a very business-like interaction. You ask her your first question and she's a little nervous but this time you don't pick up on it. The interview moves forward but not quite as well as Bob's.

The next day a co-worker asks you how the interviews went, and you respond: "Bob was great... open, easy to talk to. I think he'll be great with staff and patients." And your reply about Jane? "She's okay, I guess." Your perceptions about the interviews constitute your reality. You probably don't even remember the four-second interaction that changed Bob's entire interview. In fact, if somebody asks you, you would swear you conducted the interviews exactly the same way with the same questions. Your own role in influencing the outcome was completely hidden to you, driven by your background of comfort with Bob.

BACK

IMPLICIT BIAS IN HEALTHCARE DELIVERY

- Implicit associations directly impact healthcare delivery.
- As healthcare workers we are deeply invested in creating positive experiences for our patients and members but the implicit biases we hold may impact our attitudes and decision-making, and our patients' health outcomes, without us knowing it.
- *It isn't about who is a good person or who is a not-so-good-person but rather how our implicit associations can have meaningful effects on our day-to-day life personally and professionally.*

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EXAMPLES: IMPLICIT BIAS IN HEALTHCARE

- Non-white patients are less likely to be prescribed pain medications.
- Non-white patients receive fewer cardiovascular interventions and fewer renal transplants.
- Black women are more likely to die after being diagnosed with breast cancer.
- Black men are less likely to receive chemotherapy and radiation therapy for prostate cancer and more likely to have testicles removed.
- LGBTQ individuals face significant disparities in physical and mental health outcomes compared to their heterosexual counterparts.



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SECTION THREE REVIEW



- Implicit bias refers to attitudes and associations we have adopted outside of our conscious awareness.
- Implicit bias manifests itself in many subtle ways, such as making assumptions about older and younger workers, as well as racial and ethnic groups.
- Unconscious bias affects our decisions and actions and shows up in many areas of the workplace, such as hiring, performance evaluations and promotions.

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SECTION FOUR

PRACTICAL STEPS

PERSPECTIVE TAKING

FRAMING YOUR BIAS


INTROSPECTION AND TAKING ACTION

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**MITIGATING IMPLICIT BIAS:
INTROSPECTION & TAKING ACTION**

Step One: A critical part of addressing unconscious bias is first recognizing and acknowledging that it exists.

This section will set you on a path to understanding your own biases so that you can start doing something about them. It is extremely difficult to uncover implicit biases through introspection alone. As such, we strongly encourage you to begin uncovering some of your own biases by taking one or more of the assessments provided in this module.



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MITIGATING IMPLICIT BIAS: FRAMING YOUR BIAS



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- Putting a frame around your own unconscious bias by acknowledging that you see the world through a frame of reference based on your life experiences and assumptions allows you to examine it and move forward.
- Take a few extra minutes today to explore and challenge your hidden biases and assumptions.* Click [here](#) to print and complete a quick assessment to begin working towards setting your bias aside.

* Estimated time to complete the Hidden Biases Assessment is 10-15 minutes.

NEXT

MITIGATING IMPLICIT BIAS: EXPLORING YOUR OWN IMPLICIT BIASES

- To further explore your own potential implicit biases you have the option of taking an Implicit Association Test (IAT) on one or more topics, such as sexual orientation, weight, disability, race, and gender.* To learn more, visit the [Project Implicit](#) website, log in as a guest, and take one or more tests.

* Estimated time to complete one IAT is 10-15 minutes.



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MITIGATING IMPLICIT BIAS: MICRO-AFFIRMATIONS

Micro-Affirmations are small, discrete acts which occur in public or private wherever people wish to help others succeed. They are tiny acts of opening doors to opportunity, gestures of inclusion and caring, and graceful acts of listening.

- Use micro-affirmations frequently and universally to combat any hidden bias and confirmational behavior you may have.
- Consistently give credit to others, help them build on their strengths and successes, and provide comfort and support when they are in distress.

Many micro-inequities are not conscious. By affirming others in a consistent and appropriate way you are able to block behaviors and unconscious slights that you might not be aware exist and would consciously want to prevent.

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MITIGATING IMPLICIT BIAS: PERSPECTIVE TAKING



- Consider experiences from the point of view of the person being stereotyped. This can involve consuming media about those experiences, such as books or videos, and directly interacting with people from that group.
- Pause and reflect on your potential biases before interacting with people of certain groups to reduce reflexive reactions. This could include thinking about positive examples of that stereotyped group, such as celebrities or personal friends.

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MITIGATING IMPLICIT BIAS: INDIVIDUATION

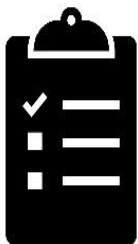


Evaluate people based on their personal characteristics rather than those affiliated with their group. This could include connecting over shared interests or backgrounds.

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SECTION FOUR REVIEW



- Our brains are malleable. We are able to find ways to lessen the effects of bias, and even change the biases themselves. In the same way that our implicit biases were learned over time, we can disrupt this process with intention, attention and time.
- By paying better attention to what we are exposed to, and making the intentional choice to seek out experiences that go against our biases, we are able to disrupt and weaken the unfounded connections we've made in our mind.

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CREDITS

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Harvard University. Project Implicit.
implicit.harvard.edu

UCLA. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.
equity.ucla.edu

Perception Institute.
<https://perception.org/research/implicit-bias/>

Microaggressions
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Media Partners.
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