

# Consciously Overcoming Unconscious Bias

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# Learning Objectives

This presentation will raise awareness of:

- What is bias and what causes it
- Unconscious bias: what are its origins
- Where does it come from?
- 11 Debiasing strategies to address your bias

# What is bias?

- Bias is a tendency, inclination or prejudice toward or against someone or something.
- Is often characterized as stereotypes about people based on the group to which they belong and/or based on an immutable physical characteristic they possess, such as their gender, ethnicity, or sexual orientation.



# What is bias?

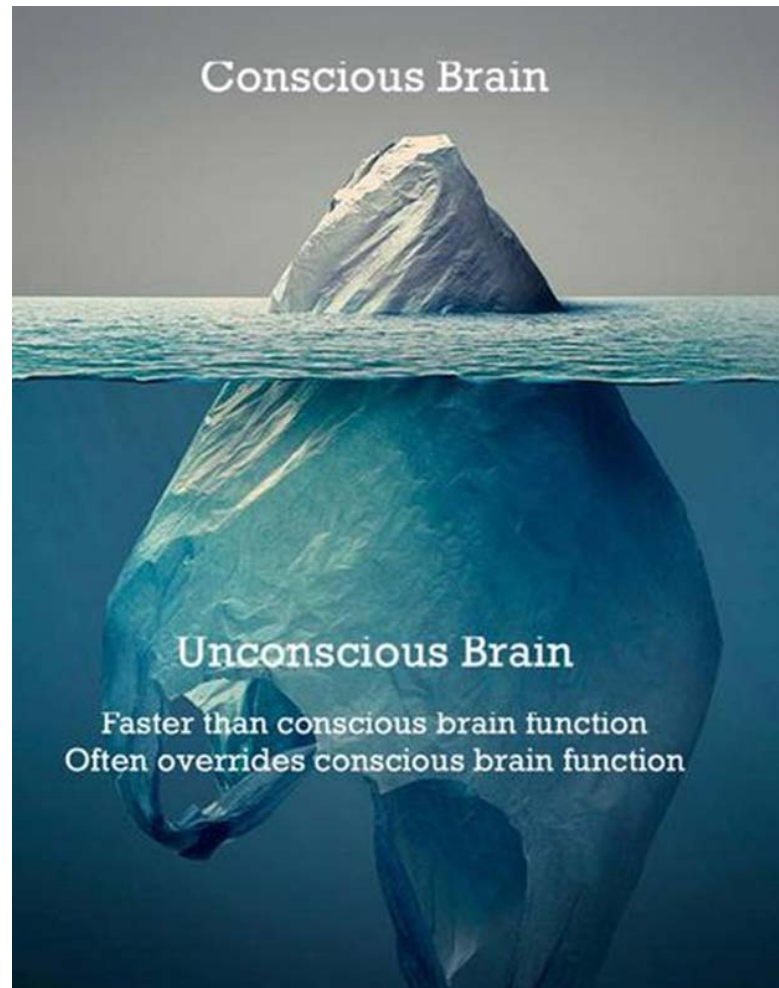
- Often based on those stereotypes, rather than actual knowledge of an individual or circumstance.
- Results in shortcuts that can result in prejudgments that lead to rash decisions or discriminatory practices.



Source: *Psychology Today*

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# How the brain works



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# Conscious vs Unconscious bias

- **Conscious bias:** We know we are prejudiced or have preference and others observe it in our behaviors.
- **Unconscious bias:** We are unaware of our prejudice or prejudice and we believe we are acting objectively and fairly.



# Conscious vs Unconscious bias

- **Conscious bias**

- “I do not like to work with women.”
- “Women are not fit to do this job.”
- “That is a woman’s job, men do not do that.”

- **Unconscious bias**

- “She won’t want to be promoted, she just had a baby.”
- “We have to watch her travel schedule, she can’t travel that much.”
- “We’re going golfing, she would not be interested.”



# What causes implicit bias?

- **Autopilot processing** - Implicit biases are the result of programmed guidelines and rules that the brain learns based on experience and uses for decisions that may not need—or allow for deliberate consideration.
- Our brains are trained to recognize patterns, and then make an assumption based on past experience or association, then act.



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# Our brains love assumptions

Assumptions guide our unconscious thinking. To test your own assumptions, ask yourself these questions:

- How do I know that is true?
- Based on what?
- If she/he were a man/woman (fill in the blanks) would I believe that?



# What is Implicit Bias?

Attitudes or stereotypes that affect our **understanding, actions, and decisions** in an unconscious manner.



Source: The Ohio State University Kirwin Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity

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# What is implicit bias?

Occurs when individuals make judgments about people based on characteristics such as gender, race, age, disability, socioeconomic status, etc. without realizing they have done so.




# What is implicit bias?

- Automatic/involuntary
- Sorting into groups
- Deeply ingrained
- Influences behavior
- Developed over a lifetime beginning at an early age



# What causes people to be biased?



People will discriminate between those who are like them, their “ingroup,” and those who are not like them, their “outgroup.”

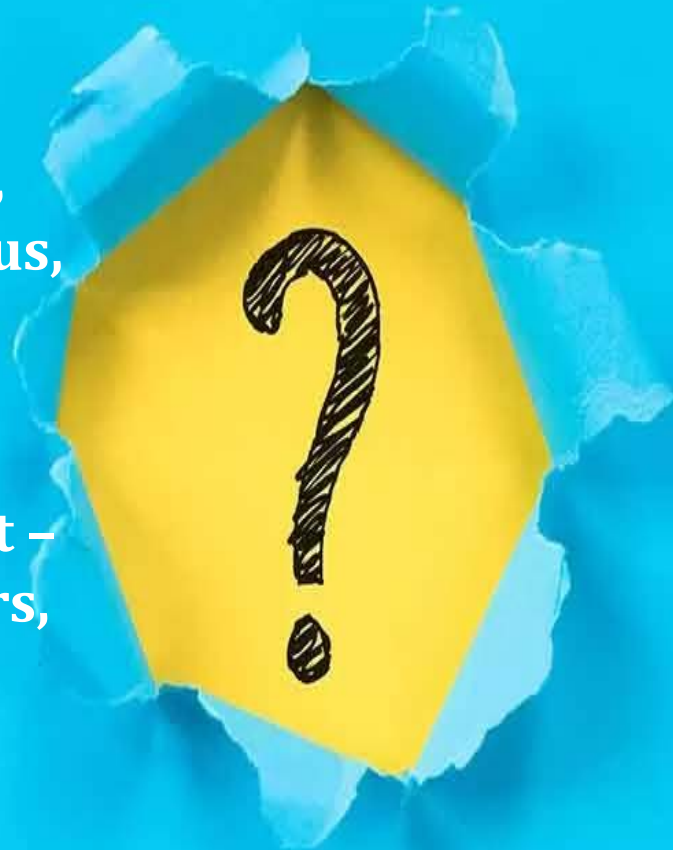
# Origins of implicit bias

- Repeated exposure to the same messaging that we receive throughout our early life experiences:
  - Upbringing (i.e., family, friends, teachers, etc.)
  - Early life experiences
  - Culture
  - Social conditioning (as early as age 4)
  - Peer pressure
  - Institutions (i.e., church, schools, etc.)
  - Media (social media, traditional)



# Culture from Childhood to Now

- 1) Where did you grow up?
- 2) What other cultural groups/identities and practices did you encounter – ethnic, race, class, sexual orientation, religious, etc.?
- 3) What messages were you given about people who were different – messages from family, from peers, from the media, and others?
- 4) How has your background experiences influenced your perceptions of other "cultures" that you encounter at work?





# What is implicit bias?

- Automatic/involuntary
- Sorting into groups
- Learned stereotypes
- Deeply ingrained
- Influence behavior
- Shaped by personal experiences, family, friends, etc.
- Developed over a lifetime beginning at an early age
- Does not align with our lived experience, beliefs, values



# Why Implicit Bias?

- Implicit bias can be a better predictor of behavior and decision-making than our explicit beliefs.
- Implicit bias gives us a framework for understanding the underlying factors driving overt racism.
- Challenging implicit bias can help us align our good intentions with our desired outcomes.
- Discussing implicit bias does not mean ignoring other causes of disparity – it helps us see the entire picture.

Source: The Ohio State University Kirwin Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity

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# We default to implicit processing

- Conditions under which we are mostly likely to make decisions based on implicit biases:
  - Ambiguous or incomplete information
  - Compromised cognitive load
  - Time constraints
  - Overconfidence in objectivity

Source: The Ohio State University Kirwin Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity

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# Can I be aware of my bias?

"How can I address my biases if I don't know that I have them?"



# Debiasing Strategies to reduce Bias

- Debiasing refers to the wide variety of techniques, methods, and interventions that are designed to eliminate or lessen potential errors, distortions, or other mistakes in people's thinking, judgment, or decision making.

# Debiasing Strategy #1: Introspection

- Know your biases.
- Pay attention to how you treat people
- Explore and identify your own prejudices by taking implicit association tests or through other means of self-analysis.

# Implicit Association Test (IAT)

- Measures the relative strength of associations between pairs of concepts
- Measures how quickly and accurately you sort concepts
- Stronger implicit associations - less time to pair and fewer matching errors
- Weaker implicit associations - more time to pair and more matching errors
- Takes 5-10 minutes to complete
- To take the IAT, go to [implicit.harvard.edu](http://implicit.harvard.edu)





**Gender-Career IAT**

**Gender - Career.** This IAT often reveals a relative link between family and females and between career and males.

**Religion IAT**

**Religion ('Religions' IAT).** This IAT requires some familiarity with religious terms from various world religions.

**Weight IAT**

**Weight ('Fat - Thin' IAT).** This IAT requires the ability to distinguish faces of people who are obese and people who are thin. It often reveals an automatic preference for thin people relative to fat people.

**Native IAT**

**Native American ('Native - White American' IAT).** This IAT requires the ability to recognize White and Native American faces in either classic or modern dress, and the names of places that are either American or Foreign in origin.

**Sexuality IAT**

**Sexuality ('Gay - Straight' IAT).** This IAT requires the ability to distinguish words and symbols representing gay and straight people. It often reveals an automatic preference for straight relative to gay people.

**Presidents IAT**

**Presidents ('Presidential Popularity' IAT).** This IAT requires the ability to recognize photos of Donald Trump and one or more previous presidents.

**Asian IAT**

**Asian American ('Asian - European American' IAT).** This IAT requires the ability to recognize White and Asian-American faces, and images of places that are either American or Foreign in origin.

**Arab-Muslim IAT**

**Arab-Muslim ('Arab Muslim - Other People' IAT).** This IAT requires the ability to distinguish names that are likely to belong to Arab-Muslims versus people of other nationalities or religions.

**Skin-tone IAT**

**Skin-tone ('Light Skin - Dark Skin' IAT).** This IAT requires the ability to recognize light and dark-skinned faces. It often reveals an automatic preference for light-skin relative to dark-skin.

**Disability IAT**

**Disability ('Disabled - Abled' IAT).** This IAT requires the ability to recognize symbols representing abled and disabled individuals.

**Transgender ('Transgender People - Cisgender People' IAT).** This IAT requires the ability to

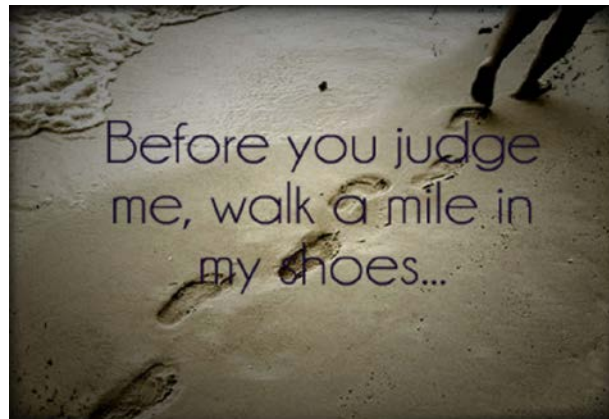


# Debiasing Strategy #2: Mindfulness

- Studies (Hoffman et. al., 2010; Farb et al., 2010) have shown empirical data that mindfulness can, among other things, lead to less emotional reactivity, more cognitive flexibility, enhanced self-insight and fear modulation
- Stress reduction, focus, boosts working memory
- Prayer

# Debiasing Strategy #3: Perspective Taking

- Consider experiences from the point of view of the person or group being stereotyped *ex. arrest of two black men at Starbucks for “trespassing”*
- Read or watch content that discusses those experiences or directly interact with people from those groups.



# Debiasing Strategy #4: Learn to slow down

- Before interacting with people from certain groups, pause and reflect to reduce reflexive actions.
- Reduce susceptibility at key decision moments.



# Debiasing Strategy #5: Individuating vs. Generalizing

- Evaluate people based on their personal characteristics rather than those affiliated with their group.
- Avoid making a snap decision based on stereotypes.



# Debiasing Strategy #6: Check your messaging

- As opposed to saying things like “we don’t see color,” use statements that welcome and embrace multiculturalism or other differences.
- Avoid microaggressive actions/words (“you’re so articulate”, “You don’t look Jewish”)



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# Debiasing Strategy #7: Institutionalize fairness

- Support a culture of diversity and inclusion at the organizational level.
  - Share your stories.
  - Support your organization's Business Resource Groups.
  - Make D&I diversity updates a standing agenda item at your regular leadership team meetings.
  - Explore the individual and embedded systems of unconscious bias that are present within the organization.
  - Review the images in your office to see if they further or undercut stereotypes.
  - Supplier diversity

# Debiasing Strategy #8: Take two

- Resisting implicit bias is lifelong work. You have to constantly restart the process and look for new ways to improve.



# Debiasing Strategy #9: Intergroup contact

- Get to know people who have different lived experiences.
- Deliberately and actively seek out opportunities that will expose you to new people, new ideas, and new places.
- Have authentic relationships with people who think differently than you.

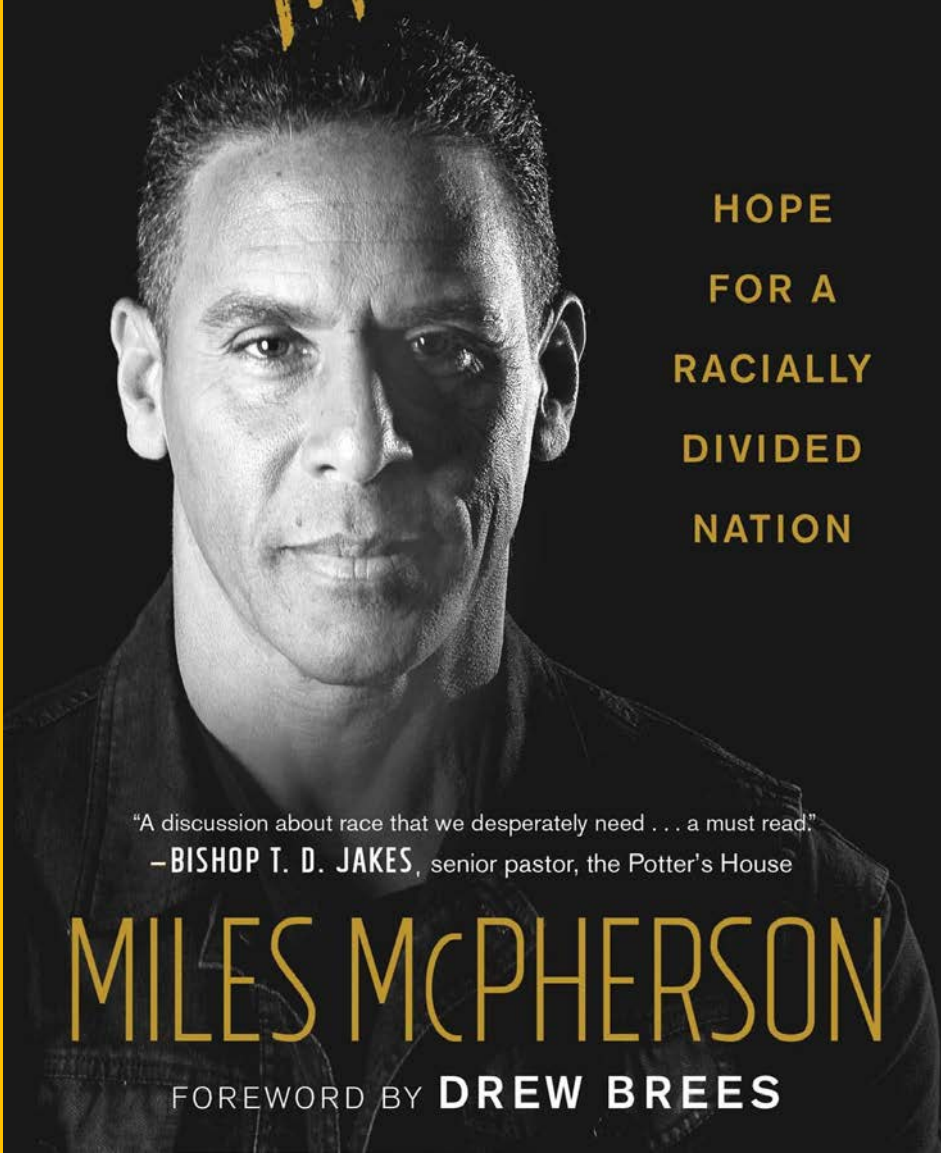


# Debiasing Strategy #10: Expand your in-group

- Expand your in-group
  - *In-group: any group or category to which an individual belongs and membership in the group fosters deep loyalty and a sense of identity. (Sociology dictionary)*
  - Examples of in-group: your race, gender, favorite sports team, your college, even the place you were born



# THE *Third* OPTION



HOPE  
FOR A  
RACIALLY  
DIVIDED  
NATION

"A discussion about race that we desperately need . . . a must read."

—BISHOP T. D. JAKES, senior pastor, the Potter's House

## MILES MCPHERSON

FOREWORD BY **DREW BREES**

# In-Group “those like me”

1. I am more comfortable with **those like me.**
2. I am more inclined to spend time socially with **those like me.**
3. I am more patient with **those like me.**
4. I give the benefit of the doubt quicker to **those like me.**
5. I express more grace when mistakes are made by **those like me.**
6. It is easier to communicate with **those like me.**
7. I assume I will get along easier with **those like me.**
8. I am more willing to go out of my way to help **those like me.**
9. I possess more positive assumptions about **those like me.**

# Out-Group “those not like me”

1. I am less comfortable with **those not like me.**
2. I am less inclined to spend time socially with **those not like me.**
3. I am less patient with **those not like me.**
4. I don't give the benefit of the doubt to **those not like me.**
5. I express less grace to others when mistakes are made by **those not like me.**
6. It is more difficult to communicate with **those not like me.**
7. I don't assume I will get along with **those not like me.**
8. I am less willing to go out of my way to help **those not like me.**
9. I possess fewer positive assumptions about **those not like me.**

# Debiasing Strategy #10: Expand your in-group

- Expand your in-group (con't)
  - Next time you encounter someone from your out-group, take a moment to assess how much out-group discrimination you are inclined to express, and practice reversing your treatment of them.

# Debiasing Strategy #11: Acknowledge your privilege

- Check your ego and acknowledge your privilege
  - Privilege as *an advantage available to one group that isn't available to everyone. -Jana & Baran*
  - *Privilege is thinking something is not a problem because it's not a problem for your personally.*
  - *Privilege means one is given the benefit of the doubt.*
  - Privilege blinds you to the challenge that others face.

TIFFANY JANA  
Author of Overcoming Bias and Erasing Institutional Bias  
MICHAEL BARAN

## **SUBTLE** **ACTS OF** **EXCLUSION**

How to Understand,  
Identify, and Stop  
Microaggressions

# Debiasing Strategy #12: Be an active Bystander

- Identify the emergence of bias.
- Decide to address the situation.
- Speak out.
- Follow up.



Source: The Ohio State University Kirwin Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity

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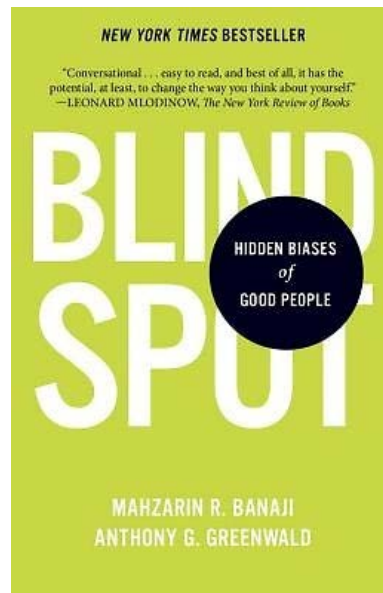


# Action Plan



# Final Thought

“The first step to defeating our hidden biases is to be honest with ourselves about the blind spots we have. Having a bias is only human. The only shame is in making no effort to improve.”



-Dr. Mahzarin Banaji

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# Questions?

# Comments?

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