

# confronting implicit bias

nine tactics to ensure your actions line  
up with your intentions



# what is implicit bias?

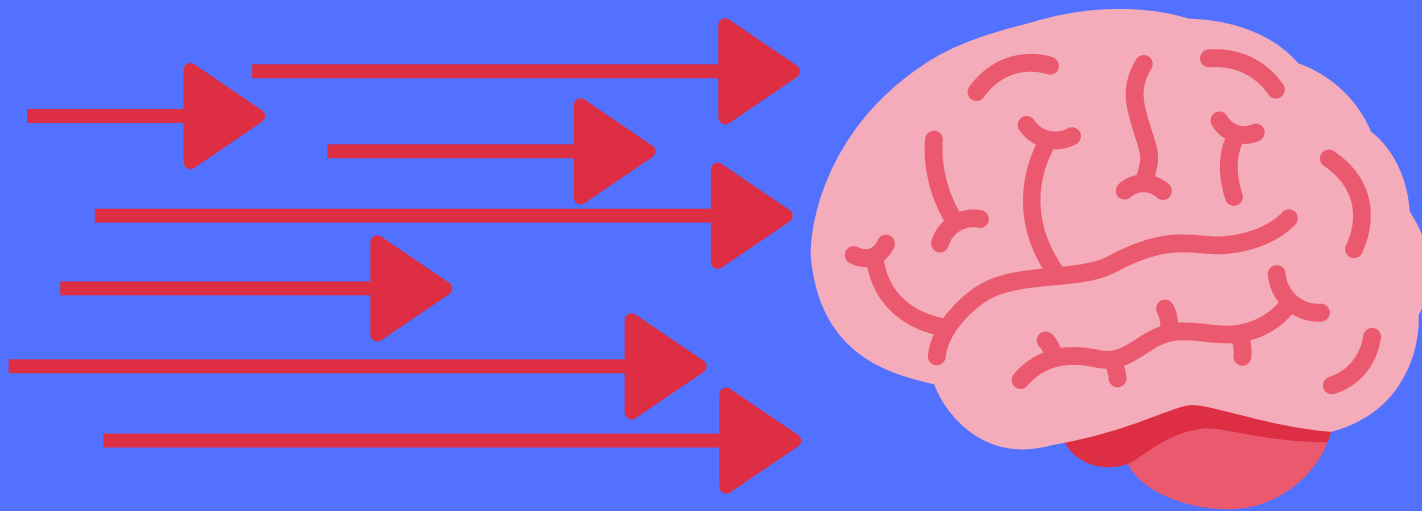
**bias** is prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another.

**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 brains manage the overwhelming amount of information they need to process every waking minute.



# bias can affect behavior in ways we don't intend

**50%**

CHANCE THAT AN  
APPLICANT WITH A  
TRADITIONALLY WHITE  
NAME WILL GET A CALL  
BACK OVER AN APPLICANT  
WITH A TRADITIONALLY  
BLACK NAME <sup>1</sup>

**75%**

OF 6-8TH GRADERS  
WHO DREW A MAN  
WHEN ASKED TO  
"DRAW A SCIENTIST"<sup>2</sup>

# 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

# anti bias tactic 2: countering stereotypes

When you see an image or message that reinforces negative stereotypes, say "That's wrong!" 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.<sup>5</sup>

# 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. <sup>6</sup>



# **BIAS MITIGATION**

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

# anti bias tactic 4: "blinding" applications

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

## IN THE REAL WORLD:

When orchestras went to "blind auditions" in which the musician played from behind a screen, 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 didn't hear if the musician was wearing heels or not.

# 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.

## 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.

# anti bias tactic 6: create inclusive rules

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

- "If I am invited to speak on an all-male panel, I will decline.
- "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

President Obama learned that men are more likely to raise their hands and more likely to be called on. So he created a "boy/girl" rule for calling on people. He didn't have to worry about his own implicit bias favoring one group or the other.

# anti bias tactic 7: pause and justify

When making people decisions, especially decisions about 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 least by writing down your rationale, or better yet to a 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.<sup>7</sup>

# COMPENSATING FOR BIAS

rebalancing the  
scales to make up  
for implicit bias

# anti bias tactic 8: expanding 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. Even 40% of African Americans have anti-Black bias. But compared to 80% of Whites with anti-Black implicit bias, that's an improvement! Compensate for bias by ensuring decision making teams have a broad diversity of people on them.



**YOU**

**can make a  
difference**

**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. To find out if Change Works can work for you, schedule a free initial consultation.

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