

# UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

Practicing conscious awareness to mitigate the impact of unconscious bias in the workplace

## THE IMPACT OF BIAS

All of us have unconscious biases that may prevent us from making equitable, inclusive decisions. Our brains rely on past cultural experience to provide data that “fills in the blanks” between the things we see. We “understand” by weaving together the information we have with the threads of information that our brains remember. We tend to make associations very quickly, based on our experience or beliefs, and more slowly when we see something counter to our experience or beliefs.

### THINGS TO REMEMBER

To have bias is to be human. Bias originates evolutionary inclination to distinguish “friend” (someone like me) from “foe” (someone different from me) in order to survive. It is a fundamental way that our minds process information, allowing us to both stay safe and navigate a cacophony of stimulus at a reasonable pace.

Our background and experience create the lenses through which we see, interpret, and judge the world. Our natural tendency is to see the world as we are, not as it is.

When we are busy and distracted, or feel guilty about our biases, it is more likely that we will act and make decisions from our unconscious. In order to make more objective decisions, we need to create the space to pause and analyze the nature and source of our unconscious judgments. By taking this on, we can create more conscious awareness both individually and organizationally.



### ABOUT COOK ROSS INC.

Cook Ross has twenty five years of experience in providing an innovative approach to diversity, inclusion, cultural competency, and leadership development through training and consulting products and services. For more information, contact us at [lookingforanswers@cookross.com](mailto:lookingforanswers@cookross.com).

### 6 WAYS TO MITIGATE UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

- Recognize and accept that you have bias.
- Develop the capacity to use a flashlight on yourself.
- Practice “constructive” uncertainty.
- Explore awkwardness and discomfort.
- Engage with people you consider “others,” and expose yourself to positive role models in that group.
- Get feedback.

### QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF TO CHECK YOUR DECISION-MAKING

- What are my biases and blind spots?
- Do I have an automatic feeling or judgment about this person?
- Am I being reminded of someone?
- What is this person triggering in my background?
- Do I notice any patterns in my decision making that might be impacted by my biases?
- How might I consciously intervene to mitigate the impact of this bias?

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

*Everyday Bias: Further Explorations into How the Unconscious Mind Shapes our World at Work* by Howard Ross, Founder, Cook Ross Inc.

*Bias in Performance Management Review Process: Creating an Inclusive Talent Pipeline by Understanding Our Filters* by Leslie Traub, Chief Consulting Officer, Cook Ross Inc.

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