



IMPLICIT BIAS - WE ALL HAVE IT



## implicit or unconscious bias

Unconscious (or implicit) bias refers to the automatic, instinctive prejudices we hold towards others, which can influence our decisions and actions without our conscious awareness.

If you have a sentient brain, you have implicit bias. It is learned.



## implicit or unconscious bias

Whether we realize it or not, our unconscious biases influence our professional and personal lives, from the way we think to the way we interact with colleagues, friends and clients.

Unconscious biases are **mental shortcuts** that aid decision-making as the brain processes millions of pieces of information per second.



Valerie Alexander on TEDtalk.



**Were any of you  
surprised to find you  
had implicit bias?**

**Or what those biases  
may be?**



# WHAT HAPPENS IN OUR BRAINS WHEN WE ENGAGE IN UNCONSCIOUS BIAS



What happens in our brains when we engage in implicit (unconscious) bias.

**[ritubhasin.com](http://ritubhasin.com)**

The tool referred to is the Harvard Implicit Association Test (IAT).



## Understanding implicit (unconscious) bias in mental health

In mental health, this bias can affect how symptoms are interpreted, who receives what diagnosis, and the treatment options offered by mental health providers.

For mental health practitioners, recognizing the presence of these biases is critical.



## Understanding implicit (unconscious) bias in mental health

Research indicates that implicit biases based on:

- **race**
- **age**
- **gender**
- **sexual orientation**
- **mental health status**
- **socioeconomic status**

can dramatically affect the judgement of healthcare providers.





**What harmful  
implicit biases do  
you think exist in  
the healthcare  
industry?**



### “Implicit Bias / Ethics Defined”

This video may apply more to socioeconomic prejudices in the USA. However think of similar issues in Canada concerning other minorities (e.g. First Nations).



**As Peer Workers,  
how do you think  
implicit bias can  
affect our work?**



In this animation, Whoopi helps an otherwise great doctor see past his own implicit bias.

The Elephant in the Waiting Room <https://youtu.be/d8feuAvxDII>



- educate
- practice
- diversify
- challenge
- slow down
- Implicit Association Test

## 6 WAYS TO COMBAT IMPLICIT BIAS

IMPLICIT BIAS REFERS TO UNCONSCIOUS ATTITUDES OR STEREOTYPES THAT AFFECTS OUR UNDERSTANDING, ACTIONS, AND DECISIONS WITHOUT OUR AWARENESS

### Educate yourself



Learn about different types of biases and their impacts on society

### Practice mindfulness



Be aware of your thoughts and decisions, questioning your assumptions

### Diversify your network



Engage with people from different backgrounds to broaden your perspectives

### Challenge stereotypes



Question and speak up against stereotypes in media and daily life

### Slow down decisions



Take time to reflect on important decisions to avoid snap judgments

### Take the Implicit Association Test (IAT)



Discover your own implicit biases through scientifically validated tests



- **Educate yourself**
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## Ways to Combat Implicit Bias

### Educate yourself:

Learn about the different types of implicit biases and their impact on society.

Confirmation bias	Authority bias
Gender bias	Racial bias
Affinity bias	Weight bias
Beauty bias	Heuristics
Attribution bias	Overconfidence bias
Conformity bias	Perception bias
Halo effect	Idiosyncratic rater bias
Name bias	Illusory correlation
Ageism	Recency bias
Contrast effect	Horn effect



- educate
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## Ways to Combat Implicit Bias

### Practice Mindfulness:

Be aware of your thoughts and decisions, questioning your assumptions.

Have the courage to examine your own behaviour when faced with the unexpected.

Ask for feedback from colleagues at work or friends/family at home.





- educate
- **Practice mindfulness**
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## An example about How mindfulness might work

“ The following example illustrates how mindfulness meditation may reduce the effects of implicit bias on care. Consider a situation which is particularly conducive to implicit stereotyping: an overcrowded clinic in which a patient, who is a member of a racial or ethnic minority group, is demanding pain medication.

Evidence suggests that the provider who has a regular mindfulness meditation practice will be less likely than her non-meditating counterpart to be experiencing burnout and other internal sources of cognitive load, so that implicit biases will be less likely to arise.

....continued

Taken from an article of ScienceDirect  
“Mindfulness Practice: A promising approach to reducing the effects of clinician implicit bias on patients”

<https://www.sciencedirect.com>





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## An example about How mindfulness might work

“ If implicit biases do arise, she is more likely to become aware of those emotions (perhaps tension, anger, judgment or frustration) arising in her body and the immediate stereotypic beliefs that enter her mind (**why is this patient drug-seeking?**),

and accept those feelings (however antithetical those feelings might be to her own explicit values), as she has practiced taking a non-judgmental, curious stance in meditation, and has cultivated self-compassion.



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## An example about How mindfulness might work

“ At that moment she can pause and take a breath, re-attune her own behavior, taking a moment to reconnect with the patient, and perhaps listen more carefully to his story, or ask him about the events in his life.

This could reverse the negative course of the situation, ensuring that the automatic stereotype that was activated did not adversely affect the therapeutic relationship and the clinical decision-making process.



- educate
- practice
- **Diversify your network**
- challenge
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## Ways to Combat Implicit Bias

### Diversify Your Network:

Engage with people from different backgrounds to broaden your perspectives.

**Can anyone suggest how we might do this?**



- educate
- practice
- diversify
- **Challenge stereotypes**
- slow down
- Implicit Association Test

## Ways to Combat Implicit Bias

### Challenge Stereotypes:

Question and speak up against stereotypes in media and daily life.

Make the effort to expose prejudice against the unexpected and help to normalize it.



- educate
- practice
- diversify
- challenge
- **slow down your decisions**
- Implicit Association Test

## Ways to Combat Implicit Bias

### Slow Down Your Decisions:

Take time to reflect on important decisions to avoid snap judgements.

If you have the time, *visualize* situations before they happen. Change your mental picture to accept the unexpected.



- educate
- practice
- diversify
- challenge
- slow down
- **Implicit Association Test**

## Ways to Combat Implicit Bias

Take the IAT from Harvard:

Developed by Harvard University, the **Implicit Association Test** has been used for decades for implicit bias training. It is freely available to anyone through [Project Implicit](https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html).

*<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>*



**What are other  
ways that we  
can deal with  
our own implicit  
bias?**



## Don't Beat Yourself Up

Everyone has implicit bias. It doesn't just develop from your upbringing or necessarily what you learned in school.





## Riddle me this:

A father and son are involved in a serious car crash and are rushed to a nearby hospital. The father dies.

When the boy is taken into the operating room, the surgeon says: "I cannot operate on this patient, because he is my son."

**How is this possible?**



## Implicit Bias and Peer Work

Peer support workers can effectively address implicit bias by acknowledging their own biases, actively seeking diverse perspectives, and challenging biases in their interactions.

They can also implement strategies like implicit bias training and creating inclusive environments to minimize the impact of unconscious preferences.



## 1. Self-Awareness and Reflection:

- **Recognize your own biases:**

Peer support workers should be aware that implicit biases are common and can affect their interactions with clients.

- **Explore and identify personal prejudices:**

Utilize tools like implicit association tests or engage in self-analysis to understand potential biases.

- **Reflect on social interactions and decisions:**

Consider how your own biases might influence your interactions with individuals from different backgrounds.



## 2. Creating an Inclusive Environment:

- **Seek diverse perspectives:**

Actively seek out and value the input and experiences of individuals from diverse backgrounds.

- **Promote respectful communication:**

Engage in empathetic and sensitive communication, respecting individual differences and experiences.

- **Build trust:**

By demonstrating respect and empathy, peer support workers can create a safe space for clients to share their experiences.



### 3. Challenging Bias and Discrimination:

- **Challenge stereotypes and assumptions:**

Actively question and challenge biased statements or behaviors.

- **Advocate for fairness and equity:**

Stand up for individuals who are being discriminated against or treated unfairly.

- **Support diverse and inclusive peer support networks:**

Encourage the inclusion of individuals from various backgrounds in peer support groups and activities.



## 4. Continuous Improvement:

- **Seek feedback from mentors and colleagues:**

Regularly ask for feedback on your interactions and how they might be influenced by bias.

- **Evaluate and improve your practice:**

Continuously reflect on your interactions and identify areas where you can improve your approach to bias.

- **Participate in training and education:**

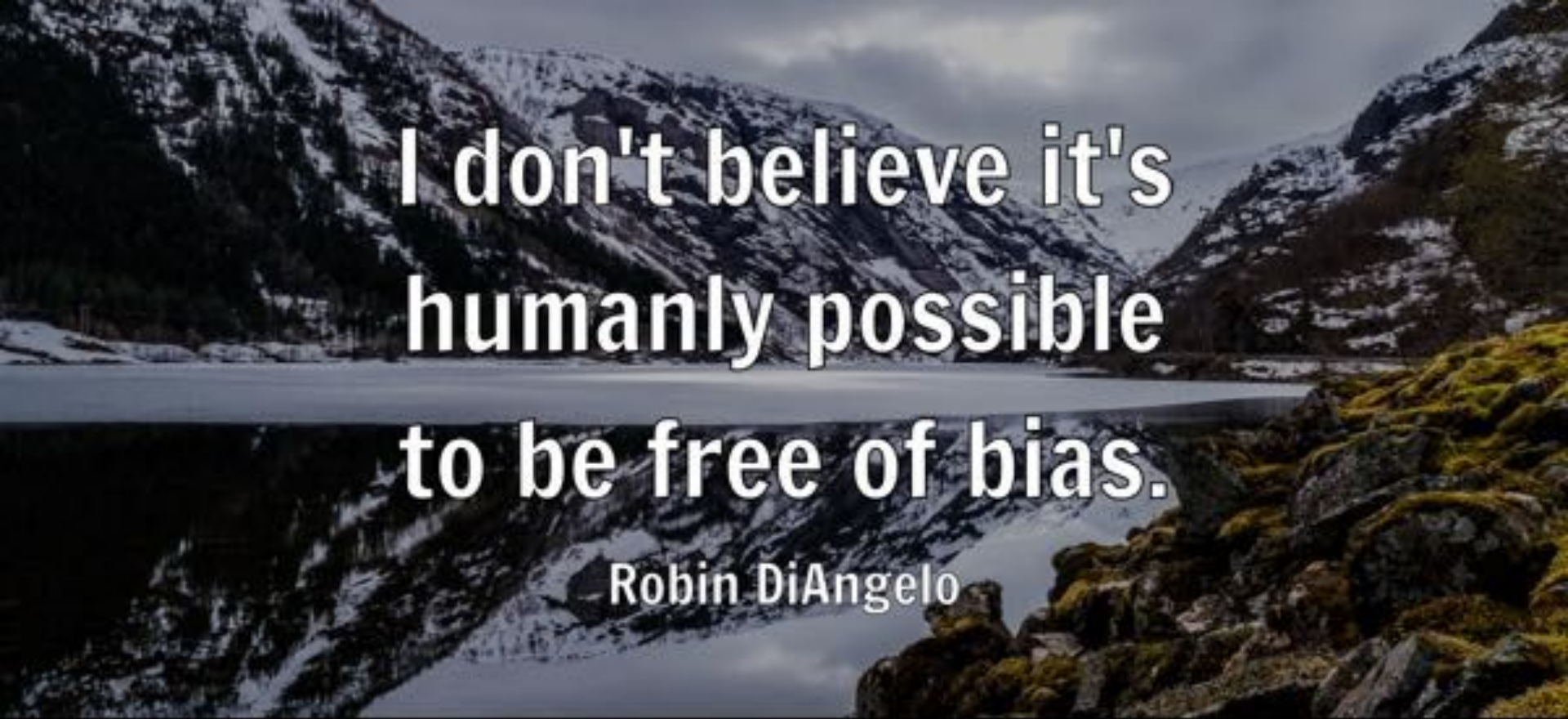
Seek out opportunities for implicit bias training and other forms of diversity and inclusion education.





If you have the time this video is great at portraying implicit bias with an entertaining twist. Implicit bias between rabbits and foxes - herbivores vs carnivores. Easier to digest than implicit biases between people. Described by a therapist and a filmmaker.

<https://youtu.be/PDFI3YGhIBg>



I don't believe it's  
humanly possible  
to be free of bias.

Robin DiAngelo

BrainyQuote®