

WELLESLEY COLLEGE

PARTNERSHIPS FOR DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



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Try these to Reduce Bias Every Day!

1. Consciously notice similarities first, differences second
2. Challenge your assumptions
3. Keep an open mind

Minimizing Unconscious Bias



106 Central Street, Wellesley, MA 02481 | partnerships@wellesley.edu |
new.wellesley.edu/diversityandinclusion



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We live and work within a diverse Wellesley College campus community. We also bring our personal experiences and cultural histories to our campus and those experiences and histories influence our everyday interactions with others.

This influence on judgment is called a “bias.” In fact, what we believe to be objective action and decision making is driven by our unconscious bias. This leads us to make assumptions along the way. When those assumptions turn out to be correct, that’s great. Our brains are working well and leading us to the correct answers. However, when our assumptions turn out to be inaccurate, our brains have led us down the wrong path. These mistakes are called cognitive errors.

We cannot stop this filtering or unconscious bias, which is a normal part of our brain function. What we do want to do is take steps to minimize our cognitive errors. We want to minimize the numbers of incorrect assumptions we make about others and that drive our decision making.

What Have We Learned?

- Influence on judgment is called bias
- Upbringing and culture shapes our biases
- When assumptions and stereotypes influence our attitudes, our unconscious biases influence what information we gather, sort, and filter in order to reach decisions.



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Just as 90% of an iceberg is out of sight, very little can be determined about a person based on appearance.



Most of us believe we are fair, unbiased individuals who treat all people in the same way. However, unconscious bias does influence our interactions with others. To minimize bias, we must understand and acknowledge that unconscious biases do influence our interactions. We must monitor situations or conditions that might trigger bias filtering (whether good or bad). Some conditions that may trigger unconscious bias include:

- Visible identity (e.g., age, gender, race)
- Pressure to make quick decisions
- Mental overload or fatigue
- Multi-tasking
- Perceived lack of accountability
- Lack of good information
- Fatigue or stress

When you know one or more of these conditions exist in your situation, slow down and re-examine your decision-making process or how you are interacting with others.

What Have We Learned?

- Unfamiliarity may trigger biased actions or responses
- There are a number of triggers to look out for
- To slow down and reconsider our thinking to help reduce bias



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