

Biases are preferences, for or against. They are a normal part of life. But without awareness our biases can be judgments that are closed-minded, unfair and unreliable. Bias unchecked and combined with power cause individual and societal harm.

Mindfulness is a profound tool to help us notice what we are thinking, feeling or sensing in our interactions and evaluation of situations. Mindfulness is a foundation for change.

SET AN INTENTION

Decide you want to put effort into uncovering and understanding your biases. This is the first step toward moving away from autopilot and ingrained perceptions, where we aren't aware of the root causes of our behaviors. See it to heal it. Name it to tame it.

HONOR YOU HAVE BLINDSPOTS

Beware of believing you have less biases than others. As soon as we hear ourself saying, "I don't have any biases," it is a signal to look and inquire more deeply.

TRY PERSPECTIVE TAKING

- Try seeing from another person's point of view.
- Reflect on how you would respond in the same situation.
- What factors might contribute to how a person acts in a particular situation?

CONSCIOUSLY CHANGE YOUR STEREOTYPES

Humans are driven to create mental shortcuts to navigate the world. But it can lead us to make damaging assumptions about other people when we create stereotypes, an over generalized belief about a group of people. The idea that membership of a group defines character, behavior or intelligence feeds prejudices, us vs. them thinking and "othering." Be aware of your stereotypes and challenge them.

FOCUS ON SEEING PEOPLE AS INDIVIDUALS

Become curious in your interactions. Notice if you are categorizing someone by race, class, gender, sexuality, etc. Ask yourself if this categorization is useful or habit. Explore how it might be affecting your perception of the individual.

PRACTICE LOVING-KINDNESS AND COMPASSION

We can cultivate kindness and empathy. Researchers found we can decrease implicit bias and improve attitudes toward other social groups through the mindfulness practice of loving-kindness¹. What you practice grows stronger, and mindfulness is a tool that can bring more kindness to our communities, and to ourselves.

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¹ "*The nondiscriminating heart: Lovingkindness meditation training decreases implicit intergroup bias.*" Kang, Y; Gray, J; Dovidio, John, American Psychological Association PsycNet.