

Types of Unconscious Bias and Micro-Aggression

The following types of unconscious bias are important to be aware of and to look out for in our own behaviour and that of others. Noticing and acknowledging that these biases can be present can help us to minimise the negative effect of them on the choices we make.

- **Stereotyping Bias**

A fixed thought or belief that many people share about a certain type of person or thing.

- **Gender bias**

A preference for one gender over the other. This can change depending on the choice we're making.

- **Conformity bias**

When we behave similarly to others in a group, even if it goes against what we actually believe.

- **Beauty bias**

The view that the most attractive person will be the most successful.

- **Affinity bias**

When we warm up to someone we feel a connection to; maybe because they attended the same school or college, or grew up in the same town.

- **Halo effect**

When we let one good quality about someone influence our judgement of them as a whole.

- **Horns effect**

When we let one negative trait about someone blind us to their positive qualities.

- **Similarity bias**


The natural tendency to surround ourselves with people who are similar to us.

- **Contrast effect**

When we compare someone to the person they're replacing, rather than how capable they are at the job they are doing. This can happen a lot in the recruitment and selection process.

- **Attribution bias**

When we look for reasons behind our own and other people's behaviour. We tend to think others are lucky when they do well; and when they do badly we think it's due to their personality or bad behaviour. When we do badly, we tend to blame other people or outside influences.





- **Confirmation bias**

When we look for evidence to back up what we already believe. We have trouble believing evidence that goes against our beliefs.

- **Micro- Aggression:**

Micro-Aggressions are a set of unconscious (sometimes conscious) behaviours often seen in the work place, committee room or other formal or informal settings which say to an individual, that they do not quite belong and are not welcome. These very often take the form of insensitive comments, questions or actions which undermine confidence, questioning the right to belong, subtle insults or criticism, slights or insults often disguised as a joke or banter. The recipient of this type of behaviour will usually feel uncomfortable or hurt.

Micro-Aggression can include:

- o Not inviting someone to speak or contribute in a meeting
- o Not paying attention to another person
- o Being ignored
- o Having your contribution to a meeting or task unnoticed
- o Being talked over
- o Having your authority undermined
- o Having negative assumptions made about your competence to do a job role or particular task
- o Having assumptions made about your honesty
- o Having assumptions made about your citizenship or nationality
- o Having stereotypical judgements made about your ability
- o Persistently not saying someone's name correctly – or creating new 'acceptable' names

Micro-aggression when left unchallenged can impact on an individual's psychological wellbeing, confidence and performance over a prolonged period, and can lead to exclusion and alienation.

