

5 Tips for Overcoming Bias

Become aware of bias

The first step in overcoming implicit biases is awareness. These biases are unconscious so we exhibit them without thinking. They include the attitudes, prejudices, and stereotypes we have learned or developed related to how we view a type or group of people. Biases affect our understanding, actions, and decisions, and can form barriers to effective communication.

Explore below the surface

Biases are often related to characteristics such as race, body size, age, gender, disability, or economic class, and are based on what can be seen on the surface. Once we become aware of our potential biases, our next step is to explore below the surface and seek to truly know others. Ask thoughtful questions, listen well, and share stories to gain a deeper understanding.

Demonstrate humility

As we listen and learn from others, we must suspend judgment. Replace it with a humble appreciation for what makes each person unique. Recognize the value of diverse backgrounds and viewpoints. Respect the differences that make our world stronger. Communicate guidance that is welcomed by the recipient and is sensitive to their culture and experience.

Build trust

Communication is a relational activity. As we form and nurture connections with others trust is built. Trust is essential for open and productive communication and is built on mutual respect between communicator and audience member. Trust promotes a willingness to listen, to learn, and to let go of the implicit biases that form barriers to communication.

Advocate for equity, diversity, and inclusion

Biases separate and divide. They create haves and have nots, insiders and outsiders. To truly overcome biases, we must advocate for equity over favoritism, diversity over uniformity, and inclusion over exclusion. We can examine policies and practices, identify and address injustices, and take the lead in creating a more equitable, diverse, and inclusive profession.