

Race Equity Project – Debiasing Techniques

Debiasing Interventions: A Pick List of Debiasing Techniques

Debiasing techniques are designed to interrupt decisions made on the unconscious level where bias resides and to insert into the thought process values that may lead to more equitable outcomes. Below you will find brief summaries of successful debiasing interventions that have been tested by cognitive scientists and examples of applications.

Intervention 1	AWARENESS OF IMPLICIT BIAS
Description	It is not sufficient to adopt a commitment to anti bias practices. This external motivation will likely have little affect upon the implicit bias that manifests in the workplace. (Devine et al., 2002; Hausmann & Ryan, 2004). The first step to overcoming implicit bias in systems is to have individuals believe that it exists and then act upon it. (Dasgupta & Rivera, 2006; Devine et al., 2002; Hausmann & Ryan, 2004) (Benaji & Greenwald, Blindspot, p. 149). These are the goals of awareness interventions.
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start early and ongoing training to create a positive inclusive culture. • Debias through education and awareness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Encourage & make time for taking the implicit associations tests.¹ ○ Set aside time for staff to discuss their experience with the IAT. • Understand the manifestations of implicit bias & preference, cognitive dissonance, change blindness, etc. • Create safe space for voluntary discussion of social issues. • Avoid accusatory tones and negative associations • Incorporate implicit bias lessons in all aspects of program services, operations and management. •
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide implicit bias training for all staff. Contextualize the training for staff in different positions.

¹ Since bias can manifest at all levels in a system it is important that all staff interacting with clients participate in this activity. Our experience suggests that these tests should be taken alone and with sufficient time to process the results.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amend new employee orientation process to include racial justice training. • Create regularly scheduled racial justice discussion groups in office/program. Teach facilitation of these discussions. • Discuss current events to examine together the role implicit bias may have played in these events. Focus on the specific manifestation of bias and potential legal challenges. • Share court decisions and briefs on implicit bias. • Share articles, video lectures and media about implicit bias with staff. • Create in house listserv to discuss, disseminate and share information on racial justice advocacy. Manage listserv to show application across substantive areas of law.
Intervention 2	HIRE & MAINTAIN A DIVERSE STAFF
Description	This complex subject will be addressed in a separate exercise but many of the decision making interventions be relevant to debiasing the hiring process.
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate a diverse applicant pool • Debias hiring process to check implicit bias. • Provide internship and fellowship opportunities using the same criteria as used in hiring. • Retain diverse staff through inclusivity & acceptance • Internships and collaborations can diversify staff as short-term interventions.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link internship and volunteer programs to hiring. • Conduct a “pre mortem” meeting prior to having a vacancy. • Outreach for candidates should be an ongoing effort. • Review hiring practices <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use a diverse hiring committee ○ Set and commit to criteria that will counter unintended biases toward groups. ○ Do not review resumes or applications until criteria are agreed upon. ○ Use agreed upon areas of inquiry for all candidates tied to hiring criteria. ○ Allow time for reflection between last interview and hiring decision. • Debias workplace and case handling structures.
Intervention #	COUNTER STEREOTYPE TRAINING
Description	It is, by far, easier for people to learn <i>new</i> implicit associations about groups than to unlearn old stereotypic associations (Gawronski et al, 2007; Gregg, Seibt & Banaji, 2006). How is this done? Cognitive scientists suggest it may be as simple as showing images representing a negative stereotype and having the

	<p>subjects say out loud “no” to them and “yes” to images of positive associations. (Kawakami, et al., 2000). These findings emphasize the importance of not just counter-stereotypic instruction, but also the need for consistent repetition of this instruction over time. (see Kawakami, Dovidio, & Kamp, 2005).</p> <p>Experiments have also found that context is very important in assigning value and positive associations to others. The use of posters, pamphlets, photographs, and similar materials in the workplace can provoke counter-typical associations. The words we use provide context that can assist to trigger or dismantle automatic inferences.</p>
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenge staff to recognize stereotype activation and work on preconscious control. • Create space to challenge perceiver to deal with stereotype-inconsistent information & discuss results • Kind in mind → Training people to avoid bias works best if instructions are concrete and specific rather than abstract. • Easier for people to learn new implicit associations about groups than to unlearn old stereotypic associations (Gawronski et al, 2007; Gregg, Seibt & Banaji, 2006) • Debias through initial <u>and</u> ongoing trainings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Central goal → to develop new, positive associations ○ Create space to challenge perceiver to deal with stereotype-inconsistent information & discuss results.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss role of context in stereotype formation when evaluating the merits of a case or the level of service to be provided. • Take time at staff meetings to tell stories and show images that create positive associations with people from all races and ethnicities. • Evaluate office décor, photographs etc. for bias. When possible use materials that reflect counter stereotypical images. • Set ongoing trainings/discussions of bias.
Intervention #	COUNTER STEREOTYPE IMAGING
Description	<p>Some cognitive scientists and social psychologists have found that exposure to non-stereotypical exemplars decreased the automatic White preference effect as measured by the IAT. Emphasizing that implicit biases change, the authors suggest that “creating environments that highlight admired and disliked members of various groups ... may, over time, render these exemplars chronically accessible so that they can consistently and automatically override preexisting biases”(Dasgupta & Greenwald, 2001, p. 807). The effect of these interventions has been mixed but early success and the ease of implementation suggests that these interventions should be considered.</p>

Goal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create inclusive, positive work environment. • Exposure that promotes favorable imagery activation. • Accessibility with a particular focus on language access • Use debiasing agents to decrease automatic preference • Make debiasing agents the norm, not the exception • The strategy makes positive exemplars salient and accessible when challenging a stereotype's validity.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take time at staff meetings to tell stories and show images that create positive associations with people from all races and ethnicities. • Examine posters, pamphlets, photographs and public materials that may reveal negative implicit associations. Show ordinary people in counter stereotypical settings to activate favorable schemas. • Review office for micro messaging where small messages are sent, typically without conscious thought or intent. • Create a screen saver with counter stereotypical exemplars.
Intervention #	INTERGROUP CONTACT
Description	Face to face interaction between groups has been shown that prejudice and stereotypes can be reduced by face-to-face interaction between groups. [Kang & Banaji, Fiske & Gilbert, Asgari, Dasgupta & Asgari]. There are several key conditions necessary for positive effects to emerge from intergroup contact, including individuals sharing equal status and common goals, a cooperative rather than a competitive environment and the presence of support from authority figures, rules and customs. [Allport, 1954]
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage frequent intergroup integration to reduce bias and racial anxiety. • Foster collegiality and not hierarchy in working groups • Communicate explicit common goals for staff • Diversify workgroups, boards, community alliances • Minimize fear and competition which leads to heightened group preference
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your staff is not diverse sponsor events with other firms who have diverse staff. Listen closely to their perspectives. • Hire diverse interns and actively learn from them by soliciting their perspectives and ideas on projects. Learn from your interns as they learn from you. • Create shared opportunities to talk about the racial aspects of events and share perspectives without immediately trying to problem solve.²

² Racial anxiety often causes participant feeling discomfort that fuels a desire to move from sharing perspectives to a discussion of the solution which ends the conversation. The open sharing of perspectives is the primary goal in these discussions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow diverse leadership in working groups without regard to tenure.
Intervention #	DELIBERATIVE PROCESSING
Description	<p>Implicit bias manifests most often when decisions are quickly made without time for deliberation. Deliberative processing can negate unconscious bias and negative associations. Implicit bias may enter decision-making process if people haven't committed to the decision criteria that are most important to them. (Hodson, Dovidio & Gaertner, 2002) Deliberate processing includes awareness of one's own emotional state in decision-making. (Dasgupta & De Steno, 2009)</p>
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Articulate specific criteria before they encounter a specific case, and also order criteria in importance (Uhlmann & Cohen, 2005). This clarity is needed at each step in a decision making process. • Reduce cognitive load by slowing down • Train decision makers to self check for bias before and during decision making process • Unchecked decisions allow for spontaneous judgments that provoke reliance on stereotypes • Consider diverse perspectives • Caution: <i>Receiving the benefits of being in the in-group tends to remain invisible for the most part. And this is perhaps why members of the dominant or majority groups are often genuinely stunned when the benefits they receive are pointed out. Blindspots hide both discriminations and privileges...</i> - Blindspot, p 144
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start each case review/case acceptance meeting with a reminder of the criteria you will apply in selection.³ • Create checklists that commit to unbiased decision making • Create data feedback loops which demonstrate activity toward your goal of achieving equitable outcomes. • Allow time for effortful processing •
Intervention #	DECISION-MAKER ACCOUNTABILITY
Description	<p>Having a sense of accountability, meaning “the implicit or explicit expectation that one may be called on to justify one’s beliefs, feelings, and actions to others,” can be another powerful measure to combat bias (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999, p. 255). If we think we are being monitored or may have to explain our decisions, we are more motivated to act in an unbiased or debiased way. [Benforado, Ziegert] But it is important that the accountability be to a superior who him/herself offers a clear unbiased approach. [Jost Beyond Reasonable Doubt]</p>

³ A program does not have to restate the entire criteria at the beginning of each session. Reference to the criteria at the outset, *Let’s recall the criteria we have committed to in case selection.* Specific applications can also be noted. *We will not be taking this case not because it doesn’t have merit but because it does very little to achieve the mission of our program.*

Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review procedural & organizational behavior <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Closely review formal and informal internal policies ○ Examine your decision makers' actions • Measure intent, approach <u>and</u> outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Added scrutiny can create better decisional and value-laden outcomes • Leaders must be positive exemplars for staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Be mindful of unintended micro-messaging
Examples	•
Intervention #	FOSTER EGALITARIAN MOTIVATIONS
Description	<p><i>Considerable research has shown that fostering egalitarian motivations can counter the activation of automatic stereotypes (Dasgupta & Rivera, 2006; Moskowitz, Gollwitzer, Wasel, & Schaal, 1999). Stone and Moskowitz write, "When activated, egalitarian goals inhibit stereotypes by undermining and counteracting the implicit nature of stereotype activation, thereby cutting stereotypes off before they are brought to mind" (Stone & Moskowitz, 2011, p. 773). For example, work by Dasgupta and Rivera found that automatic biases are not necessarily inevitable, as the relationship between automatic antigay prejudice and discrimination was moderated by individuals' conscious holding of egalitarian beliefs (Dasgupta & Rivera, 2006). [Taken from The Kirwan Institute, Implicit Bias, State of the Science 2013.</i></p>
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage desire to be fair • Affirm or restate equitable goals that counter activation of automatic stereotypes • Challenge comfortable egalitarianism • Recognize in-group helpfulness and commit to matching this for out-group members
Examples	•
Intervention #	PERSEPCTIVE TAKING.
Description	<p>Cognitive scientists have found that perspective-taking was effective at debiasing, as it "tended to increase the expression of positive evaluations of the target, reduced the expression of stereotypic content, and prevented the hyperaccessibility of the stereotype construct" (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000, p. 720). The active consideration of other's mental states and subjective experiences," can decrease implicit outgroup bias and inter group bias. (Todd & Galinsky, 2014, p. 374).</p>
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Practice perspective taking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Review workplace objectives and decisional impacts through the

	<p>lens of all involved</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Create safe space to consider diverse viewpoints ○ When seeking approval for an action or activity present the request from the client or customers perspective. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support deliberative, inclusive mindfulness
Examples	
Intervention #	MINDFULNESS
Description	In a new approach to reducing implicit bias toward Black and homeless individuals, Kang and colleagues looked at loving-kindness meditation, a Buddhist tradition defined as having a focus of developing warm and friendly feelings toward others (Y. Kang et al., 2014). Participation in loving-kindness meditation significantly decreased participants' implicit outgroup bias toward Blacks and homeless people (Y. Kang et al., 2014)
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loving-Kindness meditation is offered as a benefit to employees. • Staff are asked to spend a few moments before each interview to be present for the client and to, once again, bring known implicit biases to the conscious mind. • Staff are asked to “be present” and allow the client up to 3 minutes to explain their situation before information is processed.
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

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