EMPOWERING PEOPLE TO
BREAK THE BIAS HABIT
EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACHES TO REDUCE BIAS, CREATE INCLUSION, AND PROMOTE EQUITY

SPEAKER INFO

Dr. William Taylor Laimaka Cox is a scientist-practitioner with 20 years of experience in the realm of social justice. His work all serves the ultimate goal of understanding and reducing the injustice, human suffering, and disparities that arise from stereotyping and prejudice. Dr. Cox is the Founder/CEO of the Inequity Agents of Change, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization devoted to disseminating evidence-based approaches to reduce bias, create inclusion, and promote equity.

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FOR MORE INFORMATION, SEE BIASHABIT.COM

UNINTENTIONAL BIAS AS HABIT

Stereotypes and biases spring to mind effortlessly and often without awareness, even among those who consciously renounce prejudice. Bias persists among those who renounce prejudice because we are all exposed to stereotypes early and often. These stereotypes and biases become "habits of mind". Bias is therefore an ordinary, pervasive byproduct of socialization experiences. These habits of mind can lead well-intentioned people to be unwittingly complicit in the perpetuation of bias. These habits of mind can be broken, however, with these necessary conditions:

Motivation to eliminate the habit

Awareness of personal vulnerability to the habit and how it manifests, to identify the leverage points for disrupting the habit

Tools to disrupt the habit and replace it with intended responses

Effort over time to break the habit

LEVERAGE POINTS FOR DISRUPTION: BIAS CONSTRUCTS

Impression Justification Stereotypes give us a good gut feeling when someone fits expectations, and a bad gut feeling when someone doesn't fit expectations. Then we look for evidence to support that impression

Norm Enforcement Stereotypes set up prescriptive norms about how people should and should not behave; then we enforce those norms

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy Expectations lead you to behave in a way that causes others to behave the way you expected them to act

Attentional Spotlight Stereotypes lead your attention to stereotype-consistent information and away from stereotype-inconsistent information

Confirmation Bias Giving confirmatory information more weight than disconfirmatory information

Untested Assumptions People often treat their own untested assumptions as if they were confirmatory information

INEFFECTIVE TOOLS

Suppressing Stereotypes Banishing stereotypes from one's mind (e.g., "just try not to stereotype!")

Ignoring Group Statuses Trying to ignore group membership when interacting with members of different groups (e.g., "I just don't see race!")

Believing in Personal Objectivity Attempting to be and believing that you can be objective when making decisions (e.g., "I'll just be objective!")

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Tools 1-3 help to **Retrain Reactions***:*

Detect *the influence of stereotypes and biases,*

Reflect *on the source of the stereotype and its effects on people,*

Reject *the stereotypical portrayal or thought.*

EFFECTIVE TOOLS TO REDUCE BIAS

Tool 1: Replace Stereotypes Replace stereotypic thoughts, assumptions or portrayals with another thought or idea.

Tool 2: Consider Situational Explanations Think about how the situation may have influenced a behavior more than a personal characteristic. Actively consider things outside of the person as possible explanations for behavior.

Tool 3: Do Perspective Taking Imagine what it would feel like to be in another person's situation.

Tool 4: Broaden Your Input Increase experience and exposure to actual people's experiences and complexity, via Contact (having genuine interactions with people), Media (expose yourself to movies, books, blogs, and other media from people different from you), and Images in the Environment (increase representation of underrepresented groups).

Tool 5: Seek Individuating Information Prevent stereotypes from filling in gaps by focusing on the details that make someone a unique individual. Obtain more information on specific qualifications, past experiences, etc., before making a decision.

Tools 5 and 6 specifically help you to **Prevent Bias***.*

Tool 6: Think Ahead Decide ahead of time how to handle a situation, make a decision, or talk about an issue. Decide what criteria are important before you're in the situation to make a judgment. Being prepared makes you less likely to fall prey to spontaneous biases.

Tool 7: Speak Up When Bias Occurs Target the behavior, not the person. The goal should be working together, not finger-pointing. Focus on concrete instances, not abstract accusations. When possible, offer explanations or viable solutions. Speak up about your own slip-ups, not just those of others. Allies and authority figures hold lots of sway.

Our mission is to widely disseminate evidence-based approaches to reduce bias, create inclusion, and promote equity. We want to empower as many people as possible to be agents of change in the world. If you know of any other organizations you think would be interested in our training, please put them in contact with us, at www.biashabit.com or by emailing Dr. Cox at william.cox@biashabit.com.

To get more resources, or to sign up for our monthly newsletter, visit https://www.biashabit.com/resources