

# Unconscious bias

Certain situations will exacerbate our biases. This may be because we feel tired, stressed, threatened, frustrated or anxious.

## What can you do?

Being aware of your bias is the first step to overcoming it. You can slow down decisions by challenging your conclusions. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Is my belief always true?
- Do I have any evidence of it?
- Where did this idea come from?
- Am I being logical?
- Are there any exceptions?

## Focus on the positive

Use intentionally positive behaviour (or micro-affirmations) to help counteract micro-inequities.

Do:

- ask how people are
- identify things you have in common
- value the differences between you - they are positive things
- find and highlight achievements - use them to learn something new about the person
- acknowledge and build on ideas and suggestions
- ask about aspirations
- use listening skills
- display positive body language and make eye contact
- invite them to meetings/events they don't have to attend
- introduce them to people it would be good for them to meet.

Don't:

- go straight into 'business'
- ask how someone is - then not listen or respond to the answer
- ignore all of their contributions
- focus on the negatives
- centre conversations on stereotypes
- delay in passing on information
- use poor body language
- use inappropriate pitch or tone of voice.

## Make contact

The best way to change your unconscious bias is to work and mix with a wider range of people and get to know people as individuals. Try to:

- find positive role models within your team or department
- ensure you take other's perspectives, and investigate them thoroughly
- work together in teams - as equals.

## Top tips

1. Contradict yourself - Look out for people and behaviours that contradict your biases.
2. Take time - Don't rush decisions or squeeze important meetings into a short space of time.
3. Show interest - Be friendly and aim to establish a good rapport.
4. Don't assume - Ask people their opinions or needs.
5. Relax - Don't worry unnecessarily about your unconscious biases. Remember that everyone has them, and practising the simple tips you've learnt here will help you to be aware and not act on them.