



# The perfect conditions for unconscious bias?

How COVID-19 could lead to less inclusive practices

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# Overview

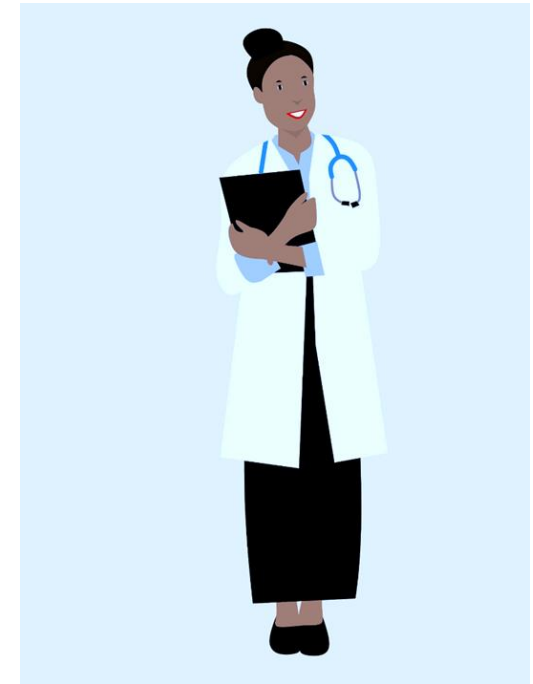
- Bias
  - What it is
  - Rooted in heuristics
  - Everyday bias in our work lives
- COVID-19 and bias
  - Perfect conditions
  - Impact on colleagues and staff
- Beating bias
  - Bias as a habit
  - Some immediate actions



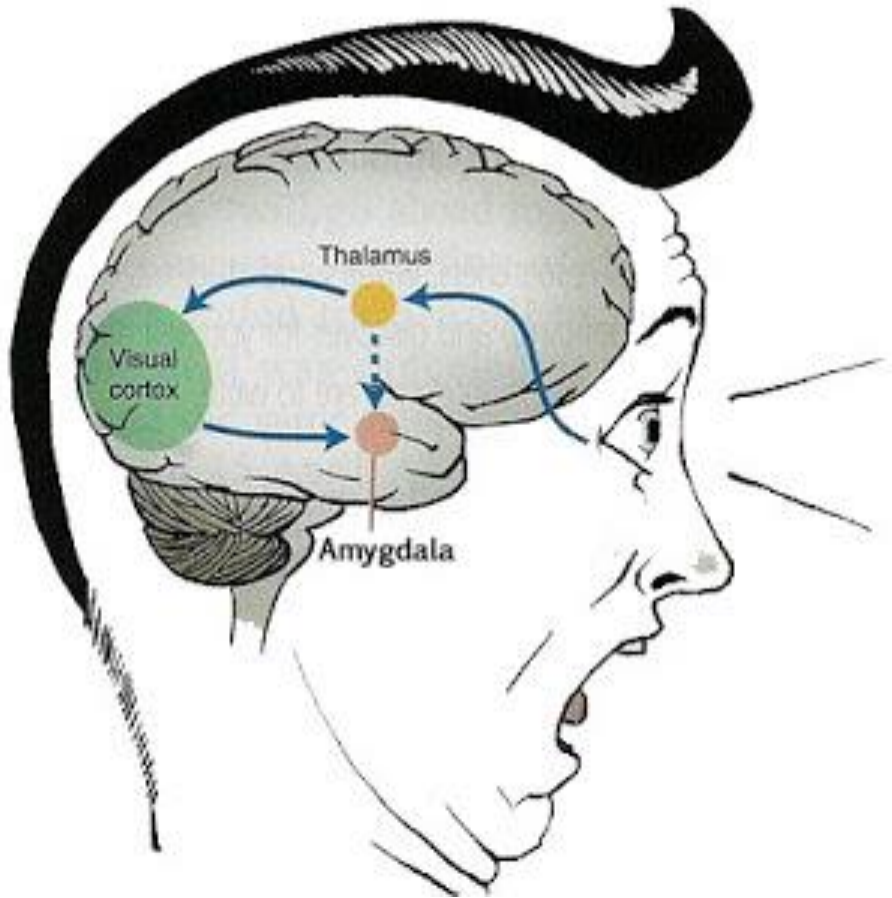
# Remember this?

A father and his son were involved in a car accident in which the father died and the son was seriously injured. The son was taken by ambulance to a nearby hospital and was immediately wheeled into an emergency operating room. A surgeon was called.

Upon arrival, and seeing the patient, the attending surgeon exclaimed, 'Oh my God, it's my son!'



# Bias is an error of judgement



“Bias is a limitation in objective thinking that is caused by the tendency for the human brain to perceive information through a filter of personal experiences and preferences”





# Bias comes from our overreliance on heuristics

“Short-cuts or rules-of-thumb that help us to make decisions efficiently under uncertainty”

## Representativeness

Overestimate based on similarity

## Availability

Make decisions based on recall

## Anchoring

Influenced by starting point



# Everyday bias in our work lives





# COVID-19: the perfect conditions for bias



Multi-disciplinary outputs  
Fact vs. fiction?



Personal and societal implications  
What does all of this mean?



Rapidly-developing situation  
How can I act quickly?



Information overload  
What do I remember?





# The potential impact on colleagues and staff

Our biases are most likely to affect those perceived as “different” to ourselves. This is because:

- We subconsciously **perceive difference as unfamiliar and uncertain**
  - Rely on heuristics (which lead to biases) to fill in gaps in our knowledge or understanding
- We subconsciously **perceive similarity as familiar and certain**
  - Heuristics have less impact because we remember things about ourselves and similar others

This means that **underrepresented colleagues and staff are most likely to be the targets of biased decisions and actions**

Bias can affect the psychological and physical resources needed most in a time of crisis, including:

- Access to information
- Sense of belonging
- Perceptions of procedural and distributive justice/ fairness

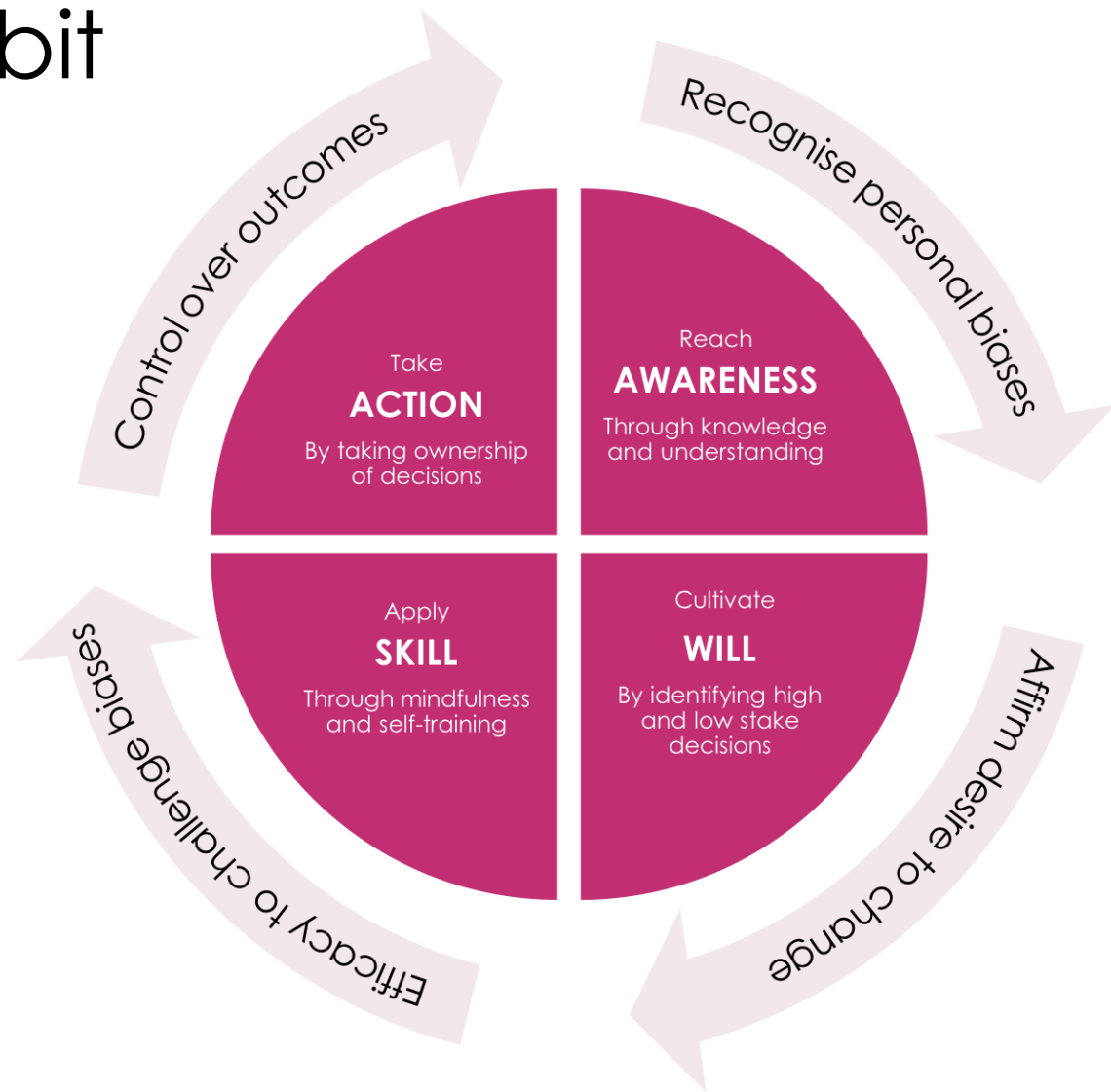




# Think of bias as a habit

In the longer term:

1. Become aware of the biases you are most susceptible to
2. Decide whether you want to tackle them
3. Identify and apply methods for reducing/ removing them
4. Keep practicing those methods until you have formed a new habit





# Things that you can start doing now



Be **aware**: conduct a self-audit of how you interact with others and make decisions – what assumptions are you making?



Be **mindful**: mindfulness is an evidence-based technique for reducing bias – you don't need to meditate, just practice being in the present.



Be **open**: perspective-taking can highlight the pitfalls in your own thinking – what do others think and importantly, why?



## Our work is built on the pillars of:

### **Inclusion & Diversity**

- Combine the science of psychology & lived experience to create impactful, lasting change for businesses and people

### **Rigorous design & methodology**

- Evidence-based learning & growth journey which engages the business 'ecosystem'

### **Cultural/Structural change**

- Change and coaching solutions that stimulate authenticity and empower change agents at all levels

### **Project management & tailored communications**

- Our Project Management Office drives excellence in participant experience & business engagement

## **Contact us.**

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