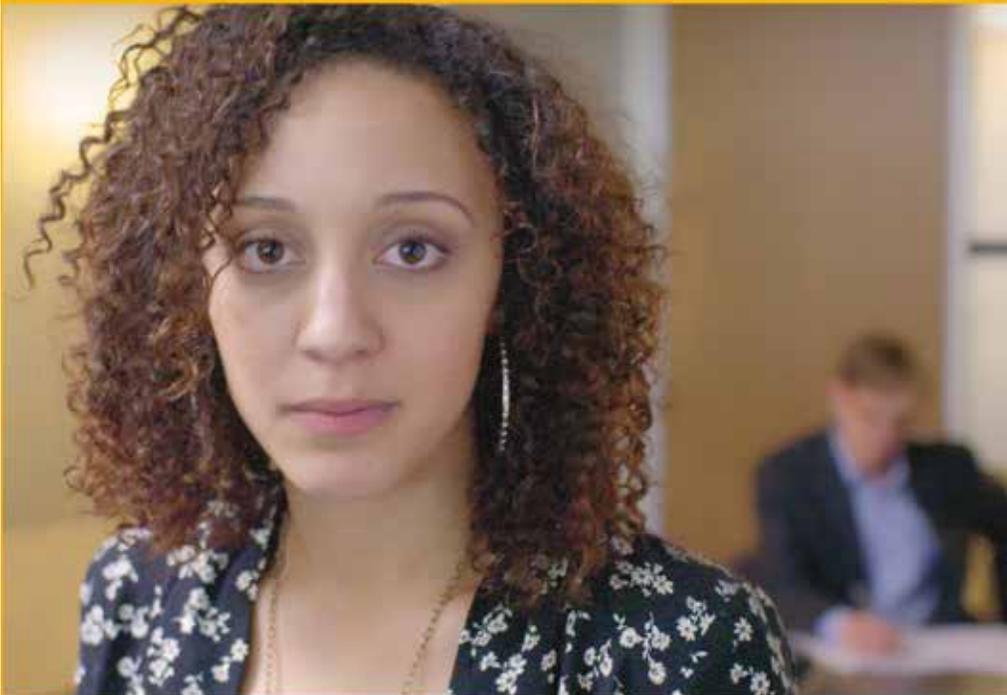


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# Defeating Unconscious Bias

5 Strategies



**Leader's Guide**  
To Facilitate a Training Session

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# Defeating Unconscious Bias

## 5 Strategies

# Leader's Guide

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For more information about this program: [www.UnconsciousBias.info](http://www.UnconsciousBias.info)

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- Ouch! That Stereotype Hurts:** Communicating Respectfully in a Diverse World
- Ouch! Your Silence Hurts:** Encouraging the Silent Bystander
- Anyone Can Be An Ally:** Speaking up for an LGBT Inclusive Workplace
- Gateways to Inclusion:** Turning Tense Moments into Productive Conversations
- Inclusion Insights:** Stereotypes, Lazy Brains & Unintentional Intolerance
- The Uh-Oh Syndrome:** From Intolerance to Inclusion

## **INTRODUCTION**

Let's face it, everybody has some unconscious bias. When I say "bias," I'm not talking about a preference for Mexican food or an inclination toward the color blue. The focus here is on those inflexible beliefs about whole categories of people that keep us from seeing others accurately, from making fair and appropriate decisions, and from building the kind of harmonious relationships that make our organizations more successful.

Clearly, biases are bad news for our workplaces. On the other hand, the good news is that biases do not make us bad people. After all, the predisposition to lump people into categories is ingrained in the human condition. Because of that predisposition, we are vulnerable to unconsciously believing the messages that hurtle at us from family, media, experience, and society as a whole.

But, (more good news) we are not stuck with our unconscious biases; we can defeat them and that's what this video is all about. As you will see, the video provides five concrete strategies for defeating unconscious bias. If applied with diligence and commitment (and even a little bit of courage), these strategies will make a real difference in your workplace.

We have, in the Guide, made an effort to provide everything you need to achieve this goal. If, however, you need additional material, you might take a look at the handbook on which the video is based – 3 Keys to Defeating Unconscious Bias: Watch, Think, Act – it is available at the website below. Also, please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions at all – I am here to help.

Respectfully,

**Sondra Thiederman, Ph.D.**

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## OVERVIEW FOR FACILITATORS

This Leader's Guide outlines a 90-minute training session.

### **Purpose of the Training Session:**

To provide participants with five strategies for becoming aware of and defeating unconscious bias.

### **Suggested Number of Participants:** 30

### **Learning Outcomes:**

At the completion of this session, each participant will be able to employ five concrete techniques for becoming aware of and defeating unconscious bias:

1. Watch your first thoughts in order to spot potential biases.
2. Use the power of logic to weaken the foundation of your unconscious bias.
3. Hit the pause button to allow your rational brain to kick in.
4. Change your behaviors to act in ways that counter your bias.
5. Cultivate common ground with people different from yourself.

### **Materials List:**

- PowerPoint Slides
- Leader's Guide
- Post-Test
- Reminder Cards

### **Session Outline:**

Welcome / Introduction

Defining Bias: What it Is and What it Is Not

Viewing of the Defeating Unconscious Bias Video

Strategy #1: Watch Your First Thoughts

Strategy #2: Use the Power of Logic

Strategy #3: Hit the Pause Button

Strategy #4: Act as If the Bias Doesn't Exist

Strategy #5: Cultivate Common Ground

Post-Test & Wrap-Up

### **Before Participants Arrive:**

- Set up and test audio-visual equipment.
- Set up flip chart and pens.
- Arrange the room.
- Show "Welcome to the Defeating Unconscious Bias Workshop" PowerPoint slide.

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## 90-Minute Training Session Script

### WELCOME / INTRODUCTION

**PowerPoint Slides:** #1

**Handouts:** None

---

**SHOW SLIDE #1** Have it projecting as participants arrive.

**Welcome to the Defeating Unconscious Bias: 5 Strategies Workshop**



*Welcome to the*  
**Defeating Unconscious Bias:  
5 Strategies**  
**WORKSHOP**



### **Say in your own words:**

Welcome to the workshop on defeating unconscious bias. The foundation of the program is the video, Defeating Unconscious Bias: 5 Strategies.

As I've prepared for this training workshop, I have watched the video several times and was amazed how much I learned – both about my own biases and, most importantly, what I can do to defeat them.

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## DEFINING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

**PowerPoint Slides:** #2

**Handouts:** None

---

### Say in your own words:

Before we watch the video, let's make sure we are all on the same page about what a bias is.



#### The Definition of Bias

A bias is an inflexible conscious or unconscious belief about a particular category of people.

Unconscious bias is in our mental blind spot – we are unaware that it is there.



### SHOW AND READ SLIDE #2: The Definition of Bias

A bias is an inflexible conscious or unconscious belief about a particular category of people.  
Unconscious bias is in our mental blind spot – we are unaware that it is there.

As you'll see in the video, biases are dangerous and destructive – they get in the way of decision making and prevent us from treating people fairly. In fact, if you watch closely, you'll see that biases can cause almost as much harm to the person holding it as to the object of the bias.

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## **DEFEATING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS VIDEO**

**Time:** 14 minutes  
**Video:** Defeating Unconscious Bias: 5 Strategies  
**Handouts:** None

---

### **Say in your own words:**

As you watch the video, keep in mind that having a bias does not make you a bad person! If so, we'd all be in a lot of trouble because everybody – to one degree or another – has bias.

The video, as you'll see, provides specific skills for defeating bias – there really is a lot we can do.

### **VIEW THE VIDEO**



**STRATEGY #1 – WATCH YOUR FIRST THOUGHTS**

**PowerPoint Slides:** #3, #4

**Handouts:** None

---

**SHOW SLIDE #3: Watch Your First Thoughts**

**Defeating Unconscious Bias**

5 Strategies

**Watch your first thoughts**

Watch your first thought when encountering someone different from yourself.

That thought might be evidence of a bias that is lurking in your mental blind spot.

Slide #3

**Say in your own words:**

I hope you agree that there are some good concrete strategies depicted in the video that we can all use to help defeat our biases.

As we just saw, the first strategy is to watch your first thought when encountering someone different from yourself. *Why?* Because that thought just might be evidence of a bias that is lurking in your mental blind spot.

Of course, not every first thought or first reaction is actually a reflection of an unconscious bias. *The question becomes, how can we tell when our response is a bias and when it is not?*

In that connection, I really liked the “switching” technique depicted in the video. *Did you notice that? Can anyone describe that incident to me?*

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### **Facilitation Note:**

Most likely, someone will describe the situation that the narrator related about a female executive who was giving a presentation and then is characterized as “too emotional.”

He suggested to switch it around and imagine a male executive giving the same presentation.

This technique of switching the group to monitor how that changes your perception of a person or situation is very powerful.

### **Facilitation Note:**

This next section is bonus material that is not discussed in the video.

### **Say in your own words:**

There’s another way, too, to see if a first thought is a bias. This technique grows out of the definition of bias: An inflexible conscious or unconscious belief about a particular category of people.

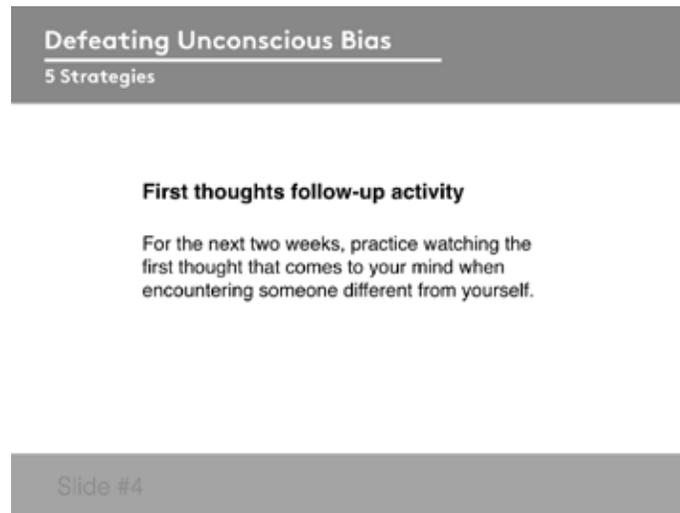
Biases are inflexible, that means they involve what I call “all statements.” Such as “all southern Californians are flaky” and “all New Yorkers are loud.” You get the idea.

In other words, another test to see if a first thought is a bias is to notice if your thought is using the word “all” or implies that the characteristic is applied to every member of the group, not just one individual. If so, you have a bias to work on.

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## SHOW SLIDE #4: First Thoughts Follow-Up Activity

For the next two weeks, practice watching the first thought that comes to your mind when encountering someone different from yourself.



### Say in your own words:

Learning a new skill requires practice. That's why we suggest you practice watching your first response to other groups *consistently* for about two weeks.

It's amazing how quickly you can get into the habit of noticing your first assumption.

Don't feel bad about what that first thought is.

For one thing, it may or may not be a bias. For another, remember – as we saw in the case of Jeff's bias about single mothers – having a bias does not make you a bad person. It merely makes you human. *What matters is what you do about it.*

Once you're aware of the thought, subject it to the "switching" technique we talked about.

Also, ask yourself: Does the thought involve the word 'all' or 'every?'

If it does, that thought is an inflexible belief which plants you firmly on bias territory.

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## STRATEGY #2 – USE THE POWER OF LOGIC

PowerPoint Slides: #5, #6,

Handouts: None



### SHOW SLIDE #5: Use the Power of Logic

#### Defeating Unconscious Bias

5 Strategies

##### Use the power of logic

A tool that we can use to weaken even our most unconscious biases.

Slide #5

#### Say in your own words:

I found it fascinating in the video to learn that using our logical brains can actually weaken even our most unconscious biases.

#### Say and ask the group:

The video showed the case of a manager, Joe, who had a bias about young people. He seemed to be stuck with the idea that all young people are unreliable and uncommitted.

The video proposed that Joe attack his bias by bringing logic to the task. In particular, it suggested that he ask himself, "How many people under 30 do you actually know who are unreliable or uncommitted?"

*Do you agree that that approach would work?*

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### Facilitation Note:

When you ask this question, make it clear that when you say “actually know,” you mean that literally – not met once, seen across the parking lot, or heard a rumor about.

If a responder says they don’t think it will work for them, ask them why they are skeptical.

If a responder says it will work, ask them why they think this is an effective technique.

**Also note:** The answer you receive might be that, once our rational brain realizes how little actual evidence there is for the bias, the unconscious belief gradually begins to weaken. In other words, logic does have the power to impact the unconscious mind.

### Facilitation Note:

This next section is bonus material that is not depicted in the video. It is another example of how The Power of Logic can help defeat bias.

### Say in your own words:

Here’s another way to use logic to defeat bias.

**SHOW AND READ SLIDE #6: Ask yourself if the source of the bias was reliable.**



Defeating Unconscious Bias  
5 Strategies

**Ask yourself if the source of the bias was reliable.**



Slide #6

We all learn our biases from many sources. Among these sources are the media, our parents, teachers, and the culture as a whole. One way to defeat bias is to explore these sources to see if they actually provide reliable information on which we can judge an entire category of people. In most cases, they do not.

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### **Facilitation Note:**

If possible, it would be valuable if you, the facilitator, could share here a personal bias that you have discovered within yourself and that, when examined, proved to have a very weak foundation.

The bias doesn't have to be about a racial or ethnic group. It could be about people from a different region of the country, a particular occupation (lawyer, doctor, college professor), or any other group.

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## STRATEGY #3 – HIT THE PAUSE BUTTON

**PowerPoint Slides:** #7

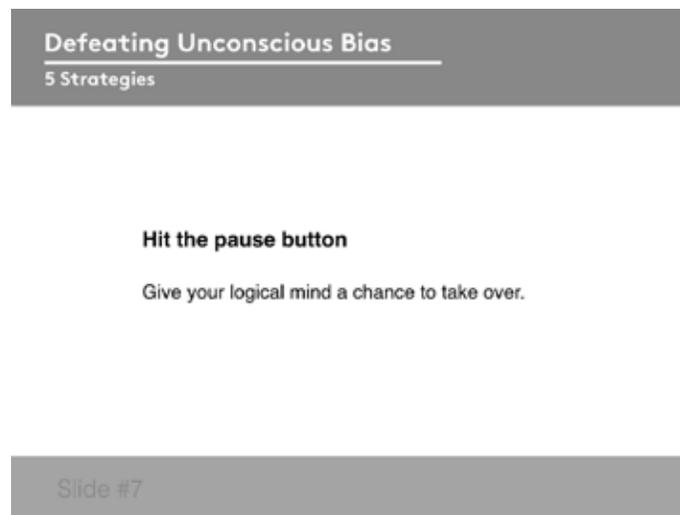
**Handouts:** None



### Facilitation Reading:

For information about the science that's behind this strategy, see the article in the Appendix - *Time: Your Weapon Against Bias*.

**SHOW SLIDE #7: Hit the pause button to give your logical mind a chance to take over.**



### Say in your own words:

We've all been taught the importance of counting to ten before making any decisions when we are angry or upset.

### Ask the group:

Why do you think counting to ten works?

### Facilitation Note:

Possible answers include

1. Counting gives us time for our heart rate and other physiological responses to calm down.
2. Counting provides time for rational thinking to take over.
3. Counting supplies time for our emotions to subside and the situation to come into perspective.

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### **Say in your own words:**

This same principle applies to controlling the impact of our biases on our decision making.

In fact, scientific studies have proven that even just a few seconds can give us the rational control we need.

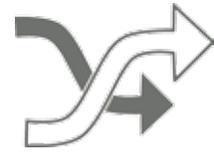
Point to the slide and remind the group that even the slightest pause can be the difference between a wise decision and a bad mistake.

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## STRATEGY #4 – ACT AS IF THE BIAS DOESN'T EXIST

**PowerPoint Slides:** #8, #9

**Handout:** None



### SHOW SLIDE #8: Act As If The Bias Doesn't Exist



Act as if the bias doesn't exist.



#### Facilitation Note:

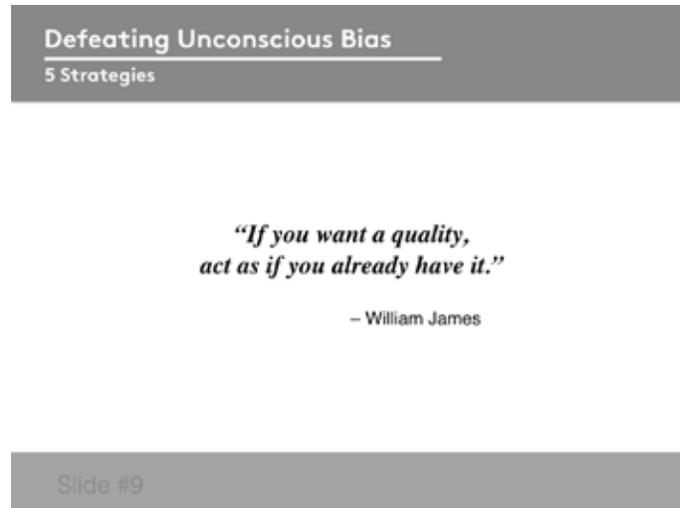
This strategy is arguably the most important of the five. We suggest you slow down here and give it special emphasis.

#### Say in your own words:

What Beth accomplished by simply changing a couple of fairly simple behaviors is amazing. This principle – the idea that attitude follows behavior – goes all the way back to the times of the ancient Greek philosophers. More recently, one of America's most famous philosophers said this.

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**SHOW SLIDE #9: “If you want a quality, act as if you already have it.” William James**



### **Say in your own words:**

As we saw in the video, acting in a way that runs counter to a bias works to defeat it for several reasons. Most important, it works because of a psychological truth called “cognitive dissonance.”

Cognitive dissonance is really just a fancy phrase for the fact that the human mind can’t for long tolerate thinking one way and acting another.

If we try to do that (like Beth did when she changed her behaviors), something eventually has to change. Either we stop the behavior or change our belief. As you can see, if we keep up the counter-bias behavior, our bias has little choice but to fade.

### **Ask the group:**

In the video, Beth had a bias that tricked her into not listening to Jorge because of how he speaks. *How might this behavior impact the team?*

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**Facilitation Note:** Possible answers include:

1. Jorge will feel devalued and possible even leave the organization.
2. Jorge might stop speaking up with his ideas which would mean the organization will miss out on valuable material.
3. Others on the team who observe what Beth is doing, will lose respect either for Beth or Jorge or both.
4. Others may begin to feel that diversity is not truly valued in their workplace.

### **Ask the group:**

In the video, Beth makes the decision to change her behaviors to those that run counter to her bias. *Can you tell me what those behaviors were?*

**Facilitation Note:** Possible answers include:

1. Beth began to take notes on what every person said – including Jorge. That forced her to listen because, after all, she couldn't take notes if she didn't hear what was said.
2. Also, she asked at least one follow-up question of each person who spoke. Again, that forced her to listen so she would know what to ask.

### **Say in your own words:**

You'll notice some things that all of these behaviors have in common. Each of the behaviors is specific, concrete and measurable.

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### **Ask the group:**

There was one other characteristic of Beth's new behaviors. *Did you happen to notice what that was?*

### **Facilitation Note:**

The answer is that she committed to keeping the behavior up for three weeks.

That commitment to an extended time greatly increased the chances that her behavior change would have the desired impact of getting rid of her bias.

### **Facilitation Note:**

This next item is not depicted in the video.

### **Say in your own words:**

I'd like to add one more tip. When you decide to change a behavior that is driven by bias, it is a great idea to write that behavior down somewhere so you can easily see it.

Put in on a sticky note or even in your calendar.

The behavior we are trying for is, after all, new to us and, on top of that, it runs counter to what our bias is driving us to do. For those reasons, we are in real danger of forgetting the new behavior all together.

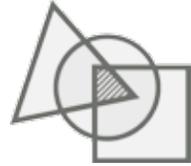
The more we remind ourselves to do it, the more effective this strategy will be.

**STRATEGY #5 – CULTIVATE COMMON GROUND**

**PowerPoint Slides:** #10, #11

**Handout:** None

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**SHOW SLIDE #10: Defeat Bias by Cultivating Common Ground**

Defeating Unconscious Bias  
5 Strategies

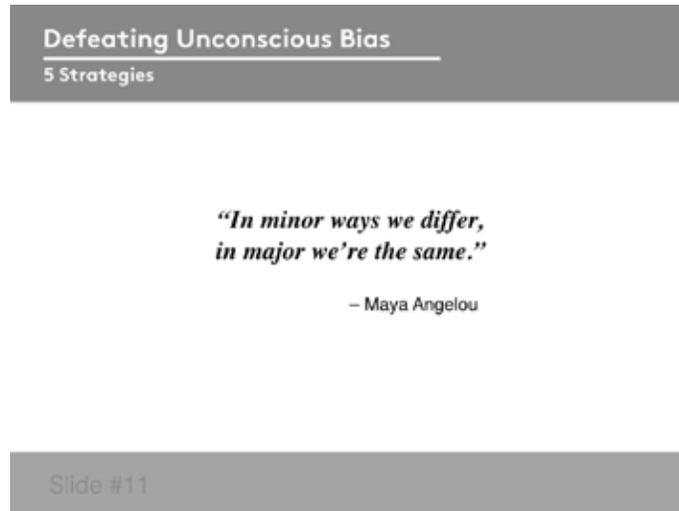
**Defeat bias by cultivating common ground.**

Slide #10

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## SHOW AND READ SLIDE #11:

**In minor ways we differ, in major, we're the same." – Maya Angelou**



### **Say in your own words:**

This quote from poet Maya Angelou helps us remember how important identifying common ground is to reducing bias.

If you really think about it, valuing diversity and identifying what we have in common are two sides of the same inclusion coin – we need them both in order to have a truly inclusive workforce.

If you recall the “cat-lover / dog-lover” reference in the video, you understand that, although we of course value differences, there is an awful lot that human beings have in common.

### **Say and ask the group:**

Let's explore this notion of common ground a little further.

*Can you think of a time when you met someone very different from yourself only to later find out how much you have in common?*

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## **Facilitation Note:**

Give the group a few minutes to share examples.

You might prime the discussion with examples of your own. The commonality may be in any area: values, tastes, interests, challenges, or shared goals.

## **Facilitation Note & The Question Game:**

At this point you will introduce this bonus material – The Question Game – as another way to identify what human beings have in common. This activity consists of the asking of one or more questions followed by participant feedback. Here are detailed instructions along with a list of sample questions.

## **Instructions:**

1. Invite a volunteer to function as the “primary responder” to the questions you supply. If time allows for more than one person to be the responder, try to achieve as much visible diversity as possible among those chosen for this role.
2. Select one or more questions from the list. The number of questions depends upon the time available. As you ask each question out loud, have both the primary responder and the rest of the group write down their answers.
3. After all the questions are asked, have the primary responder provide his or her answers, one by one.
4. After each response is read, ask the group if any of their answers are similar to those provided by the primary responder.
5. As commonalities emerge, make the point that we have a lot more in common than we realize. This is particularly valuable if those who have answered a question in a similar way are visibly different from each other.
6. Encourage participants to discuss what they have discovered among themselves following the program.

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### **Suggested Questions:**

Use your imagination and experience to add more to the list.

1. What single non-living item would you rescue from a fire in your home and why?
2. What three pieces of advice did your parents give you? Have you found that advice valuable?
3. If you could live during any time in history, when would it be and why?
4. What talent that you don't currently possess would you most like to have? What is it about that talent that appeals to you?
5. What about you or your achievements are you most proud?
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

### **Say in your own words:**

I encourage you to continue to looking for what you have in common with your colleagues back in the workplace. I don't know what this commonality might be, but what I do know is that you will probably be pleasantly surprised at what you discover.

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## DEFEATING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS POST-TEST & WRAP UP

**PowerPoint Slides:** #12

**Handouts:** Defeating Unconscious Bias Post-Test

---

**SHOW SLIDE #12: Thank you for your participation**

Defeating Unconscious Bias

5 Strategies

*Thank you for your participation.*

Slide #12

[www.UnconsciousBias.info](http://www.UnconsciousBias.info)

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**DISTRIBUTE:** Post-test

**ASK THE GROUP:**

Please complete the Post-Test.

**Facilitation Note:**

Give participants a couple of minutes to complete the test.

After they have finished, quickly provide these correct answers:

1. True
2. False
3. b
4. True
5. True
6. c
7. e
8. False
9. d
10. True

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**DISTRIBUTE:** Reminder Cards

**Say in your own words:**

We suggest you keep this reminder card handy and review it from time to time as a reminder of the skills learned throughout this session.

Thank participants for their openness and participation.

Encourage the group to apply the tools they have learned to their lives and in the workplace.

Remember that, in this process of defeating bias, desire is the driver of the effort and the rational mind is the tool. It also requires commitment and just a little bit of courage. All this is worth the effort because it really is true: We have the power to defeat our unconscious biases.

**END TRAINING SESSION**

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## DEFEATING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS POST-TEST

1. Unconscious biases cause problems for both the holder of the bias and for the person who is the target of the bias.

True

False

2. The first thought or assumption that pops into your mind when seeing someone different from yourself is always an indication of an unconscious bias.

True

False

3. A good way to tell if a first thought is evidence of an unconscious bias is to...

a. ... observe if others around you have jumped to the same conclusion.

b. ... switch the person to another group and see if you change your mind.

c. ... try to remember if you've ever had the same thought before.

4. Asking yourself how many people you really know who conform to your bias helps to weaken it because even the unconscious brain responds to the influence of logic.

True

False

5. Hitting the pause button before making a decision helps reduce the influence of bias because it gives the rational brain a chance to kick in and influence your thinking.

True

False

6. Acting as if your bias does not exist works to reduce bias because when we behave in ways that are inconsistent with what we believe...

a. ... we receive more positive reactions.

b. ... our brain cannot tolerate believing something that is inconsistent with our behaviors so the attitude changes.

c. ... a and b

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7. When we change our behaviors to reduce bias, the most important characteristics of those behaviors is:

- a. They are concrete, specific, and measurable.
- b. They are executed vigilantly.
- c. They are in some way dramatic and intense.
- d. a and c
- e. a and b

8. Human beings from diverse groups are more different than they are alike.

- True
- False

9. Which of the following is NOT a good way to identify what we have in common with others?

- a. Start conversations with people who in some ways are different from us.
- b. Bring up subjects that we at first assume would not interest them.
- c. Broaden your social circle to include people of diverse backgrounds.
- d. None of the above.

10. Having an unconscious bias does not make us bad people. What matters is what we do with and about it.

- True
- False

## **APPENDIX**

### **Time: Your Weapon Against Bias**

By Sondra Thiederman, Ph.D.

Let's face it, biases are creepy. They lurk in our unconscious minds just waiting to pop up in the form of disrespectful actions or miss-guided decisions about who people are, what they need, and what they are good at. To make matters worse, this "popping up" is most apt to happen when we are the busiest which, paradoxically, is often the very time that making the correct decision is most important.

Fortunately, science hints at a solution to this problem that just might make it easier for all of us to manage our biases. This particular study was conducted by a psychologist named William Cunningham. Cunningham based his work on earlier studies that tracked the speed with which the alarm centers of the brain spike when white subjects are shown of black faces.

This spike amounts to a primitive "jumping to conclusions" about the nature of people different from ourselves. What Cunningham did was modify the methodology of the earlier research just slightly. He made a tiny change, but that change produced significantly different results, results that have a significant impact on how we conduct ourselves in today's rushed and stress-filled workplaces.

Cunningham's modification had to do with time. In the earlier studies, the faces were shown for only 30 milliseconds – removed so quickly that they could only be "seen" subconsciously. Cunningham decided to find out what would happen if the pictures were viewed for a longer period of time—525 milliseconds.

525 milliseconds is still too brief for the conscious mind to grasp and yet the extended time was long enough to change the brain's response. Although there was still a spike when the different faces appeared, the spike was not in the alarm center, but in the part of the brain that controls rational thought.

The upshot of this—and the very good news—is that, if given long enough, the conscious and rational brain does have the power to override even our most primitive biased instincts. This explains why we tend to react with more bias when rushed to make quick decisions. There is simply no time for the rational brain to become engaged.

This conclusion sends a message that has immediate application in the workplace:

We must give the rational part of our brains a chance to get in gear before reacting instinctively to someone who is different from ourselves.

In other words, let's get in the habit of taking a beat, a breath, or a moment even in the midst of the most extreme chaos and rush. That beat – that few seconds of delay – could be the difference between a biased decision and the ability to see people for who they really are.

## **About Sondra Thiederman**

**D**r. Sondra Thiederman is one of the nation's leading experts on workplace diversity/inclusion, cross-cultural business, and bias reduction. As President of Cross-Cultural Communications, a San Diego based training firm, Sondra has more than 25-years' experience as a speaker, trainer, and author helping professionals in Fortune 500 companies, public sector organizations, and dozens of associations find ways to successfully navigate our increasingly-diverse workplaces.

Since receiving her doctorate with an emphasis on cross-cultural studies from UCLA, Sondra has helped hundreds of organizations develop solutions to their cross-cultural and diversity challenges. Among her clients are such leading organizations as Sodexo, Xerox Corporation, The Boeing Company, FedEx Corporation, Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, Marriott Corporation, Century 21 Real Estate, American Express, The Federal Reserve Bank, Motorola, and AT&T. She has also served as consultant to the University of California and the American Cancer Society and has served on the Diversity Cabinet of the American Red Cross. Most recently, she has served as an Expert Panelist for O'Mara and Richter's Global Diversity and Inclusion Benchmarks: Standards for Organizations Around the World.

Sondra has extensive media experience including mention in such national publications as *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, and *U.S.A Today*. She is published in professional journals ranging from *T&D* to *Real Estate Today* to *Association Management*, has written on diversity for the web site Monster.com, and is the author of six books including:

- *Bridging Cultural Barriers for Corporation Success*
- *Profiting in America's Multicultural Marketplace*
- *Getting "Culture Smart": Ten Strategies for Making Diversity Work*
- *Making Diversity Work: Seven Steps for Defeating Bias in the Workplace*
- *The Diversity and Inclusion Handbook*
- *3 Keys to Defeating Unconscious Bias: Watch, Think, Act*

Sondra's website is: [www.Thiederman.com](http://www.Thiederman.com)

## **About SunShower's Producer**

### **Joel Lesko**

Joel is the producer behind all of SunShower's training programs. Following his passion for diversity and inclusion, Joel has created a library of programs that stand out for their creativity, intelligence and lasting emotional impact. Organizations around the world have used the videos to train and inspire their people to create more respectful workplaces.

Joel not only produces, markets and distributes the training programs, but is also available to help organizations implement the programs as a presenter, consultant and coach.

Joel's film, documentary and video work has appeared on PBS, network television and cable. He has traveled the world to produce shows on a wide range of topics from politics to poetry, music to medicine, and food and spirituality. His work has received over a dozen industry awards including the Telly, Summit, Aurora, Videographer and the Iowa Film Award for Best Editing. Prior to his career in film and video, Joel traveled the world teaching meditation. He lives and works in Ashland Oregon with his wife, Alia.

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