

## Personal Bias Exercise – Unconscious Bias Begins Early in Our Lives

### PERSONAL BIAS: A REFLECTION EXERCISE

*Use these journal prompts to explore your experiences with and attitudes about difference.*

1. The first time I became aware of differences was when ...

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2. As I was growing up, my parent(s) taught me that people who were different from us were...

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3. As I was growing up, my parent(s) taught me that people who were like us were ...

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4. A time I was mistreated because of my own difference was when ...

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5. A time I mistreated someone for being different was when ...

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6. I feel most comfortable when I am around people who ...

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7. I feel least comfortable when I am around people who ...

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8. The memories I have of differences affect my parenting by ...

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*Proactively ask about all team members' personal priorities or commitments that are important to honor as the team plans its work stream and deliverables; seek to respect those requests.*

Instead of just saying, "People matter," take the time to set-up one-on-one meetings not only with your direct reports but also with employees two to three levels down to get to know them.

**Validate employees' experiences—both the good and the bad—by transparently acknowledging barriers and setbacks faced by the organization. Share plans that illustrate an awareness of both challenges left to face and the continued progress that is possible.**



**Over the course of several meetings, keep track of whose ideas are acknowledged, built on, or adopted vs. ignored or appropriated. Do you see any patterns based on gender, race, and/or ethnicity?**



**Regarding talent identification and inclusion: Look up. Look down. Look deep. And look often.**



Don't assume that people who work differently (or even less) are less committed; they may be working smart.



Intentionally seek out ideas/insights from people who may not look like you.



Engage with people of different levels and backgrounds at the water cooler (either virtually or in person).

Acknowledge people you don't know in the hallways with a culturally appropriate greeting. A small friendly signal goes a long way toward breaking down hierarchies, siloes, and aggressive cultures, and it opens the door to further dialogue.

## Be Inclusive Every Day

Start with these easy, practical, intentional actions that **organizations**, **leaders**, and **teams** can take today for a more inclusive workplace.

*Support diversity by accommodating the way people process and react to information. Send material in advance so that introverts may prepare and communicate their thoughts.*



**Ask and then listen—you'll be amazed what you can learn from everyone around you.**



**Next time you ask someone for advice on a project (your go-to folks), stop and ask yourself—who did you miss/not ask? Why?**



Review and revamp existing practices to uncover potentially exclusionary norms.



**Avoid making "jokes" at the expense of an individual or group. And when you hear others using this kind of harmful "humor," speak up to let them know its not okay.**



If you plan on sending emails to colleagues at off hours, add a line to your signature that lets people know you are working at that time because it is most convenient for you, but it does not mean you expect people to respond when they otherwise would not be working.



Help bust the myth that senior women have it all together by inviting a group of high-potential women home for dinner. Leave from the office and let them observe your real life—kids, dogs, etc.



**Challenge assumptions—don't assume anything, ask questions. A place of curiosity is the zen zone.**

**Implement a "no-interruption" rule at brainstorming and staff meetings to ensure that everyone is being heard.**



**Don't just gather metrics—go behind the numbers to explore what's really going on. Ask employees (through surveys, focus groups, and interviews) how programs and policies really affect how they feel about their daily work lives.**



**Ban the word "fit" from hiring discussions—recognizing that what is intended to refer to an alignment of values can be translated into comfort with someone who looks, thinks, and acts like the majority.**

**Think about your interactions with your direct reports over the past week. Whom did you offer to connect with a more senior colleague? To whom did you mention a plum opportunity? To whom did you offer insight on workplace politics? How, if at all, did these interactions vary by gender, race, ethnicity?**



**Put a Pride flag, "I am an ally" sign, or some other signal of your allyship on your office door or at your desk. A little bit of visibility can go a long way.**



When discussing possible presenters for a meeting, panel, or other event, make sure the group of people under consideration is diverse. Seize these opportunities to showcase somebody who isn't heard from much, if at all.

# Unconscious Bias – Activity One

## Personal Narrative



## Explore Your Personal Narrative.

Becoming aware of your personal narrative, or story, is a key step toward understanding and managing the impact of your unconscious bias. Our biases are developed over time and often have roots in our childhood and early life experiences. These roots inform our way of thinking and how we perceive the people and situations around us. To become more aware of your biases, it is important to reflect on how and when they developed. What were the seeds that led to the preferences you have today? Take a few minutes and think through or jot down your answers to the following questions:

**1** What memories do you have of what your family taught you about various kinds of diversity or differences among people? Was your family's behavior consistent with what they taught?<sup>11</sup>

**2** What childhood experiences did you have with peers or adults who were different from you in some way (racial identity, culture/ethnicity, family structure, economic class, religion, gender role, sexual orientation)? Were these experiences comfortable? Why or why not? What experiences did you lack? Take time to acknowledge any specific triggers or trauma this may bring up for you.

**3** What institutions influenced your values and behaviors as a child (e.g. religious institutions, Boy/Girl scouts, clubs, schools, etc.)?

**4** What have you learned from your culture of origin that informs your values and behaviors? How is this different from what other people may have learned in their culture? How do these differences in culture affect your relationships and interactions with others?

**5** What stereotypes have you heard about various racial/ethnic groups in the United States? This is not a list of stereotypes you believe, just those you have heard. Quickly write down as many as you can. Then, examine the list and try to figure out from where or whom you heard the stereotypes, and what age they came into your life. Be honest with yourself about which ones you believe.<sup>12</sup> Are they associated with gender, if so, why?.

**6** What kinds of behaviors of men make you uncomfortable? Of women? Where do these sets overlap and where are they different? From where or whom did you learn your differing gender expectations?

**7** What feelings come up when you work with colleagues with very low incomes? Who are homeless? Have a family member in jail? With very high incomes?

**8** Think about the people you know personally, and your experiences and interactions with them. How does this compare with what you were taught or told as a child?

As you explore your personal narrative, it is important to understand the source of your belief systems, values and preferences. Identifying where our narratives about different people originate is important, for these form the roots of our bias. The closer we get to the root of our bias, the more we can create a new narrative that disarms it.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Derman-Sparks, L and Edwards, J., (2010). *Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves*. p.23

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Ross, H., (2014). *Everyday Bias: Identifying and Navigating Unconscious Judgments in Our Daily Lives*. p.112-17

# Empathy Map Canvas

Designed for:

Designed by:

Date:

Version:

## 1 WHO are we empathizing with?

Who is the person we want to understand?  
What is the situation they are in?  
What is their role in the situation?

## GOAL

## 2 What do they need to DO?

What do they need to do differently?  
What job(s) do they want or need to get done?  
What decision(s) do they need to make?  
How will we know they were successful?

## 7 What do they THINK and FEEL?

### PAINS

What are their fears, frustrations, and anxieties?

### GAINS

What are their wants, needs, hopes and dreams?

## 3 What do they SEE?

What do they see in the marketplace?  
What do they see in their immediate environment?  
What do they see others saying and doing?  
What are they watching and reading?

## 6 What do they HEAR?

What are they hearing others say?  
What are they hearing from friends?  
What are they hearing from colleagues?  
What are they hearing second-hand?

## 4 What do they SAY?

What have we heard them say?  
What can we imagine them saying?

What other thoughts and feelings might motivate their behavior?

## 5 What do they DO?

What do they do today?  
What behavior have we observed?  
What can we imagine them doing?

## Design Thinking Group Activity

Once in team of 5 participants

- Select team name \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify a Point (Team member name) \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify A Line (Team member name) \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify a Triangle (Team member name) \_\_\_\_\_
- Identify a Square (Team member name) \_\_\_\_\_
- Agree on the most frustrating daily experience that you want to fix.

Step 2:

Team member assigned as the Point, describe your typical experience.

Team – Capture emotions and experiences in an Empathy map.

Step 3:

Team member assigned as the Line, describe your worst experience.

Team – Capture emotions and experiences in an Empathy map.

Step 4:

Team member assigned as the Triangle, describe your ideal experience.

Team – Capture emotions and experiences in an Empathy map.

Step 5:

Based on the new learnings and insights, reframe the problem.

Synthesizes all inputs.