Workplace Strategies for Mental Health

Compliments of Canada Life

Workshop series



Participant handout

Implicit bias

Notes:

Implicit bias

Implicit bias refers to attitudes or stereotypes that affect our actions, decisions and unconscious understanding towards or against a particular person or group. A person may explicitly endorse certain values and believe them to be true. Yet, they may still hold an unconscious bias that doesn't align with their declared values. A common example of implicit bias is favouring or being more receptive to familiar-sounding names than those from other cultural groups.

Learning objectives

- Understand microaggressions and intersectionality
- Explore your own unconscious bias
- Develop a 3-step approach to address all of the above

What do you imagine?

In the space below, describe what you see in your mind when you hear the prompt.

Be as specific and descriptive as possible. Who do you see? What do they look like?

Be as honest as possible, we will all see what we are used to seeing.

Prompt #1

Write your responses below

Prompt #2

Write your responses below

Prompt #3

Write your responses below

Prompt #4

Write your responses below

Implicit bias stems from the various types of stereotypes or fears that lead to prejudice, discrimination and/or negative attitudes. These are common “isms” and phobias:

- **Ableism** (directed at people who may exhibit or seem to show signs of mental or physical disabilities)
- **Ageism** (based on age)
- **Homophobia** (targets those who are attracted to members of their own gender)
- **Racism** (based on a person’s skin colour or cultural identity)
- **Religious prejudice** (based on a person’s system of beliefs, practices or worship)
- **Sexism** (focused on a person’s gender)
- **Sizeism** (based on a person’s weight and outwards appearance)
- **Transphobia** (heteronormism) (targets transsexual or transgender people)
- **Xenophobia** (focuses on people from other countries)

Can your group think of any other “isms” not listed above that could lead to implicit bias?

Write your responses below:

Microaggressions

Microaggressions take place when a person indirectly, subtly or unintentionally discriminates. They're based on differences in race, gender identity or sexual orientation.

Implicit bias can occur without a face-to-face interaction. For example, the choice of images or written language can show bias. Microaggressions are more likely to occur through passive remarks and actions.

Where are you really from?

How could this question make someone feel uncomfortable?

What could be a better approach?

You don't look trans

How could this question make someone feel uncomfortable?

What could be a better approach?

He's acting bipolar

How could this question make someone feel uncomfortable?

What could be a better approach?

She must be on her period

How could this question make someone feel uncomfortable?

What could be a better approach?

Intersectionality

Intersectionality focuses on the overlap of the various social identities one person would hold. This can include skin colour, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and class. Different combinations may increase or decrease the likelihood that you will experience systemic oppression and discrimination.

What intersections do you have?

Please fill in the next 3 pages as instructed

Social identities:	Name your intersection in each group	Check where you are in the majority at work	What could constitute implicit bias towards those who are in the minority at work?	Which groups are not currently in your personal social circle? Why not?
Ability E.g. Physically disabled, Mentally disabled, Chronic pain	Able-bodied	√	Not included in work baseball team.	Physically disabled: Not sure why not.
Age E.g. Under 10 20 – 30 60 – 80				
Body type E.g. Average Athletic Obese				
Culture E.g. Latino Indigenous African-American				

Education level E.g. No formal education, High school, PhD				
Ethnicity E.g. Italian African Asian				
Family status E.g. Married Single parent Widowed				
Gender E.g. Non-binary Trans Male/female				
Income level E.g. Low Middle High				
Job role E.g. Management Union rep Frontline				

Nationality E.g. Japanese British Mexican				
Political affiliations E.g. Far right Far left Centrist				
Religion E.g. Buddhist Muslim Jain				
Sexual orientation E.g. Gay Lesbian Bisexual				
Skin colour E.g. Brown White Black				

3-step approach to addressing bias and microaggressions in the workplace

If you witness bias or a microaggression in the workplace:

1. **Identify:** State to those involved what you saw or heard. Do this respectfully and with the intention to objectively reflect what you witnessed rather than adding in your opinion about the intent. For example, if you heard “where are you really from?” you might say, “they just told you.”

2. **Reframe the narrative:** Share why you think the exchange may be hurtful to some people. This is an opportunity for respectful dialogue. Give people the benefit of the doubt. They may not be aware of their own bias and the person on the other end may not have been offended in the least. By approaching this as a conversation instead of an accusation, you will find that people are much less likely to become defensive. In this example, you might ask, “Why don’t you believe their first response?”

3. **Educate:** The more everyone understands the issues, the more they can avoid bias. Ask questions, especially of those who may experience implicit bias. Seek to understand their experiences. Pursue professional development opportunities that focus on inclusion. This could be done privately with the person who spoke up or as a general education opportunity with an entire team without singling anyone out.

If you’re interested in doing more work in this area, check out http://www.clwsmh.ca/implicit-bias on the Workplace Strategies for Mental Health website.

What will you do or say differently?

Please record at least one thing that you will do differently at work as a result of what we have discussed today. We will take up the answers when you are done.

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Workplace Strategies for Mental Health

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Workplace Strategies for Mental Health resources are:

- For all employers, people leaders and employees
- Available in English and French
- Evidence- or practice-based
- Available to anyone at no cost

Examples of the resources available at clwsmh.ca/materials include:

Addressing co-worker reactions

Effectively respond to co-worker concerns, fears or reactions – even if you feel they're unfounded – to help support a psychologically safe work environment for all.

Being a mindful employee

Help employees understand their responsibility and opportunities to contribute to a mentally healthy workplace as described in the National Standard of Canada for Psychological Health and Safety.

Harassment and bulling prevention

Address aggression or unresolved conflicts among co-workers before they escalate into a crisis in the workplace.

Inclusivity and discrimination

Identify approaches to address potential discrimination and promote inclusivity. Help create an environment where all employees are supported to thrive and succeed.

Indigenous teachings at work

Indigenous elders and professionals helped to adapt the Seven Sacred Teachings and the Medicine Wheel to benefit your workplace culture and all employees.

Psychologically safe interactions

Use this slide presentation, facilitator guide and participant handout to engage your team in a workshop that increases awareness of how our behaviours may be interpreted as bullying, even when that wasn't our intention.

Responding to issues

Use these practical and action-oriented guidelines to address work issues, including:

- Conflict
- Performance
- Accommodation
- Impairment
- Return to work
- Violence

Supporting newcomers

Help protect the psychological safety and facilitate the success of employees new to this country.

All Workplace Strategies for Mental Health resources are available to anyone at no cost, compliments of Canada Life.

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We’d love to hear how you used this free resource!

Contact us through social media or at clwsmh.com

Twitter LinkedIn YouTube

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