

Additional Questions & Answers

Unconscious Bias: Perspectives from the Private Sector webinar, October 5, 2021

What about reverse bias, where you favor a person that stereotypically could be perceived as the underdog?

I think the goal is to make sure everyone gets the same opportunities. So favoring may go too far, but taking steps to make sure everyone is treated fairly and equitably is reasonable and necessary.

How do you handle polar opposite views--for example, creationist versus scientist/geologist?

Unless someone's views affects how they treat people, we don't all need to share the same views. If someone's views does influence how they treat people, then regardless of the source of the bias, the actions need to be addressed, not their views. As Ross points out, the idea is not the change the 'other', rather understand them.

How important is universal parental leave regardless of gender (vs. only leave for the person who gave birth) in combating bias and discrimination in hiring and promoting? Does the company where you work offer universal parental leave for both parents where applicable?

I personally think parental leave (regardless of gender) is critical. I appreciate the example set by Mark Z when he took 3 months after his child was born, and Microsoft won't work with companies unless they provide parental leave. I used both of these examples in various discussions at a previous company to demonstrate the need to support better parental leave policies. At my current company, Stantec, I am very happy to state they support progressive parental leave, not just for birth of a child but also adoption or placement of a child for foster care!

Can you develop more about PRIMING the BRAIN?

Priming the brain, or the power of suggestion can influence behavior, especially confidence. Several studies have shown that if someone is told they performed well in a task, their confidence increases. And similarly, if told by someone they can do a task, they are more confident to take on that task. This might manifest in a micro-behavior where a person can be supportive of someone doubting their abilities, or a micro-aggression where a person may not support someone else, or more directly may confirm the doubts of someone else. Another example is a person may express their support or doubts of a second person to third person, then the third person is influenced by that opinion and doesn't really form their own individual opinion/impression of the second person.