

10 Mindful Ways for Leaders to Beat Their Own Unconscious Biases

While it isn't easy and often feels uncomfortable, learning to recognize unconscious biases within yourself is a critical step in becoming the most successful leader you can be. Attitudes and perceptions you possess but aren't aware of may lead you to make unwise choices and cause members of your team to lose respect and trust in you.

Fortunately, once you understand how these subconscious notions impact your actions, behaviors, and decision-making, you can start to foster a more inclusive, welcoming, and productive work environment. After identifying your own unconscious tendencies, you must work to address them.

Below, 10 members of Forbes Coaches Council share steps you can take to address the biases you uncover.

1. Interrupt Your Biased Thoughts

Once you're aware of what biases you have, practice interrupting those thoughts to keep them from becoming actions. Rehearse what you would do with "if-then" scenarios. When faced with a triggering situation, you will know to pay attention to cues for pausing your thoughts. Say to yourself, "This is a situation where I am likely to be biased. I don't want to act on my bias." Then, apply what you rehearsed. - [Samara Hakim](#)

2. Expand Your Network

Biases can only be revealed when people interact with other people. For leaders to reveal their own biases, they must expand their network and get to know people from a variety of backgrounds, experiences, nationalities and beliefs. When leaders are exposed to others, they grow in their thinking and challenge past stereotypes about individuals. - [Ken Gosnell](#)

3. Learn About Bias to Gain Needed Tools

Learning more about unconscious bias is the key to gaining the tools you need to be able to do something about it. When we bring more unconscious actions to consciousness, we can then make choices that will serve us and others more powerfully. There are many research-based books, videos, workshops and other resources that can help. This is deep work, and it takes effort! - [Susan Madsen](#)

4. Approach the World From A Growth Mindset

Unconscious bias, to a great degree, comes from the leader's need to problem-solve. This need to problem-solve puts leaders in a fixed mindset of determining the right or wrong path forward, as framed by their biased thinking. To address this bias, approach the world from a growth mindset by asking, "How can I learn from this situation and grow as a leader and person?" - [Brad Cousins](#)

5. Seek Feedback from Diverse Perspectives

Seek feedback and expand your network. We're often stuck in our unconscious biases because we fail to challenge them, and we fail to surround ourselves with people who may oppose our viewpoint. Also, in order for the feedback to be effective and a real source of change and

growth, it's important that you embrace the idea that there are other perspectives equally as valid and crucial as your own. - [Carol Parker Walsh](#)

6. Redefine the Bias

For instance, consider addressing confirmation bias by using the scientific method of disconfirming a hypothesis. Similarity bias can be addressed by seeking what is similar in those with whom we have the most differences. Attributional bias can be flipped so that I consider what part of my character prompted my behavior and what situation might have prompted the behavior of the other. - [Valerio Pascotto](#)

7. Take the Implicit Association Test

Admit that the mere fact of having a brain makes you biased. Sadly, generalizing and making snap decisions based on limited data was crucial to early humans. Today, it is the root of prejudice. Then, observe yourself, take the Implicit Association Test (IAT) test and be open-minded. Ask your peers and reports for regular feedback. If you are curious about it, there is a great chance that you will get less defensive. - [Inga Bielińska](#)

8. Develop Realistic Stretch Actions

Congratulations on taking the effort to identify and understand the unconscious bias. The next step is to develop realistic stretch actions or behaviors as incremental steps that you can commit to taking in order to mitigate the bias. Your commitment and continued mindfulness will turn into a heightened awareness for practicing a growth mindset. - [Sheila Carmichael](#)

9. Discuss Unconscious Bias Openly

The first and possibly hardest step is to admit that you have them. From there, educate yourself and make the necessary changes to lead your team, company and self into a better future. Unconscious bias should be a topic of discussion as often as possible, at home, at work and with peers. This way, you'll open others up to having the same internal and external conversations that they need to have as well. - [Miranda VonFricken](#)

10. Surround Yourself with A Diverse Team

Surround yourself with a diverse team that is comfortable pushing back and challenging your assumptions. If you only have people who think, look and act like you on your leadership team, or people who don't feel safe to speak up and challenge you, you will consistently fall victim to your unconscious biases, regardless of the deep reflective work you may do personally. - [Jonathan H. Westover](#)

View the full report from Forbes Coaches Council here:

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbescoachescouncil/2020/10/29/10-mindful-ways-for-leaders-to-beat-their-own-unconscious-biases/?sh=2401c3684156>