



Beating Bias

What?

We're all biased, we just don't know we are. Our brains are constantly filtering information. It means that every moment of our lives we are making decisions about other people, instant judgments based on the smallest of cues. Judgments which are often wrong.

We are wired to notice things which are familiar and can be trusted and things which are unfamiliar and deserving of suspicion. We are attracted to what's familiar and we avoid what's unfamiliar. This is the basis of human bias. It's not wrong, it's how we are.

So What?

Bias operates at an unconscious level and shapes our behaviour. We can be quick to judge others, especially on the basis of ethnicity, gender, race, age, appearance, education, sexual orientation and any other dimension of difference.

Now What?

Bias is evident within individuals, teams and organisations. We can adjust our filters to reduce unhelpful bias. Doing so develops self-awareness. Self-awareness acts as a sentry guard to challenging unhelpful attitudes, behaviours and decisions. A starting point is to ask searching questions of ourselves. We call it *Look in, Look out*:

1. What do you consider to be your five most important personal values?
2. Which of your everyday behaviours exhibit those values?
3. How do others, whom you know well, experience those behaviours?
4. How might others, whom you don't know well - colleagues, acquaintances, neighbours - experience those behaviours?
5. Finally, how might others, whom you don't know at all, and who may be very different to you experience those behaviours?
6. Now try the activity from the point of view of some of those in point 5 above. What might their important personal values be? How do their everyday behaviours demonstrate those values?

Bias is sometimes described as a 'disproportionate weight' in favour of, or against, an idea, person or thing. We could go through a lifetime and not be fully aware of those biases which distort our view of what's around us. To better appreciate what is possible in overcoming bias, read our ThreeWhats Playbook, Beating Bias.