



The Impact of Explicit and Implicit Bias on Patient Safety

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Conflict of Interest Disclosure

Michelle van Ryn, PhD, MPH, reported no relevant financial relationships or relationships she has with ineligible companies of any amount during the past 24 months.



Presenter

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Dr. Michelle van Ryn is Founder, CEO, and Distinguished Scientist of Diversity Science, a public benefit corporation whose mission is to translate the best current evidence into practical and effective approaches for achieving true equity, and deep diversity and full inclusion. Her work has improved the national awareness of how providers contribute to disparities in patient care and has led to greater understanding of how improved health care encounters positively impact patient outcomes.



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Agenda



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Focus on the Core Personal Values that Brought You Here Today

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Opportunity

Core values are a source of personal integrity, identity, and self-worth

Focus on core values (affirmation) can increase openness to difficult topics and equity, inclusion, and diversity concepts

Studies show that focusing on core values:

- Improves resilience and ability to cope with stressful or psychologically threatening situations
- Shields against stereotype threat
- Helps us be open to new ideas
- Encourages a growth mindset



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Our Challenge:

Inequities in care stemming from health care personnel biases

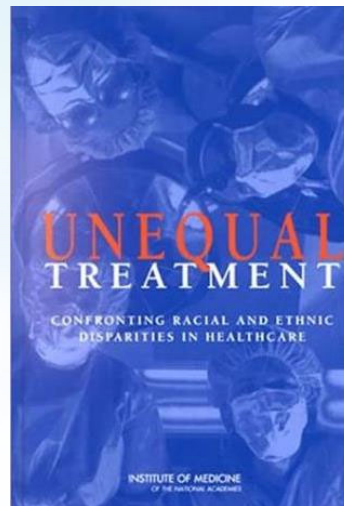
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Our Challenge

Inequities in medical care
have been a focus of study
for over 20 years.

While the causes are multi-
faceted...

*“Clinician bias is one of
several contributors to racial
inequalities in care.”*



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Clinician Biases Have Been Shown to Undermine Quality and Safety at Every Step in the Clinical Pathway



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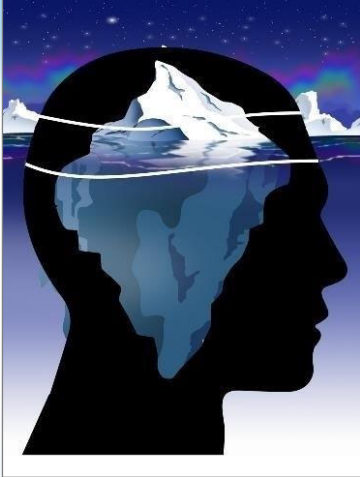
Why?

Insights from the mind sciences



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Findings from the Mind Sciences



System 2: Explicit

- Effortful
- Deliberative
- Reflective
- Slow

System 1: Implicit

- Efficient
- Automatic
- Reflexive
- Fast

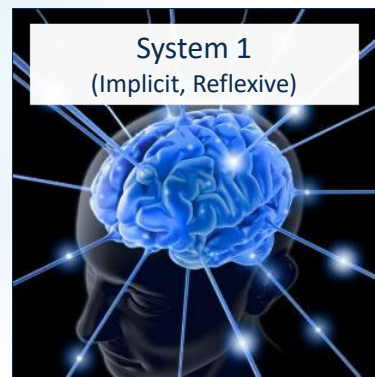
We Don't Think the way we Think we Think

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Findings from the Mind Sciences



Unconscious mental processes help us deal with the millions of bits of information that surround us



Unconscious

Effortless

Automatic

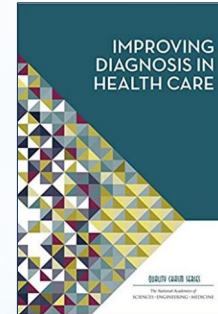
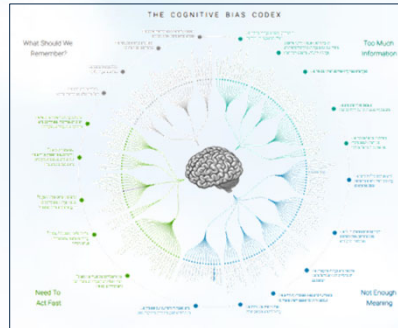
Fast

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Our Challenge

We are prone to numerous cognitive biases and faulty heuristics

28% of diagnostic errors are caused by cognitive biases

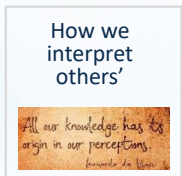
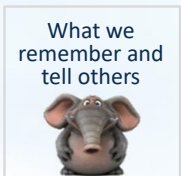
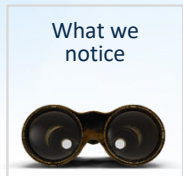


Cognitive Bias Codex

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Our Challenge

System 1 Stores and Activates Information that *Guides Our Conscious Mind*



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The Challenge



Affinity bias:

Tendency to prefer and evaluate others more positively when they are similar to us.

Similar to:

Ingroup bias:

Tendency to favor one's own group, its members, its characteristics, and its products.

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The Challenge



Cross-Racial Empathy Gap

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What's happening here?



10-second video clip from *Dignity in Pregnancy & Childbirth*, Diversity Science, Funded by CHCF



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What story did the doctor tell herself?



What we notice about patients



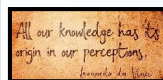
How much importance we give to information



What we remember about patients (chart and tell others)



How we interpret behavior, signs, & symptoms



In-group bias



Our non-verbal behavior toward patients



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What's happening here?



1.21 of video clip from *Bias in Health Care Crises*, *Diversity Science*, Funded by CHCF



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What story did the nurse tell herself?



What we notice about patients



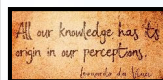
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Opportunity: Evidence-based bias-prevention practices and mind hacks

Inclusive Leader Tip: Adopt, Role-Model, & Encourage Evidence-Based, Bias-Preventive Mind Hack Practices

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Best Practice for Inclusive Leadership: Adopt, Role-Model, & Encourage Evidence-Based, Bias-Preventive Practices



Self-Care and Emotion Shifting

Implicit biases are more likely to affect what we do when we are busy, tired, feeling anxious or stressed, or generally depleted for any reason.

Learn emotional regulation and emotion-shifting.

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Best Practice for Inclusive Leadership: Adopt, Role-Model, & Encourage Evidence-Based, Bias-Preventive Practices



LEADER TIP: CREATE FUN

Positive Emotions

- Inhibit the activation of unconscious stereotypes and prejudices
- Lead to the use of more inclusive social categories
- Make people see themselves as being part of a larger group
- Increase the capacity to see others as members of a common “ingroup”

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Best Practice for Inclusive Leadership: Use Bias-Prevention “Mind Hacks” Adopt, Role-Model, & Encourage Evidence-Based, Bias-Preventive Practices



Perspective-taking is a skill
that can be learned. Practice,
practice, practice!

Practice Perspective-Taking

- Shown to reduce bias toward a range of stigmatized groups including Black people
- Inhibits the activation of unconscious stereotypes and prejudices

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Best Practice for Inclusive Leadership: Use Bias-Prevention “Mind Hacks”

Adopt, Role-Model, & Encourage Evidence-Based, Bias-Preventive Practices



Increase Sense of Partnership “On the Same Team”

- The sense of working together towards a common goal has been shown to reduce bias. Focus on common goal.
- Discover what you have in common. Notice that as humans, we have many more commonalities than differences.
- Mind Hack: Use words like we, us, and our, instead of I, you, or them.

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Best Practice for Inclusive Leadership:

Adopt, Role-Model, & Encourage Evidence-Based, Bias-Preventive Practices



Check for Double Standards

- Take a moment and imagine how you would react, feel, decide, behave if someone different acted in the same way.
- Would you feel the same way? Interpret their intentions and motives the same way?

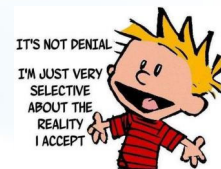
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Best Practice for Inclusive Leadership: Adopt, Role-Model, & Encourage Evidence-Based, Bias-Preventive Practices

Evaluate Your Skepticism

Many studies show we are biased in the way we evaluate evidence of discrimination or differential treatment.

We automatically look for, and prefer, less distressing explanations for experiences.



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Best Practice for Inclusive Leadership: Adopt, Role-Model, & Encourage Evidence-Based, Bias-Preventive Practices

Conscious Cognitive Strategy “Don’ts”

Do **not** try to suppress bias or stereotypes.

Do **not** worry about being biased during an interaction.

Instead, focus on the other person.

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Our Challenge

Our Challenge: It's very hard to be truly open to diverse ideas, perspectives, world views, and ways of doing things.

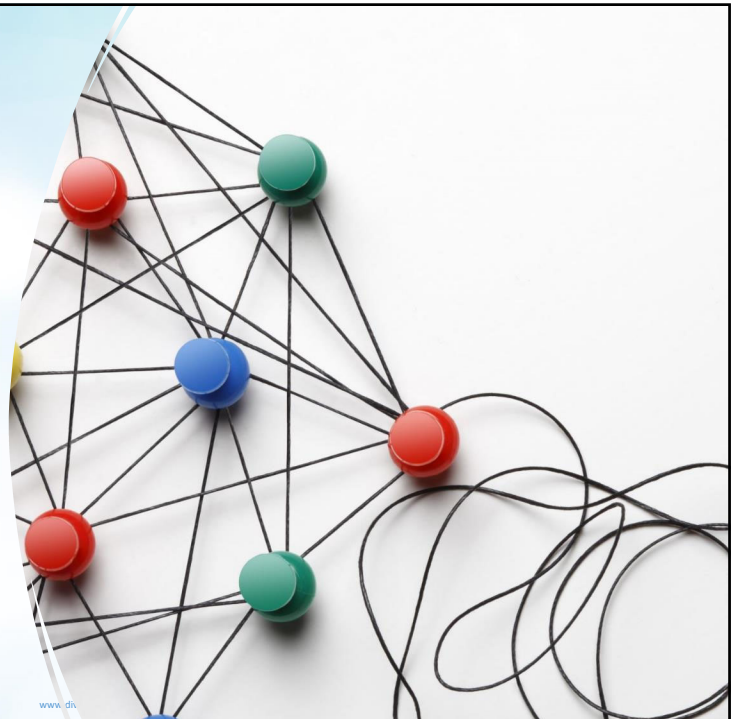
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Our Challenge

- Increasing safety and quality for diverse patients requires openness to diverse perspectives, ideas, and ways of doing things
- Easier said than done
- We have cognitive wiring that gets in the way



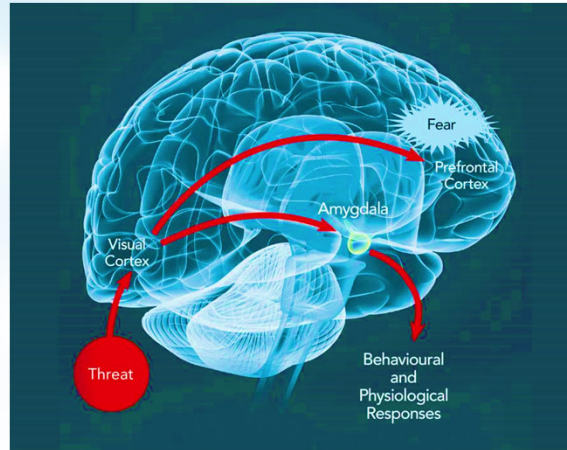
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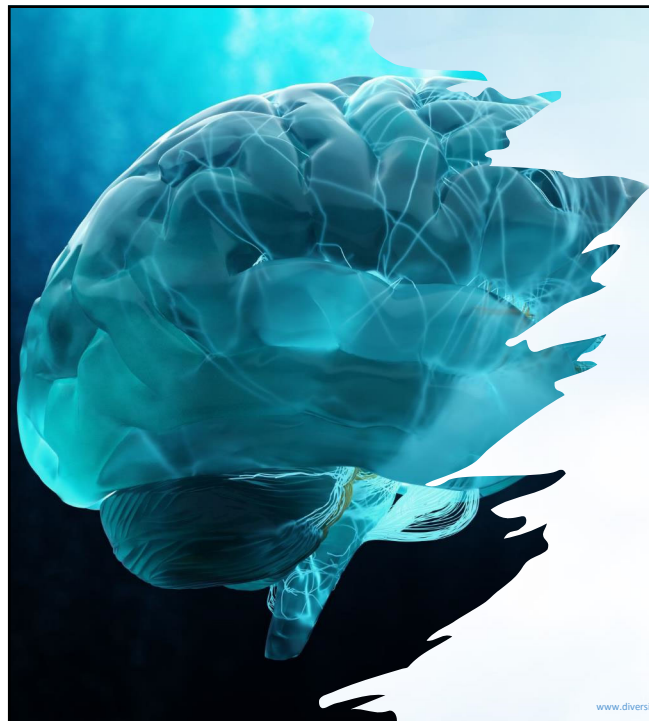
Automatic Threat Response

- Our brain responds much the way it does to physical threats.
- Efficient, but prehistoric, set of physiological responses designed to move us to action.
- Amygdala triggers a cascade of chemicals (stress hormones) in the body.



“Danger! React, Protect, Attack.”

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Deprives our brain of the resources it needs for reasoning

Higher-order thinking shuts down, and our prefrontal cortex becomes inactive, disabling self-regulation, impulse control, and perspective-taking.

Effects:

- Trouble with complex decision-making
- Narrowing of attention/trouble holding multiple perspectives
- Memory becoming untrustworthy

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Opportunity

Our Challenge: Best practices for openness to diverse ideas, perspectives and ways of doing things

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Opportunity: Evidence-Based Practice to Create the Best Chance of a Positive Impact or Outcome: THE ADD + ACT APPROACH

STEP 1: ADD (Assess, Defuse, Decide)

- ✓ [A] Assess: Are you, or anyone you are speaking with, having an automatic threat response?
- ✓ [D] Defuse and soothe: Pause, at a minimum. Consider other **rapid emotion-shifting strategies**.
- ✓ [D] Decide on your goal: What considerations will help you decide on the best outcome you can hope for in the situation?

STEP 2: ACT (Ask, Connect, Talk)

- ✓ [A] Ask open-ended questions: First, **seek understanding of their POV**, goals, and needs.
- ✓ [C] Connect with those around you: Find the understandable part. Validate motives or goals.
Reflect on what you have in common.
- ✓ [T] Talk: State your view or make your points with humility and respect.
 - Ground everything in values and ideally, lead with values.
 - Make a statement that reflects awareness and understanding of systemic inequities. In many cases, also acknowledge the realities of partners/employees from marginalized groups and affirm your commitment to being part of the solution.
 - State a few key points simply with authenticity, humility and respect.
 - Stay on-topic (on message).

Not enough time to go through the whole process but will get you started on overcoming the main challenge.

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Our Challenge: Feedback loop

We tell a story to ourselves to explain the threat response

There is a feedback loop between our thoughts and our body.

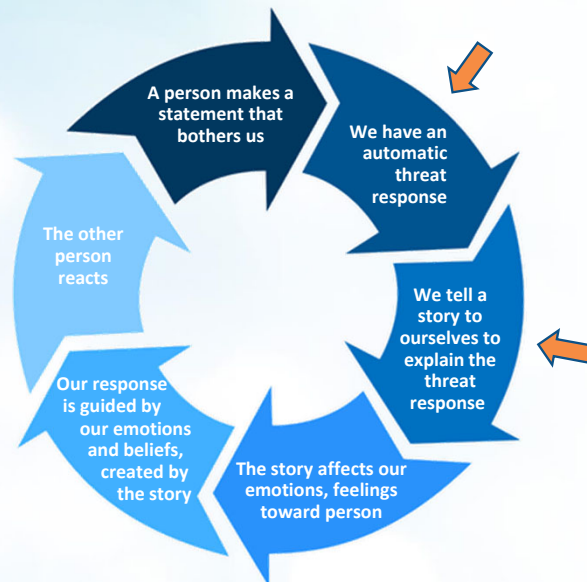
If the negative thoughts persist, so do the stress hormones.



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Opportunity: Interrupt the feedback loop

- ✓ Self-awareness and emotional regulation
- ✓ What story are you telling yourself? Change the story.
- ✓ What “story” might be ascribed to you?
- ✓ What assumptions might you need to address?
- ✓ Put yourself in their shoes – what are their experiences? What is their belief system?



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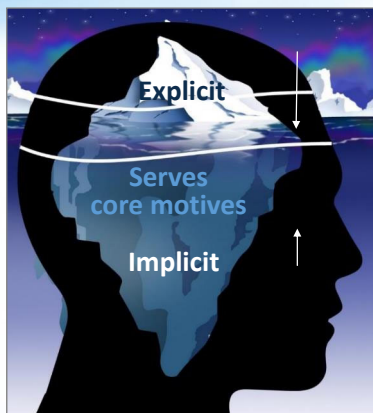
Our Challenge: Organizational Bias-Exacerbating Factors

Conditions that Put You and Your Team at Risk of Being Influenced by Unintended Biases

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System 1 guides us based on powerful, automatic, and often under-the-radar motives



Bias-Exacerbating Factors

- Cognitive overload, fatigue, stress
- Exclusion
- Threat to self-concept, self-esteem
- Psychological or physical threat of any kind
- Negative emotions

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Opportunity: Promoting Bias-Protective Conditions

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**Organizational culture *is* always changing.
We can take action to change it intentionally.**

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A learning and growth mindset towards DEI and working with those who differ from us is essential for success



The Rocket Fuel

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Growth and Learning Mindset

- Reduces anxiety
(vs. increasing discomfort and anxiety)
- Increases interest in interacting with people who differ from us
(vs. increasing avoidance)

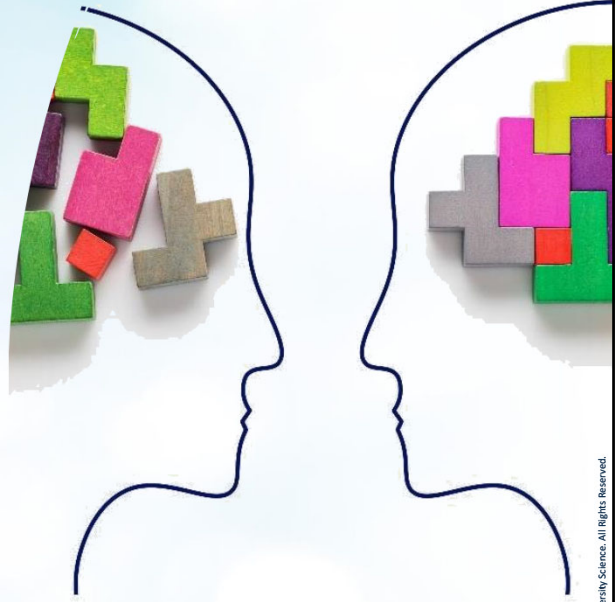


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Growth and Learning Mindset

Key Messages:

- We live and work in different worlds, right next to each other.
- Interactions with people who are different from us are opportunities to learn; they are not tests of our ability to be unbiased.
- Bias is not inevitable; we can take steps to prevent biases from impacting us.



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Psychological safety reduces team bias.
It lowers threat and increases positive emotions, trust,
and sense of belonging – all of which are bias-protective
factors.



The Foundation

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Psychological Safety

“When people have psychological safety at work:

- They feel comfortable sharing concerns and mistakes without fear of embarrassment or retribution.*
- They are confident that they can speak up and won't be humiliated, ignored, or blamed.*
- They know they can ask questions when they are unsure about something.”*

- Amy Edmondson, Harvard Business School, “The Fearless Leader”

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Opportunity

Best Practices for Increasing Psychological Safety in Your Organization

FREQUENT
STATEMENTS
THAT ROOT
WORK IN
MEANING &
VALUES

“Lives are at stake.”
*“We care deeply
about each and every
one of our patients.”*

ACKNOWLEDGE
UNCERTAINTY

*“There is so much
we don't know –
we need everyone's
input.”*

OPENLY
ACKNOWLEDGE
FALLIBILITY

*“I might miss
something –
I need your help.”*

INVITE INPUT,
SEEK OUT
DIFFERENT
PERSPECTIVES

*“What else should
we be thinking
about? How does
this look to you?
What do you
think?”*

THANK PEOPLE
FOR SPEAKING
UP
*(focus on the fact
that they spoke up,
regardless of
content)*

*“Thank you for
speaking up.”*

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Recap



Challenges

- Automatic biases & stories we tell
- Threat response to those who differ from us
- Bias-exacerbating conditions

Opportunities

- Use and promote proven strategies and mind hacks for preventing unintended biases
- Use and promote ADD+ACT process to create openness to differences
- Consider changes and actions in light of organizational bias exacerbating factors
- Promote organizational bias protective factors

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Questions?

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Thank you!

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- Strategic Advising

