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ELP Programme 2021

Unconscious Bias 1-Day Module

Harnessing the power of cognitive diversity is set to become a key source of competitive advantage, and the surest route to reinvention and growth.

Matthew Syed.

theculturexchange

Covid Guidelines:

- Respect 2 metre social distance at all times (tables, flipcharts, breaks)
- Protect your workspace and your folder items
- Only use pens, pencils, markers and blutac from your folder
- No sharing of materials
- Follow all hotel guidelines- including sanitising hands before entering room and when leaving the room.
- Stay safe and respect others
- Anything else to consider?

Welcome to the Emerging Leaders Programme

Module 3 - Cognitive Bias

Programme Aim:

- To understand the impact of key cognitive biases.
- To experience the behaviours that will interrupt those biases.

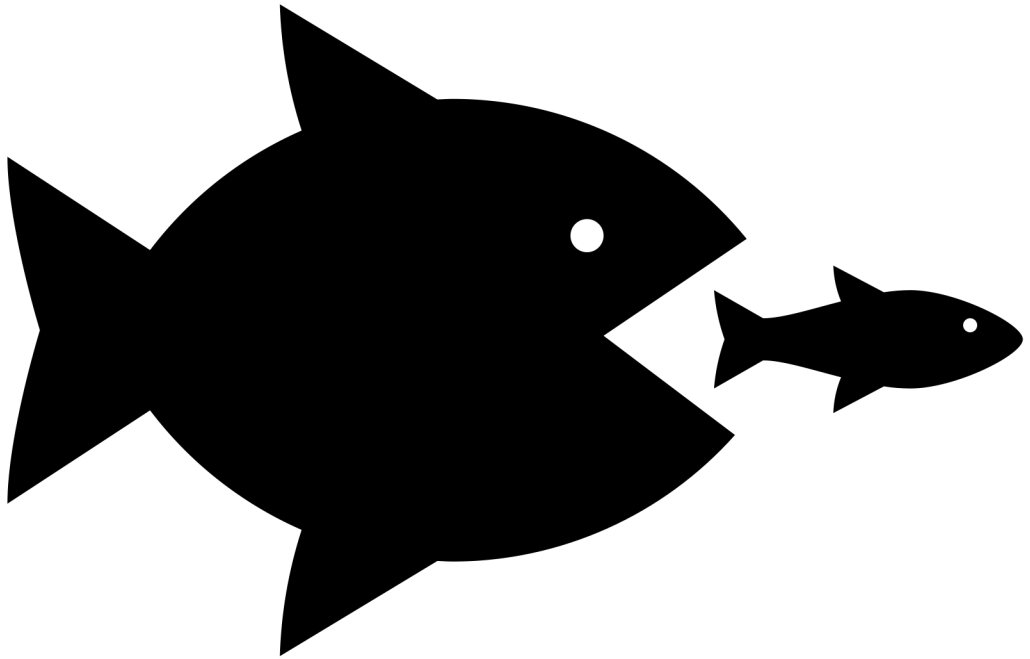
Working Agreement:

- One voice at a time
- Phones/Laptops off (or on silent)
- Begin on time
- There is no such thing as a stupid question
- Confidentiality: What is said in the room stays in the room.
- Participate
- Encourage others to participate

Silently decide:

Which fish is called Tim?

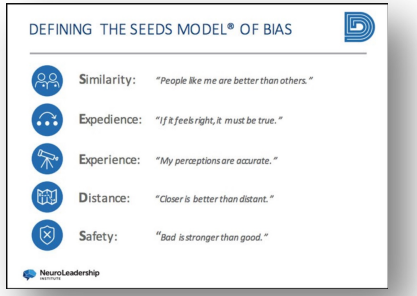
Which fish is called Tom?



A straw poll...

Introduction to Cognitive Bias

- ✓ How to ensure that Cognitive Bias does not diminish your leadership ability
- ✓ How to ensure your decision making is robust


DEFINING THE SEEDS MODEL® OF BIAS

Similarity:	*"People like me are better than others."*
Expedience:	*"If it feels right, it must be true."*
Experience:	*"My perceptions are accurate."*
Distance:	*"Closer is better than distant."*
Safety:	*"Bad is stronger than good."*

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‘Breaking Bias’

A Neuroscience research paper published in the NeuroLeadership Journal (2015) by:

Matthew Lieberman,

David Rock,

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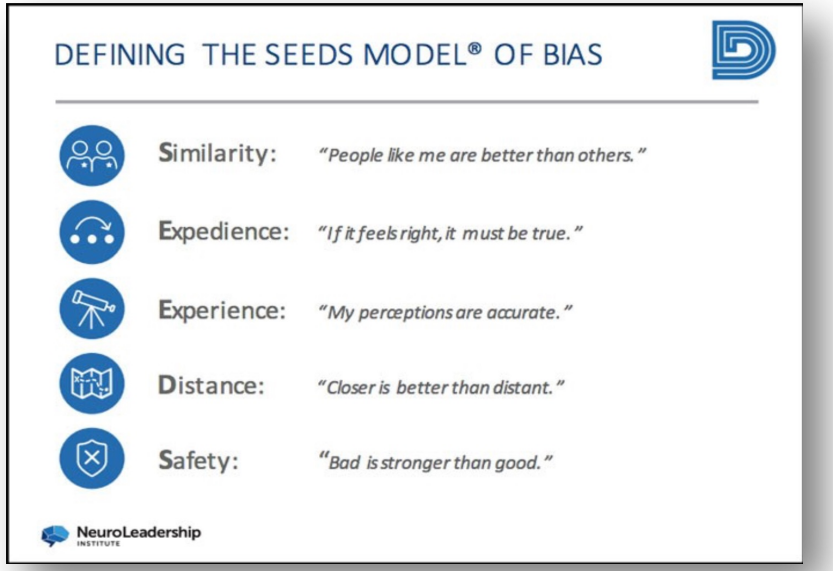


The journey today….

How the brain makes sense of the world

Why and how biases exist and how they impact our thinking

The tactics we can use to disrupt the negative impact of bias

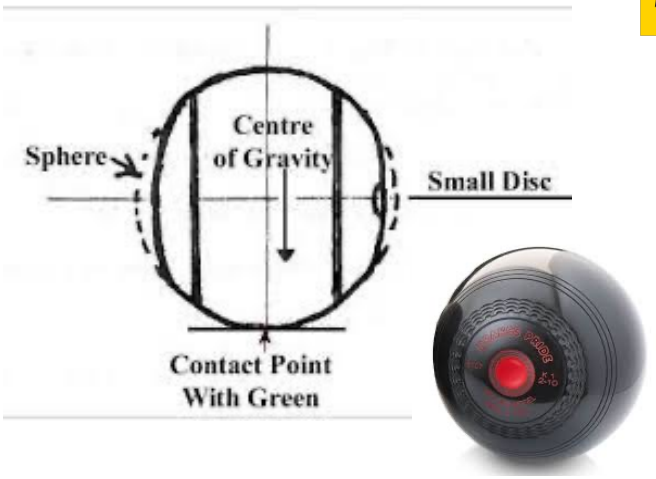
☆ Creating Action Plans ☆

The journey until break-time…

- WHAT is bias?
- WHY does it matter?
- WHAT should you, as a leader, do about it?
- HOW, WHY & WHEN does bias happen?
- The Science of Bias
- B-R-E-A-K

What is bias?

What is Bias?



<u>Definition</u>: Bias is a disproportionate weight in favour of or against an idea or thing

<u>Etymology:</u> Old French word – ‘Biais’ meaning sideways, askance, against the grain.

Entered English language via the game of bowls - balls made with a greater weight on one side.

Biases are…

- Unconscious drivers that influence how we see the world.
- Exerting their influence outside conscious awareness.
- Adaptive mechanisms - evolved to make quick, efficient decisions with minimal cognitive effort.
- Unconsciously impacting every decision we make.

Is having bias a ‘bad thing’?

Bias is not a ’bad’ thing.

A bias is a mental shortcut

Biases are essential for us to *not* become overwhelmed by information and data

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Who does it affect?

Why does it matter?

In our hyper-connected world:

- Poor decisions can multiply like a chain reaction.
- Default solutions not adequate for complex problems (VUCA).
- Parallel increase in need for:
  - diversity of thought &
  - reliance on tech and social networks
- Potential solutions formed by multiple perspectives.
- Solutions require greater cognitive effort.
- Increase in demand for speedy decisions.

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To mitigate for bias in decision making….

What is needed from you as a Leader?

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As a Leader:

When you understand the neural underpinnings of bias

and how to mitigate for them,

you can help to pave the way for

the acceptance of strategies to prevent bias

in decision making at the organizational level.

HOW do biases happen?...

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Biases = Mental shortcuts

A process of:

Deletion

Distortion

Generalisation

The brain at work…

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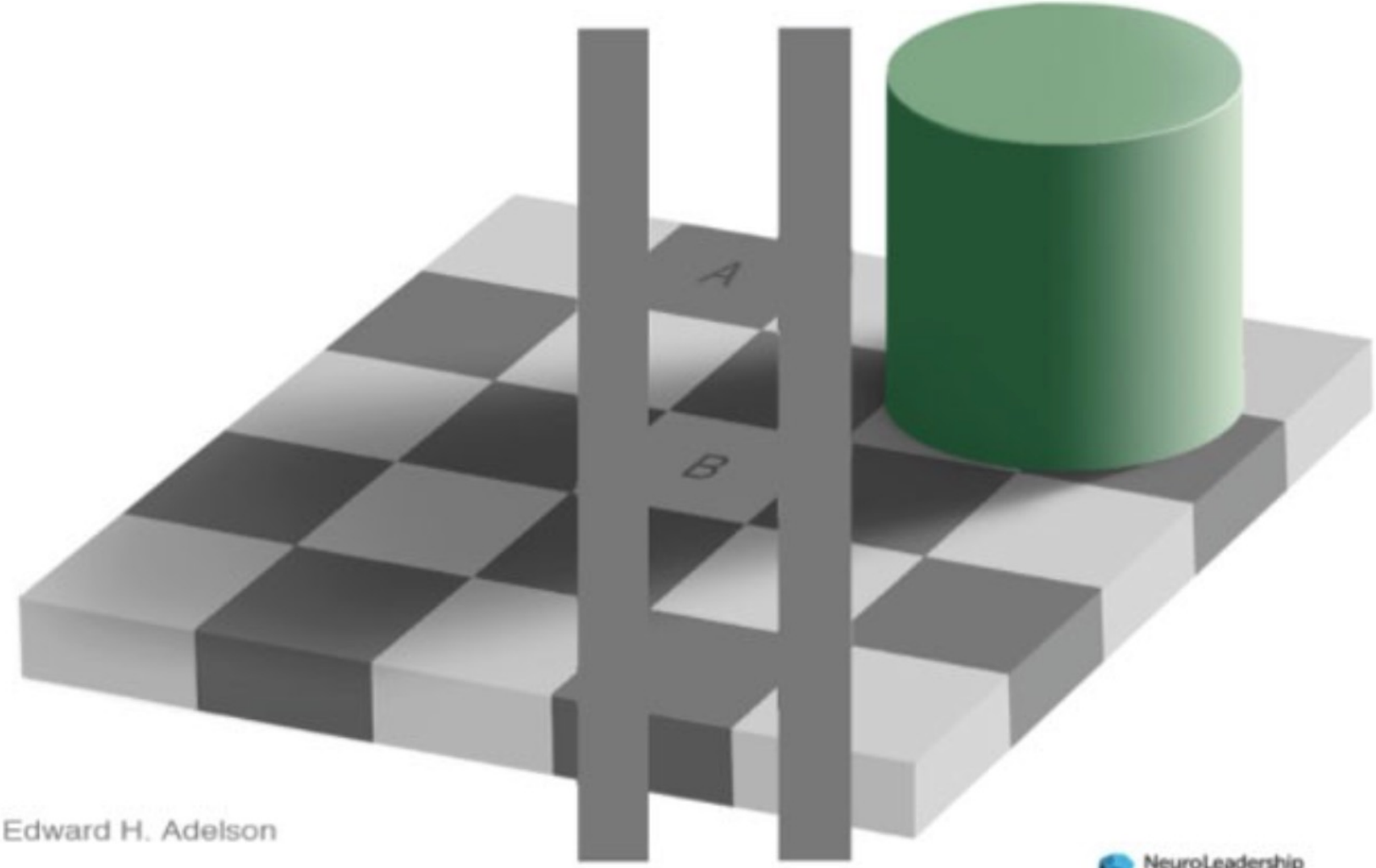
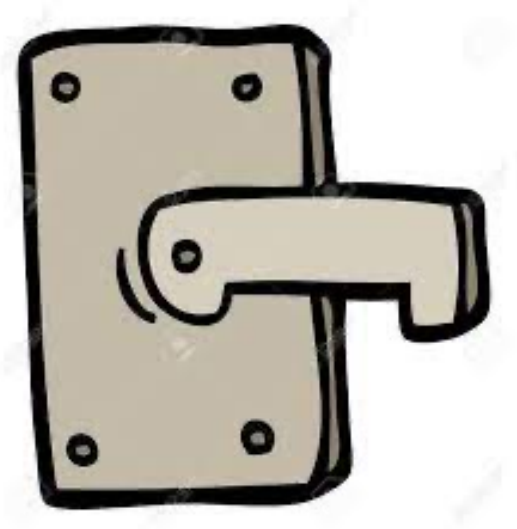
INVESTORS IN PEOPLE | Gold Until 2022



Edward H. Adelson

NeuroLeadership

Door handles…



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Make a note of your answer for later….

£1.10 = a bat + a ball

WHY do biases happen?...

Experts believe that….

- The mind's unconscious is responsible for at least 80% of thought patterns.

and

- The conscious mind is *not* capable of perceiving what the unconscious is thinking!

Banaji and Greenwald, *Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good People* 61 (Delacorte Press, 2013)

It’s as if you can be two people at the same time…

CONSCIOUS SELF:

“I don’t have any bias towards anything or anyone.”

UNCONSCIOUS SELF:

Harbouring biased attitudes that unknowingly leak into decision making and behaviour

What is the underlying cause of bias?

Neuroscience and brain imaging shows that…

- Avoiding pain and seeking rewards
- The need to be ‘right’
- Blind spot bias

Bias happens when…

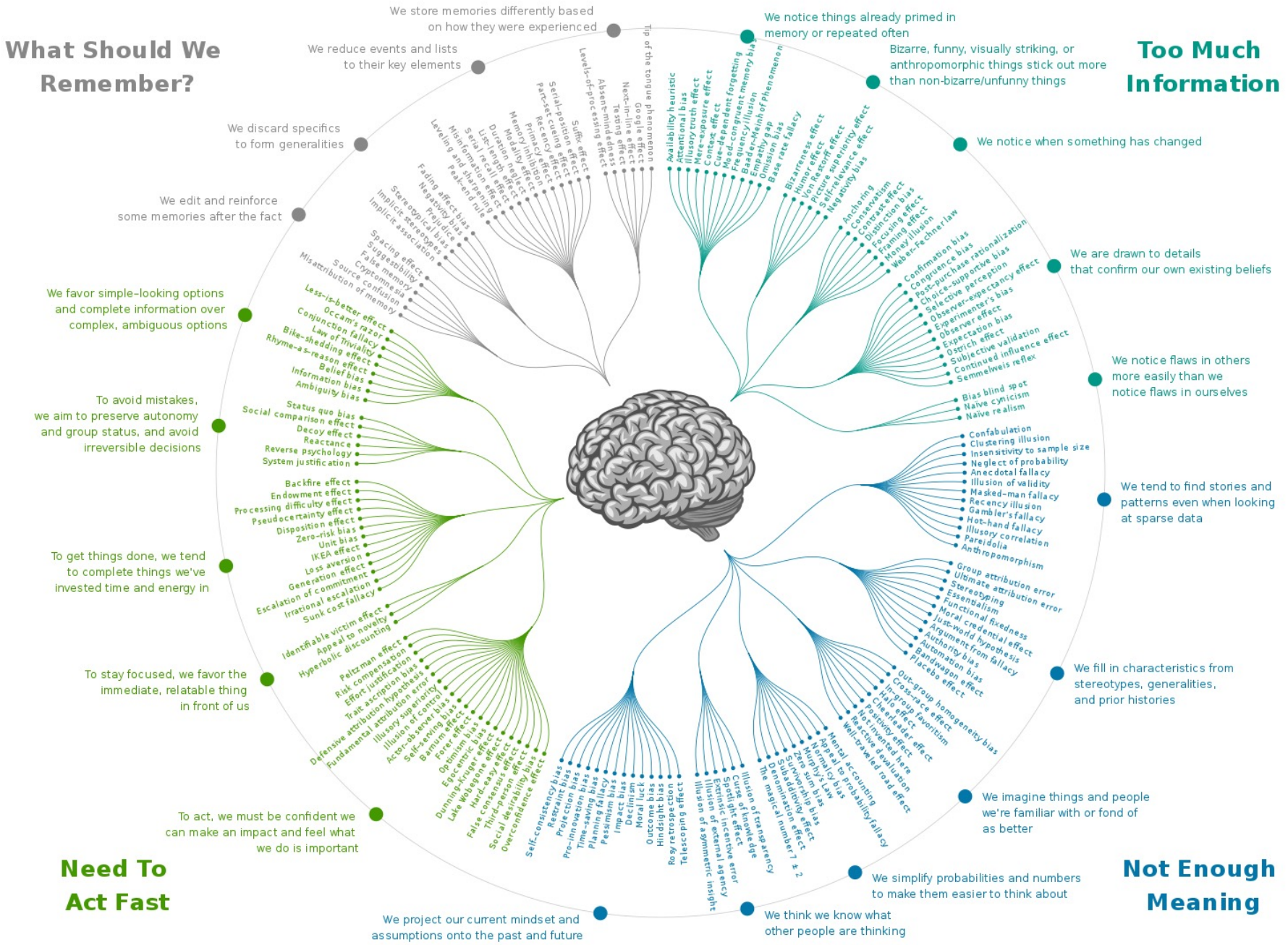
1. Too much information

2. Not enough meaning

3. Need to act fast

4. Needing to remember

THE COGNITIVE BIAS CODEX



Accepting the role of bias…

- Bias is universal
- We are biologically pre-disposed to have bias
- Individuals are unaware of the impact of their biases
- It is difficult to mitigate for bias in the midst of decision-making
- Individual cognitive effort is not enough.

Break: 15 minutes

The journey until the end of the day…

- The Neuroscientific research of ‘Breaking Bias’
- 3 Step Plan
- Mitigating for bias
- Identifying 5 biases - SEEDS
- Worksheets and de-brief

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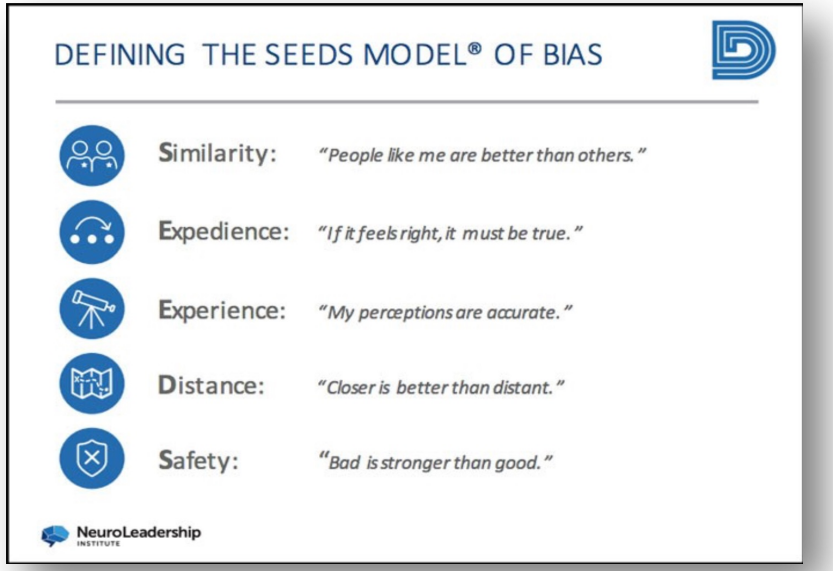
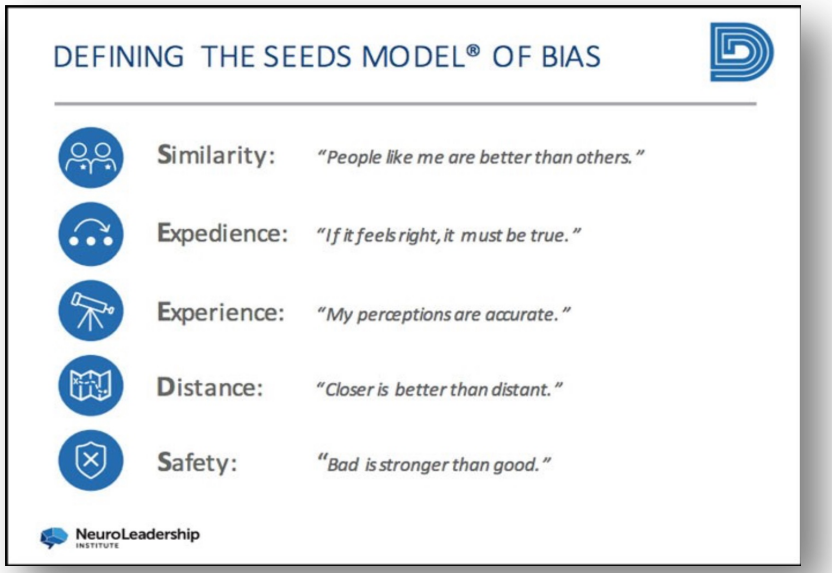


Overcoming Bias - 3 Step Plan: ('Breaking Bias' paper)

1. **Accept** ✓
2. **Label** (Identify)
3. **Mitigate**

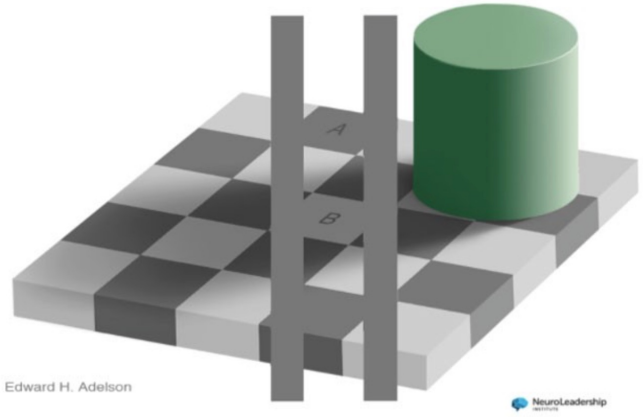
(Assess)



Mitigating for bias…

Knowing about bias is not enough to mitigate for it

Ventrolateral prefrontal cortex (VLPFC) is the braking system for the brain.



Creating an organisational culture to mitigate for bias…

We need an organisational culture to challenge the default position

of the egocentric brain

…

What are the changes needed in:

- Culture
- Managing mistakes?
- Creating safety in speaking up?

Identifying Biases

SEEDS™ - 188 different biases grouped into 5 categories:

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Similarity bias

Expedience bias

Experience bias

Distance bias

Safety bias

Similarity Bias…

…people who are like me are better than others who are not like me

- In-Group versus Out-Group bias.
- Significant neural & behavioural differences
- Assigning arbitrary teams creates affinity.
- Affinity Bias.

Similarity Bias Mitigation…

600 decisions

made by 200 different teams

over a 2 year period…..

Decisions MADE and EXECUTED by diverse teams delivered 60% better results.

Expediency Bias…

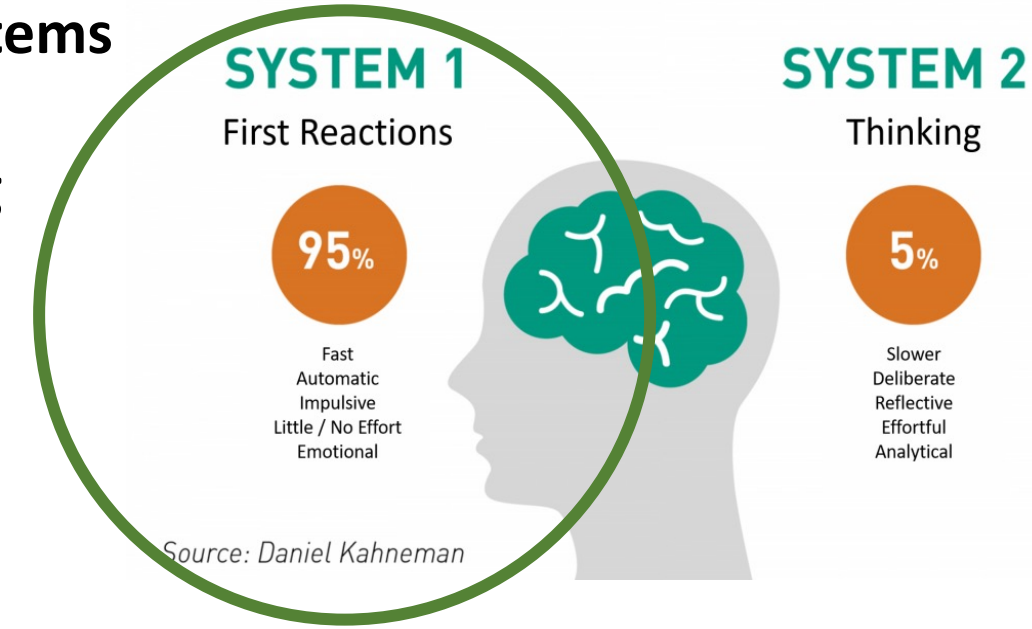
…happens when there is too much information to process, & a decision has to be made.

- A mental shortcut.
- £1.10
- ‘If it feels familiar, it must be right.’

Expediency Bias relies upon…

System I and System II Thinking

- 2 parallel decision-making systems
- Expediency in decision making
- It “feels right”



Expediency Bias…

…mental shortcuts that enable us to make quick and efficient decisions

Examples:

- **Availability heuristic bias:** relying on the most readily available data points
- **Anchoring bias:** Relying too heavily on the first piece of information offered when making a decision
- **Confirmation Bias:** Causes people to pay more attention to information that confirms their existing belief system and discount information that is contradictory.

Experience Bias…

…my experience and perceptions are valid and all I need to know to make a decision

FI of FIDO…

Facts

Interpretation

Decision

Outcome

We are like a dog with a bone……

Experience Bias Mitigating Strategies

Who is your Elrick and who is your Jason?

Changing perspective: 2nd Positioning

Experience Bias…

…my experience and perceptions are valid and they are all that I need to know to make a decision

Examples of Experience bias:

- **False consensus effect:** others are sure to agree with me – overestimating
- **Blind Spot Bias:** I can see the biases in others but not in myself

Distance Bias…

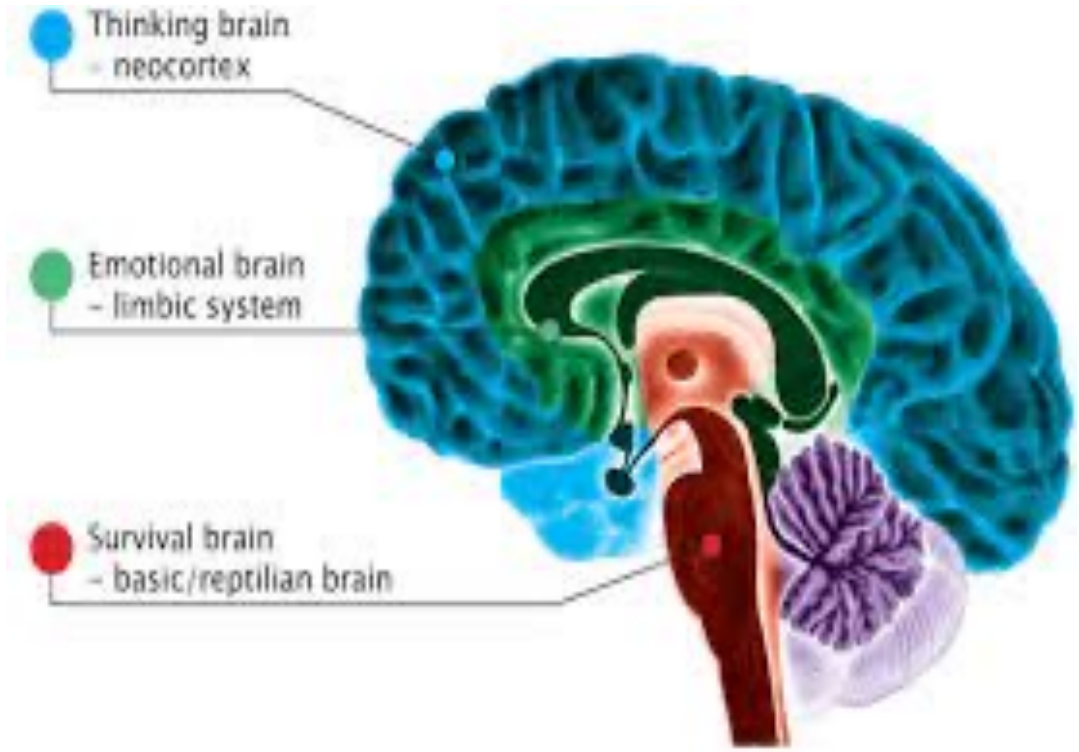
…close is better than distant

Examples of Distance bias:

- **Affective Forecasting bias:** Imagining that I will feel in the future the same as I feel today
- **Temporal Discounting bias:** £100 today is better than £150 in 6 months

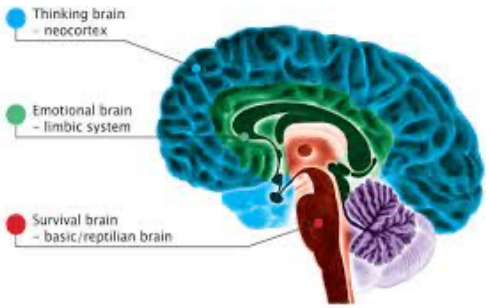
Safety Bias…

…bad is stronger than good



Safety Bias…

…bad is stronger than good



Examples of Safety bias

- **Loss Aversion bias:** Being risk averse – more likely to take action in the face of loss or fear
- **Framing Effect bias:** Making a different judgement based on whether the decision is presented as a gain or a loss (40% v 60%)
- **Sunk Cost Bias:** Not wanting to let go of something you are invested in

SEEDS Summary…

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SEEDS Summary…

SIMILARITY

"People like me are better than others."

Common in all people decisions.

A function of automatically defining everyone as in-group or out-group, and processing information differently as a result.

Examples

- In-group Bias
- Out-group Bias

Similarity bias mitigation:

Find commonalities

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SEEDS…

EXPEDIENCE

"If it feels right to me, it must be true."

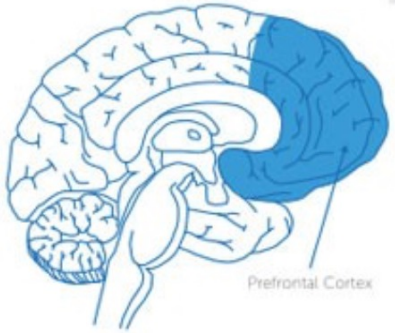
Common when we hurry or experience high cognitive load. Tied to limited prefrontal resources.

Examples

- Availability Bias
- Confirmation Bias
- Halo Effect

Expedience bias mitigation:

Consider all the information



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SEEDS…

EXPERIENCE

"My perceptions are accurate."

Common in creative and business decisions. A function of perceptions being highly subjective, with many processes invisible to us.

Examples

- Fundamental Attribution Error
- False Consensus Effect
- Illusion of Transparency

Experience bias mitigation:

Get other perspectives

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SEEDS…

DISTANCE

"Closer is better than far."

Common in people and business decisions. Due to a 'proximity' network for all types of closeness, in time, space and ownership.

Examples

- Temporal Discounting
- Affective Forecasting

Distance bias mitigation:

Remove distance from the equation

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SEEDS…

SAFETY

"Bad is stronger than good."

Common in business decisions

Due to a larger threat than reward system.

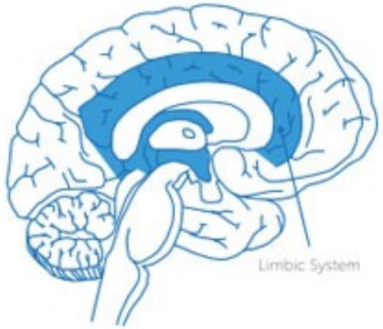
Includes social dangers, like loss of status

Examples

- Loss Aversion
- Sunk Cost

Safety bias mitigation:

Decide for someone else



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Creating an organisational culture to mitigate for bias…

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What are the changes needed in:

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Discussion Exercise for Buddy Group Work

Confirmation Bias

A type of unconscious bias that causes people to pay more attention to information that confirms their existing belief system and discount information that is contradictory.

And completion of worksheets