

How to Test Your Unconscious Bias

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Coaches are charged with the responsibility of seeing each client as a unique individual who is endowed with all possible capabilities and potential. However, some coaches might feel uncomfortable when they encounter clients with backgrounds and cultures that are different of their own. Society's understanding of the world and its people are often formed through news events, social media, and stories shared with one another. In many instances, these streams of information present interpretations of events that are inaccurate or reflect the bias of the source writer or outlet. The constant exposure to different narratives can create personal perceptions that can bring people together or create division.

Discomfort with differences often translate into thoughts and ideas that contribute to an unconscious bias. Bias can also be defined as:

"Preference or inclination that inhibits impartiality; prejudice"
(American Heritage Dictionary, 1983).

Cognitive Science and Social Psychology experts identify unconscious bias as a topic that needs further study. They state that stereotypes and bias have some similar qualities. Stereotypes can be positive or negative. They characterize a whole group of people based on a characteristic that is exaggerated, distorted or untrue. How is bias similar? Bias means that individuals are inclined towards or away from the "accepted" stereotypes and treat them as factual evidence even though it might not be true.

How can you test to see if you have an unconscious bias towards any person because of their gender, race, religion, class, sexual orientation, or even their career? Continue reading and you will find out in a moment!

We live in a world where we touch the lives of people across the globe through social media and news media outlets. We hear what is happening to people across the world and we might apply stereotypes to the situations without knowing it. When we receive requests from clients to coach them, we get excited that we have clients and we discuss their goals and any potential barriers.

Without understanding their intersectionality (i.e., social location and how it affects their way of thinking, beliefs, values, and the general view of the world), we might fall into the traps of assumptions or misunderstandings. We might even face frustration when they cannot understand how we are trying to help them. Because of our previous programming about where they come from, we might step into judgment.

In order to help our clients at a deeper level, we need to first uncover our own unconscious biases. We need to be open and learn about intersectionality and how it plays a role in our clients' measure of success. Our own view of the world impacts how we might perceive other people's view of the world. As iPEC coaches, we are promoting the 7th Level of self-Transcendence, which includes total non-judgement in order to achieve unconditional passion and genius creativity. Uncovering our unconscious biases helps us move beyond them and embody the 7th Level and become a master coach.

Let's do an activity to uncover our unconscious biases:

Write down the first word that comes to your mind when you see the following person mentioned in column one. Then, write what you think is the source of the meaning of this word?

Item	1st Word Comes to Mind	Where Did It Come From?
Irish		
Muliculture		
Japanese		
Russian		
Chinese		

Egyptian		
German		
African Man		
African American Man		
White Man		
European		
African Woman		
White Woman		
Mexican		
Nigerian		
Indian		
Saudi Arabian		
French		
African American Woman		
British		

Pakistani		
Face with Freckles		
Garbage Collector		
Judge		
Doctor		
Engineer		
Actor/actress		
Preist		
Pope		
Imam		
Catholic Man		
Rabi		
Muslim Woman		
Rich Person		
Poor Person		

Homeless		
Gay/Lesbian		
Muslim Man		
Catholic Woman		
Buddhists		
Farmer		

What have you discovered about yourself?

The best way to learn how to move away from bias, is to study the 7th Level of Energy as described in the book *Energy Leadership* by Dr. Bruce D Schneider. Consider taking the Energy Leadership Index® (ELI) assessment to discover your personal attitudes and beliefs that impact judgment, bias, the need to control, unpleasant patterns, and the desire to be right. (You will take the ELI as part of MOD III.) This allows you to develop strategies to replace divisive attitudes with those that build strong rapport with your clients of all walks of life. When this happens, coaches can understand their clients at deeper levels.

Here are a few questions to consider:

1. What is the social location of my client?
2. How can I discover the different aspects of their lives that might work for them and against them?
3. What triggers might be avoided if I understand their intersectionality?
4. Knowing that there is a tremendous cost if I generalize about a certain social location, how can I differentiate my client's features that fit for them and might not fit another client from the same social location? (Do not assume that since one client is from the

same social location as another client, then everyone coming from there will have the same issues.)

5. How do I find the training and resources to learn and expand my perception and understanding of different social locations?
6. How can I apply what I've learned about Intersectionality in the real world and with my own clients?

After completing this tool and immersing yourself with the clients coming from different social locations, get to know your client. You could ask questions about definitions, values, and beliefs and discover new dimensions of your client. Coaching mastery occurs when you gain the knowledge and ability to understand the uncertainty of your clients' world.

"To reach others, we have to first know ourselves. And to contact the deeper truth of who we are, we must engage in some activity or practice that questions what we assume to be true about ourselves." -Adapted from A.H. Almaas

It takes skill to know ourselves and to uncover our unconscious biases. By enabling your talent as a coach with no bias and judgment, you will develop higher talents that elicit contributions and meaningful support for your clients.

Credit: The concepts inherent in this article are the author's interpretation of materials issued by iPEC®.