

Bias Awareness



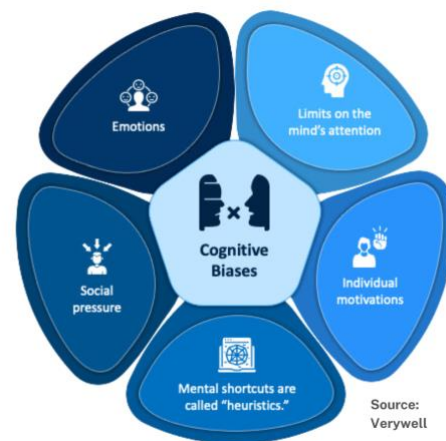
If you're human, biases distort your thinking. In fact, there are over 200 documented cognitive biases! ¹ Fortunately, this doesn't mean that our thinking is hopelessly corrupt. The takeaway is that we need to guard against some all-too-human tendencies. If we're humble and careful, we can compensate for our biases and become clearer, more capable thinkers. For example, knowing that we're prone to confirmation bias can make us less certain and more attentive to disconfirming evidence. We're also prone to imagine causal connections that don't really exist. Knowing this, you can make a habit of asking "Do we really know that this *causes* that?"

Applications

- Focus on teaching students a few of the **most common biases**, like confirmation bias, negativity bias, motivated reasoning, and the availability heuristic, along with examples. Yourbias.is is a fantastic resource. The Lowdown also has a good lesson plan for this.²
- Ask students the **questions**, "Could biases be coloring our views about this? Which one(s) might be at work here, and how might they be distorting our judgment?" Encourage them to raise such questions themselves.
- Try a Mad Lib-like word **game** to help students explore the subject of unconscious bias³.

Notes

It's important to learn about biases in an active way. Simply having students memorize lists of biases won't help them understand or apply that knowledge. We want students to be aware that biases creep into *everyone's* thinking. There's no shame in this: it just means we need to practice spotting it, then making allowances. Often, this means dialing down the conviction influenced by the bias.



¹ Wikipedia, [List of cognitive biases](#)

² The Lowdown by KQED Learning, [Lesson Plan: Can You Beat Cognitive Bias?](#)

³ Edutopia, [An Engaging Word Game Helps Students Grasp Implicit Bias](#)