



Be Peace. Choose Peace. Create Peace.

CHOOSE BIAS REDUCTION

What is Bias Reduction?

Bias is defined as prejudice against a person or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair. These kinds of biases infiltrate many parts of our society, are detrimental to our country, and can result in violence and intolerance towards others.

Bias Reduction is a peaceful practice that involves reducing the unconscious or explicit biases that are ingrained in us. The history of this practice is rooted in our nations ongoing struggles with discrimination and prejudice against others, mainly minority groups¹. Reducing bias in our personal lives will enable our society to move forward as a whole, unobstructed by illogical and irrational predispositions of others.

How do people learn Bias Reduction?

All of us live with many implicit biases and preferences for or against certain things, and most are harmless in nature- preferring cats over dogs for example, is one type of harmless bias. Unfortunately, some biases *are* harmful, and many are so ingrained in us that they impact our thinking and belief systems². According to Project Implicit, a virtual laboratory founded by researchers from several American Universities, most Americans exhibit **many** social biases that they aren't even aware of².

Being aware of unconscious bias, as well as recognizing the wrongness of explicit bias, are important first steps in reducing reliance on generalizations and stereotypes³. The Institute for Healthcare Improvement suggests a stepwise approach to reduce bias at the individual level that involves the following: recognizing and replacing stereotypes, listening to the perspectives of others, and increasing opportunities for contact with people from different groups. Learning bias reduction methods should begin at the individual level, and it requires a degree of self-guided research and individual practice.

How do people implement Bias Reduction?

Biases towards others infiltrate many parts of our society from our homes, to our workplaces, to the very political institutions that govern our nation. Every American has the opportunity to incorporate bias reduction strategies into their everyday lives. On a larger scale, government and non-government institutions have the responsibility to encourage Americans to take steps to reduce bias. Most of us are familiar with the many types of training that companies employ to

¹ Christine Jolls and Cass R. Sunstein, *The Law of Implicit Bias*, 94 *Calif. L. Rev.* 969 (2006).

² Project Implicit. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.projectimplicit.net>.

³ Devine, P. G., Forscher, P. S., Austin, A. J., & Cox, W. T. (2012). Long-term reduction in implicit race bias: A prejudice habit-breaking intervention. *Journal of experimental social psychology*, 48(6), 1267–1278. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2012.06.003

reduce biases in the workplace and enable full integration of members of minority groups⁴. Likewise, bias reduction strategies are becoming a crucial part of the education system in the United States. Teachers can take steps to cultivate bias awareness, encourage empathy among students, and practice loving-kindness in the classroom⁵.

For what types of circumstances is Bias Reduction suited?

Bias reduction processes and practices have been studied in a variety of interpersonal, professional, and community settings. While nearly all public-facing and human-centered businesses would benefit from bias reduction training, this range of skills can provide significantly consequential advantages for healthcare and human service contexts where invisible power differentials can affect program effectiveness and constituent outcomes.

Does Bias Reduction work for preventing or controlling aggression or violence?

In her book *Hate Crimes: New Social Movements and the Politics of Violence*, Valerie Jenness states: "Violence directed at victimized groups because of their real or imagined characteristics is as old as humankind"⁶. Our history is filled with times when prejudices against minority groups have led to acts of violence. Thankfully, bias reduction practices work to reduce the biases that can contribute to acts of violence and aggression in society.

There are few studies proving that bias reduction leads directly to violence reduction, and it seems that unconscious bias therapy is still in its infancy in the United States and beyond. However, it is easy to understand how cultivating a society where equity is achieved for all would lead to a peaceful nation. Through the analysis of 17 unconscious bias intervention methods, research has shown that counter-stereotyping (a common bias-reducing strategy) is the most effective way to reduce unconscious bias⁷. Unwinding stereotypes in the areas of gender and race is shown to reduce negative thoughts about these societal groups, possibly reducing any associated violent acts. Likewise, other strategies to reduce unconscious and explicit bias such as perspective taking and negation have been shown to create a sense of empathy for a stereotyped group on an individual and collective scale⁸.

⁴ How to Fight Your Own Implicit Biases. (2016, March 30). Retrieved July 17, 2019, from <https://www.aauw.org/2016/03/30/fight-your-biases>.

⁵ Suttie, J. (2016, October 28). Four Ways Teachers Can Reduce Implicit Bias. Retrieved July 17, 2019, from https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/four_ways_teachers_can_reduce_implicit_bias.

⁶ Jenness, V. (1997). *Hate Crimes*. New York: Routledge. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203790250>.

⁷ Lai, C. (2014). "Reducing implicit racial references: I. A comparative investigation of 17 interventions". *Journal of experimental psychology*, 143(4), 1765–1785.

⁸ Shih, M. J., Wang, E., Bucher, A. T., & Stotzer, R. (2009). "Perspective taking: Reducing prejudice towards general outgroups and specific individuals". *Group Processing & Intergroup Relations*, 12(5), 565–577.

Where else might I go to extend my learning about Bias Reduction?

Social bias is a complex problem from which many other issues branch. There are many ways you can learn more about social bias, as well as different ways of undoing or reducing bias. For starters, [Racial Equity Tools](#) and [Dismantling Racism](#) are two websites that provide platforms for people to learn the fundamental concepts that concern racial equity, and racial biases in America. If you are interested in learning more about how you can combat blatant discrimination as a bystander, visit [Step up Equity Matters](#). Lastly, [The People's Institute for Survival and Beyond](#) (PISAB) is an international collective of anti-racist, multicultural community organizers and educators dedicated to building an effective movement for social transformation.

About Peace Through Action USA

Peace Through Action USA activates and equips Americans to implement practical peaceful solutions to aggression and violence in their communities and our country. We are a national-scope, charitable, social capital-building organization. Learn more at www.PeaceThroughAction.org.

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