

3 WAYS TO SPEAK UP AGAINST UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

Unconscious biases are social stereotypes about certain groups of people that are different from you. These biases are outside of our conscious awareness and can be totally out of alignment with our stated values. In other words, we can hurt people and discriminate without meaning to. If you are the victim of unconscious bias, here are three ways to speak up and confidently challenge the behaviour, so that our silence doesn't sound like acceptance. **This is how to make the unconscious, conscious:**

Facilitate Reflection

A great opening question to stimulate reflection is **'Why do you say that?'** or **'Why do you think that?'** As Dr. Covey says, 'Seek first to understand, then to be understood.' People have often inherited beliefs from their parents, school, the media or friends, and have never stopped to consider whether that view of a particular people group is in line with their own experiences. Could you help them to reflect by giving examples that are contrary to the opinion they have expressed?

Re-Educate

The second approach is to try to re-educate. What we regularly see is that people don't realise that what they are saying is causing offence. A quiet word, one on one, to explain that it is **not the accepted norm** anymore can often be really effective, especially when it is said in a light-hearted way. What works well about a sentence like **'it's not the accepted norm'** is that it's not personal. It's non emotional. It's a statement of fact.

What also works well is to ask an **advocate or ally** who is of the same people group as the person who has been unconsciously biased to have a quiet word and explain that it is not the accepted norm to say those things anymore. For example, if everyday sexism is a problem for you as a woman in your place of work, ask a male advocate to speak up on your behalf.

Confront

The reality is that we do sometimes need to confront someone if it is not getting better. If they aren't taking on board your hints and suggestions, and it is really affecting you day to day, then we have to speak up or our silence sounds like acceptance. The thought of this is always much worse than the actual conversation because people are generally horrified that they have said something that may have caused upset or offence. Social scientists have discovered that a statement that includes three elements is the absolute **best way to confront someone** and it doesn't matter which order you do them in.

1. **Explain the ACTION:** what specifically did they do that made you feel uncomfortable? Don't generalise and say 'in meetings you always do that.'
2. **Explain how it made you FEEL:** you can't argue with the way someone feels – that's their reality.
3. **Explain the potential IMPACT:** Then go quiet! Listen to what they have to say, then finish by summarising the statement one more time.

For example: *"I hope you don't mind me mentioning this but during that meeting you **talked over the top of me three times** and it made me **feel** like you don't really value what I've got to contribute. I'm concerned that the **impact** of this is that I won't want to speak up in meetings anymore and I **don't want the business to miss out** on something that might be useful information."*

