

Committed Collective Action: *The Journey Continues...*

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We began this journey of committed collective action with the definition of inclusion. Are we truly making everyone at the table feel a sense of belonging? Does our culture make people feel respected and valued for who they are as an individual or group?

We did the “Face Test” to understand our experience or lack of experience with those who are different than ourselves. We know as early childhood educators that the relationships and experiences of an individual have high impact on the person’s behavior.

We learned about microaggressions and the effect on the recipients. It is in our power to make changes to not only mitigate those effects, but to eliminate them. It is an important step as we move forward. Where do you stand when it comes to microaggressions? Does it depend on your experiences whether it is a high priority? What changes can be made to make our environments safe for all?

Implicit Bias

We are adding a new set of vocabulary words as we begin to understand social justice and all that comes from committing to “learn better and do better”.

Defining Implicit Bias

Also known as implicit social cognition, implicit bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. These biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual’s awareness or intentional control. Residing deep in the subconscious, these biases are different from known biases that individuals may choose to conceal for the purposes of social and/or political correctness. Rather, implicit biases are not accessible through introspection.

The implicit associations we harbor in our subconscious cause us to have feelings and attitudes about other people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, age, and appearance. These associations develop over the course of a lifetime beginning at a very early age through exposure to direct and indirect messages. In addition to early life experiences, the media and news programming are often-cited origins of implicit associations.

A Few Key Characteristics of Implicit Biases

- Implicit biases are **pervasive**. Everyone possesses them, even people with avowed commitments to impartiality such as judges.
- Implicit and explicit biases are **related but distinct mental constructs**. They are not mutually exclusive and may even reinforce each other.
- The implicit associations we hold **do not necessarily align with our declared beliefs** or even reflect stances we would explicitly endorse.

- We generally tend to hold implicit biases that **favor our own ingroup**, though research has shown that we can still hold implicit biases against our ingroup.
- Implicit biases are **malleable**. Our brains are incredibly complex, and the implicit associations that we have formed can be gradually unlearned through a variety of debiasing techniques.

(Taken from Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity)

In other words... we have baggage we are not aware of driving our behaviors that can be both offensive and exclusive for others. In our commitment “we have pledged to stand against the actions of exclusion: racism, hatred, and violence.” This includes all –isms.

Let us unpack some of our baggage and explore the Implicit Association Test.

People don't always say what's on their minds. One reason is that they are unwilling. For example, someone might report smoking a pack of cigarettes per day because they are embarrassed to admit that they smoke two. Another reason is that they are unable. A smoker might truly believe that she smokes a pack a day, or might not keep track at all. The difference between being unwilling and unable is the difference between purposely hiding something from someone and unknowingly hiding something from yourself.

The Implicit Association Test (IAT) measures attitudes and beliefs that people may be unwilling or unable to report. The IAT may be especially interesting if it shows that you have an implicit attitude that you did not know about. For example, you may believe that women and men should be equally associated with science, but your automatic associations could show that you (like many others) associate men with science more than you associate women with science. *(Taken from Project Implicit)*

Please join me in taking one or more of the [Implicit Association Tests](#). It will give personal insight into our implicit attitudes so we can know and understand them and prevent behaviors that add to stereotypes and microaggressions.

(Link : <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/>)

As always, I invite any comment, experience, additions, and suggestions. Feel free to contact me at dnnsmlyk@aol.com

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