



# ALASKA SHRM STATE COUNCIL



## WHY DON'T I "FIT"?

# UNDERSTANDING AND PREVENTING THE NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF UNCONSCIOUS BIAS, STEREOTYPES, AND MICROAGGRESSIONS IN THE WORKPLACE

PRESENTED BY  
TRACI GATEWOOD

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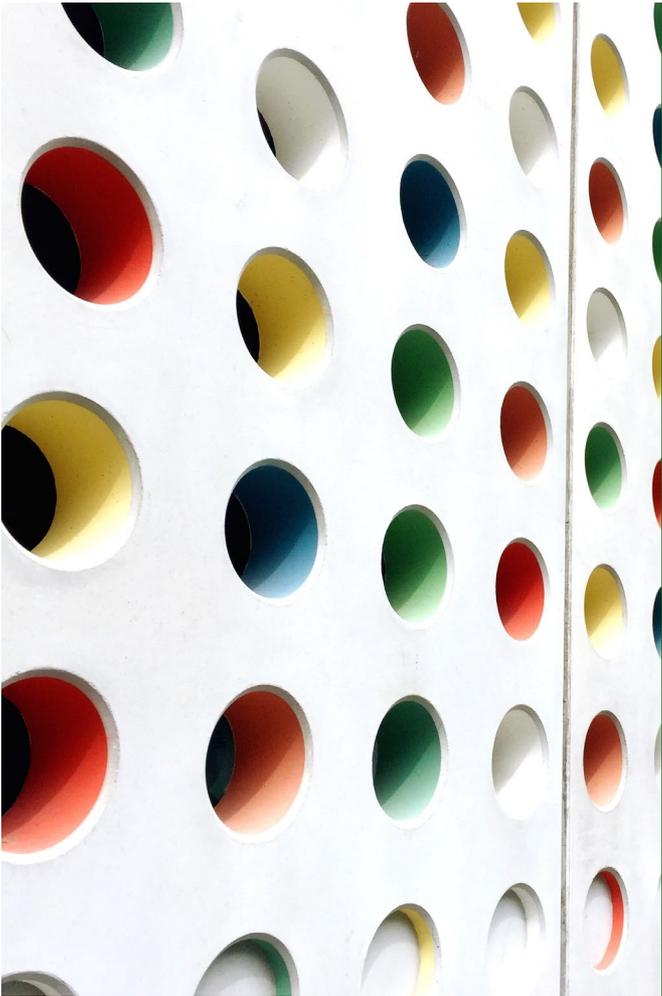
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# DIVERSIFIED SERVICES

— IMPROVING BUSINESS EFFECTIVENESS —

## Why Don't I “Fit?”

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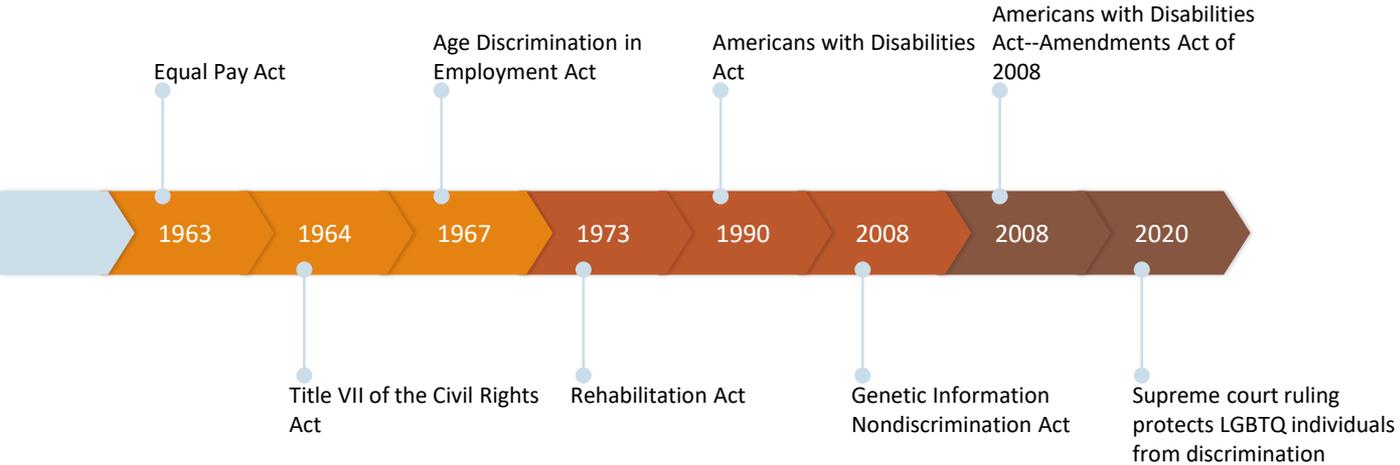
# Learning Outcomes

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- Understand unconscious bias and how it can lead to stereotyping and microaggressions in the workplace.
- Identify biases that impact employee recruitment, selection, and retention.
- Recognize that commonly accepted phrases and actions are microaggressions.
- Formulate actions that can be taken to create more inclusive work environments.

# Timeline

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# Unconscious (AKA Hidden) Bias Defined

Negative associations that people unknowingly hold. They are expressed automatically, without conscious awareness. They can apply to anything, including:

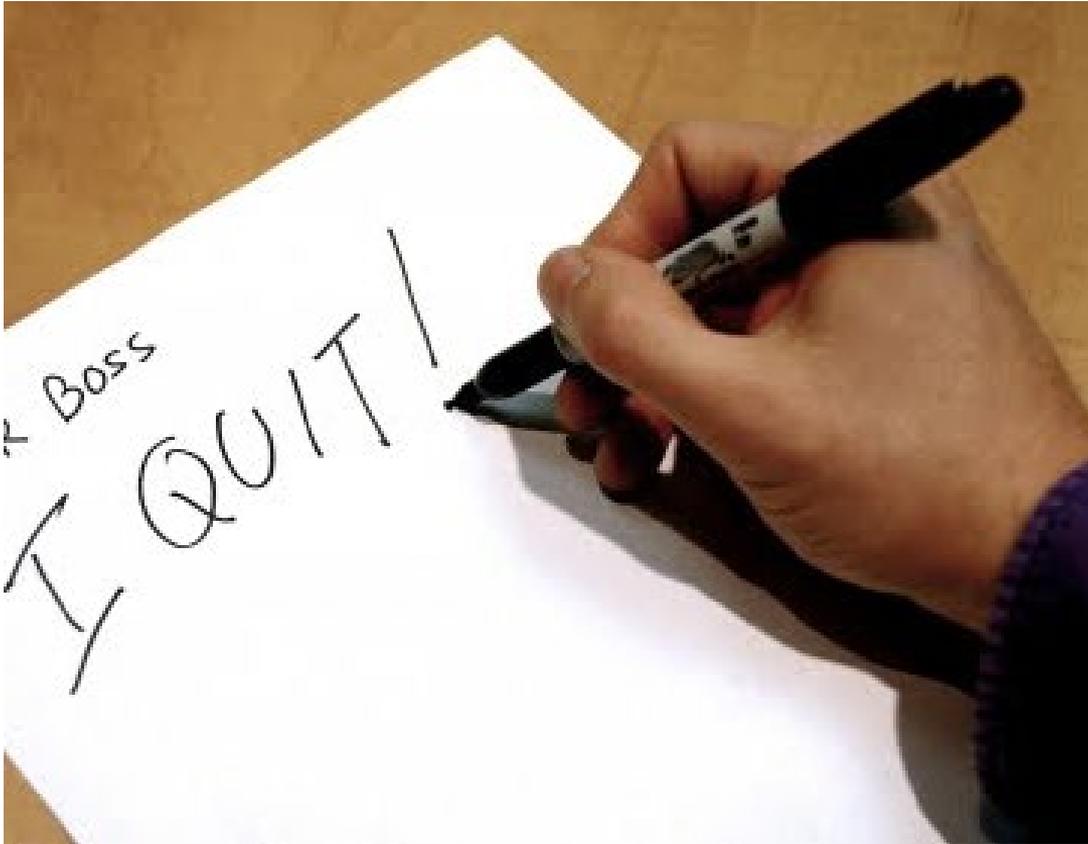
- race
- personality
- accent
- religion
- gender
- education
- appearance
- weight



# Unconscious Bias Basics

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- Common & pervasive
- May not align with declared beliefs
- Tend to favor our own in-group



## Costs Associated with Bias

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Employees who perceive bias against them are:

- nearly three times as likely to be disengaged at work
- more than three times as likely to quit their jobs
- 2.6 times as likely to withhold ideas as their peers

Employee disengagement costs U.S. corporations \$450 billion to \$550 billion per year.

# Unconscious Bias, Stereotypes, and Preference

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- **Bias** is an inclination or predisposition for or against something.
- **Stereotypes** are oversimplified ideas about a particular type of person or group of people.
- **Preference** is the act of choosing one alternative over others.



# Three Common Unconscious Biases



# Confirmation Bias

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Interpreting new information as confirming your existing beliefs.



# Affinity Bias

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Biased in favor of someone because you share something with them.



# Attribution Bias

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Seeing some groups such as minorities as less competent than those in the majority, which can lead to undervaluing their accomplishments and overvaluing their mistakes.



*“Unconscious bias isn’t always negative, but it is always problematic.”*

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# Organizational Risk Factors

# Causes of Workplace Unconscious Bias

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Employees who feel angry or disgusted, regardless of what they're upset about

Ambiguity

Obvious social categories or hierarchy amongst employees

Employees who are tired, disengaged or disinterested in their work

Decision-making situations that are rushed, pressured, or distracted

Lack of feedback and/or accountability when employees make decisions

WHAT CAN YOU  
DO?

# Reducing Bias



# Unconscious Bias Training

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REQUIRE IT!



# Actionable Steps

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- Give every person an equal chance to speak in meetings
- Gather as much information as possible before making a decision
- Interact with employees from different ethnic groups, genders, and ages
- Don't make assumptions
- Act as an ally; speak up if you witness bias, harassment, discrimination or bullying in action



# Engage Hesitant Employees

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Focus on empathy and business results, not on blaming and shaming!



# Don't Play Favorites

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Be objective and consistent!



# Mental Health

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Prioritize it!

# Actionable Steps

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- Promote a healthy work/life balance by encouraging time off and offering flexible work hours.
- Train managers to recognize employees who are struggling and how to help them.
- Including mental health treatments in your company's benefits plan.
- Compile a list of mental health resources that all employees can access, such as crisis hotline numbers, local practitioners' contact information, and educational information on mental health symptoms and signs.
- Organize stress-busting events, such as yoga, therapy dogs, or painting.



# Recruiting and Hiring Practices

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Review and update!



# DEI Goals

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Determine, commit to,  
and act on them!

WHAT ARE  
THEY?

# Microaggressions

# Microaggressions Defined

Everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

# Types of Microaggressions

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## **Microassaults**

Overt discrimination or criticism done intentionally to discredit a marginalized group

## **Microinsults**

Comments that communicate that the demographic group is not respected, but the target is seen as an exception to the stereotype

## **Microinvalidations**

Comments or actions that dismiss the experiences of historically disadvantaged group members

# Age-Related Microaggression

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## **Wrong**

“Are you old enough to be in charge?”

## **Instead**

Say nothing.

# Minority-Related Microaggression

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## **Wrong**

“Oh, sorry, wrong person.”

## **Instead**

Learn your co-workers' and employees' names.

# Mental Health-Related Microaggression

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## **Wrong**

“I think I have PTSD from that meeting.”

## **Instead**

Use objective terms to describe concerns with meeting.

# Disability-Related Microaggression

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## **Wrong**

“The way you’ve overcome your disability is so inspiring.”

## **Instead**

Say nothing.

# Linguistic-Related Microaggression

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## **Wrong**

“Your name is so hard to pronounce.”

## **Instead**

Ask them how to pronounce it.

# Gender-Related Microaggression

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## **Wrong**

“This is Bob, our male nurse, and Sarah, our female engineer.”

## **Instead**

Communicate about and with employees **WITHOUT** gender tags.

WHAT CAN YOU  
DO?

# Preventing & Addressing Microaggressions



# Company Culture

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Influence it!



# Anti- Discrimination Policies

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Create and update!



**YOUR  
FEEDBACK  
MATTERS!**

# Employee Feedback

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Seek and encourage it!



KEEP CALM

and

COMMUNICATI

# Respectful Communication

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Teach and require it!



# DEI Professional Development

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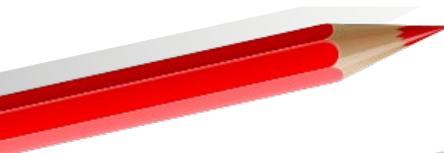
Require it!



*Remember!!*

Knowledge,  
commitment &  
training matter!

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# Questions?

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