

Exploring Implicit Bias

(Blue text is for our reference only)

Title: Exploring Implicit Bias

Competency area: Demonstrate Awareness of Biases

Description:

You've probably heard of bias. What is it, and how can you ensure your own unconscious biases are not impacting your tutoring?

Learning Objectives:

Upon completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Identify implicit, or unconscious, bias.
 - Apply strategies to counter the effects of your own implicit biases.
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How would you describe your coaching experience and skills?

1- beginning tutor

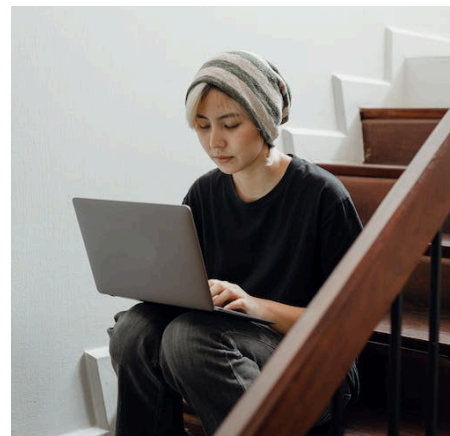
5- expert tutor

[include consent language and gating for 18 or older here]

Scenario 1

A tutor is working with a student named Xinyu with her calculus homework. Her parents are immigrants from China with tech jobs who pride themselves on their work ethic. She tells the tutor that her family is pressuring her to do well in school so that she can get a good job, but she's been struggling in calculus. The tutor responds, "Come on, I know you can do this. You must be super good at math. It's in your blood."

[Image link]



[Open response- identifying implicit bias]

1. How does the tutor's response to Xinyu reflect unconscious bias, otherwise known as implicit bias?

[Predict/Decide - MCQ]

2. Which of the following tutor responses is a better response than the tutor's response above?

I would say to Xinyu:

- A. **“Just remember, grades aren’t everything. It’s what you learn that matters. How about you tell me what you’ve tried so far?”**
- B. “Don’t worry, I know you’re crazy smart. You’ll do just fine. Let’s get started!”
- C. “You’re having trouble? Then these must be super hard.”
- D. “Luckily, this shouldn’t be hard for you. Here, show me what you’ve already tried.”

[OPEN- explain]

3. Explain how the response you chose above is a better response to Xinyu and does not contain implicit bias?

[MCQ- explain]

4. Which of the following statements aligns with the rationale you chose and explained in the previous two questions.
- A. By saying that the problems are super hard, tutors can shift the focus from working with students to rethink their solutions.
 - B. By emphasizing the student’s learning, and not assuming they know how to solve all math problems, the tutor can support them and give them confidence to move forward.**
 - C. When tutors reassure students about their smartness and not encourage them to share their struggles or thinking, they create greater focus on learning.
 - D. The tutor should tell the student the problems are hard but encourage them. If the student assumes they are naturally good at math, they will be more confident in their math abilities.
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[Observe]

Research Recommends

While it is important to maintain high expectations, assuming that the student is naturally good at math demonstrates implicit bias due to their race, or perhaps other reasons. Instead, the tutor should demonstrate their belief that even though the student is struggling, they can work hard and succeed— just like any other student. Therefore, the most-desired response or correct answer is:

“Just remember, grades aren’t everything. It’s what you learn that matters. How about you tell me what you’ve tried so far?”

Tutors must be aware of any unconscious biases they may have in order to ensure all students reach their potential. Often referred to as implicit biases, unconscious assumptions are beliefs or attitudes we may hold about certain groups without being aware of them. Just about everyone has some implicit bias. It can influence your expectations based on race, gender, age, ability, religion, and more. There is little evidence that implicit bias can be eliminated in the long

term. However, being aware of your bias is the first step to letting it not control your actions. You can overcome implicit bias by first discovering your blind spots and then actively working to combat any stereotypes or attitudes that may affect your interactions with students. There are four steps coaches can apply to reduce or counter the effects of their own implicit bias.

- *Apply introspection*- To reduce or counteract the effects of bias, you must be able to explore and identify your own bias. There are resources available on PLUS to help you explore your bias.
- *Maintain high expectations*- Ensure you are actively maintaining high standards.
- *Learn to slow down* - Be sure to pause and reflect before talking to the student. Make sure you are not making any broad assumptions. Implicit bias occurs subconsciously in the brain, so taking a moment to use your active mind can help you catch biased statements.
- *Use a student's perspective* - Put yourself in the shoes of a student and consider experiences from their point of view. Evaluate the student based on their personal characteristics rather than expectations of a group.

(Devine et al., 2013)

[\[Open Response- Explain\]](#)

5. In your own words, please explain why it is important for a tutor to maintain high expectations for all students.

[\[MCQ- self-assess\]](#)

6. How much do you agree or disagree with this research-recommended approach?

Strongly disagree-1

Somewhat disagree-2

No opinion-3

Somewhat agree-4

Strongly agree-5

[\[Open Response- Explain\]](#)

7. Explain why you agree or disagree.

[MCQ- identifying the applied strategy]

8. A student is struggling with understanding a math problem on his homework. Match the given tutor's response with a recommended strategy to reduce or counter the effect of the tutor's own biases.

Tutor's response	Recommended Strategy
"I remember struggling with math problems like these when I was your age. Let's give it a try."	a. Maintain high expectations.
[The tutor reflects on their own biases and then responds.] "It appears you are having some trouble. Let's find out what you know."	b. Learn to slow down.
[The tutor pauses for a few seconds before texting the student.] "Let's work through your homework together. You can do it!"	c. Use a student's perspective.
"I know you can do this. You just have to work hard and keep going. Show me your first problem."	d. Apply introspection.

OR USE THE ONE BELOW

Instead of the matching problem above, use the MCQ below:

[MCQ- identifying the applied strategy]

8. A student is struggling with understanding a math problem on his homework. Which of the following tutor responses involves a tutor applying the strategy of using a student's perspective, or putting themselves "in the shoes" of the student?

- A. [The tutor reflects on their own biases and then responds.] "It appears you are having some trouble. Let's find out what you know."
- B. [The tutor pauses for a few seconds before texting the student.] "Let's work through your homework together. You can do it!"
- C. "I know you can do this. You just have to work hard and keep going. Show me your first problem."
- D. **"I remember struggling with math problems like these when I was your age. Let's give it a try together and see how we do."**

Research Recommendations

Research says implicit bias occurs when a person makes an assumption without any evidence based on stereotypes. Using the four strategies previously discussed, the correct answers are:

Tutor's response	Recommended Strategy
"I remember struggling with math problems like these when I was your age. Let's give it a try."	Use a student's perspective.
[The tutor reflects on their own biases and then responds.] "It appears you are having some trouble. Let's find out what you know."	Apply introspection.
[The tutor pauses for a few seconds before texting the student.] "Let's work through your homework together. You can do it!"	Learn to slow down.
"I know you can do this. You just have to work hard and keep going. Show me your first problem."	Maintain high expectations.

OR USE THE ONE BELOW

Or the other question 8 depending on which one you use.

Studies show that putting yourself in the shoes of a student and considering experiences from their point of view, is an effective strategy to prevent bias. This way you are evaluating the student and their abilities based on their personal characteristics rather than expectations of a group. Therefore, the correct answer to (8) is D. below:

"I remember struggling with math problems like these when I was your age. Let's give it a try together and see how we do."

Scenario 2:

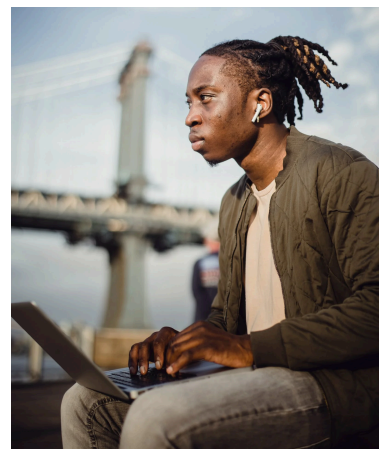
You are working remotely with a student named Malcolm. He reached out to you with help on a math assignment. Below is a conversation between you and Malcolm:

[\[image link\]](#)

[Tutor] How can I help you, Malcolm?

[Malcolm] I have a Calculus assignment that I am struggling with, and I really need to get a good grade. I want to go to college to be an engineer.

[Tutor] I can certainly help you with that.



[Malcolm] Last semester I failed the class, so I really need an A on this assignment.

[Decide/Predict - Open Response]

9. If you were Malcolm's tutor, what exactly would you say to him in response to his need to get an A on the assignment?

[Decide/Predict - MCQ]

10. Which of the following tutor's responses below do you think would best support Malcolm?

- A. **"I understand why you want an A on the assignment. You can do it if you work hard. Let's try to solve these problems together."**
- B. "Calculus is a very hard subject. Since you failed last semester, it may be hard for you to get caught up. Let's see how far we get on the assignment."
- C. "That is great, you want to be an engineer. You are going to need to know calculus and get good grades. I am not sure you can get an A on the assignment, but let's try. What is the first problem?"
- D. "Students like you will have a hard time getting their grade back up and engineering is a difficult career. Let's see if we can work together and complete your work."

11. OPEN- Explain why the response you chose demonstrates a lack of implicit bias from the tutor.

12. MCQ- Which of the following statements aligns with the rationale you chose and explained in the previous two questions?

- A. **By telling the student they are capable of getting an A, the tutor is setting high expectations.**
- B. Setting realistic expectations will help make sure the student doesn't aim too high and get discouraged by their inability to progress.
- C. If the student wants a difficult career, they need to know how to work hard. Indicating that they have work to do will spur them to achieve their full potential.
- D. By notifying the student that he is going to have to work extra hard because of who he is, you are setting realistic expectations and being honest.

Conclusion

In tutoring it is important to always maintain high expectations and encourage students to work hard to achieve their goals. It is important that tutors express that even though the student is struggling, they can work hard and succeed— just like any other student. Therefore, A is the most-desired, or correct response:

"I understand why you want an A on the assignment. You can do it if you work hard. Let's try to solve these problems together."

Further Information

For more information regarding how to demonstrate awareness of bias, check out the resources below:

[Project Implicit - Take A Test](#)

[What is Implicit Bias](#)

[How to Identify, Understand, and Unlearn Implicit Bias in Patient Care](#)

References:

Project Implicit. (2011). Project Implicit. Harvard University.

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

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. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2012.06.003>

Feedback

Indicate how much you agree or disagree with the following statements:

This module made me more aware of my own biases.

Strongly disagree-1

Somewhat disagree-2

No opinion-3

Somewhat agree-4

Strongly agree-5

This module helped me use strategies to counter the effects of my own biases.

Strongly disagree-1

Somewhat disagree-2

No opinion-3

Somewhat agree-4

Strongly agree-5

This module was valuable.

Strongly disagree-1
Somewhat disagree-2
No opinion-3
Somewhat agree-4
Strongly agree-5

I can apply what I have learned from this module to my tutoring in the future.

Strongly disagree-1
Somewhat disagree-2
No opinion-3
Somewhat agree-4
Strongly agree-5

Please provide any additional comments or feedback related to this training module.
