

How biases can get in the way of your career development

A bias is an **automatic way to think about something**. It's a shortcut our brains make to filter information and understand the world. Being aware of biases, including big systemic ones like age, gender, and race, puts you in control and helps you handle them, making your decisions more fair and conscious.

How can biases get in your way?

Biases limit learning, reduce curiosity and contribute to flawed judgements. Being aware of biases and feeling confident about alternative actions makes a big difference to your development.

*You can't control other people's biases, but you can **positively influence them through your actions**.*

Exploring your biases

Affinity bias

Seeking out and being more comfortable with people who think like you, who have similar experiences, and even look like you.



Bias blockers:

1. Your career community becomes an echo chamber
2. You spend time with strong ties and stop nurturing weak ties = fewer opportunities
3. You limit your learning because you don't develop the skill of collaborating with difference

Awareness

🔗 Scan for similarity

Who do you spend the most time with and how similar are they?



Idea for action

Escape your function

🔗 Volunteer to spend time with people who work in different companies and contexts.
Try gettingonboard.org.

Confirmation bias

Searching for and prioritising information that confirms your pre-existing views. This reinforces what you already believe.



Bias blockers:

1. You default to the same data and make the same decisions
2. You become blinkered and lose adaptability and agility
3. You are over-attached to an idea or outcome.

Awareness

🔗 Reflect on your patterns and paths

What are your career progression patterns?



Idea for action

Play devils advocate

🔗 If you default to thinking learning looks like going on a course, challenge yourself to think about learning differently (e.g. by doing)

Recency bias

Believing that recent events reflect how things will play out in the future. Immediacy gets in the way of impact.



Bias blockers:

1. Your performance and career conversations lose context
2. Your feedback reflects recent situations but not overall reality
3. You narrow the view of what you can do beyond the role you're in today

Awareness

🔗 Press pause & reflect

What career moments have you learnt the most from?



Idea for action

Keep a development diary

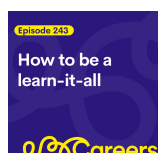
🔗 This supports you to learn as you go and gives you data to go back to. Reflection.app is a useful tool to prompt you to press pause.

Recommended resources



How biases affect your organisation and how to overcome it

Harvard Business Review article focusing on the effect of confirmation bias



How to be a learn-it-all

How to learn, unlearn and relearn at work. #243 of Squiggly Careers.