

CENTRE FOR INNOVATION IN PEER SUPPORT

Examining Bias Toolkit

Support / **House**



Centre for
Innovation in
Peer Support

1-833-845-WELL (9355) Ext 390

supporthouse.ca

centreinfo@supporthouse.ca

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Gremmen, A. & Hopkins, E. (2021). Examining Bias Toolkit. Support House: Centre for Innovation in Peer Support.

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Acknowledgements

Authors
<p>Ethan Hopkins, Peer Integration & Systems Support, Centre for Innovation in Peer Support</p> <p>Alyssa Gremmen, Peer Integration & Systems Lead, Centre for Innovation in Peer Support</p>
Content Advisor
<p>Richard Adair, Manager, Centre for Innovation in Peer Support</p>
Content Reviewer
<p>Betty-Lou Kristy, Director, Centre for Innovation in Peer Support</p>
Branding Coordinator
<p>Lisa McVey, Communications & Marketing Coordinator, Centre for Innovation in Peer Support</p>

If you have questions about this resource, please contact
centreinfo@supporthouse.ca | www.supporthouse.ca

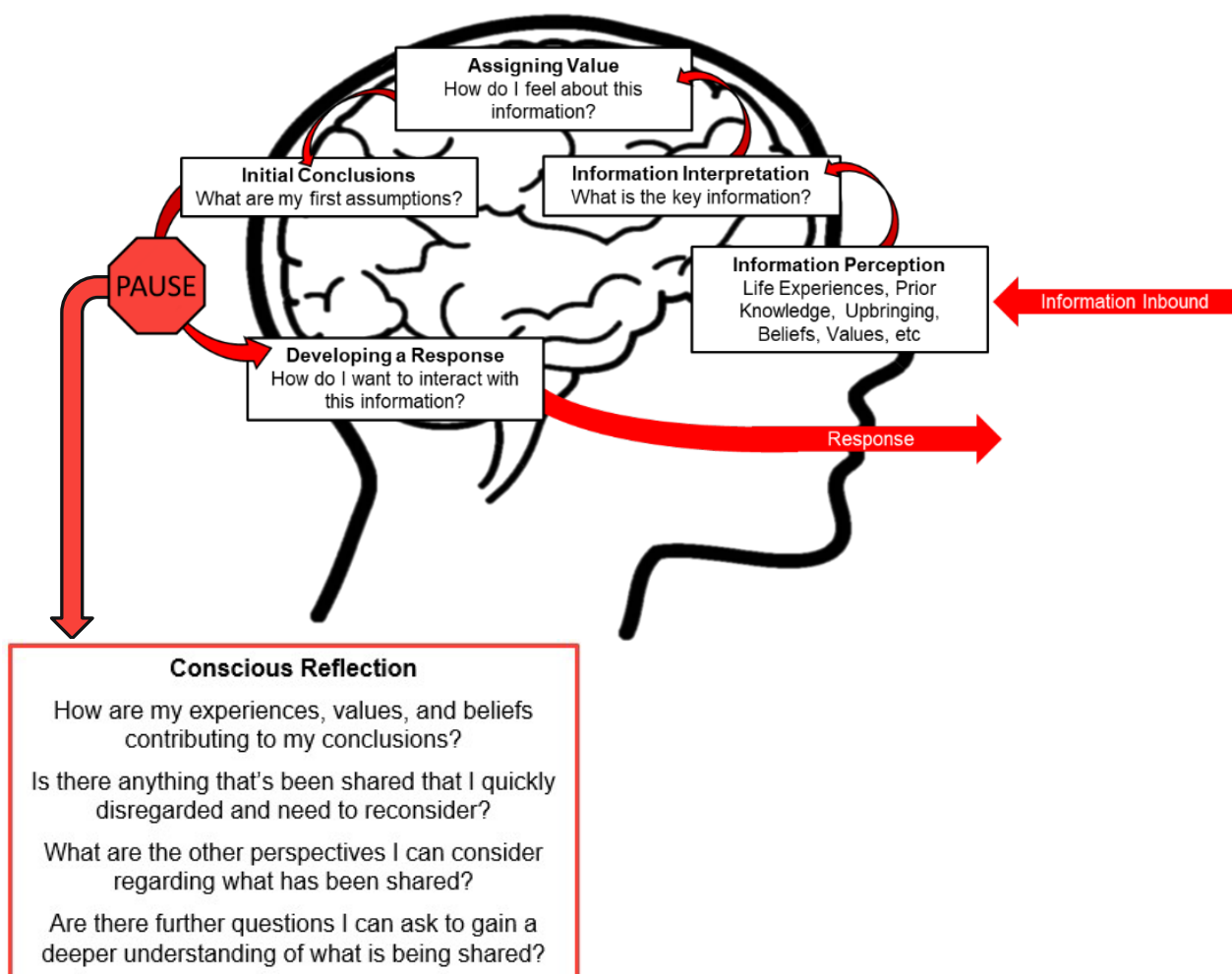


BIAS DEFINITION

“Bias is a natural inclination for or against an idea, object, group, or individual. It is often learned and is highly dependent on variables like a person’s socioeconomic status, race, ethnicity, educational background, etc.” (Psychology Today).

Examining Bias Model

The Examining Bias Model was created by Ethan Hopkins at the Centre for Innovation in Peer Support (2021). It is adapted from: the ladder of inference, initially developed by Chris Argyris and published in Senge, P. M. (1990). The fifth discipline: the art and practice of the learning organization. Doubleday/Currency.



We naturally have biases and ways of understanding information. It is important to be aware of this, and to pause and consciously reflect. By doing so we can ensure our response is one that is not driven by our biases.

EXAMPLE: Someone arrives late at work and tells us “I’m having a really rough day, my kids were late getting ready for school this morning, I didn’t sleep well last night, and the line at Tim Hortons took forever.”	
Stage	Example
Information Perception: Often unconsciously, when we receive information, we filter it through our perceptions (life experiences, prior knowledge, upbringing, beliefs and personal values).	We didn’t sleep well last night either but we got to work on time, punctuality is something we consider to be a core value of ours and we were always taught that it is rude to stop for coffee if you know you’re going to be late.
Interpreting Information: We then interpret this information in accordance with our perceptions, retaining certain elements and disregarding others.	We pick out the lack of sleep and stopping at Tim Horton’s as the “important” parts of the story.
Assign Value: From the elements we have retained we assign a value regarding how we feel about the information.	Not getting enough sleep isn’t a valid excuse, and this person stopping at Tim’s was unnecessary and rude.
Initial Conclusions: These perceptions, interpretations and values make up our initial conclusions and first assumptions.	This person is in the wrong, they should have gone to bed earlier and not have made a stop if they knew they were going to be late
Once we acknowledge our initial conclusions, we can consciously pause and take a moment to reflect and challenge our assumptions.	
Conscious Reflection: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are my experiences, values, and beliefs contributing my conclusions? • Is there anything that’s been shared that I quickly disregarded and need to reconsider? • What are the other perspectives I can consider regarding what has been shared? • Are there further questions I can ask to gain a deeper understanding of what is being shared? 	Reflection Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We feel resentment because we would have benefitted from taking it slower this morning, getting Tim’s and coming in late • We disregarded that this person mentioned their kids being late getting ready for school. • Perhaps they stopped at Tim’s to get their kids breakfast because they were running late. • It’s stressful being a parent sometimes, maybe that’s why they weren’t sleeping well last night. • Is this person’s schedule supportive to their home life? • Is there anything we could do to assist this person in arriving on time?
Developing our Response: At this point we can use our conscious reflections to develop a response that is supportive and challenges any biases we have.	We acknowledge that we need to ask some further questions before getting frustrated and see if there are accommodations we can make to be of support to this person
Conveying Our Response	“Thank you for sharing that with me, I hear that you have a lot going on in the morning. Would it be helpful if we moved your start time back by a half hour so you have more time for your family’s morning routine and you don’t have to rush to work?”

Working Through our Perceptions

Step One – Observe your underlying, default responses

Record your authentic first thought and first feeling in regard to the following experiences, and/or identities of others. These are for your personal reflection only.

Experience & Identities	Thought	Feeling
Substance Use (cannabis, opioids, crack, cocaine, crystal meth etc.)		
Addiction (any substance or activity)		
Psychosis (e.g., hallucinations, delusions)		
Suicidality		
Self-harm		
Grief		
Homelessness		
HIV		
Hoarding		
Trauma		
Mental illness diagnosis (personality disorders, mood disorders, etc)		
Drug use and mental illness occurring together		
Engagement in sex work		
All gender identities		
All sexual orientations		
Living with mice, ticks, fleas, bed bugs		
Religious/spiritual beliefs and practices that are different from yours		
Someone of a race that is different than yours		
Someone with skin colour that is different than yours		
Someone involved with the criminal justice system		
Someone with a history of violence		

Step Two – Contemplating and challenging our perceptions

Choose three of the items you would like to challenge from above.

Why do you think/feel this? (Life experiences, prior knowledge, upbringing, beliefs, values)

1.

2.

3.

What assumptions have you made?

1.

2.

3.

Pause & Reflect

- How are your experiences, values, and beliefs contributing your conclusions?
- Is there anything that's been shared that you quickly disregarded and need to reconsider?
- What are the other perspectives you can consider regarding what has been shared?
- Are there further questions you can ask to gain a deeper understanding of what is being shared?

1.

2.

3.

We encourage you to continue to reflect on how bias appears in your life and work and revisit this model as it serves you.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES TO EXPLORE

Centre for Innovation in Peer Support's

Provincial Systems Virtual Learning Centre & Resource Hub for Peer Supporters & Organizations

Support House's Centre for Innovation in Peer Support's full programming is offered through our Virtual Learning Centre & Resource Hub which supports the most current, best practices in Peer Support.

Through our Virtual Learning Centre, we offer trainings, consultation, our Peer Professional Development Webinar Series, and provincial communities of practice. Our Resource Hub is home to our educational toolkits, documents and videos. These offerings support the practice and implementation of Peer Support within Ontario.

Products on our Resource Hub:

- ***Guiding Standards of Peer Support*** (from Mental Health Commission of Canada, Peer Support Canada & Centre for Innovation in Peer Support)
- ***Peer Support Examining Bias Toolkit***

[CLICK HERE TO VISIT OUR VIRTUAL LEARNING CENTRE & RESOURCE HUB](#)

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References

Psychology Today. Bias. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/ca/basics/bias>.

Senge, P. M. (1990). *The fifth discipline: the art and practice of the learning organization*. Doubleday/Currency.