

Video: Implicit Bias and Self-Regulation

Talking Points

Many people believe they should not react to others based on stereotypes, based on their personal beliefs that people should be treated in fair and egalitarian ways. Nevertheless, these same people sometimes find themselves having stereotypic feelings, thoughts, and behaviors.

Simply making a decision not to rely on stereotypes often does not change our behavior because responses based on stereotypes can occur automatically – that is, without conscious intentions to apply stereotypes, or awareness that one is doing so. In other words, like the breaking of other habits, our reliance on stereotypes can be reduced only if we become aware that they are influencing us, and we exert efforts to inhibit, control and replace our biases.

- Can you identify specific instances in which you have responded based on stereotypes? Do you sometimes make assumptions about people, experience feelings, or engage in behaviors that are influenced by stereotypes?
- Do you sometimes avoid certain people or groups of people so that you don't have to feel uncomfortable or worry about relying on stereotypes? On the flip side, are you sometimes “naturally” drawn to people who seem similar to you on the surface? What consequences follow from these patterns of avoiding certain people and being drawn to others?
- The video suggests that getting to know people who are different from you can help you to overcome stereotypes. Have you ever had this experience?
- According to the video, in what ways can feeling uncomfortable or guilty about your biases be useful to you and others?
- The video suggests that learning not to rely on stereotypes is a process, and that people get better across time with practice and effort. Indeed, research supports this view. We do not have to rely on stereotypes, but we need to put some effort into identifying how stereotypes may influence us and stopping them from doing so. This process of monitoring ourselves to avoid stereotypes and learning to think and react in other ways is called *self-regulation*.

Can you identify specific situations and behaviors that you can monitor so that you can work on self-regulating your biases? Are you personally motivated to put forth this effort, why or why not?

You may be interested in reading “Racial bias, even when we have good intentions” found at: <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/04/upshot/the-measuring-sticks-of-racial-bias-.html? r=0>