

Workshop 02

Understanding allyship, unconscious bias and how to build safe spaces

February 26, 2025

What is an Ally?



“a person or organization that actively supports the rights of a minority or marginalized group without being a member of it” Oxford Languages

- From Latin, meaning bind together. First use in Military context
- *“An ally will mostly engage in activism by standing with an individual or group in a marginalized community.”* (Learning for Justice)
- Level of engagement varies. There are multiple ways of being an ally



Tokenistic Allyship



Allyship is much more about consistency and action than it is about communication



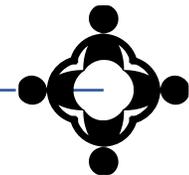
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aligned with company values



Look like a marketing campaign?



People around you walk the talk

What does a good ally look like?



What behaviors should an ally present?
When should they be presented?

- Spread the knowledge!
- Properly learn your interlocutor's name
- Learn the Lingo (basic terms)
- Remember a flag is more than just drapery. It's a war banner
- Learn the history to understand how far we've gone, to keep the present in check, and to take action on how much further we need to go
- Commit to being a myth buster 24/7/365
- Feel bias may be trickling in, take a deep breath and a step back to analyze the situation



Bias in Allyship



Sometimes, you can only be a friend

- Be aware of your limits
- Being a good friend or family member is different than an ally
- Equity-deserving-minorities need friends and family too



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What is Bias?



bi-as (n,v)

Plural: biases

Original use

- STATISTICS (noun):
 - *“A systematic distortion of a statistical result due to a factor not allowed for in its derivation”*
- STATISTICS (verb):
 - *“Distort (a statistical result); introduce bias into (a method of sampling, measurement, analysis, etc.)”*



What is Bias?



bi-as (n,v)

Plural: biases

Most common current use

- SOCIOLOGICAL (noun):
 - *“Prejudice in favor of or against one thing, person, or group compared with another, usually in a way considered to be unfair”* (negative)
 - *“A concentration on or interest in one particular area or subject”* (ambivalent)
- SOCIOLOGICAL (verb):
 - *“Cause to feel or show inclination or prejudice for or against someone or something”* (negative)



What is Bias?



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Uncommon (niche) use

- K-POP (noun):

- *“A person's favorite pop star, pop group, actor, etc., or favorite member of a pop group”*



Be mindful that other uses outside our context exist

What is Bias?



Bias is a human characteristic inherent to current society

- Bias a mechanism in the brain
- It fills in the blanks when information is missing
- Governed by individual experience



Examples of Biases



The non-exhaustive list below provides a few examples of Biases and how they influence our decision-making process

- **Confirmation bias**: Searching for, remembering, and interpreting information in a way that seeks to confirm preconceptions.
- **“Not invented here” bias**: The tendency to dismiss or give less weight to solutions or information that come from outside one’s team or organization.
- **Status Quo bias**: The tendency to try to keep things the way they are.
- **Anchoring bias**: The tendency to rely too heavily on the first piece of information acquired about a subject when making a decision on it.
- **Past-experience blindness**: Instinctively associating patterns and solutions that you have seen in the past with new problems and decisions.
- **Hero mindset**: The feeling that it is one’s responsibility to make all the decisions in a given situation.
- **Bias to action**: The belief that leaders who act quickly are the most effective.

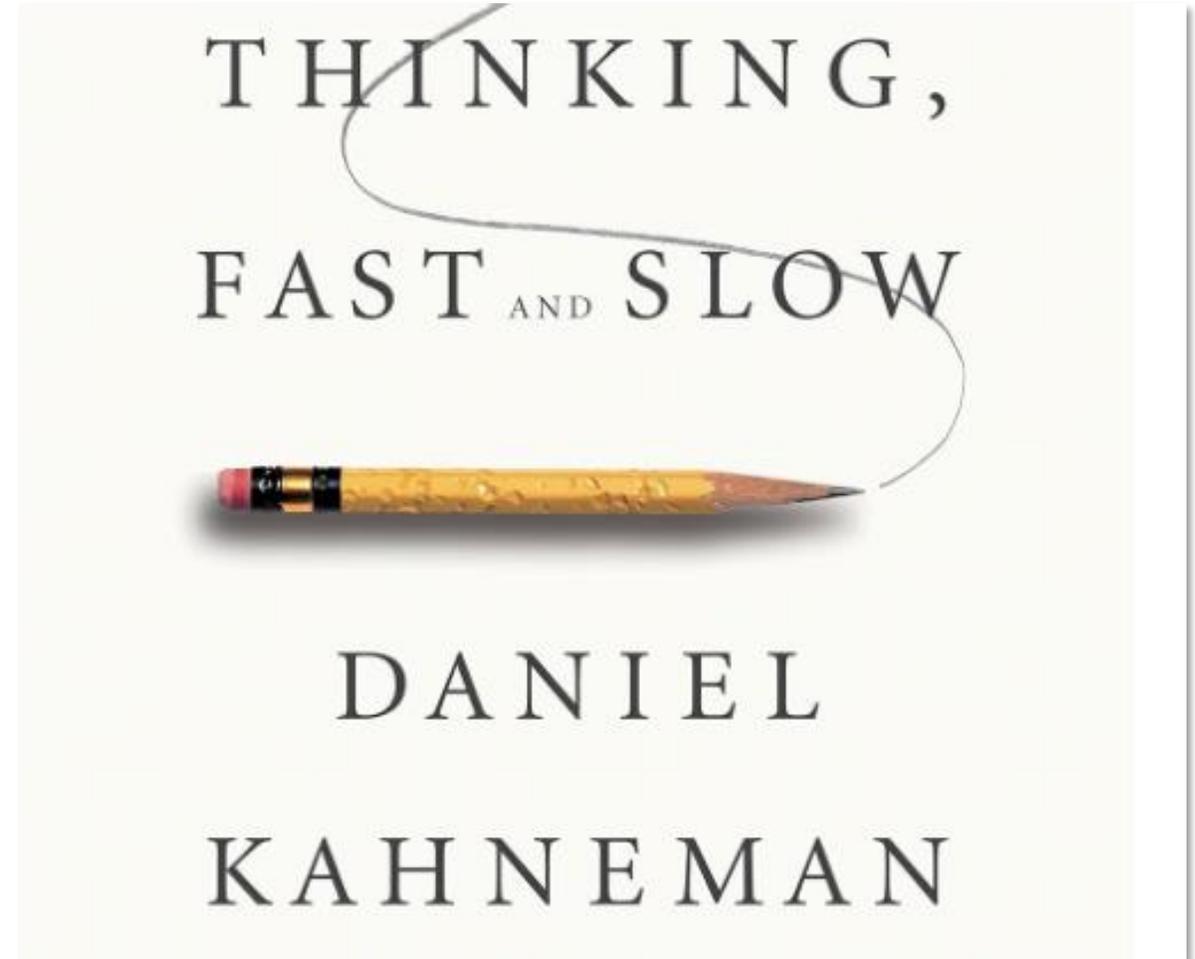
Often used in political discourse

How does Bias originate?



Fast Thinking and Slow Thinking Mechanisms in action

- The human brain possesses 2 decision-making systems: fast thinking (System 1) and slow thinking (System 2)
- **System 1:** pre-set library of decisions the brain quickly accesses
- **System 2:** complex network of neurons that will calculate data in real time
- **Why two systems:** energy efficiency!

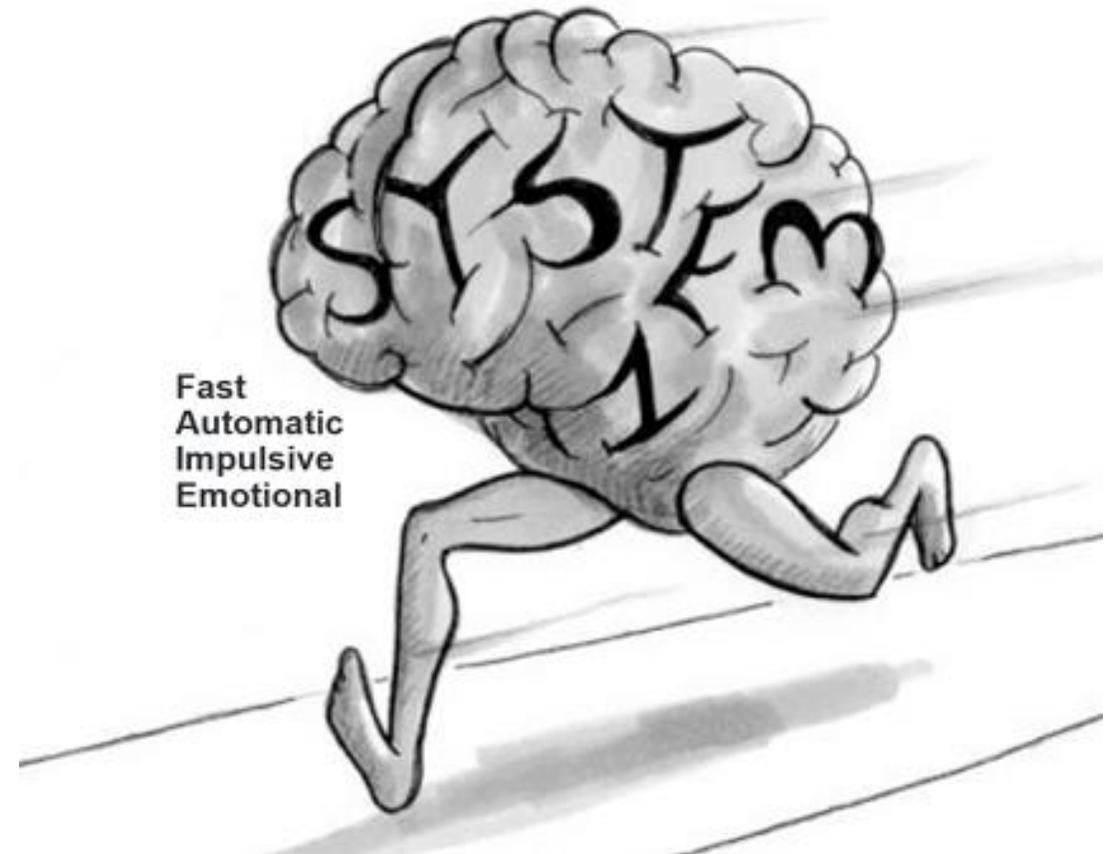


Bias is a byproduct of System 1 functioning properly



Bias is something one brings to light and lives with

- It is not possible to separate bias and System 1 functioning
- Killing System 1 is the only way to stop biases from forming in one's mind
- It's been proven that humans cannot survive without a functioning System 1
- People who claim bias-free are actually unaware of their biases



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How does Bias originate?

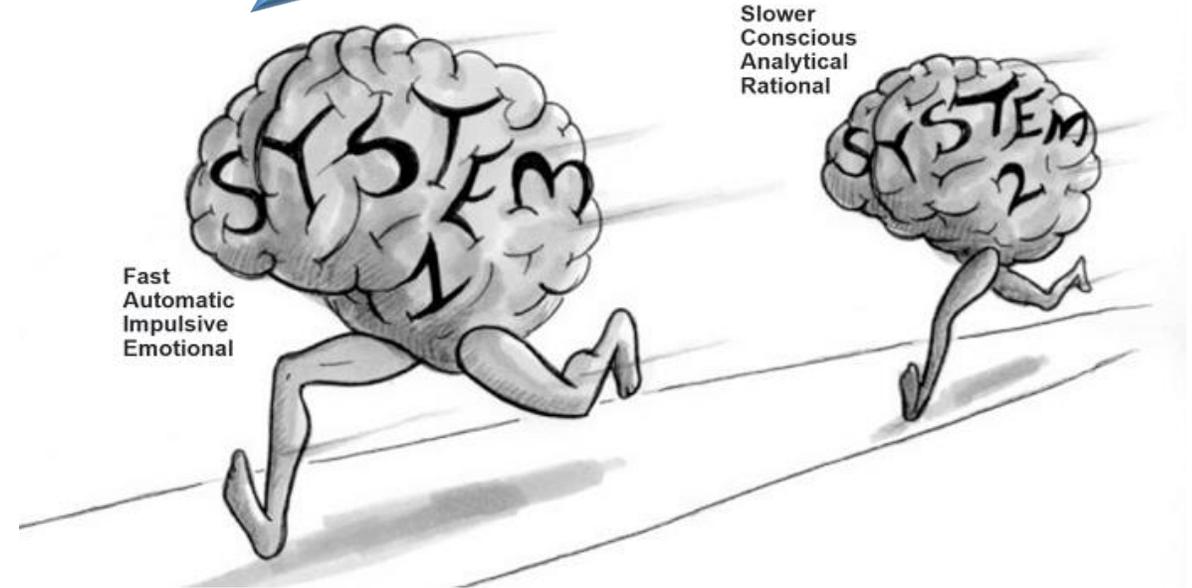


In one word, Exposure!

- Types of exposure: visual, auditory, tactile, lived experience, fiction, stories
- The less exposure one has, the more biases will be created
- Human beings live approx. 100 years. Therefore, biases are inevitable

"We've evolved to often act based on habit, intuition, and instinct – our System 1 way of thinking, without engaging System 2, which involves consciously deciding"

Daniel Kahneman



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When is Bias an issue?



Problems that require greater consideration, such as:

- Strategic business decisions
- Complications of the VUCA environment
*Volatile; **U**ncertain; **C**omplex; **A**mbiguous*
- Legislation and rules-creating
- Business decision making



Signs this issue may be negatively influenced by Unconscious bias



When faced with elements below, take a deep breath and a step back to **slow your thinking**

- The problem is re-occurring
- The problem is familiar and has a known history
- Other attempted solutions to the problem have not worked
- Sentences with absolute words

Always, all the time, never, all, none, nobody, everybody, you people, etc.



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How to handle Bias in your day to day?



Stay attuned to your body signs

- Is your body giving you signs to act quickly based on intuition?
- Are you actually in danger?
- Are you in a typical situation negatively influenced by unconscious bias?



How to handle Bias in your day to day?



Engage System 2

- Delay your response
 - Take a deep breath
 - Call for a break
 - Walk to the washroom and come back
- Stick to the facts, avoiding generalizations
- If bias has been identified after the fact, apologize, correct course, and move on



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Dictionary Definition of Safe Space



Safe Space (n)

- *“a place or environment in which a person or category of people can feel confident that they will not be exposed to discrimination, criticism, harassment, or any other emotional or physical harm”*
- Oxford Dictionary



What is the cornerstone component of a Safe Space?



Alternative Definition of Safe Space



Safe spaces are where participants can be vulnerable

“Vulnerability is the emotion one experiences during times of uncertainty, risk, and emotional exposure”

“Vulnerability is [...] having the courage to show up when you can’t control the outcome”

Brené Brown, *Dare to Lead*, Random House, New York, 2018



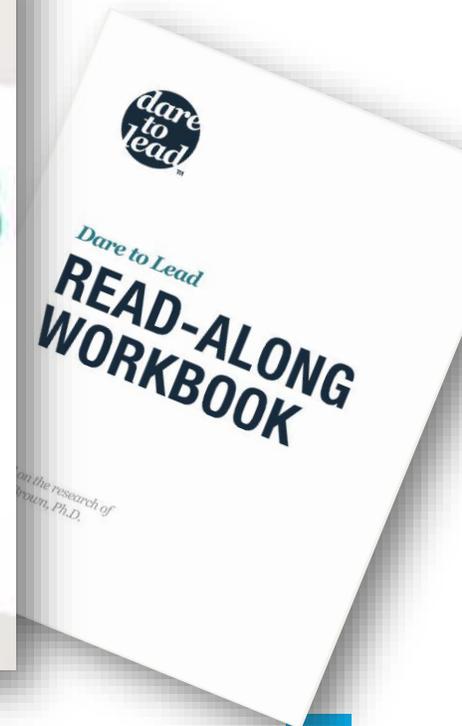
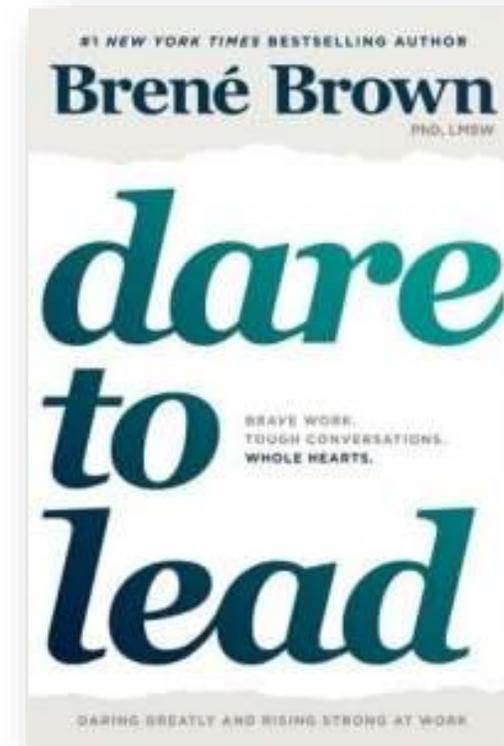
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For Further Reference



Through daring leadership, you'll be able to create safe spaces in your workplace. Change starts with yourself

- Redefine good leadership
- Key behaviors of good leaders:
 - Recognize Potential
 - Take Responsibility
 - **Vulnerability**
 - Courage
 - Honesty



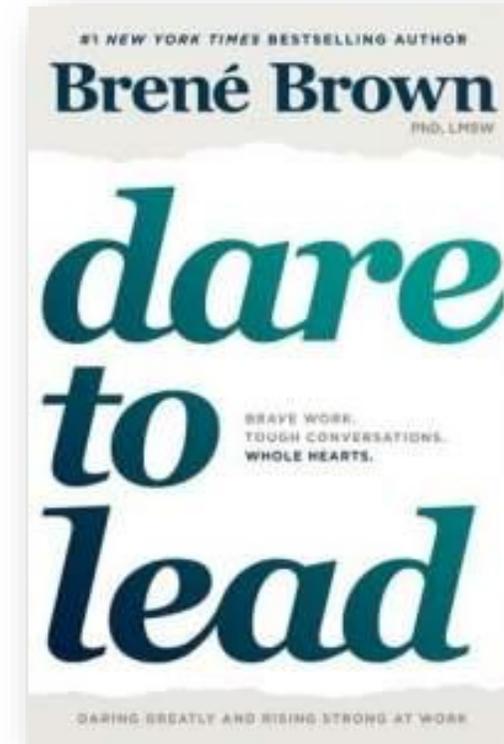
Step 01 to establishing trust in the workplace



The BRAVING Inventory, rumble tool providing a systematic approach to internalizing knowledge into your bones

Acronym:

- **B**oundaries
- **R**eliability
- **A**ccountability
- **V**ault
- **I**ntegrity
- **N**on-judgment
- **G**enerosity



The BRAVING Inventory Explained



“A conversation guide to use with colleagues that walks us through the conversation from a place of curiosity, learning, and ultimately trust Building”, Brené Brown



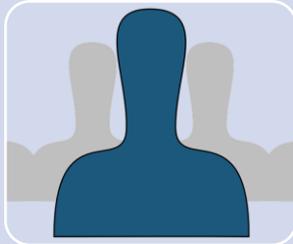
Boundaries

You respect my boundaries, you check in when it's not clear, you're willing to say no



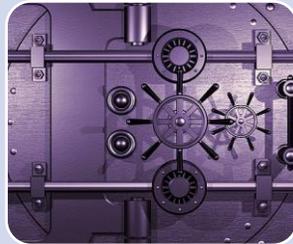
Reliability

You do what you say you will do. Staying aware of your competencies and limitations in order not to overpromise, deliver on commitments and balance competing priorities



Accountability

You own your mistakes, apologize, and make amends



Vault

You don't share information that is not yours to share



Integrity

You choose What is right over what is fun. You choose to practice your values rather than simply professing them.



Non-judgement

I can talk about how I feel without judgment. I can ask for help without judgment.



Generosity

You assume the best intentions to others' words and actions

Vulnerability Exercise



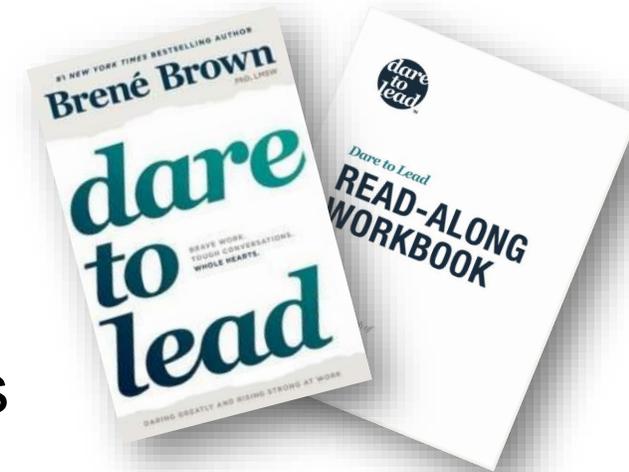
Let's get behavioral!

Operationalizing BRAVING (p. 34)

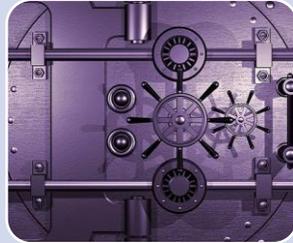
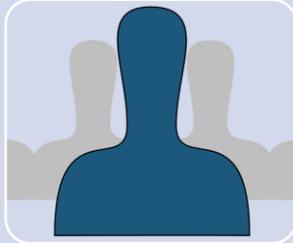
- **Individually:**
 - For each element of trust, write down 1-2 behaviors that support such element in the workplace
- **As a group (of 5 people):**
 - Identify one behavior the entire group is willing to commit to for each element

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The BRAVING Inventory Exercise Sheet



Boundaries

You respect my boundaries, you check in when it's not clear, you're willing to say no

Reliability

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Behavior 01



Behavior 02



Take-away Exercises for you and your team



Directly from the Dare to Lead Workbook

- Container building (p. 5):
 - establish ground rules
- Rumble starters (p. 27):
 - Good technique to reshape your own discourse
- Operationalizing BRAVING (p. 34):
 - Good technique to materialize behaviors to be observed in order to create a safe space
- Getting hooked (p. 35):
 - Good exercise to spread awareness of self and triggers being actioned
- Off-loading strategies (p. 36)
 - Good exercise for homework to help people understand what it feels like to be on the receiving end of such emotional charge
- The reckoning, the rumble, and the revolution (p.38)
 - Good homework exercise to give people as a template for examining a past event and generating lessons learned to initiate change in future events

