PERCEPTION STRATEGIES
Assess. Analyze. Act.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REALTORS®

BIAS OVERRIDE

Overcoming Barriers to Fair Housing



Developed for the National Association of REALTORS®

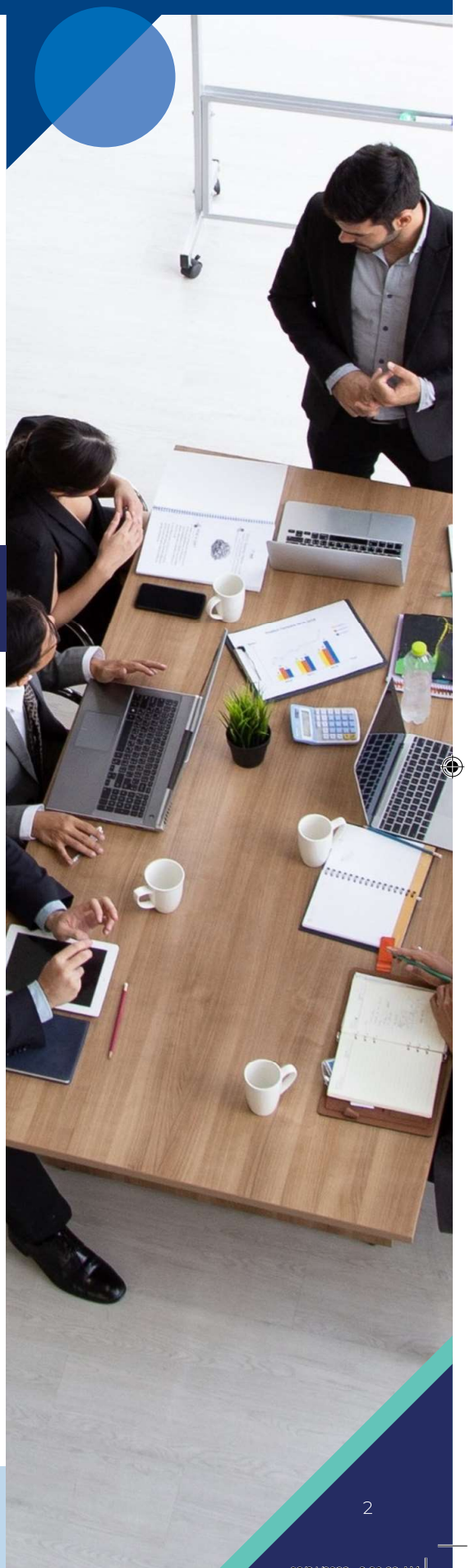
Version 1.0

National Association of REALTORS (Participant Take Home Guide)-023-03_Print.indd 1 03/31/2022 8:36:21 AM

Mind Science in Action Take-Home Guide

Now that you are familiar with the Mind Science of Bias, the Perception Institute offers you this series of Mini Learning Modules (MLMs) to help you continue living your values. This guide will help translate the science of bias into daily personal and professional interventions. Learn to enhance your perception of others while improving your communication skills and relationships.

The goal here is to improve interpersonal interactions and build a world where everyone feels they belong.



Mini Learning Module (MLM) Outline

01 **Welcome to Belonging in the 21st Century**

02 **Our Brains on Difference**

A. Implicit Bias

B. Identity Anxiety

C. Stereotype Threat

03 **Fair Housing, Bias, and Challenges to Bias Override**

National Association of REALTORS (Participant Take Home Guide)-023-03_Print.indd 2 03/31/2022 8:36:22 AM

01 Welcome to Belonging in the 21st Century

At Perception, we believe our foundational principles are the building blocks of belonging:

BELONGING – Create an environment where each person can freely be themselves

RESPECT – Value the rich insights and ideas each person has to share

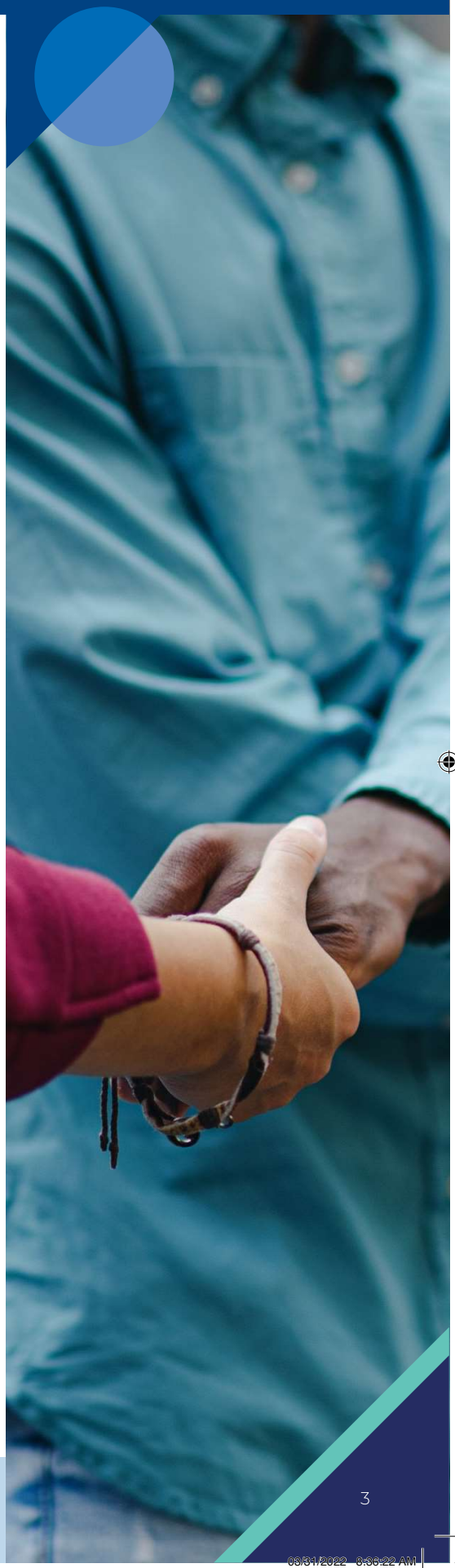
INVESTMENT – Nurture a person's specific goals and aspirations

CONVERSATION – Engage challenging topics, such as identity dynamics, as they arise

KINDNESS – Practice authentic listening, regard, and warmth for person

Some might ask, why are these identity differences still worth talking about? Can't we just move on?

For people to thrive, they need to feel they belong. Everyone (if we are being honest) has felt like an outcast at some point in our lives. Take a few moments to consider how the different social identity groups of people (race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation) affect the way they experience belonging.



National Association of REALTORS (Participant Take Home Guide)-023-03_Print.indd 3 03/31/2022 8:36:22 AM

Now answer the following questions true or false:

	Statement	Circle One	
1.	I regularly see my identity group represented in movies and/or television shows.	True	False
2.	In most work meetings, I share the same identity group with everyone else.	True	False
3.	I have never been asked, "Where are you really from?"	True	False
4.	I do not have to work hard to "fit in" in my workplace.	True	False
5.	I've never had to change how I communicate (either dialed up or down) to avoid playing into stereotypes.	True	False
6.	I can go to work with my natural hair without any comments from others.	True	False
7.	I've never harbored fear for external events in the workplace.	True	False
8.	My identity does not impact my ability to build rapport with colleagues.	True	False
9.	I assume that I am respected be my colleagues.	True	False
10.	I can confidently eat food that is part of my cultural identity without commentary from others.	True	False
11.	If I make a mistake, I feel comfortable that it won't be attributed to or representative of my identity group.	True	False
12.	As an adult, I've never been told I'm "articulate."	True	False
13.	I can hail a cab at night.	True	False
14.	I can take public transportation without being perceived as a threat.	True	False
15.	I am comfortable sharing out-of-the-box ideas at work.	True	False
16.	When reading the news, I don't worry about stories related to my identity group that will impact other people's perception of me.	True	False
17.	My contributions are acknowledged and valued in meetings.	True	False
18.	How I look and speak does not impact perceptions of my competence.	True	False
19.	I have ample role models in my work whom I share similar identities with.	True	False
20.	Regarding work feedback, I have never questioned if my identity played a role.	True	False
21.	I don't worry about how my colleagues will respond when I talk about current events.	True	False
22.	Throughout my career, people offered informal feedback and guidance.	True	False
23.	I have attended an event linked to race and ethnicity in the past six months.	True	False
24.	I do not worry if my identity impacts my relationship with supervisor/people I supervise.	True	False

National Association of REALTORS (Participant Take Home Guide)-023-03_Print.indd 4 03/31/2022 8:36:23 AM

Your social identities, as well as where you live and work, most likely influenced your answers. If you compare notes with a classmate who has different identities, you'll find that you answered very differently. Consider the following reactions from people who previously engaged in that exercise:

"You start to realize where I am in my career and age how little I've really had to worry or even think about different things regarding my identity. Many of these questions that I answered true to, you realize many of them don't even dawn on me. They don't come to mind, and I've never really had to think about it. Reading it you realize wow; how lucky and advantaged I've been. It's easy to take your identity for granted. It took looking at the questions and reflecting how this is unique to me and there are many people who would not be answering true as often as I am."

- White Male Senior Leader

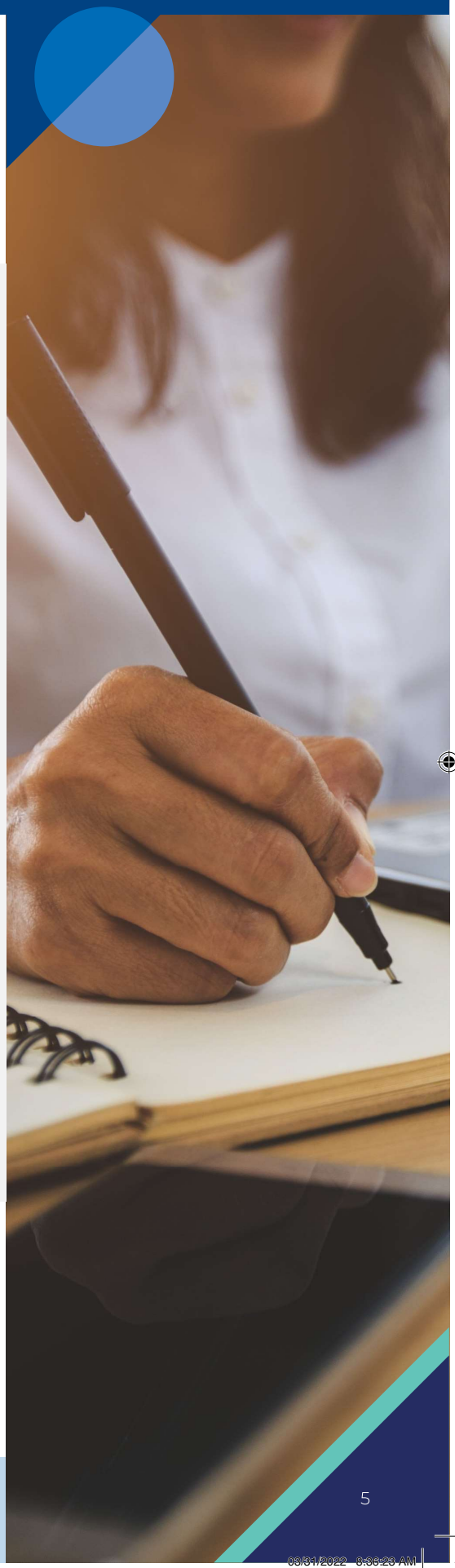
"It brought me back to that place where I really had to alter my behavior, my hair, my communication style. It brought me back to thinking about all those times where I felt overlooked, ignored, and disrespected."

- Black/African-American Female Manager

"It really reminded me of how infrequently I see members of my specific identity group in the media and how few role models there are in my line of work."

-Senior Leader Black/African-American Male

The statements in the exercise involve interactions people have both outside and inside of the workplace. They have a structural underpinning – where people live, their access to resources and amenities, and who they interact with most regularly.



National Association of REALTORS (Participant Take Home Guide)-023-03_Print.indd 5 03/31/2022 8:36:23 AM

Discussion Questions

- What does belonging mean to you and why is it important?
- How is kindness expressed in supportive ways?

This might all seem straightforward and obvious to practice. Yet social sciences suggest it is sometimes more challenging than it seems because of how identity differences may create obstacles.

Identity, Connection & Belonging

Consider your own racial and ethnic identities. Remember the "Who's in Your Network?" exercise, reproduced below. Take a moment to consider your answers again.

Most people in the United States have personal circles that are mainly people of their own race or ethnicity. For some, the workplace provides more opportunities to engage with people from other identity groups. However, work is also often where hierarchies emerge--and those in positions of power are more likely to be White. In future modules, we will discuss why this is the case – when many of us want to be connected to different people across race and ethnicity.

Who's in Your Circle?

Fill in the Blanks

_____ Race
_____ Ethnicity
_____ Language
_____ Gender Identity
_____ Sexual Identity/Presentation
_____ Religious Affiliation
_____ Ability/Different Ability

01 I am...

02 My elementary school was mostly...

03 My college was mostly...

04 Most people at the last wedding/union I attended were...

05 Most close friends are...

06 People in my home are...

07 My team is mostly...

08 The people I socialize with at work are mostly...

09 My last 3 mentors were...

10 My last 3 mentees were...

11 Role models in my field are...

Personal Reflection

Within your personal connections, did you grow up connected to people from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds? What about now? Thinking about identity will mean different things to each person. Some of you may already think about it every day – others almost never.

National Association of REALTORS (Participant Take Home Guide)-023-03_Print.indd 6 03/31/2022 8:36:21 AM

02 Our Brains on Difference

Let's go further into the Mind Science of Bias:

A. IMPLICIT BIAS

This refers to the process of associating stereotypes or attitudes toward categories of people without conscious awareness. Everyone has some sort of implicit bias.

- **Implicit –** A thought or feeling that we are unaware of or mistaken about.
- **Bias –** A preference or aversion toward a person/category of person
- **Stereotype –** A specific trait associated with a category of people.
- **Attitude –** Indications whether we like or dislike a category of people.

Many people are skeptical about discussing implicit bias. They believe explicit bias -- racism, misogyny, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, violence against transgender or gender non-conforming people – to be of greater concern. Data[1] shows that hate crimes have been increasing over the last few years, despite that the majority[2] of people think that racial and ethnic diversity is very good for the country. Does rejecting explicit bias mean we can be confident that social identities have no effect on how we treat people?

The clear answer is no. Research overwhelmingly supports that people's social identities do matter and that we are most at risk of treating people unfairly if we ignore this fact.



1 https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2019/08/14/trump-and-racism-what-do-the-data-say/

2 https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2019/05/08/americans-see-advantages-and-challenges-in-countrys-growing-racial-and-ethnic-diversity/

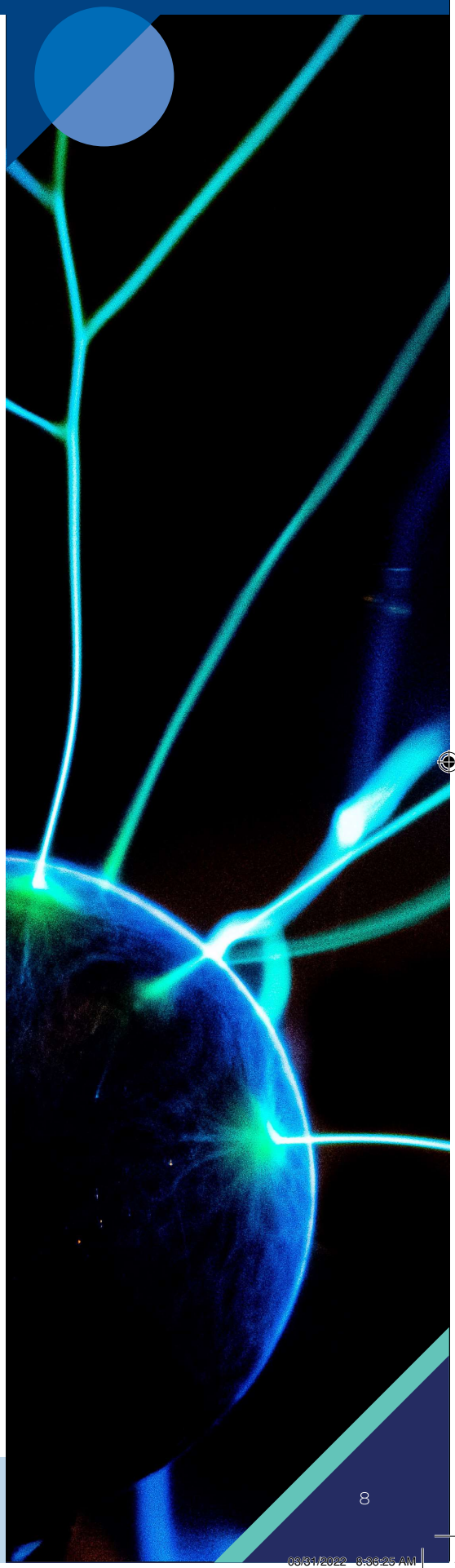
What is Implicit Bias Again?

Our brains use shortcuts to quickly make judgments without conscious thought. These mental "heuristics"[1] help our unconscious minds take in and process around 11 million bits[2] of information per second. (In contrast, our conscious minds only process around 40 or 50.)

These split-second mental tricks can lead to problems, however. Implicit bias is the brain's automatic association of stereotypes or negative attitudes towards groups of people. This happens often without our conscious awareness. These stereotypes, embedded in our brains through history and culture, can affect how we interact with people who are different from us.

While most Americans believe in equality and reject discrimination, biases can influence us to counteract our most deeply held values. Without even knowing it, we may treat others unfairly and affect our relationships and reputations.

Implicit biases often more accurately predict what we will do more than our own personal views. While everyone has some sort of implicit biases, implicit racial biases are both more widespread and potentially harmful.



Discussion Questions

- Do you think you ever make automatic assumptions or judgments about other people? What are they?
- Do you think other people make automatic assumptions or judgments about you?

1 https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/heuristics

2 https://www.britannica.com/science/information-theory/Physiology

National Association of REALTORS (Participant Take Home Guide)-023-03_Print.indd 8 03/31/2022 8:36:23 AM

B. IDENTITY ANXIETY

Identity Anxiety is linked to cross-group interactions. Out-group members may fear they will experience discrimination, hostile treatment, or invalidation. Meanwhile in-group members may fear their words or actions will be perceived as biased.

- These concerns are often supported by past experiences in similar settings.
- Claiming to "not see color" is to disregard of a key part of people's identities. Apart from gender and age, Americans primarily use race for judging how they will engage with people.

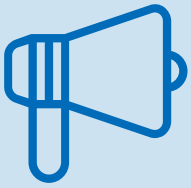
A bias is having a preference in favor or against one group over another. Being biased in favor of the "in-group" can be harmful and is more common than blatant hostility toward the "out-group". Consider how mistakes are handled. If a person from the in-group is late it's because of traffic delays. But if a person from the out-group is late, then it's due to time management issues. These situations are called "attribution errors" and they can have major effects on how businesses treat clients or how employers see employees.



Personal Reflection

As we close this module, we invite you to take a few moments to reflect on the following from your own personal experiences:

- Think about a time when you experienced a cross-group dynamic. What was the setting? If you were in the in-group, how did you treat the out-group? If you were in the out-group, how did that feel? Did this experience impact you in any way? If you were in the in-group, reflect on how it feels to recognize that retrospectively.
- Name a time when you experienced bias. Were you on the receiving end of bias or were you made aware that you held a bias against someone else? How has that moment impacted you?



Connections/Call to Action

It may be uncomfortable to accept, but every person has implicit biases—even for groups we are part of. The unconscious is social, not personal, and we all live in a culture that creates stereotypes.

National Association of REALTORS (Participant Take Home Guide)-023-03_Print.indd 9 03/31/2022 8:36:23 AM

In what ways can we think about overriding biases together? We must figure out how our implicit biases may show up and whether they cause harm or give advantages to some over others.

Strategies to Override Bias

- Think about your interactions and who they effect the most. Then take the **Implicit Associations Tests**[1] (IAT) linked to the groups you may meet. The IAT may help you become cognizant of any associations you may not consciously be aware that you hold.
- While it is impossible to get rid of all of our biases, identifying them can help engage in a few evidence-based practices to address and reduce **these biases**.[2]
    - The first recommendation is to "slow down." Process each encounter to understand the difference between being "nice" versus being "kind."
    - Focus on the **impact** of your behavior and language as opposed to your intention.
    - Consider "empathic perspective taking" to put yourself in someone else's experience. Consider how their experiences may differ from yours. Please watch this **video**.[3]
    - Perspective taking helps with **individuation**—asking questions to obtain real information about people, without assumptions based on the group they are in.
    - Try stereotype replacement or counter-stereotypic imaging. If you perceive a group through only negative images from media or culture, actively look for positive images of that group and refer to them often.
    - Create protocols or "guardrails" to ensure every client is given the same treatment.
    - The most powerful and long-lasting way to reduce our bias is to create sustained positive relationships and friendships with people from other groups. Not just at work, but in your personal life and community as well.

What is Racial Anxiety? Talking Back to Colorblindness

One of the key takeaways from the science of implicit bias is that our brains categorize people. Studies show that when people from any culture encounter someone new, they instantly categorize that person based on their age and gender. In America, we also categorize people based on race; in other cultures, religion is a more important category.

Many people continue to assert that "colorblindness" is the way to address the harms linked to race. While it's good to strive for equal treatment, implicit bias research shows that "colorblindness" is not humanly possible. Because our brains naturally see color, we will always attribute characteristics to those colors as a way of processing information.

1 https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/

2 https://perception.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Educating-All-of-Our-Children-Godsil-2020.pdf

3 https://www.nytimes.com/video/opinion/100000004237305/a-conversation-with-latinos-on-race.html?smid=pl-share

National Association of REALTORS (Participant Take Home Guide)-023-03_Print.indd 10 03/31/2022 8:36:25 AM

"Colorblindness" can also be used as an excuse to ignore the injustices, unfairness, and racism in our society. To make real change, we must engage with how these inequalities are linked to race and ethnicity.

Identity **anxiety**[4], depending on past experiences, refers to the worry we feel that our differences will cause interactions to go poorly. For people of color, experiences of bias — explicit and implicit — can lead to anxiety about discrimination, stereotyping, hostility, or invalidation during cross-group interactions. This anxiety induces a physiological reaction like that produced by an actual physical threat, leading to emotional stress, cognitive fatigue, and physical health effects.

White people are often anxious about being perceived as racist or prejudiced. For people in positions of power, this anxiety can diminish their cognitive capacities and reduce their ability to fully engage with others. This can create distance. Any attempt to overcome this anxiety may be seen as either cold or artificially warm, as if they are treating someone from another group differently than they would someone from their own.

When two people interacting are both experiencing anxiety, they both may be in fight-or-flight mode. Interactions like that are unlikely to go well. It can also lead people to avoid cross-group interactions.



Discussion Questions

- How do Implicit Bias and Identity Anxiety challenge colorblindness?
- How can people who consider themselves fair harm others without realizing it?
- What can you directly change that addresses Identity Anxiety?
- Do the proposed strategies feel feasible to implement right now?



Personal Reflection

As we close this module, we invite you to take a few moments to reflect on the following from your own personal experiences:

- How, if at all, were you taught to talk about identity in school? At home?
- What were you taught about colorblindness?
- Do moments of identity anxiety come up for you?

4 https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/sound-science-sound-policy/201501/the-cognitive-traps-can-harm-intergroup-relations

National Association of REALTORS (Participant Take Home Guide)-023-03_Print.indd 11 03/31/2022 8:36:26 AM



Connections/Call to Action

When engaging with clients and colleagues across lines of racial difference, it's helpful to understand that each of you may be experiencing anxiety. Racial anxiety can be very distracting against important tasks.

In interpersonal situations, we believe that those with dominant group identities should do more "racial navigation" to help take the burden away from people of color. In the past, many White people likely did not pay attention to their own racial identity and were not consciously aware of how they are perceived in cross-group interactions. Knowing that these interactions can create anxiety, those with power must take the steps to engage respectfully and authentically with the other person's perspectives.

C. STEREOTYPE THREAT

What Happens When You Feel Seen Through a Lens of Stereotype?

Most of us can reflect on how aspects of our social identity – religion, race, ethnicity, gender – are important to how we see ourselves. That identity may be a source of strength or pride. But even with that pride, we know the negative stereotypes that exist about our own groups. As shown in this video, we learn about these stereotypes at a young age. So, while we are categorizing others, they are also categorizing us. We want to focus on how that knowledge effects each of us.

The author, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, once stated,

"The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story."

As this quote describes, stereotypes can be most damaging between members of groups who don't regularly interact on a personal level. However, deeply negative stereotypes are not just a result of distance – they have also been used to justify inequality. These stereotypes will shift depending on who has power and who is being excluded.

Negative stereotypes about groups that we are part of can also create a worry that our behavior will confirm these stereotypes. This feeling has been named "stereotype threat." This video[1] explains the phenomenon identified by Claude Steele[2] and other social psychologists over the last two decades.

1 https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=C6xSyRJqIe8

2 http://steele.socialpsychology.org/

National Association of REALTORS (Participant Take Home Guide)-023-03_Print.indd 12 03/31/2022 8:36:26 AM

While stereotype threat tends to be most harmful for those in groups that face many stereotypes regularly, it is situation-specific. It is only triggered if something within the environment makes a person feel their identity is stigmatized or that another group seems stronger because of their identity. This means that, in some contexts, stereotype threat can affect those in generally "dominant" groups. A study[1] found that White male math majors underperformed taking a test when they thought their scores were being compared to Asian math majors.

Stereotype threat is not inevitable. Not surprisingly, when people feel a sense of belonging and value, stereotype threat becomes less of an issue. To see members of our group exercising authority can also mitigate stereotype threat in certain domains.

Being in a position of power, our actions can either trigger or prevent stereotype threat. What matters? We must show that each person is valued as a unique individual, without assumptions based on stereotypes. A greater challenge is to prevent actions that suggest some groups are favored. Who is given opportunities? It's important to avoid patterns depending on people's identity group.



Discussion Questions

1. Where can we see stereotype threat?
2. Even if the environment is an empty house, how might someone experience a threat to their identity? What community factors might play a role in this?
3. What role can you play in welcoming someone into an environment?



Personal Reflection

1. In what ways can you begin the work to override bias?
2. What interventions work best for responding to Identity Anxiety in the moment?
3. How can we best address discomfort around challenging topics?
4. What tools will you now use to combat discomfort and/or tension between individuals?

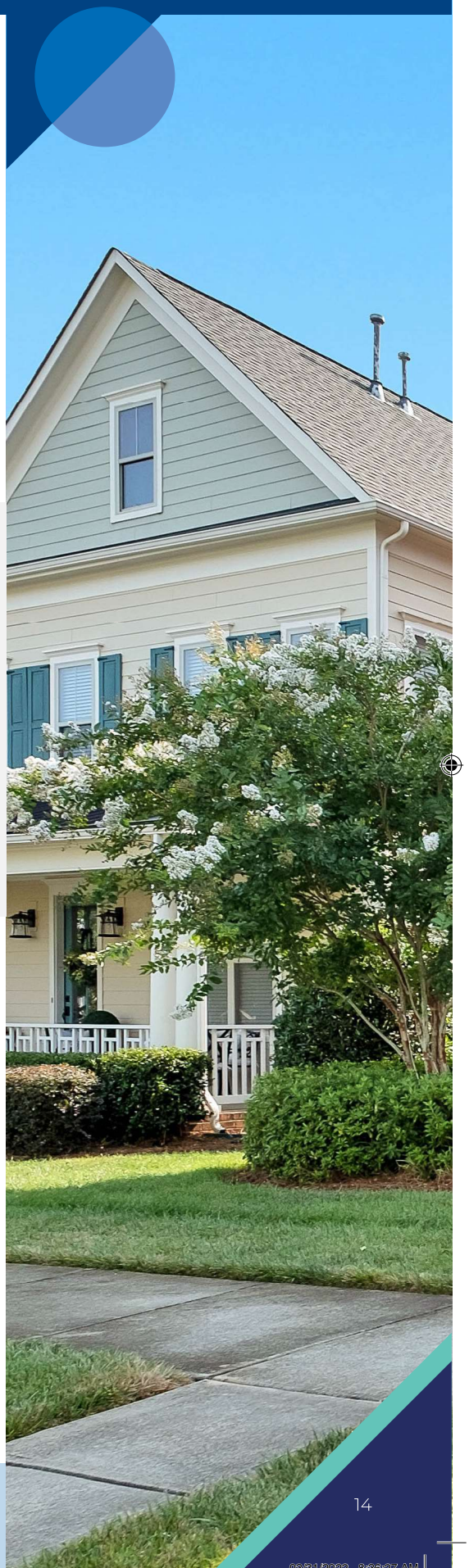
1 https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0022103198913713

National Association of REALTORS (Participant Take Home Guide)-023-03_Print.indd 13 03/31/2022 8:36:26 AM

05 Fair Housing, Bias and Challenges to Bias Override

All REALTORS® know that discrimination is wrong. It violates the Fair Housing Act and the REALTOR® Code of Ethics. All clients must be treated fairly. It's simply good for business. So, what's the challenge? Why should it be difficult? This is what the science behind implicit bias helps us understand. Understanding how implicit biases can result in violations is the critical first step to interrupting the behavior and ensuring that you are acting both fairly and ethically.

> *"You might feel more comfortable in a demographic area that isn't one way or another in terms of people."*
>
> *"What I say is always to women, follow the school bus. You know, that's what I always say. Follow the school bus, see the moms that are hanging out on the corners."*
>
> *- Quotes from real estate agents in the hidden camera Newsday investigation*[1]



Why did the agent treat the two otherwise identical homebuyers differently? How does a person feel about being told they might be more comfortable somewhere else? Why do comments like this get in the way of fair housing? How do we figure out how to get it right without being nervous all the time?

As real estate professionals, your work occurs in a context -- not a blank slate. There is a host of structural inequities within our neighborhoods and housing market that have been at play across decades. These inequalities effect the lives of real estate agents and their communities.

1 https://projects.newsday.com/long-island/real-estate-agents-investigation/#open-paywall-message

National Association of REALTORS (Participant Take Home Guide)-023-03_Print.indd 14 03/31/2022 8:36:27 AM

"You know, but like usually coming from – from the west, some of these towns, in my opinion, are not necessarily the greatest in terms of school districts, safety, you know crime, resale.... Some of them are not as nice.... You know, maybe not as nice in terms of statistics."

- Quote from a real estate agent in the Newsday investigation[1]

Steering is a biased practice where an agent influences a buyer's choice of community based on one of the prohibited characteristics under the Fair Housing Act: race, color, religion, gender, disability, familial status, or national origin.

Steering can occur when an agent hears a client say they want a "nice" or "good" neighborhood. The implicit assumption here is that a White family only considers predominantly White neighborhoods as "good". The agent ends up not showcasing homes in racially and ethnically diverse neighborhoods.

On the flip side, that same agent will share the homes in diverse neighborhoods with their Black or Hispanic clients, assuming that the clients may not feel comfortable within the predominantly White neighborhoods.

Based upon what? Often it is the agent's *implicit* assumptions: that people want to be in neighborhoods with people of their same race or ethnicity. The agent doesn't consciously intend to treat anyone unfairly or to discriminate. But the effect is the same.

Once you understand that implicit biases can lead to violations, then you can take steps to make sure you override these biases.

Bias Override Tools

01 Humility

02 Slow down

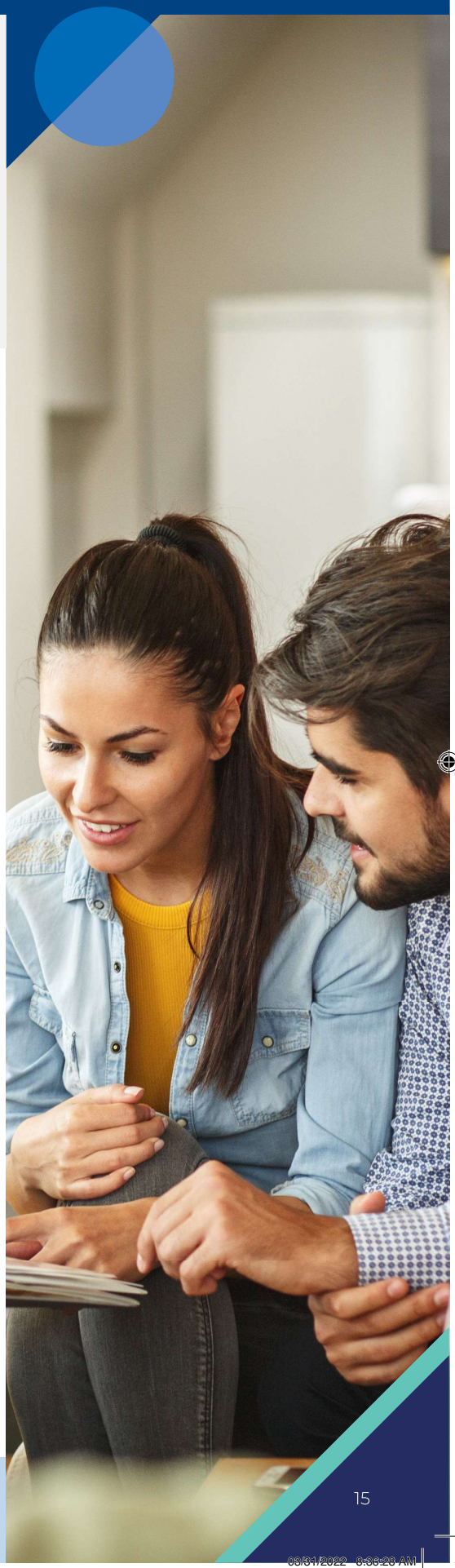
03 Cross group/counter stereotypes exposure

04 Self-assessment
What can do differently?

05 K.N.O.W

06 R.E.S.E.T

1 https://projects.newsday.com/long-island/real-estate-agents-investigation/#open-paywall-message



National Association of REALTORS (Participant Take Home Guide)-023-03_Print.indd 15 03/31/2022 8:36:28 AM

Avoid Unnecessary Errors

Know names / pronunciation of names

No identity presumptions

Open conversations

Widen your circle

Reset Conversation

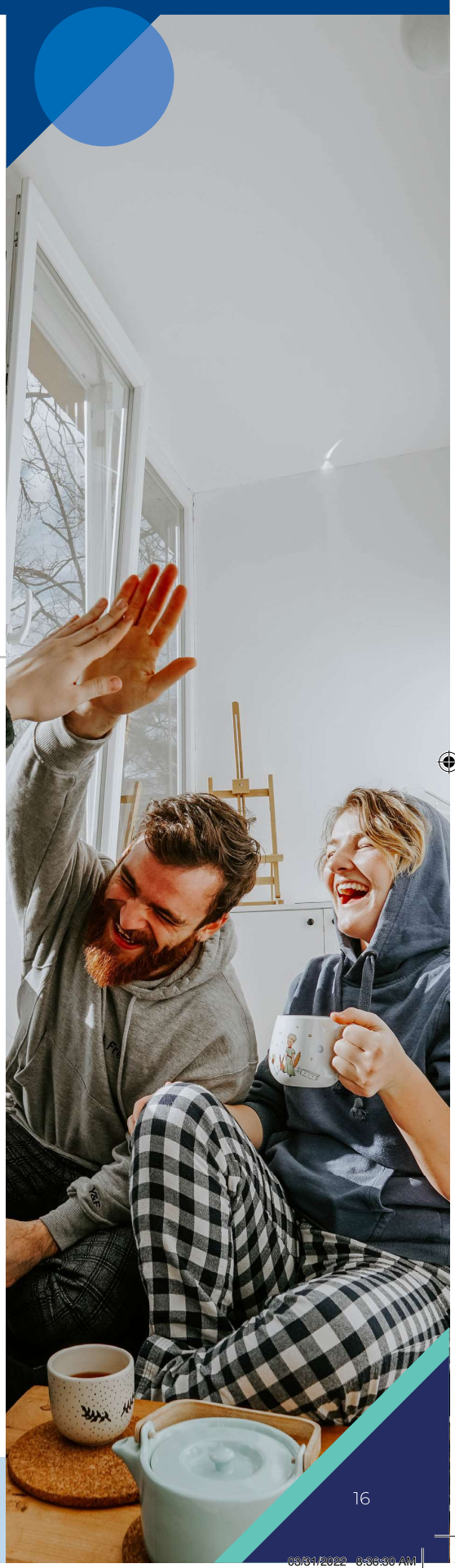
Refocus from embarrassment

Emphasize apology

Skip self-justification

Explore accountability

Thank you



National Association of REALTORS (Participant Take Home Guide)-023-03_Print.indd 16 03/31/2022 8:36:30 AM

Practice Tips



Use standardized procedures



Allow the client to set the limits in the housing search



Reference objective information from third-party sources



Offer a variety of choices and options



Discussion Questions

- Have you encountered steering in your real estate practice?
- Are there ways you might think differently about which clients belong where?
- What tools will you use and share with others as we create spaces where all belong?



Personal Reflection

1. In what ways can you begin the work to override bias?
2. What interventions work best for responding to Identity Anxiety in the moment?
3. How can we best address discomfort around challenging topics?
4. What tools will you now use to combat discomfort and/or tension between individuals?

National Association of REALTORS (Participant Take Home Guide)-023-03_Print.indd 17 03/31/2022 8:36:30 AM

Resources

MLM 1 Materials:

- john a. powell, "Creating the Conditions for Belonging and Breathing in a Toxic Environment" [video[1]]
- Godsil, Tropp, Goff, powell, MacFarlane, Science of Equality, Volume 2: The Effects of Gender Roles, Implicit Bias, and Stereotype Threat on the Lives of Women and Girls [article[2]]

MLM 2 Materials:

- Pew Research Center, U.S. Hispanic population continued its geographic spread in the 2010s [article[3]]
- Dushaw Hockett, "We All Have Implicit Biases. So What Can We Do About It?" [video[4]]
- Harvard University's Project Implicit [Implicit Association Test[5]]
- The New York Times, "A Conversation with Latinos on Race" [video[6]]

MLM 3 Materials:

- Barathunde Thurston, "How to deconstruct racism, one headline at a time" [video[7]]
- Rachel D. Godsil and Linda R. Tropp, "The Cognitive Traps that Can Harm Intergroup Relations" [article[8]]

Further Reading:

- Introduction to Biased[9] by Dr. Jennifer Eberhardt
- Fair Housing Book recommendations from NAR[10]

---

1 https://www.youtube.com/supported_browsers?next_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DIpxT-8Qodnw&ab_channel=Bioneers

2 https://perception.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Science-of-Equality-Vol-2.pdf

3 https://www.pewresearch.org/topic/race-ethnicity/

4 https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=kKHSJHkPeLY

5 https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/

6 https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/29/opinion/a-conversation-with-latinos-on-race.html

7 https://www.ted.com/talks/baratunde_thurston_how_to_deconstruct_racism_one_headline_at_a_time?language=en

8 https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/sound-science-sound-policy/201501/the-cognitive-traps-can-harm-intergroup-relations

9 https://www.youtube.com/supported_browsers?next_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DpD5a3-v9KZs

10 https://www.nar.realtor/fair-housing/fair-housing-month/fair-housing-book-recommendations



National Association of REALTORS (Participant Take Home Guide)-023-03_Print.indd 18 03/31/2022 8:36:30 AM