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# Mindfulness and bias



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# What is mindfulness?

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Awareness of the present moment without distraction or judgement:

- your own thoughts and feelings
- physical sensations

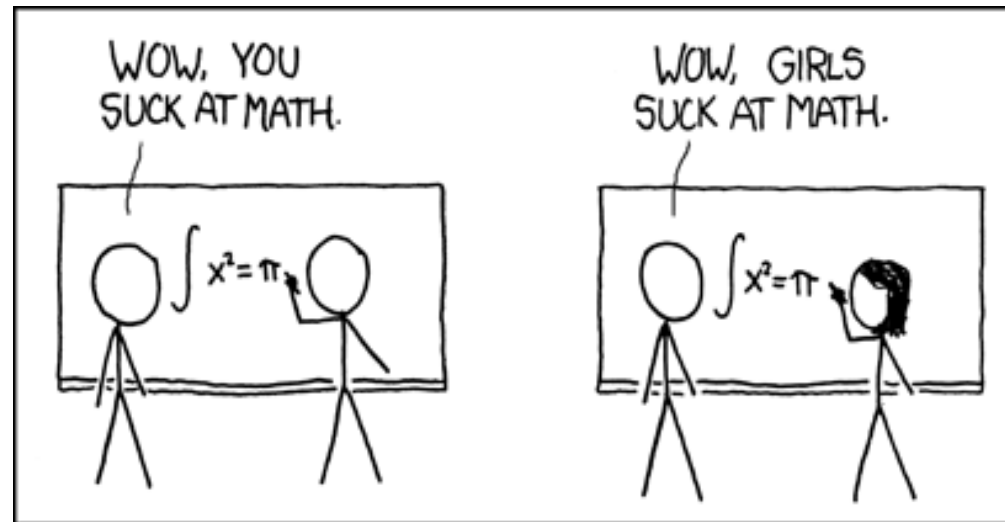
Taking breaks from 'living in your head'

Not operating on autopilot

Mindfulness ≠ meditation

# What is unconscious bias?

- A stereotype about a certain group
- Unconscious and automatic process
- Reflects the associations we learn from the culture we grow up in



XKCD

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Unconscious biases limit people's potential and prevent us from making the best decisions.

# Mindfulness and bias

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- Mindfulness meditation caused a decrease in implicit race and age bias as measured by implicit association tests (Leuke & Gibson, 2014)
  - A follow up study showed white participants who did mindfulness meditation were more likely to trust Black people in a 'trust game'
- Practicing lovingkindness meditation (LKM) reduced bias against homeless people, but discussing the principles of lovingkindness did not (Kang et al, 2014)
  - LKM training made participants five times more likely to offer their seat to a stranger in visible distress than those who had not received LKM training (Condon et al, 2013)
- Mindfulness meditation reduced biased language choices in favour of one's in-group and against one's out-group (Tincher et al, 2015)

# Mindfulness and bias

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- Compassion and non-judgement
- Decreases amygdala reactivity
- Opposite of autopilot

# Using mindfulness to interrupt bias

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- Incorporate regular mindfulness practices
  - Formal: meditation, yoga
  - Informal: notice every time you stand up from your chair, change where you work or the routes you take
- Do 5-10 minute mindfulness session before making important decisions
- Take a short break between tasks and don't multitask

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Any questions?



## Further reading

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- [Mindfulness Meditation Reduces Implicit Age and Race Bias: The Role of Reduced Automaticity of Responding \(Leuke & Gibson, 2014\)](#)
- [The nondiscriminating heart: lovingkindness meditation training decreases implicit intergroup bias \(Kang et al, 2014\)](#)
- [Meditation Increases Compassionate Responses to Suffering \(Condon et al, 2013\)](#)
- [Mindful Attention Reduces Linguistic Intergroup Bias \(Tincher et al, 2015\)](#)
- [Three Ways Mindfulness Can Make You Less Biased](#)
- [Can meditation reduce implicit bias? How mindfulness may be an important step for individual reflection](#)