



MENDING THE CHASM

BUILDING INCLUSIVE CULTURES FROM THE INSIDE OUT.

Building our Capacity to Address Unconscious Bias and Microaggressions

Downtown Stratford BIA

October 24th, 2023

Facilitator: Leena Sharma Seth

Acknowledging the Land

“We acknowledge that Stratford is positioned on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe and the Neutral (Attawandaron) peoples. As we gather, we are reminded that the City of Stratford is situated on treaty land that is steeped in rich Indigenous history and home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples today. We acknowledge that Stratford is situated on land that was shared between the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe and the Neutral (Attawandaron) peoples. We are grateful to have the opportunity to live, work, and play on this land.”

- City of Stratford

Setting the Container



Embodiment Practice



Community Assumptions

The purpose of naming community assumptions in our work together is to make transparent what is often invisible and to ground ourselves in postures that will help us to embody a more equitable, inclusive, and accountable learning, reflection and transformational space.

- Oppression [racism] is systemic and structural, first and foremost, and interpersonal and personal in expression.
- It's all of us versus whatever the problem/oppression is.
- There is no neutral. Every decision and every choice has the potential to include or exclude, or to create deeper connection/disconnection.
- Our roles and responsibilities are different based on our social location.
- Racism, white supremacy and oppression cause trauma.
- Our mutual liberation and well-being are bound together.
- Binaries are bullshit. We recognize that there are a spectrum of responses and solutions, and oftentimes it's an AND, not OR conversation.
- We honour the full complexity and messiness of this work. We accept and expect non-closure.

Community Agreements

- Ask for what you need, offer what you can.
- Listen with curiosity and compassion.
- Our impact is more important than our intent; we move with good intentions and remain committed to repairing any harm we may unintentionally cause.
- We avoid making assumptions about other people, including assumptions about their history, race, or lived experience.
- We are committed to progress over perfection.
- We center lived experience in equity, inclusion and anti-racism work because we recognize it as valuable insight and wisdom.
- We expect conflict and value it as an opportunity to deepen understanding, prioritize relationships, and to build common ground.
- We each work to decenter ourselves and make space for others. Especially if we identify as someone who holds dominant privilege because of our social location. Our roles, our accountability, and our work is informed by our social location.
- This is a no shame no blame space. Our focus is on accountability and how we will intentionally use our power, privilege and platform to build a more equitable and inclusive culture in our community.

Agenda

- Welcome and Land Acknowledgement
- Container Setting: Community Agreements and Assumptions
- Checking In
- What is Bias?
- Circle of Trust Activity
- Unpacking Microaggressions
- Small Group Activity
- Discussion and Debrief
- Questions and Reflections
- Checking out and Close

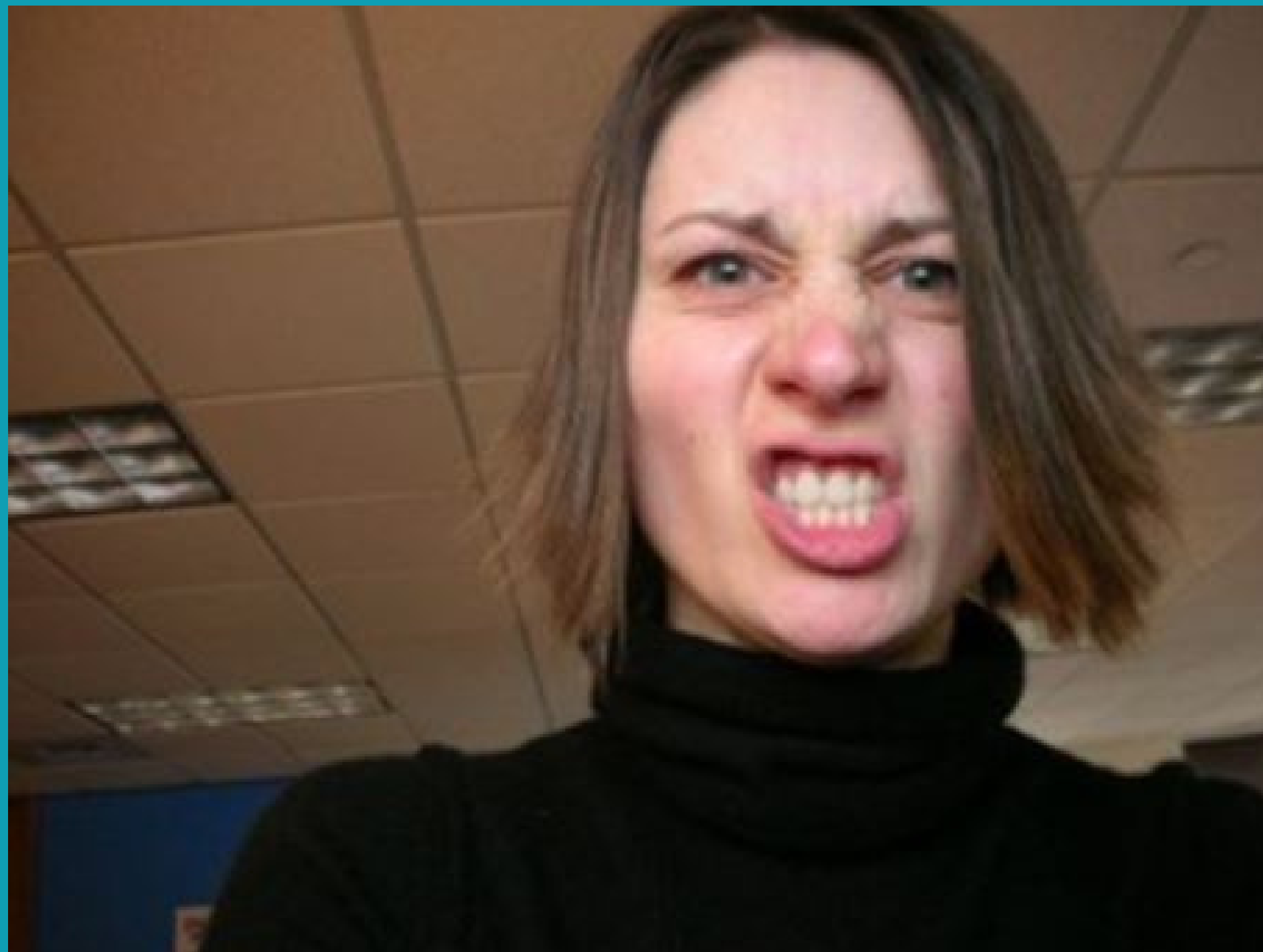
Checking In - Breakout Discussion

What is something you're understanding about the experience of microaggressions that you learned from the pre-session resources?

Discuss in your breakout groups.

What is Bias?

**What is your first thought about this person? (within first three seconds)
Share your immediate impressions in the chat.**



What did you notice? Share your responses in the chat.

Answer the next question in three seconds.

17 x 24

What was your guess for the answer? Share it in the chat.

Answer: 408

Was this your response?

$$17 \times 24$$

Daniel Kahneman has popularised the notion of two systems in the human mind. In his book **Thinking, Fast and Slow (2011)** he describes them as follows:

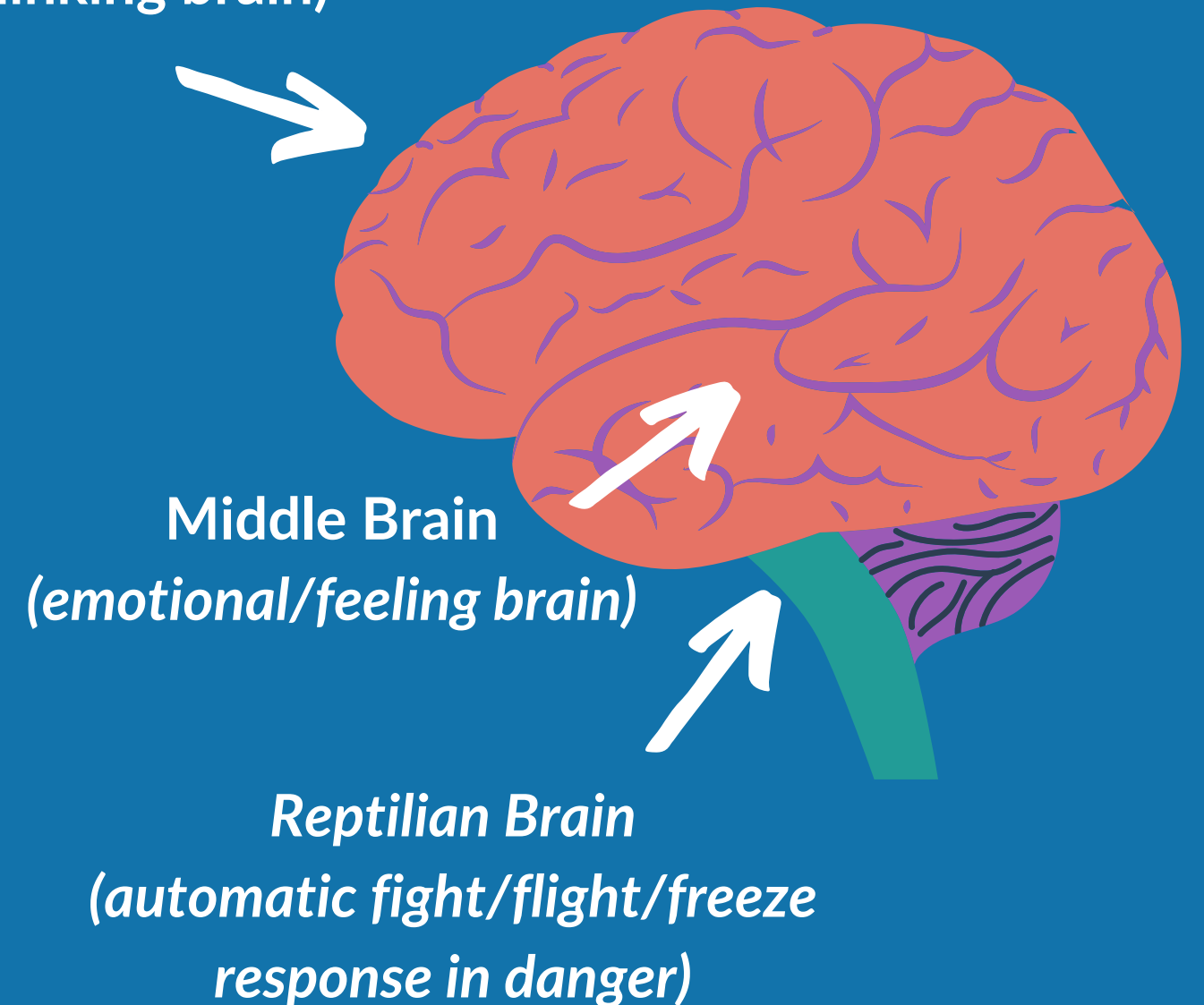
SYSTEM 1 THINKING:

Operates automatically and quickly, with little or no effort, and no sense of voluntary control.
Reptilian brain

SYSTEM 2 THINKING:

Allocates attention to mental activities that demand it (20% of our energy used by the brain), including complex computations. The operations of System 2 are often associated with the subjective experience of agency, choice, and concentration. Middle brain - gut feeling and Neocortex - higher order and abstract thoughts.

Neocortex
(rational thinking brain)



Middle Brain

(emotional/feeling brain)

Reptilian Brain

(automatic fight/flight/freeze response in danger)

Implicit bias or unconscious bias describes the automatic association people make between groups of people and stereotypes about those groups. Under certain conditions, those automatic associations can influence behavior—making people respond in biased ways even when they are not explicitly prejudiced.

Source: Trust and Justice Org.



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Unpacking Implicit Bias

- Implicit bias occurs even when someone consciously rejects stereotypes and supports anti-discrimination efforts and holds negative associations in their mind unconsciously as well as consciously;
- These attitudes and stereotypes can negatively impact our understanding, actions, and decision-making;
- The fact that people may discriminate unintentionally continues to have implications for understanding disparities in so many aspects of society, including but not limited to health care, policing, and education, as well as organizational practices like hiring and promotion;

Sources: Project Implicit and Rachel Godsil, American Values Institute, 2013

Explicit bias refers to the attitudes and beliefs we have about a person or group on a conscious level.

Much of the time, these biases and their expression arise as the direct result of a perceived threat.

When people feel threatened, they are more likely to draw group boundaries to distinguish themselves from others.

Source: Perception Institute



Unpacking Explicit Bias

- Preferences, beliefs, and attitudes of which people are generally consciously aware and can, when willing, identify and communicate to others;
- Explicit bias refers to attitudes and beliefs (positive or negative) that we consciously or deliberately hold and express about a person or group;
- Our explicit and implicit biases can sometimes contradict each other.
- Sources: Dovidio and Gaertner, 2010 and [Facing History](#).

Different Types of Bias



Bandwagon Effect

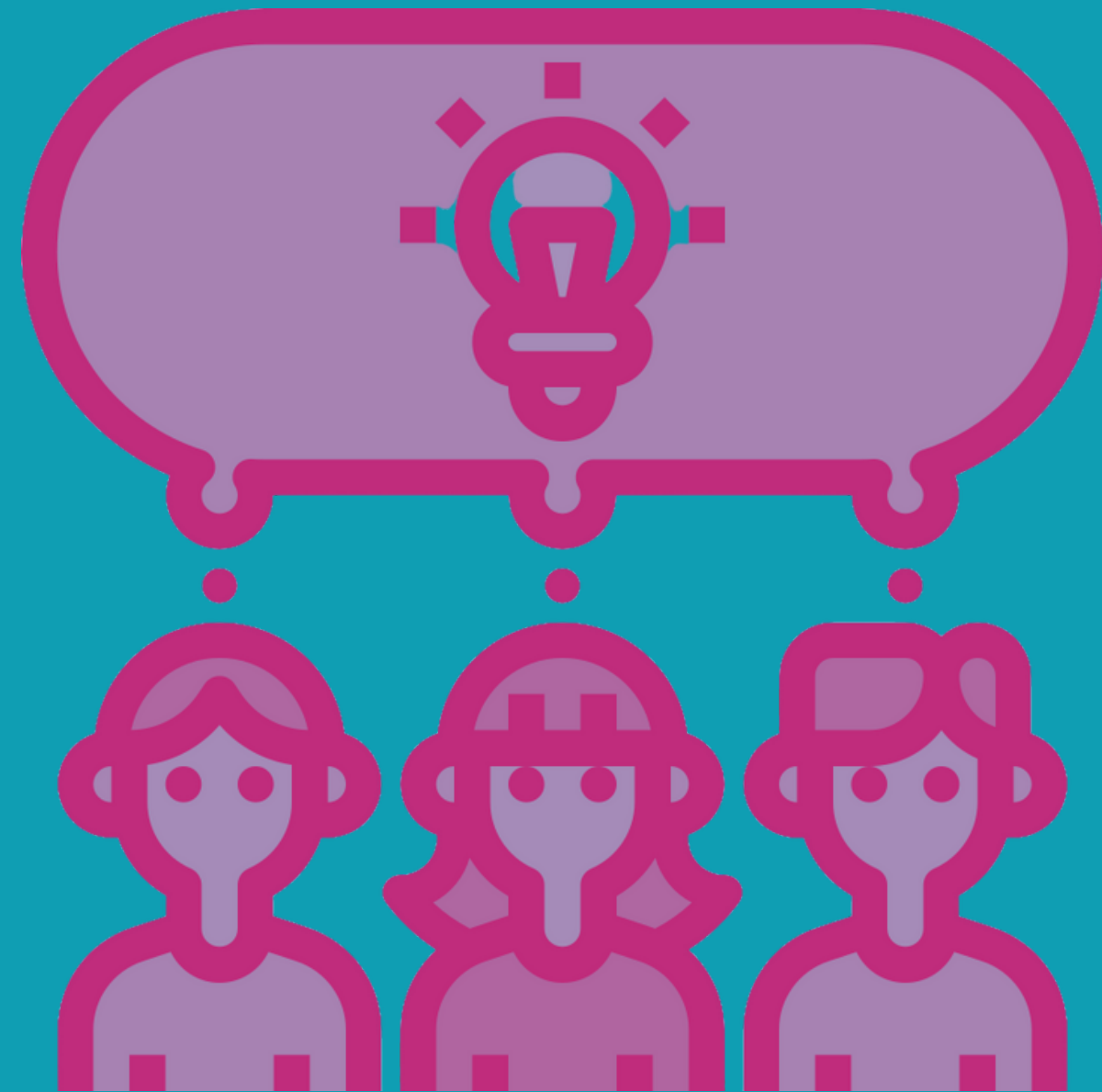
Anchoring Bias

Bandwagon Effect

The bandwagon effect is essentially a type of groupthink. As more people adopt a particular fad or trend, the more likely it becomes that other people will also "hop on the bandwagon."

When it seems that everyone is doing something, there is a tremendous pressure to conform, which is perhaps why the bandwagon behaviours tend to form so easily.

[Source: VeryWellMind, 2020](#)

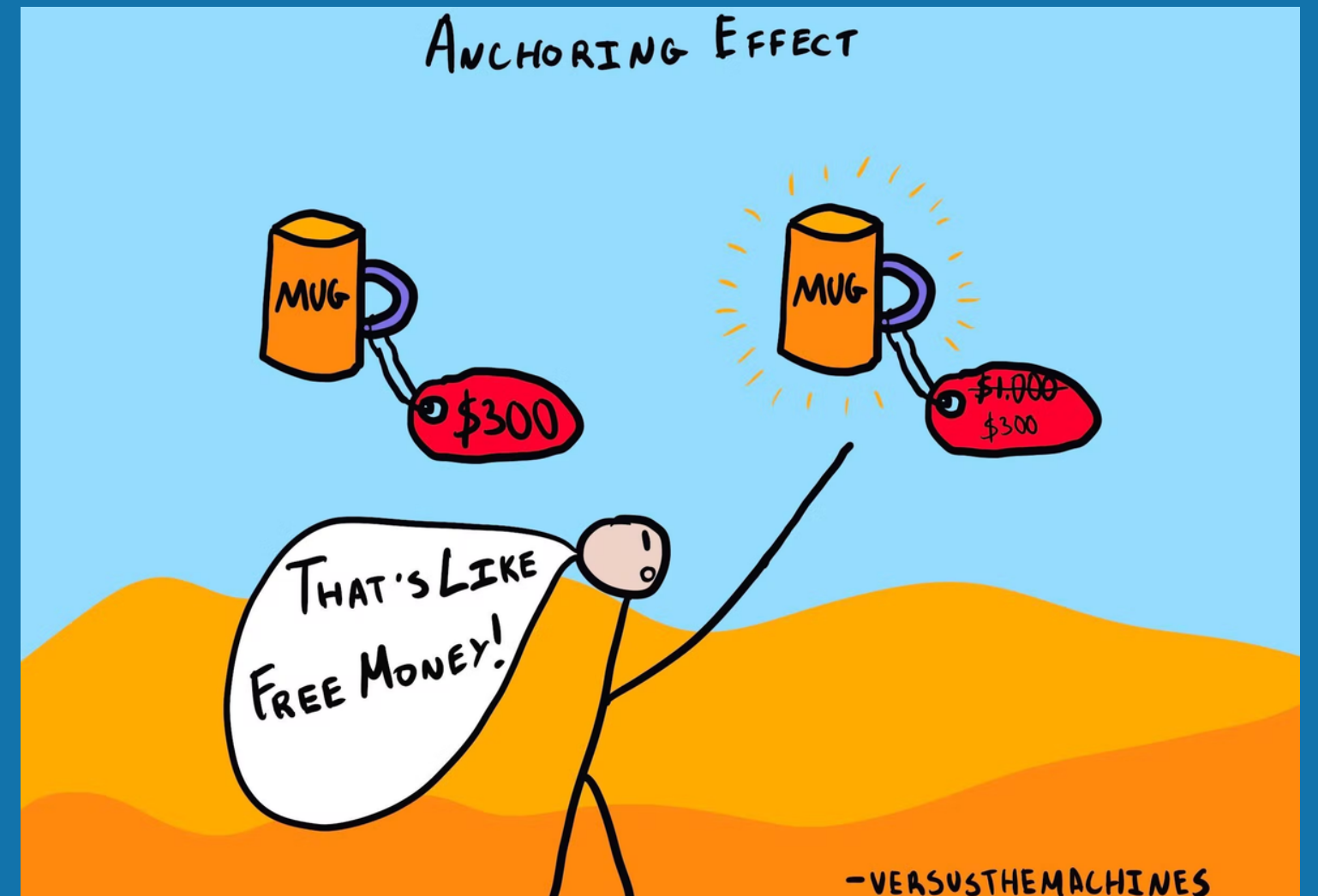


Anchoring Bias

A common human tendency to rely too heavily on the first piece of information offered (the “anchor”) when making decisions.

During decision making, anchoring occurs when individuals use an initial piece of information to make subsequent judgments.

Once an anchor is set, other judgments are made by adjusting away from that anchor, and there is a bias toward interpreting other information around the anchor.



Source: The Anchoring Effect and How it Can Impact Your Negotiation - Harvard, 2019



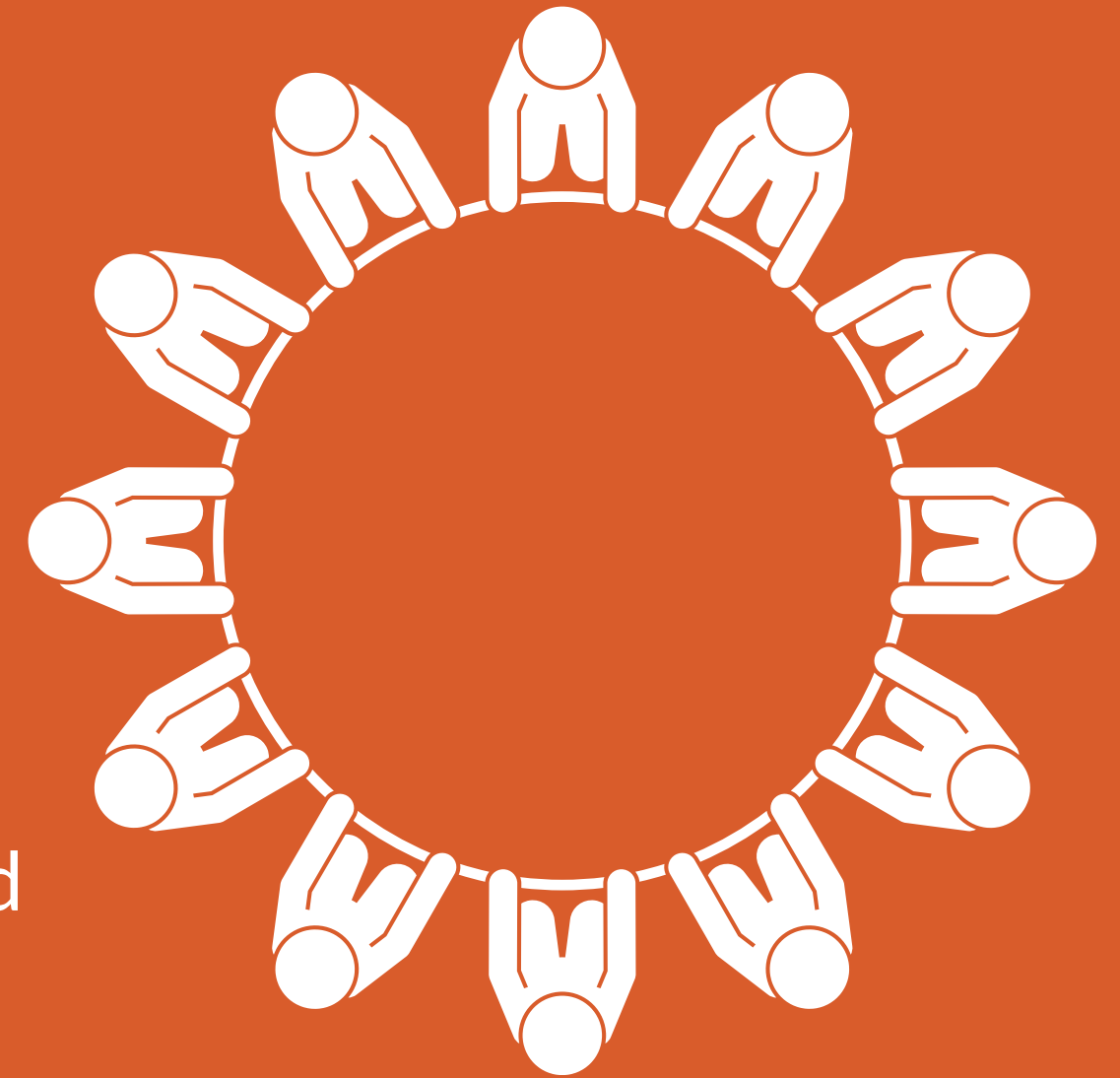
Circle of Trust Activity - Breakout Discussion

Access the worksheet you completed.

Small Group Discussion

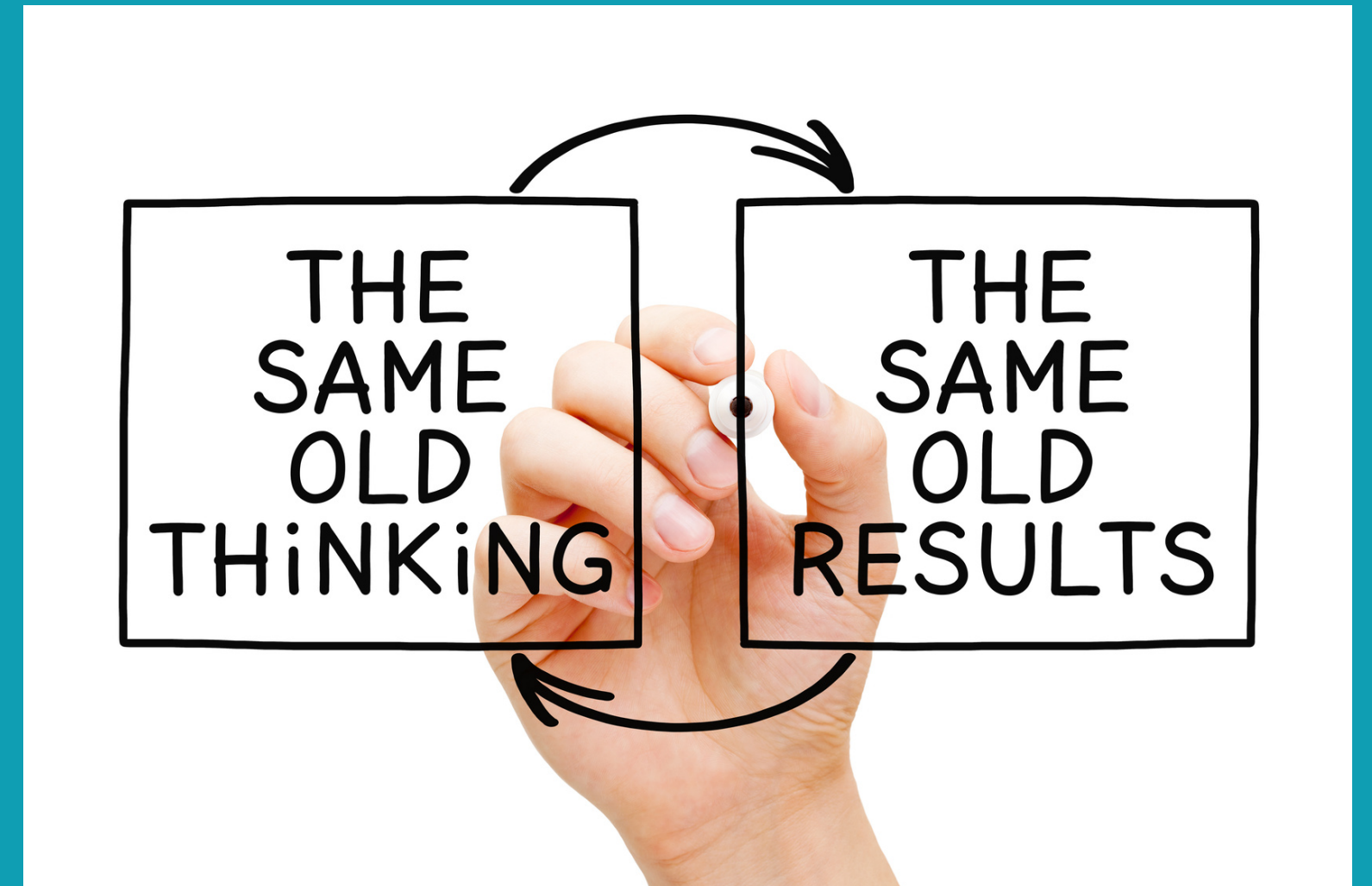
In your groups, discuss the following questions:

- What did you notice about your network?
- How might a lack of diversity within your circle of trust affect how you understand and/or take in various current events and issues?
- What kind of relationship, if any, exists between your implicit bias and your sense of trust?



Circle of Trust Activity - Large Group Debrief

What insights were alive and shared in your conversations in small groups?



Unpacking Microaggressions

Judgements or characteristics attributed to specific groups of people – races, genders, age groups, etc. – that may or may not be true for any one specific individual within that group.

STEREOTYPES

MICROAGGRESSIONS

Subtle verbal or nonverbal insults, indignities, or denigrating messages directed toward an individual due to their marginalized identity. Often committed by well-intentioned people who are unaware of the hidden messages conveyed or the impact of their statements.

IMPLICIT BIAS

Subconscious attitudes, perceptions and stereotypes that influence our understanding, actions, and behavior when interacting with various identities.

Source: [Project Ready : Reimagining Equity and Access for Diverse Youth](#)

Microaggressions Defined

Microaggressions are the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership.

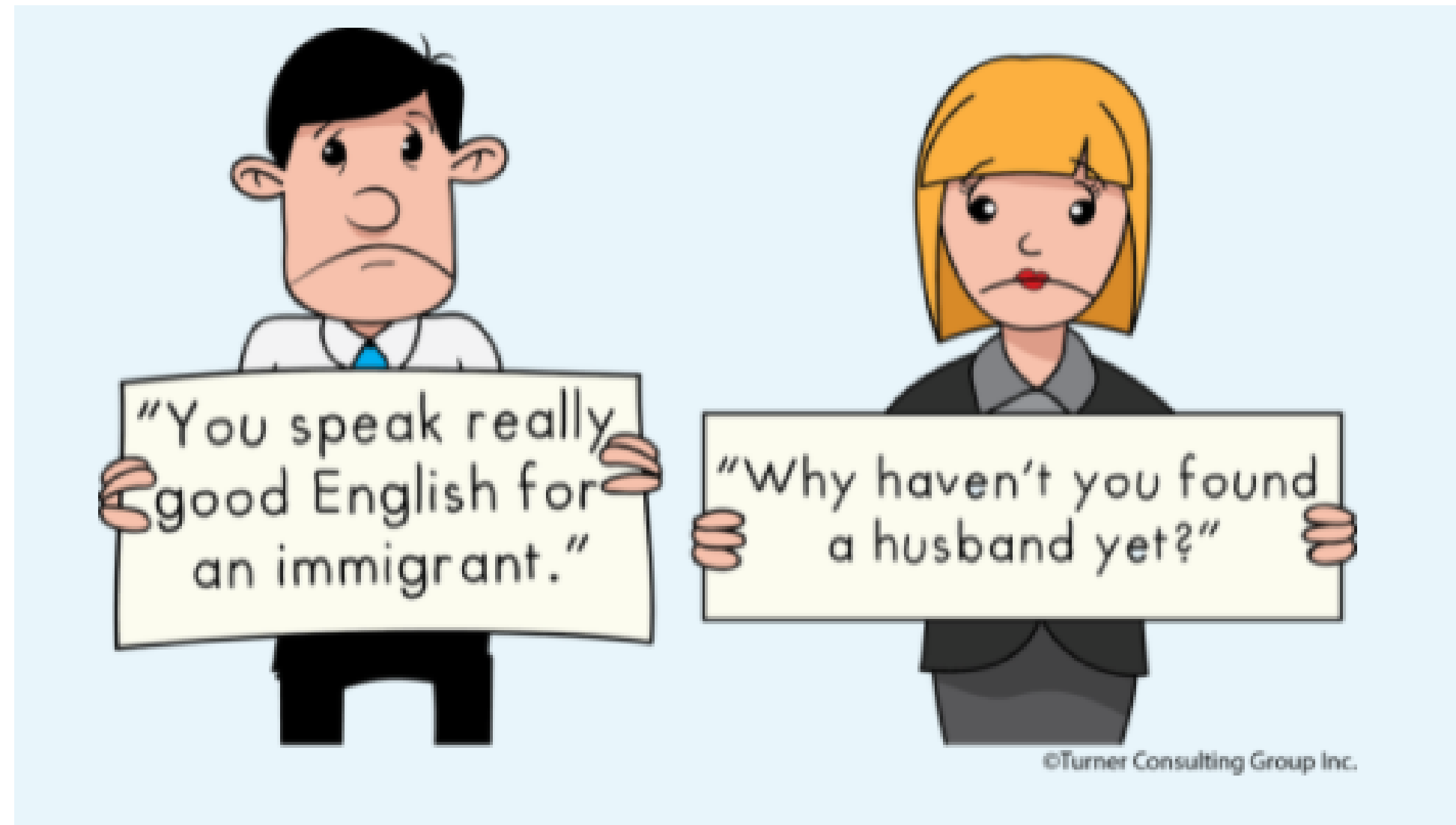
In many cases, these hidden messages may invalidate the group identity or experiential reality of target persons, demean them on a personal or group level, communicate they are lesser human beings, suggest they do not belong with the majority group, threaten and intimidate, or relegate them to inferior status and treatment.

Source: Derald Wing Sue, Ph. D

Micro-assault: A form of microaggression involving purposeful discriminatory action, such as a verbal attack or avoidant behaviour.



Micro-insult: Verbal and nonverbal communications that subtly convey rudeness and insensitivity and demean a person's racial heritage or identity.



Micro-invalidating: Communications that subtly exclude, negate or nullify the thoughts, feelings or experiential reality of a person of color.

"I don't think that was racist - you're overthinking it."



THE WHERE ARE YOU FROM? GAME



Checking Out

What is one insight you're leaving today's session with?

RESOURCES

[How Microaggressions are like Mosquito Bites](#)

[Author Talks: How to Interrupt Bias in the Workplace, McKinsey & Company, 2021](#)

[Micropedia of Microaggressions](#)

[When and How to Respond to Microaggressions, Harvard Business Review, Washington, Birch, and Roberts, 2020](#)

Thank you!

Connect with us:

Phone Number

416-230-5449

Email Address

leena@mendingthechasm.ca

Website

www.mendingthechasm.ca



@mendingthechasm

