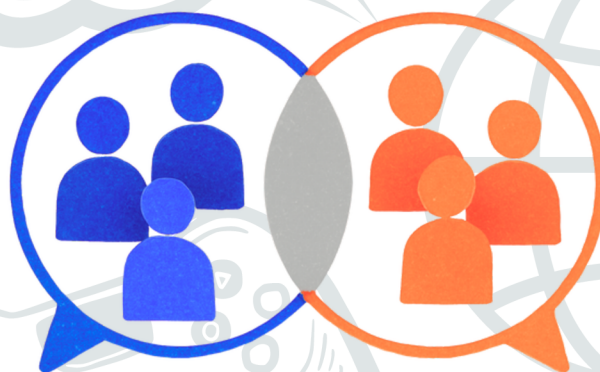


COGNITIVE BIASES

In-Group Bias



KEY WORDS

belonging | groups | red flags | loyalty | values



Sometimes we don't even notice how much we care about the groups we belong to. Whether it's your school, your favorite band, your friend group, or even your gaming crew, being part of something makes us feel good, understood, and safe.

But sometimes, this feeling of belonging can quietly affect how we think and what we believe, especially when we start seeing our group as better than others.

"I trust people like me more."

We tend to see people in our group as smarter, kinder, and more trustworthy. This can feel good, but it also makes it easier to ignore or judge people outside our circle, even when they might have something valuable to say.

That's what In-Group Bias does. It pushes us to believe, defend, or agree with something just because it comes from "our side", and to shut down anything that comes from "them", no matter how valid it might be.

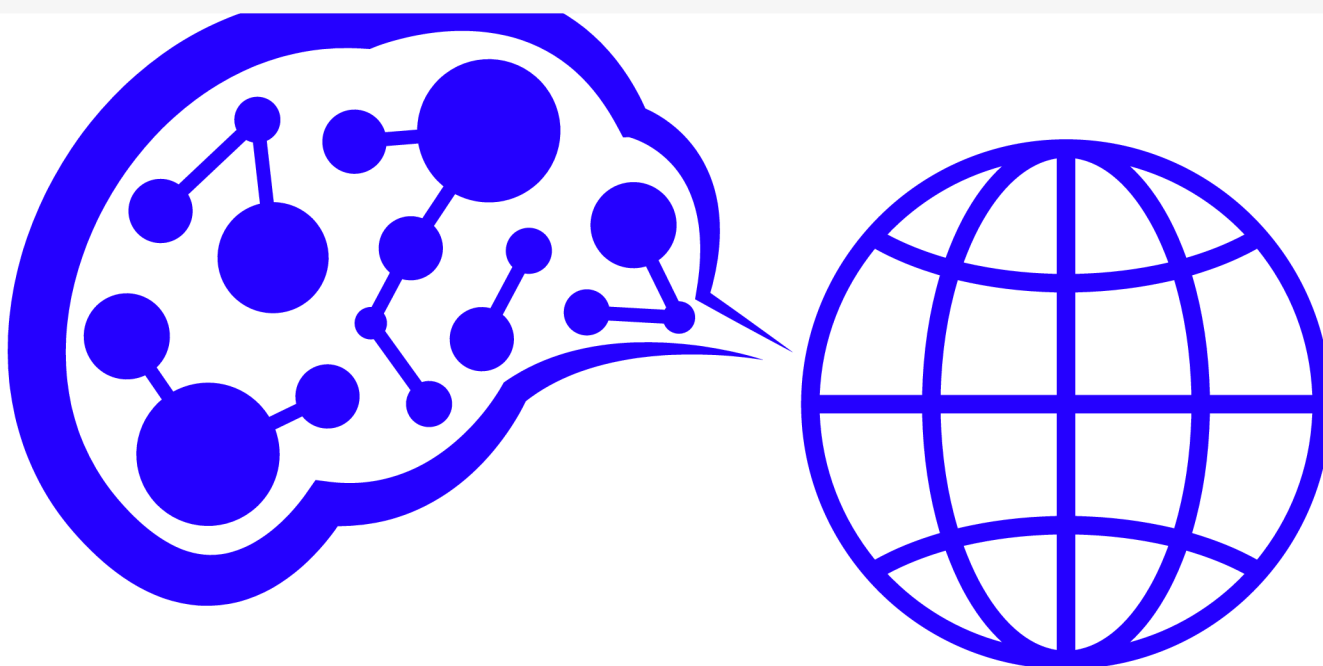


“I’m more likely to believe something if it supports my side.”

Imagine you’re really into climate action. One day, you see a post claiming that a well-known environmentalist politician chose to travel by train rather than plane to cut their carbon footprint. You instantly believe it and repost it: “Finally, someone who walks the talk!” But the next day, you see a similar post about a politician from the opposing party doing the same thing. Your first reaction? “Yeah right, that’s just PR.” That’s In-Group Bias at work. We’re more likely to trust information that confirms what our group believes, and we quickly doubt, ignore, or attack anything that doesn’t. It’s not always about logic: it’s about loyalty. And when loyalty takes over, it can cloud our judgement.

“It’s easy to confuse loyalty with truth.”

When we feel close to a group, we often defend its ideas fiercely. That’s not always a bad thing: loyalty can feel like strength. But if we stop questioning what “our side” says, we risk falling into echo chambers, where everyone agrees and outside views get shut out. Even smart, well-meaning groups can end up spreading false information, like conspiracy theories or extreme opinions, just because no one dares to disagree.



“I try to understand other sides, even if I disagree.”

Exploring different perspectives is part of learning and growing. Staying curious helps us see beyond our usual group and recognize that there are many ways of thinking. Some ideas might feel unfamiliar or uncomfortable at first, and that’s a natural part of the process. You can feel close to your group, support its values, and also create space for different points of view. This kind of openness shows attention and awareness.

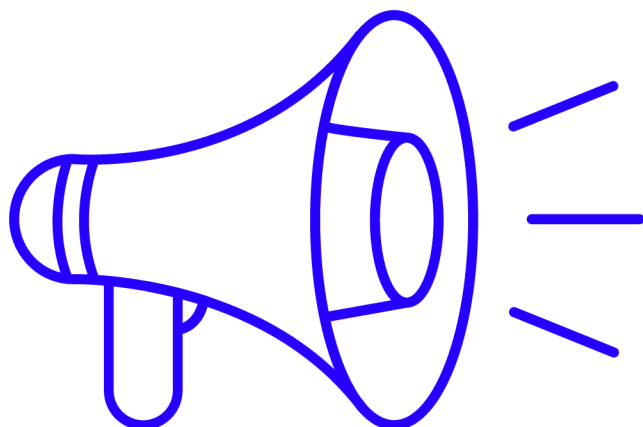
Sometimes, a simple pause is enough, a moment to ask yourself:

- “Would I still believe this if it came from someone outside my group?”
- “Am I reacting to the idea, or just to the person who said it?”
- “Can I listen just to understand, without jumping to conclusions?”

Belonging gives us strength. Reflecting on what we believe helps us give that belonging meaning.



COGNITIVE BIAS



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COGNITIVE BIASES

Authority bias



KEY WORDS

authority | expertise | influence | critical thinking



“They must be right... they’re in charge!”

Why do we sometimes believe people just because they look or sound like they know better? It happens more often than we think, whether it’s a teacher, a doctor, or someone speaking confidently on TikTok. Without even noticing, we might accept what they say simply because they seem to know more than us. That’s the effect of authority bias: we trust people more than we should, just because they appear important or in control.

“What is authority bias?”

Authority bias happens when we believe, agree with, or follow someone just because they seem to be in a position of authority, even if they’re not actually qualified, or even if what they say doesn’t really make sense. In other words, it’s not always about **what** they say, but it’s about **who** we think they are!

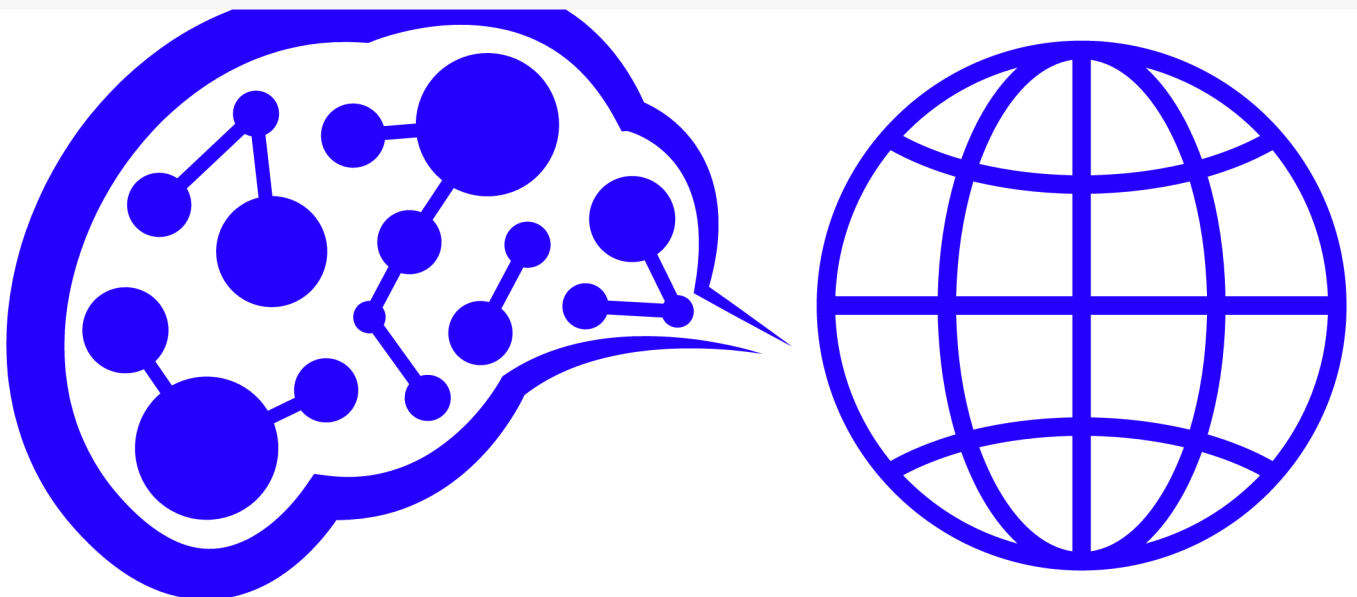




“Ever seen this happen?”

Imagine you’re scrolling through Instagram and a fitness influencer pops up in your feed. She looks super healthy, has glowing skin, and talks with total confidence. She says you should try the Dukan diet or go on a 7-day fast to “reset your body”. It sounds convincing, and the video has thousands of likes. You think: “Well, she looks great... she must know what she’s talking about.” But here’s the thing: she’s not a certified nutritionist, she’s not a doctor, she just seems like she knows, and that’s exactly how authority bias works.

We trust someone because of **how** they present themselves, not **because** they’re actually qualified.





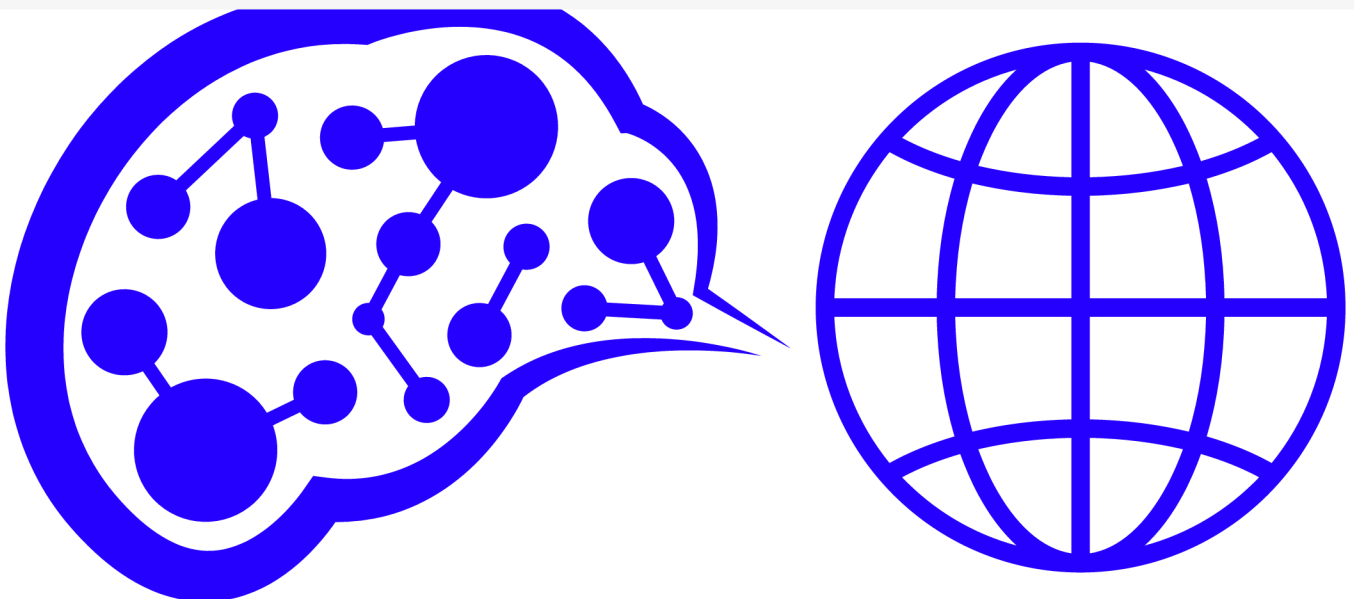
“They probably know better.”

This bias is part of how our brains are wired. When someone appears to be in charge, our instinct kicks in and tells us: “They look confident, so they must be right.”

Here are a few reasons why this happens:

- **It saves mental effort.** Instead of researching or thinking critically, we “outsource” our decision to the expert.
- **We’ve been trained to follow authority figures** since we were kids: parents, teachers, coaches. It feels natural.
- **Confidence is persuasive.** Someone who speaks firmly and looks the part can seem more reliable than they really are.

This doesn’t mean all authority is bad. Doctors, teachers and scientists often are experts. But authority bias kicks in when we stop thinking critically just because of who’s talking.



“Is it fact or just confidence?”

You don't need to be rude, skeptical of everything, or mistrustful of real experts. But you do have the right (and responsibility) to think for yourself!

Here are three simple questions to ask:

- “Is this person actually qualified to speak on this topic?”
(Wearing a stethoscope doesn't make someone a doctor.)
- “Would I trust this advice if it came from someone else?”
(If a random friend said it, would you still agree?)
- “Can I fact-check this from another source?”
(Use websites from universities, scientific journals, official institutions...).

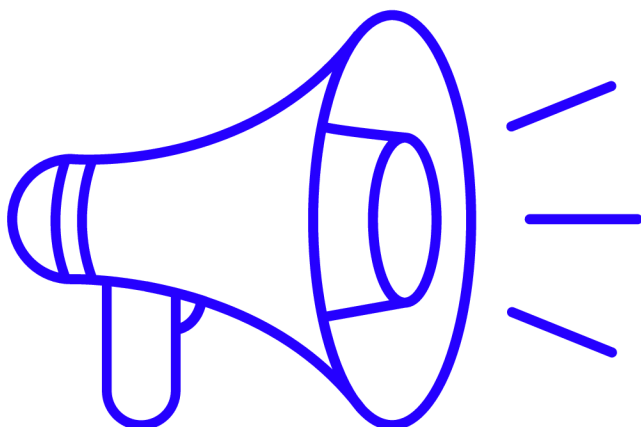
Being respectful doesn't mean agreeing with everything.

Being curious doesn't mean being rude.

Thinking for yourself is not disrespectful: it's smart!



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COGNITIVE BIASES

Confirmation bias



KEY WORDS

perception | opinion | information | beliefs



Have you ever found yourself convinced that something is true simply because it aligns with what you already believe? Maybe you love a particular food and search only for reasons why it's healthy, or you follow people online who share your exact opinions. This is all part of confirmation bias, a natural tendency that shapes how we see the world.

Did you know...?

Confirmation bias is the instinctive habit of seeking out and believing information that supports our pre-existing views, often disregarding opposing evidence. It feels reassuring to confirm what we already think, but this can lead to overconfidence and an unwillingness to change our minds, even when new facts arise.

For example, if you love coffee, you might search for the health benefits of coffee to confirm it's good for you, but avoid looking for health risks of coffee because it contradicts your beliefs. Similarly, on social media, we tend to follow people who share our views, and algorithms show us content that reinforces those opinions, deepening our bias.



Why it matters?

Confirmation bias isn't just about seeking comfort: it also affects how we make decisions, form opinions, and engage with the world around us. When we only consume information that confirms our beliefs, we become trapped in echo chambers, which can distort our understanding of reality. This limits our ability to grow and adapt in a constantly changing world.

What Can You Do About It?

- **Challenge your beliefs:** Intentionally seek out information that contradicts your views. This doesn't mean accepting everything you hear, but being willing to consider new ideas and challenge your assumptions.
- **Be open-minded:** True learning happens when we expose ourselves to viewpoints that challenge our own. Change doesn't mean abandoning your core beliefs, but refining them with a more rounded understanding.
- **Diversify your sources:** When researching, avoid searching only for terms that reinforce your beliefs. Actively broaden your inquiry to include a range of perspectives. This will help you see the bigger picture and avoid reinforcing your biases.
- **Engage in thoughtful discussions:** Rather than avoiding debates, engage in conversations with people who hold different views. Sometimes, respectful disagreement can help you see flaws in your reasoning, or even strengthen your stance when you back it up with more evidence.
- **Reflect on your biases:** Regularly ask yourself, "Am I looking for confirmation, or am I genuinely interested in the truth?" Being aware of your biases is a crucial first step in making more thoughtful and informed decisions.

Embracing Complexity

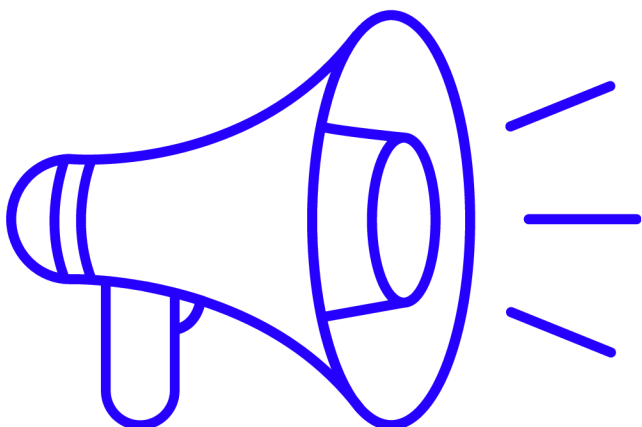
The world around us is complex and full of nuances. Often, confirmation bias leads us to take mental shortcuts, choosing the easier path, the one that reinforces what we already think. But truth is rarely simple. To grow, we need to learn to see things from different angles, listen to opinions that challenge us, and recognize that there is no single truth.

Start by considering that the beauty of critical thinking doesn't lie in trying to be "right," but in being able to question even what seems most certain. When we learn to doubt our own certainties, we open the door to true personal and collective growth.

Don't be afraid to explore what might contradict your point of view; it may be there that you find the key to understanding the world better!



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COGNITIVE BIASES

Selective Perception Bias

KEY WORDS

filters | distortion | perception | judgment



Every day we make choices, perceive information, and assign importance to what surrounds us. However, we're not always objective. Our brain, always at work, is constantly engaged in simplifying and organizing what it receives. Selective perception bias is exactly this: a tendency to focus only on what interests or concerns us, ignoring or forgetting everything else. It's like wearing glasses that only let us see what we want to see!

A Common Example?

Imagine you have a friend who, in the past, missed a few school projects or was always a little late for study sessions. If you start thinking of them as unreliable, you might begin to focus only on the times they don't show up or forget to complete tasks. You may completely overlook the moments when they've been on time, or when they've worked hard on assignments and exceeded expectations. This is the **Selective Perception Bias** at play, where we focus on information that supports our **initial judgment**, ignoring other positive behaviors that might challenge our view.



"We see what we want to see."

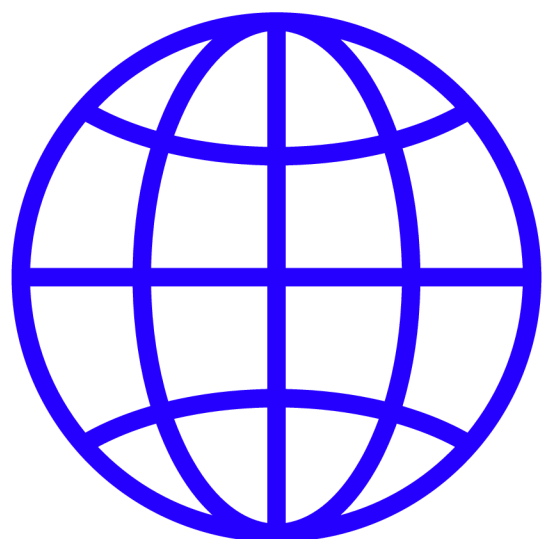
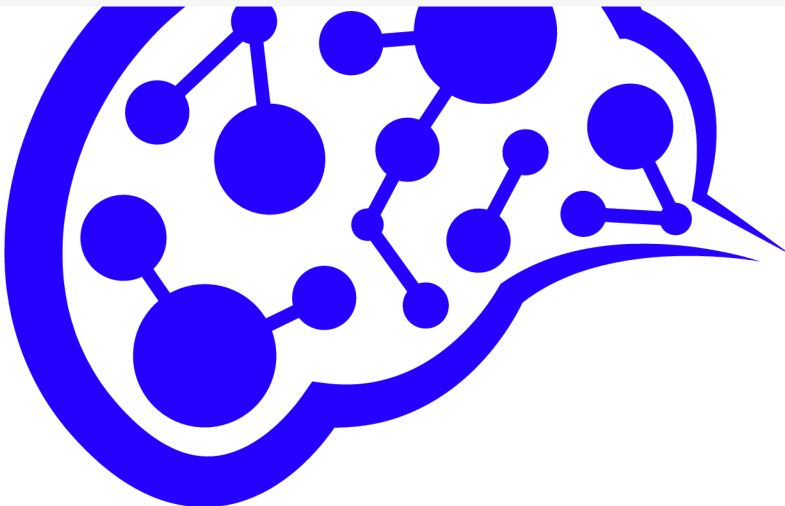
This bias doesn't only affect our interactions with friends or classmates. It also shapes how we engage with broader information, like the news.

When we read an article or watch a TV program, our perception is inevitably influenced by our **pre-existing beliefs**. If we have strong political opinions, we tend to look for news that confirms what we already think. This bias makes us ignore information that doesn't fit our worldview. If we watch a news report promoting a different perspective from ours, we often feel uncomfortable or even frustrated. This is a very common phenomenon: in practice, our brain selects only what aligns with our perception of the world.

The risks of living in our own bubble

Selective perception bias can lead us to see a distorted version of reality. For instance, if we only talk to people in our social circles who share our ideas and opinions, we end up reinforcing our point of view without ever questioning it.

This prevents us from opening up to new ideas, limiting our personal growth. But it's not just in political discussions or consumer choices that this bias plays a role. It influences how we respond to feedback, criticism, and even our daily experiences.



“See Beyond Our Filters”

The first step to tackling selective perception bias is recognizing that we all have mental **filters**. These filters shape how we see the world, based on our past experiences and beliefs. Once we accept this, we can start challenging our own assumptions.

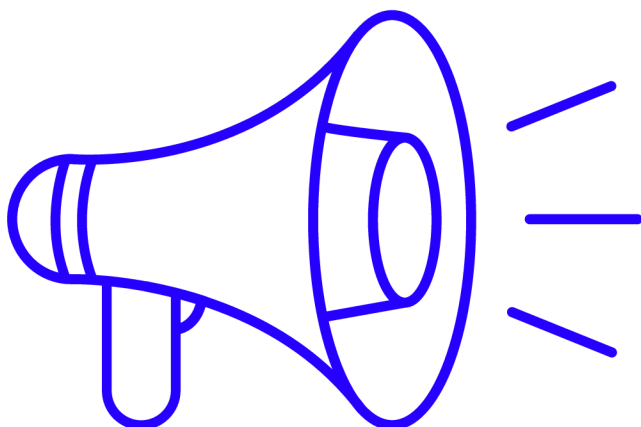
A powerful way to do this is by seeking out different perspectives. Instead of simply hearing opposing views, engage with them: ask yourself, “What can I learn from this?” It’s also helpful to pause before making judgments and ask, “Am I only noticing what confirms my beliefs?”

Broadening our experiences is another key step. Expose yourself to new ideas, people, and situations - whether through travel, books, or conversations. This helps break free from our usual thought patterns.

By questioning our biases, we can open our minds, make better decisions, and connect more meaningfully with the world around us.



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COGNITIVE BIASES

Anchoring Bias



KEY WORDS

perception | influence | choice | judgment



When we are faced with decisions, our mind tends to focus heavily on the first numbers or information we receive, even if they aren't always the most relevant. This is known as the Anchoring Bias. In other words, we are influenced by the "first impression," and this can shape our choices without us realizing it.

Anchoring Bias is a type of cognitive bias where we place too much trust in the first piece of information (the "anchor") we get and use it as a reference, affecting all subsequent decisions. Our brain, in practice, "drowns" in the first information it receives, even if other evidence might suggest something different.

"Does the first impression count?"

Imagine you walk into a store and see a t-shirt priced at €50. Then, you notice another t-shirt for €30. It seems like a bargain, right? But if you had first seen a t-shirt priced at €100, you might have considered the €30 one as a real deal! What happened here is that the initial price of €100 "anchored" your perception of value, making the €30 price seem much lower than it actually was.



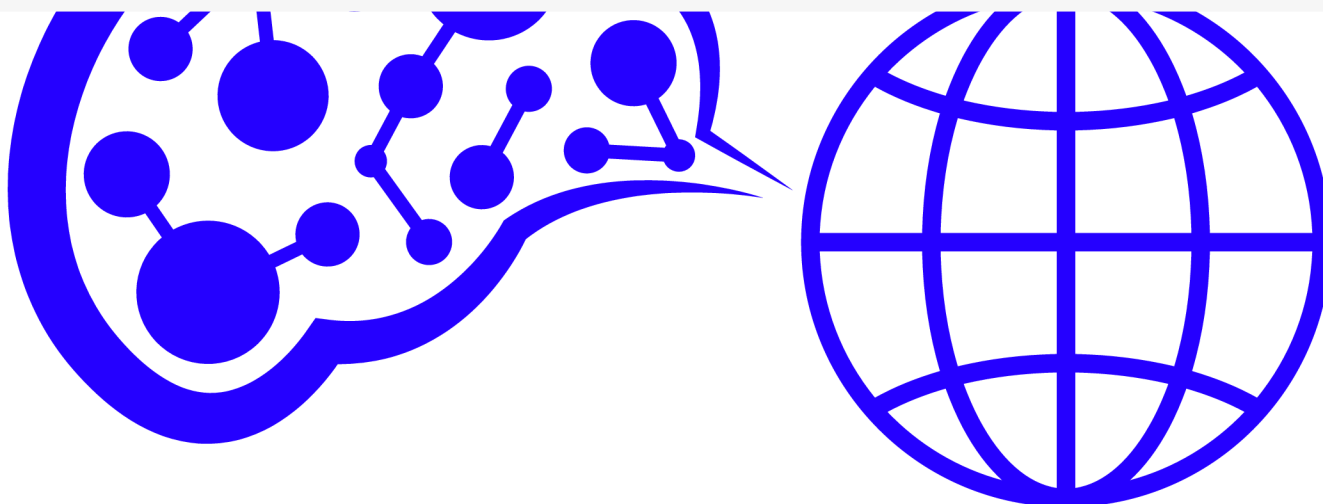
Why do we fall for it?

When making decisions, our brain looks for shortcuts to save energy. We tend to rely on the first piece of information we receive, which helps us decide quickly but not always rationally. Our brains are overwhelmed with information, so it's easier to latch onto the first thing we see or hear instead of considering every option.

For example, imagine scrolling through social media and seeing a post that says, "Everyone is talking about how great this new phone is." Even if you don't know much about the phone, you might think it's the best, simply because of the first impression it gave you. That initial post creates a reference point, focusing your attention on the phone's popularity, even if there are better or cheaper options out there.

Why it matters?

The Anchoring Bias affects many areas of life, from shopping to making important decisions at work or in relationships. By recognizing it, we can make more informed, rational choices. Instead of being stuck on the first piece of information we receive, we can broaden our perspective and make decisions based on a fuller picture. For instance, in negotiations, if you only focus on the first offer made, you might miss out on a better deal. Understanding the bias helps you stay grounded and avoid being influenced by irrelevant details.



How to avoid it?

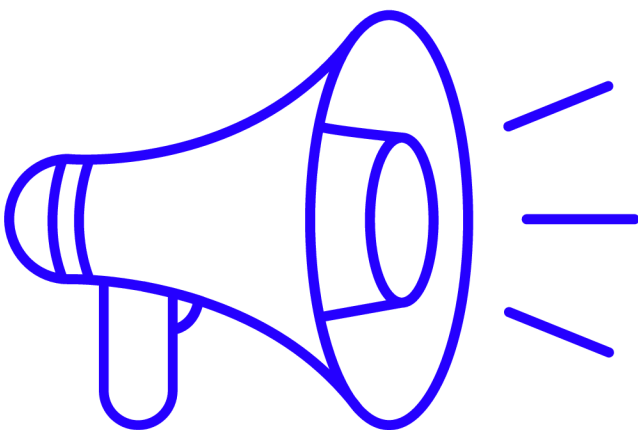
To break free from the Anchoring Bias, try to slow down and reflect before making a decision. Ask yourself: "Is this initial information really the most important, or is it just something that caught my attention first?" Being aware of biases is the first step, but critical thinking is key.

Instead of accepting the first piece of information you receive, consider alternative perspectives. Challenge the "anchor" by asking yourself: "What am I missing? or What other options could be out there that I haven't considered yet?"

Don't let the first piece of info lock you in! Challenge it, explore other options, and you'll make choices that are truly informed.



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COGNITIVE BIASES

Illusory Truth Bias



KEY WORDS

misinformation | familiarity | repetition | believability



We take in hundreds of messages every day, from friends, school, social media, the news, ads, memes, and more. Some are accurate, others are not. Since our brain tends to lean towards what feels familiar, hearing something over and over makes it seem more convincing, even if it's not true. That's why, with enough repetition, even a false statement can begin to sound like the truth.

"I've heard it everywhere, so it must be true."

This is **Illusory Truth Bias**. It's the tendency to believe something simply because we've heard it multiple times. The more a statement is repeated, the more familiar it becomes, and the more likely we are to accept it as true. Our brains take shortcuts, and familiarity feels comfortable. We trust repeated information, even if it's not accurate. It's not about laziness; it's about making thinking easier. Familiar things feel safer, and that sense of safety tricks us into believing they are correct.

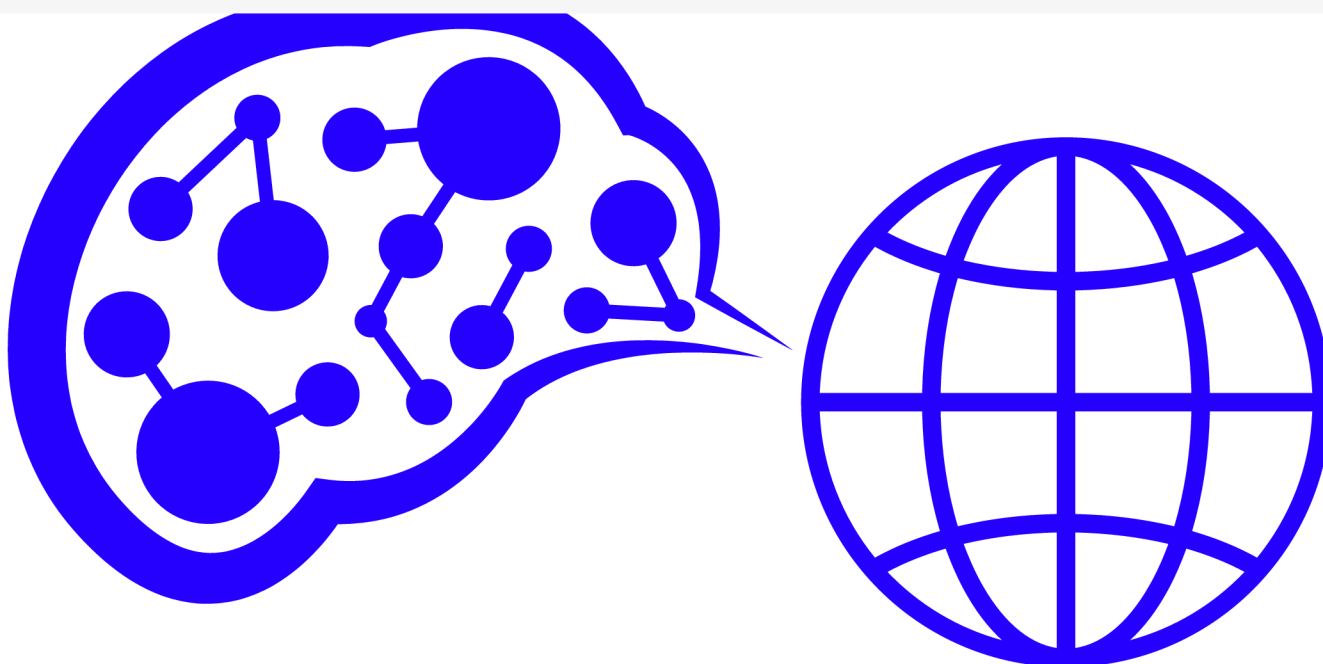


“Wait... I think I read that somewhere.”

Imagine hearing something like “Drinking coffee helps you live longer”. You come across it online, your friend mentions it, and then you see it again in an article. It starts to feel believable, even though there’s no solid evidence to support it. Soon enough, you might find yourself repeating it to others.

This is how misinformation spreads. We don’t always remember where we first heard something, but the more often we hear it, the more likely we are to believe it. Our brain mistakes repetition for truth.

A similar dynamic happens with propaganda, like the repeated narratives pushed by Putin’s messages about the war in Ukraine. As these ideas are constantly repeated across various channels, people begin to accept them as facts, simply because they’ve been heard so many times, even if they don’t stand up to scrutiny.

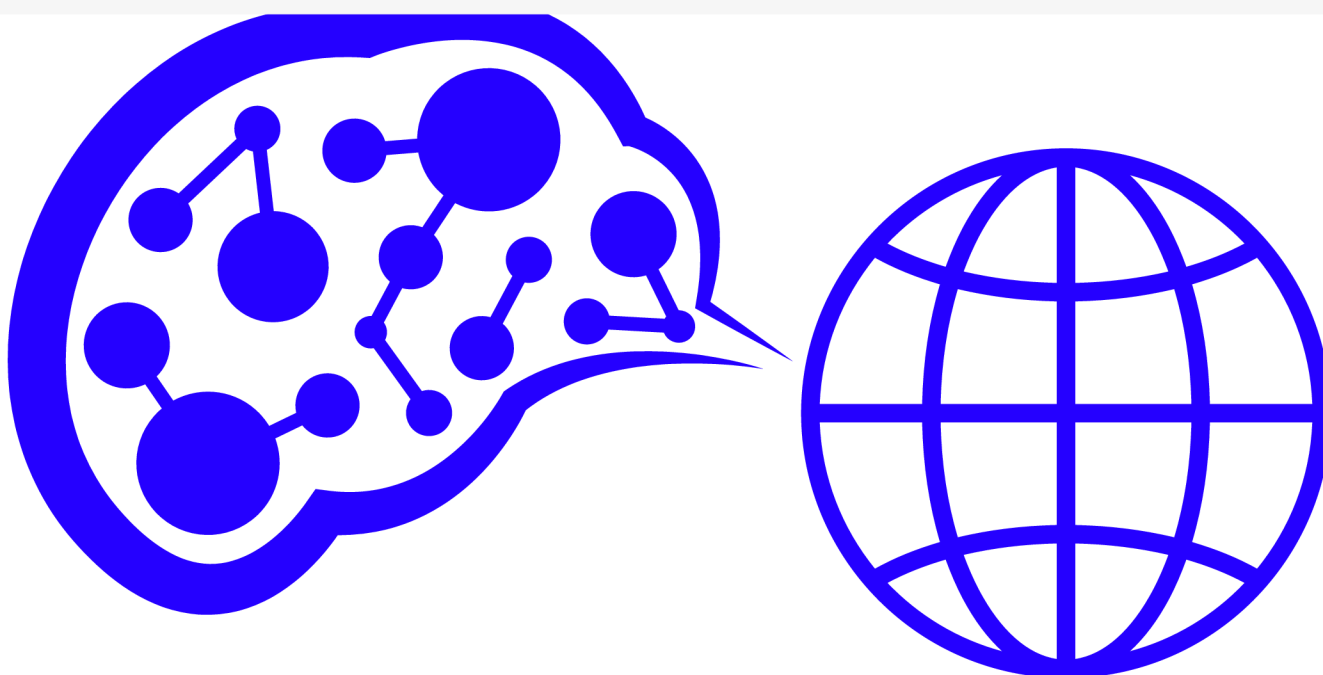




“Everyone says it, so I stopped questioning it.”

This bias is everywhere:

- In **advertising**: “8 out of 10 dentists recommend this toothpaste” sounds always convincing, but we rarely know the full details behind the study.
- In **politics**: Leaders repeat statements like “This policy will reduce unemployment” so often that it starts to feel true, even without the data to back it up.
- In **everyday myths**: “We only use 10% of our brain”, still believed simply because it's repeated so many times.
- **Online**: Think about the claim “Drinking lemon water in the morning helps you lose weight”. Repeated across blogs and social media, it starts to feel true, even though it's not scientifically proven.



"I try to pause before I repeat what I've heard."

You don't have to question everything you hear, but taking a moment to think is important. Before passing something on, ask yourself:

- "Where did I hear this?"
- "Why does it sound true to me?"
- "Is this something I've checked for myself, or just something that feels familiar?"
- "Could there be another side to this story?"

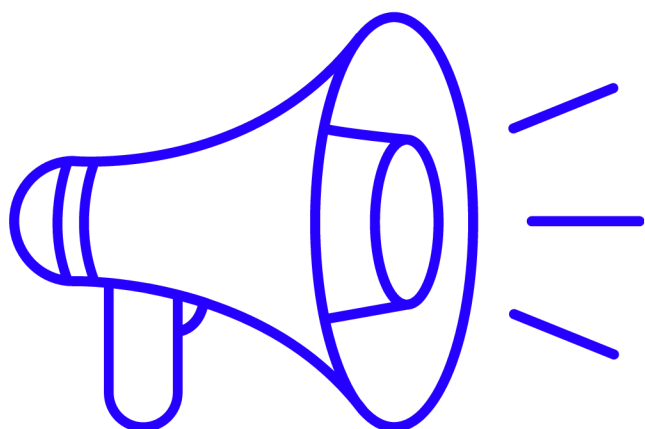
When we stop questioning things just because we've heard them before, we leave the door open for propaganda, fake news, and harmful stereotypes.

Taking a moment to think critically isn't about hesitation. It's about making sure we're not just accepting things at face value.

Critical thinking doesn't slow us down, but it sharpens our judgment and helps us see the bigger picture!



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COGNITIVE BIASES

Conformity Bias



KEY WORDS

conformity | independence | choice | authenticity



“Everyone’s doing it, so it must be right!”

Sometimes, we feel the pressure to do something simply because the majority is doing it. It's that feeling that if everyone is saying something, it must be true, or if everyone is following a trend, we should do it too. It's a natural human behaviour: we want to be part of the group, not stand out or be excluded!

For example, it might happen that if your friends are wearing a certain style of clothing, you feel the pressure to do the same, even if it’s not really your style. Or if everyone is on a social media platform like Instagram, you might feel like you don't want to be the only one not on it.

“I don’t want to be left out.”

There are several reasons why we feel this way:

- **Social Acceptance:** We want to be accepted and part of a group. Standing out too much can make us feel uncomfortable.



- **Fear of Rejection:** The fear of being excluded or judged can push us to adopt the opinions or behaviours of the majority.
- **Lack of Confidence:** Sometimes, we may feel unsure about our own thoughts or decisions and rely on the group's opinion as a safety net.

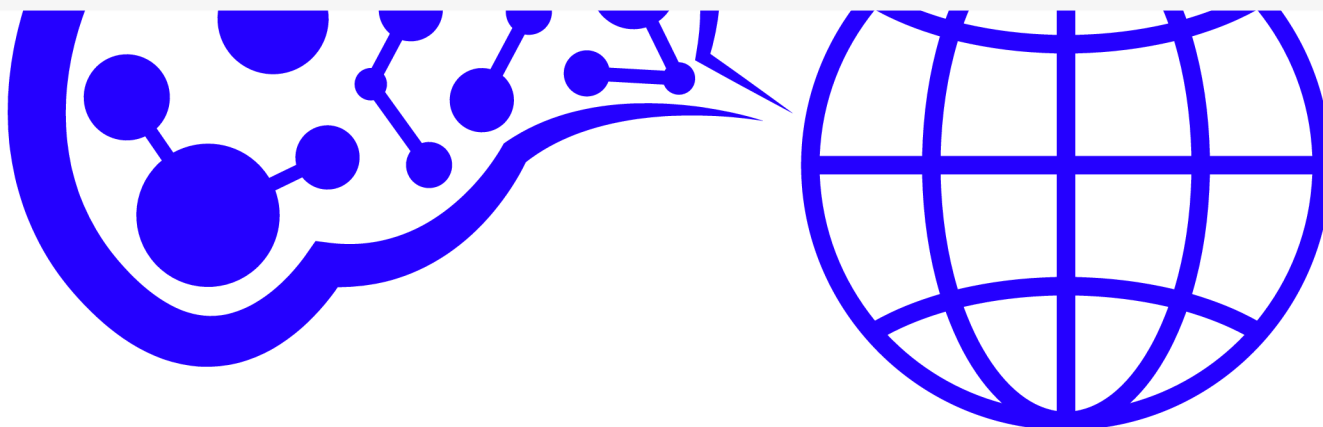
"If everyone's wearing it, it must be cool."

Let's look at how conformity bias can sneak into our everyday lives, often without us even realising it!

- **Restaurant Choices:** When everyone orders the same dish, you might feel compelled to do the same, even if it's not what you want.
- **Trends in Entertainment:** Hype around a new movie or show can push you to watch it, just to keep up with the crowd, even if you're not interested.
- **Travel Destinations:** Social media can make you feel like you have to visit the same trendy places everyone else is posting about.
- **Fitness Trends:** If a new workout or diet is all over the place, it's easy to jump on the bandwagon, even if it doesn't match your goals.

"I just want to blend in."

Being aware of how conformity bias influences our decisions helps us make more independent choices. It's natural to want to fit in, but it's also important to stay true to who we are and what we think. By recognising this mechanism, we can avoid being influenced by the crowd and make more conscious decisions.



"Sometimes it's easier to go along with the crowd."

Conformity bias is a natural part of human behaviour, but it's important to recognise when it's influencing our decisions. Reflecting on what we think and do helps us avoid following the crowd out of convenience, allowing us to make more authentic choices.

Group Think:

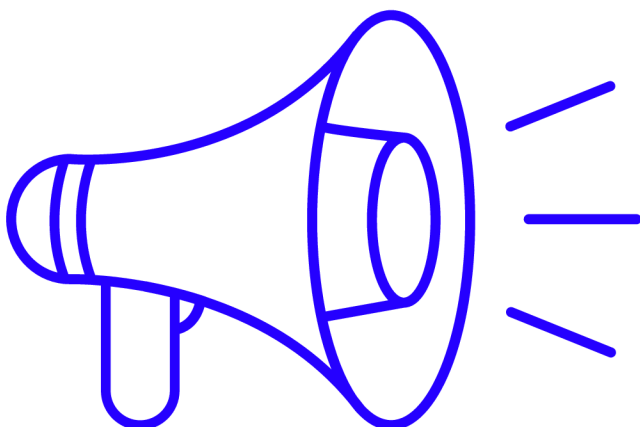
- Think about a recent trend or popular opinion you noticed among friends or on social media.
- Reflect: Did you embrace it because you truly wanted to, or just because everyone else was doing it? Did you feel pressured to follow? Why?

Breaking the Mold:

- This week, try something different. Wear something out of fashion or voice a different opinion.
- Reflect: How did it feel to stand out? Any reactions?



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