

Supporting culturally reflective practice

LEADERS SERIES

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be aware that this resource may contain images, audio or names of people who have passed away.

Module 2: Regularly examining your own thoughts, values and beliefs

Welcome to the second module of Emerging Minds' series for leaders focusing on culturally reflective practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, families and communities. In this module, we will discuss the importance of regularly examining your own thoughts, values and beliefs, and encouraging those within your team to do the same.

Everyone has a culture. Being human implies being embedded in a cultural matrix in which characteristics and identities interact and inform experiences of the world.¹

Unconscious bias, or the unintentional prejudices we all come with, tends to inform our judgements and decision-making processes. Even the most open-minded people can have underlying, unconscious beliefs or assumptions that trigger automatic judgements about other people or groups when left unchecked.²

Most practitioners and leaders working with children and families understand that there are injustices in the world. A good leader cannot ignore the fact that injustices in the world will equate to injustices in practice.

No one leaves their biases and assumptions at home when they come to work. While you cannot change people's beliefs, as a leader you can reflect on their behaviour in practice. It demands a paradigm shift and openness to different ways of thinking and doing things; it also requires intentionality.³



It is important to understand the way your personal biases influence you and the impact they have on your attitudes. Personal biases affect the type of communication we have with others. As such, bias should be recognised as a determining factor in respectful interactions.

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You must let go of your own world view. Social workers have an evolving professional identity – they are confronted with their own limitations, and in the face of this, they hold onto their professional identity and apply their expertise in identifying the issues and coming up with the solutions for Aboriginal people.

ABORIGINAL HEALTH PRACTITIONER

Watch the following video (2 minutes, 56 seconds) as Darryl Bingsapore, a Ngarrindjeri Community member, and Uncle Clyde Rigney Senior, a Ngarrindjeri Elder, share some tips for practitioners.



Reflective questions

- When Uncle Clyde discusses the concept of 'good intentions', what are the key points he is making?
- What practices described by Darryl and Uncle Clyde could help you and your team enhance connections with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and families?

Strategies to support learning

As a leader, consider how you can explore personal biases. It could be through:

- demonstrating the competencies that you would like to build in your team
- making space for conversations where you can explore the values, ideas and beliefs that your team come with
- noticing the nuances of difference between members of the team and developing a language to help navigate them.

Thinking about your own leadership and team, which of these activities do you currently engage in? How might you consider these ideas in your work in future?

References

1. Botelho, M. J., & Lima, C. A. (2020). From cultural competence to cultural respect: A critical review of six models. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 59(6), 311–318.
2. Seven Dimensions. (2024). [4 lessons about inclusion and unconscious bias](#) [Video recording].
3. Gordon, S. A. (2021). *Unbias: Addressing unconscious bias at work*. Wiley.

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