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**A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR
ADVANCING FAIR OPPORTUNITIES
FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE**

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TRUTHLIGHTING

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Unconscious Bias Awareness Exercise

Purpose:

The Unconscious Bias Awareness Exercise aims to help individuals recognize and understand the impact of unconscious bias in team meetings and workplace settings. Through scenario simulations, personal reflection, and group discussions, this tool aims to raise awareness of how biases can influence decision-making, communication, and collaboration. It encourages participants to develop strategies for mitigating bias and fostering more inclusive and equitable work environments.

This exercise promotes self-awareness and collaborative discussions on unconscious bias, helping participants recognize it in various situations and empowering them to make more equitable decisions.

Exercise: Unconscious Bias Awareness in Teams

Objective:

To help participants recognize their unconscious biases in workplace settings, particularly during team meetings, and understand how they can impact decision-making, communication, and collaboration.

Duration: 45 minutes

Materials Needed:

- A whiteboard or flip chart (or digital equivalent)
- Sticky notes or index cards
- Markers
- A timer

Step 1: Introduction to Unconscious Bias (10 minutes)

1. Brief Explanation: Start by defining unconscious bias:
 - Unconscious bias refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that unconsciously affect our understanding, actions, and decisions. These biases are formed over time based on cultural, social, and personal influences.
 - Bias can manifest in various forms, such as race, gender, age, ability, and socioeconomic status.
2. Examples in the Workplace:
 - Microaggressions: Subtle, unintentional actions that can be perceived as offensive or dismissive
 - Decision-making bias: How certain individuals may be favored or overlooked without clear reasons
 - Communication bias: How some people might dominate the conversation, or others may be overlooked in discussions

Step 2: Scenario Simulation (15 minutes)

1. Divide the Group: Split participants into small groups (3–4 people per group).

2. **Scenario Creation:** Provide each group with a different scenario that could occur in a team meeting or workplace setting. Here are a few examples:
 - A team meeting where one person consistently interrupts others
 - A situation where ideas from a female team member are overlooked, but a male colleague's idea is immediately accepted
 - A situation where someone from a different cultural background is not invited to contribute to a brainstorming session
 - A situation where an older team member is excluded from new technology discussions or a younger team member's experience is downplayed
3. **Group Task:** In each group, participants discuss how unconscious bias could affect the situation. They should consider:
 - Which biases could be affecting the people involved
 - How these biases impact the outcome of the situation (e.g., decision-making, communication, collaboration)
 - What behaviors or actions contribute to the bias
4. **Debrief (Group Share):** After 10 minutes of discussion, each group presents their scenario and thoughts. Write key points on the whiteboard or flip chart.

Step 3: Bias Recognition Reflection (10 minutes)

1. **Personal Reflection:** Ask participants to individually take 3–5 minutes to reflect on the following:
 - Have they ever witnessed or been part of a similar scenario in their team meetings?
 - How might their unconscious biases have impacted decisions or interactions in the past?
2. **Self-Assessment:** Provide participants with sticky notes or index cards to anonymously write down examples where they might have unintentionally displayed bias in meetings. Encourage participants to reflect on areas like:
 - Who do you tend to speak over or not acknowledge?
 - Who do you seek feedback from more often?
 - Whose ideas do you typically support or dismiss without considering them?
 - Collect the sticky notes, then read some out loud (without identifying who wrote them) to create a safe and reflective atmosphere.

Step 4: Group Action Plan (10 minutes)

1. **Strategies to Mitigate Unconscious Bias:** Encourage participants to brainstorm ways to combat unconscious bias in meetings. Write suggestions on the whiteboard. Some strategies may include:
 - Actively making space for quieter voices or diverse opinions

- Regularly reminding the team to seek input from everyone
 - Having a “bias check” before decision-making (e.g., asking if everyone’s ideas are being considered)
 - Encouraging feedback on team dynamics and bias
2. **Create Accountability:** Discuss how the team can support one another in addressing unconscious bias. This might include:
 - Setting up a “bias buddy” system, where team members help each other recognize when bias is happening
 - Providing anonymous feedback channels to discuss any concerns about bias
 3. **Commitment:** Have each participant write down one action they will take in their next team meeting to minimize bias and make meetings more inclusive.

Step 5: Closing Reflection (5 minutes)

1. **Group Reflection:** Ask participants how their perceptions of unconscious bias in meetings have changed and what they will do differently.
2. **Final Thought:** Remind participants that recognizing and addressing unconscious bias is ongoing. Encourage continued self-awareness and dialogue on the topic.

