Overcoming Cognitive Bias*

1. Confirmation bias is the tendency to seek and find confirming evidence for what an individual already believes, and to ignore, or rationalize, dis-confirming evidence. Here are four tools to overcome confirmation bias, which can help for improved thinking and better decisions.
   a. Be aware of confirmation bias, and the fact that everyone is subject to it. For any decision, or judgment, check whether there is a bias about it.
   b. Try not to have super strong expectations.
   c. Look for dis-confirming evidence, that is, examples of the opposite of any expectation.
   d. Keep an open mind, and be willing to change it when the evidence changes.

2. Hindsight bias involves the tendency to view past decisions through present lenses, which can often lead to bad judgements. Here are four ways not to fall for hindsight bias.
   a. Be aware of hindsight bias and understand that when looking back at decisions, there is a tendency to justify the outcome of that decision.
   b. Try to assess the decision based on the information at the time the decision was made rather than the outcome.
   c. Make decisions that closely follow the data instead of any feelings about it.
   d. Consider alternate outcomes had a different decision been made.

3. Illusory superiority or the better-than-average bias involves individuals being extremely generous when accessing their own knowledge, skills, and abilities, which can cause a cloud in judgment. Here are some ways to overcome the better-than-average bias.
   a. Be cognizant that everyone believes they are better than average. Some may be better than average in certain domains but below average in others. Be realistic.
   b. Ask the question, "How would others assess my skills, abilities, strengths, and weaknesses?" Find a few trusted peers willing to provide open, honest and especially, critical feedback to better understand self.
   c. Next, make a plan to improve, using the feedback from others.

4. Attribution bias involves the tendency to attribute different causes for our own beliefs and actions than that of others. Here are ways to avoid falling for the attribution bias.
   a. Individuals should assess others in the same way they would assess themselves.
   b. Be fair when judging others and looking at their decisions.
   c. Give other people the benefit of the doubt.
   d. Do not attribute personal decisions to purely rational reasons and others' decisions to purely emotional reasons. Have a balanced perspective.

5. Availability bias is the tendency to assign probabilities of potential outcomes based on examples that are immediately available to us, especially those which are vivid, unusual, or emotionally charged. Here are a few things to think about.
   a. Ensure that examples being considered and data being analyzed are truly representative of what it is that needs to be known.
   b. Consider the source of the information. Are they trying to inform or are they more interested in encouraging consumption of a particular product.
   c. Do not rely on a single or a limited source of information.
   d. In the end, follow the trend lines, not the headlines. Dramatic stories and dramatic presentations don't give us a proper understanding of where our focus should reside.
6. Backfire effect or backfire bias occurs when people seem to double down on their beliefs in spite of overwhelming evidence against them. When engaged in a difficult conversation with another person exhibiting backfire bias, keep the following in mind.
   a. Keep emotions out of the exchange.
   b. Discuss, do not attack. Focus on the argument, not the person making the argument.
   c. Listen carefully and try to articulate the other person's position accurately.
   d. Show respect by listening to the other person carefully and taking their argument seriously.
   e. Acknowledge understanding why someone might hold that opinion.
   f. Try to show how changing facts does not necessarily mean changing world views.

7. Authority bias, involves the tendency to value the opinions of an authority, especially in the evaluation of something we know little about. This is sometimes also called the halo effect, which is the tendency for people to generalize one positive trait of a person to all other traits. To avoid decisions being made based on the authority bias or halo effect, do not give credibility to a perceived authority who is likely no better informed than anyone else.

8. In-attentional blindness bias, more or less means, the tendency to miss things that are right in front of our eyes. Because of in-attentional blindness, individuals can focus too much on the details and miss the obvious. Here are some things to consider.
   a. Try to think out of the box.
   b. Change perspectives.
   c. Look for new patterns.
   d. Be playful and relaxed and see the bigger picture.
   e. Be curious, ask why, and examine the unexpected.

9. Large numbers bias focuses on very improbably events will probably occur when there are a sufficiently large number of chances for them to happen. For this bias, keep the following in mind.
   a. Be aware of all the other things that could have happened compared to what did happen.
   b. Remember, we only notice the highly unusual things that happen because they stand out, whereas the numerous other mundane things that happen around us, don't stand out.
   c. Pay attention to everything that happens, not just the highly unusual.

10. Blind spot bias is defined as the tendency to recognize the power of cognitive beliefs in other people but to be blind to the influence upon our own beliefs. Here is how to avoid the blind spot bias.
    a. Attend to personal blind spots.
    b. Focus on personal biases and not others' biases. Ask, "How am I biased?"
    c. Try to answer the question, "What would it take to show that I am biased?"
    d. Self-awareness of cognitive shortcomings is the first step to a deeper understanding of yourself and your biases.

11. Self-awareness of cognitive shortcomings is the first step to a deeper understanding of self and personal biases.

*This document include the biases covered by the instructor in this LinkedIn Learning course, and is not meant to be an exhaustive list.