Steps to Eliminating our Biases

Just as we need to regularly make sure that your tools and equipment are in good condition, we need to care for our civility tools. Consequently we need to find ways to direct our bias back to a civil level of communication. Here are a few steps I am suggesting to help us eliminate our own bias and perhaps that of others.

The absolute first step is to admit to ourselves that we do have some biases that needing cleaning up. Along with that we may need to take a look at all our strong feelings to assess whether they too may be getting out of hand. These biases and strong feelings all need to be written down. It is clearly important that we address each of them until they are no longer interfering with our civility.

Secondly we need to go through a process of cleaning up the corrosion of each of our biases. Here you need to consider how your best learn. Some like to hit the hardest first, your strongest and most disruptive bias, because as you proceed the rest becomes easier and easier. Others like to build on starting with the easiest, a relative strong opinion, and work up to the hardest.

Since bias blocks your ability to be inclusive, I believe this is where you are best able to be successful. Now you write the bias that you chose to work on first and write it down on a separate piece of paper. Next you write down what you know to be other opinions. This may be so difficult that you can only come up with one statement. Further research is required. There are multiple resources to read or view where you need to try to keep your mind focused on understanding this viewpoint. An example from our past is the issue of slavery. You can read about how the south depending on slavery for its economy as well as its lifestyle. Hopefully this research will lead you to an expanded viewpoint: another individual had a different life experience and viewpoint on the issue. Inclusiveness has been returned to you.

A further step is to engage in a conversation or more with someone who has a different view point and let them speak. Listen to every word they are saying. Try to see their thinking. You have to remain quiet as you want to hear it all, you want to allow yourself to your best ability for a moment to embrace these thoughts. The first time you try you may find it impossible to listen. Then quietly let the person know that you are having difficulty listening and need to end this conversation now. It is important to repeat these attempts until you can listen. Hearing an opinion is not wanting you to change yours, but rather the acknowledgement that there are other thoughts on the subject.

This prepares you to find commonality or agreement: Using slavery the economy of the south depending on slavery while the north’s did not. Try to find as many as you can. When we feel we have something in common, it becomes easier to be respectful to the person. Wide spaces have been opened to have a civil conversation where both can voice their choice, find common ground, and agree that differences is reference remain.

It is probably helpful to choose other topics to discuss with those who also have your bias. Only voicing these thoughts can get your right back into your bias.

Lastly you have to give yourself a bias check regularly on this issue to make sure that you are remaining inclusive, listening, agreeable and respectful.

This process needs to be repeated with each of your biases on your list. Finally this means that you need to devote time to cleaning up your bias. It will not go away by just writing them down and saying I am going to stop this behavior. You have to practice new behavior, using the clean tools of civility.

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