



Finding Agency: Cognitive Blind Spots Worksheet

Disclaimer: The following worksheet is designed for the purpose to assist people improve their own common thinking errors, behavioral patterns or habits, or inaccurate perceptions in order to improve their well-being, relationships, and overall functioning. This worksheet has been modified and altered from existing theoretical models, psychology research, and cognitive frameworks, and also based upon the authors' own research, study, expertise, and practice. We hope that you find this as a helpful tool and guide as you explore the inner workings of your thinking and problematic patterns. Insight-oriented treatment can also help to individually tailor your goals and assist in working through more difficult stuck points.

Here is a summary:

- Wanting to be right can become a conversational blind spot.
- Overcoming conversational blind spots requires limiting one's "ownership" of the conversation and asking open-ended discovery questions.
- To break one's addiction to being right, one can make a conscious effort to speak less and listen more in one-on-one conversations.

Blind Spots

We live in a matrix. But this matrix is unlike the matrix where our bodies are stored in some remote location distant from our reality. Our matrix is the cognitive construct we create in our mind that determines how we see the world. The challenge is that everyone, coming from different backgrounds and experiences, have cognitive constructs very different from our own.

Leadership is determined by our ability to influence others. And our ability to influence others is driven in large part, by understanding our own biases, so that we can influence others with differing biases. Our Agency is the ability to understand that the actions you take determine your fate.

Like the Matrix, In this cognitive matrix we create, we choose between two pills: The Blue pill that allows us to maintain our moral authority, or the Red pill that allows us to see the world as it actually is, requiring moral humility.

We are trained to pick sides. Alas, so is everyone else. So if you rush into a discourse with others thinking you're right, you'll quickly find, so does everyone else. You will not find success, but if you step back and give up your moral authority you may find it.

Some people see the world as safe and good. Others see the threats in the world. We need both types. Both have biases. But the moral authority in us makes us want to see ourselves without bias and see that only as a weakness of lesser people. Because recognizing a blind spot involves self-evaluation. It is often difficult and potentially psychologically painful. However, understanding your blind spots are key to **owning your agency**.

In our hierarchy of Agency on our Optimistic American website and better described in our book Addictive Ideologies gives the necessary steps to achieve Agency. We are focusing on Blind Spots because it plays a critical role in our ability to accomplish Agency. It weaves its way through all 7 ideals.

	KNOWN TO YOU	UNKNOWN TO YOU
KNOWN TO OTHERS	<p>WHAT IS KNOWN</p> <p>You and others know about this behavior.</p> <p>i.e. Shyness</p>	<p>BLIND SPOT</p> <p>COGNITIVE BIAS</p> <p>INACCURATE VIEW OF THE WORLD</p> <p>You are unaware of your behavior but others are aware.</p> <p>i.e. Avoidance/self-defeating purposes</p>
UNKNOWN TO OTHERS	<p>CONCEALED</p> <p>You hide this from others.</p> <p>i.e. Excessive guilt/shame</p>	<p>UNKNOWN</p> <p>You and others don't know.</p> <p>[deeper psychological issues may benefit from working with a mental health provider for deeper insight oriented treatment]</p> <p>i.e. Beliefs of self-unworthiness</p>

Blind Spots Take on Many Permeations.

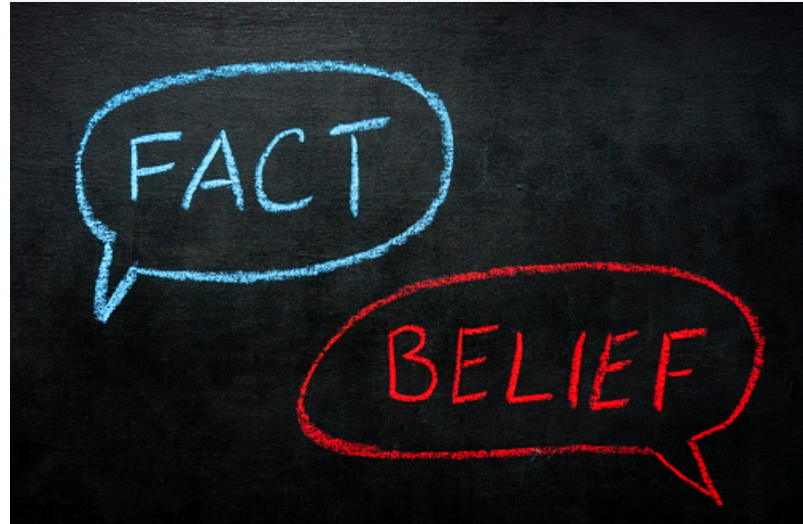
The top of the hierarchy is to “Know the Truth.” Our cognitive bias and blind spots get in the way. Leveraging Power is about putting strength over emotional safety. We can easily look at the Alt Right or Woke Left who seem impervious to differences, and not see our own ability to recognize our own bias. Agency demands strength and strength only comes from resilience. Love, connection, we not me, are all ideals that need us to overcome our bias.

When we communicate we have an intention to accomplish a given result. Blind Spots create a barrier between our intentions and the result we desire. The biggest keys to overcome blind spots are self-awareness and emotional intelligence. As you read these two words, self-awareness and emotional intelligence, if you believe you have mastered them, that is a sign you have a problem.

Blind spots strongly influence your interpretation of others, and others interpretations of you. As an example, the blind spot can cause one to assume that other people’s political views are influenced by biased sources, whereas our own political stance is perfectly rational. When we express this without understanding how others will interpret us, we lose the ability to influence them and create an image of ourselves we did not intend.

Cognitive biases aren’t always bad. We encourage you to distinguish between cognitive biases and an inaccurate view of the world. We overestimate negative outcomes and underestimate positive ones. This is helpful in planning for the future but can also harm our ability to see the possibilities. things. Also, biases can help us create mental shortcuts that are necessary for quicker decisions that are often necessary.

Ideologies are addictive partly because of the high we get when we argue and win. When you study an ideology, you learn the arguments against the ideologies and the points to counter those arguments. As you then argue and win, your brain floods with different hormones — adrenaline and dopamine, giving you a high and feelings of invincibility. The hit from this feeling makes us want to replicate it. So we fight again. We become addicted to being right.



One of the counters to this high is love and connection, one of the steps in the Hierarchy of Agency. This creates another hormone that gives one a similar high - oxytocin. Activated by human connection, it opens off the networks in the prefrontal cortex, giving us the ability to find optimism, rational thought, creativity, trust and sharing.

Both public policy and business can face disastrous results from confirmation bias. When decision makers jump to conclusions, or ignore inconvenient information because it harms a plan of action, the results can be disastrous.

It can cause disaster in business and policy when it leads a decision-maker to jump to conclusions, fall prey to misguided analogies, or simply exclude information that inconveniently disturbs a desired plan of action. While the answer seems obvious to test assumptions, challenge your assumptions, this can be difficult even if you commit to it. The real answer is to create a culture of opposites. If two people in an organization think exactly alike, one of them is not needed. The starting point of overcoming bias is in who you hire.

Who you hire or create a part of your group, organization, or team should be driven by a shared sense of purpose and meaning. Having similar values is important. But they need to be tough, and unafraid to tell you the truth. People who are afraid to tell you the truth, are driven by fear. And that fear is an indication, they know they have limited options. And a person with limited options is one who probably doesn’t have the skills you need to be successful.

Here are different situations where Blind Spots affect our lives:

Resolving Conflicts in Marriage and with life partners that are damaged because of blind spots. Communicating between men and women, or communication with partners who come from different backgrounds.

In politics blind the desire to appear right is rewarded both from the voters and the hormonal stimulus. Many successful leaders suffer from this addiction, creating massive blind spots. Their skills at fighting for their views makes them unaware (some are aware and are intentional) that it creates for others a hijacking of the frontal lobe leaving them feeling submissive, the need to fight, flight, freeze or appease. Robbing others of their sense of Agency diminishes their desire to compromise and work with others. The Agency needed for our democracy to work.

The attraction to ideologies where we gain biological addiction to the hormones that come from feeling right. Mastering an ideology gives one the feeling of intellectual superiority, almost always a sign of blind spots. Those blind spots destroy their ability to find higher success that comes from collaboration. It also increases one's isolation from loved ones and can often lead to violence.

In business the loss of sales. When we have a bias for our product, or a bias about our need to be successful, we often miss the ability to create a relationship with others through understanding their needs. Telling people is very different from selling people. When we tell them even our questions are designed to be statements. When we sell them, we connect to them. We understand their needs and their points of view.

In business we lose input from good people because of our blind spots. This in turn often means we lose good people. Leaders who practice monologues, not dialogues are full of blind spots.

The Causes of Blind Spots and Inaccurate View of the World Bias

Naive realism. The assumption that one's is point of view is *entirely objective*. You tell yourself or others you can see things as they actually are.

The introspection illusion. Over valuing your beliefs, feelings and intents over behavior. Then applying a different standard to others and instead only seeing the behavior.

Ego-related needs. Ignoring your biases in order to feel better about yourself. There is no single cause for an inaccurate view of the world bias.

Intuition vs. Conscious Reasoning:

Research suggests Cognitive biases occur primarily due to faulty intuitions or improper analytical reasoning. Cognitive biases or inaccurate view of the world bias can be described based on dual-system theory or *two main cognitive systems* we use as humans:

System 1 Intuitive Processing: strongly influenced by emotions, this processing is fast and effortless. It has the ability to focus on many factors at once but may be faulty, i.e., laughing at a joke or slowing down as you enter a dark room.

System 2 Conscious Reasoning: Detached from emotions, the process is responsible for reasoning. This process is slow and effortful. In this mode, we can only focus on one thing at a time such as trying to solve a complex mathematical equation.

Bounded rationality: Our judgements and decisions are affected by the amount of time we have as well as the types of information we have to process. We might reach a different decision if we had more time.

Heuristics: We all use mental shortcuts to examine information and make decisions. According to recent polling for example, women are considered more trustworthy than men, while men are considered more competent than women. A short cut would be to apply the bias when making a decision. Heuristics, are generally connected to System 1.

Rejection engages amygdala hijack releasing cortisol which floods the system and shuts down the prefrontal cortex. This creates a blind spot to find compromise, opportunity, and we begin to pay more attention to our thoughts and less to other people's words. We begin to lose our ability to influence.

Expressing ourselves creates a release of a higher level of hormones giving us a feeling of euphoria. The more we talk, the better we feel. Our bodies crave that high, and we become blind to the conversational dynamics. People we're talking to might feel cut off, invisible, unimportant, minimized, or rejected, which releases the same neurochemicals as physical pain.

Hooked on Being Right: When we feel like we won an argument we receive a high. When we feel we are losing an argument, trying to defend your position while losing ground, your voice gets louder. You talk over a colleague and correct their point of view. They push back, so you try to convince everyone you're right. It becomes an out of body experience. From a neurochemistry standpoint it is the amygdala hijacking the frontal cortex. Being hooked on being right is the attraction to ideologies.

Types and Categories of an Inaccurate View of the World Bias

Hot Biases: Hot biases are more emotionally motivated. Our desire to have a positive self image may cause us to take credit for others actions, and see the success as driven by our personal effort, where we might blame failure on either the other person or the environment.

Cold Biases: Cold biases are not emotionally motivated. As an example, our memories struggle to determine events that took place long ago verses recent events. It is a bias, but it is motivated not by emotion, but by the mechanical way of how our memory works.

Other Biases:

Belief biases. Our biases effect our beliefs and modifications of beliefs in us and others. As an example, often we think we reached consensus only to find that was not shared by others in our group. This can be caused because others do share the same beliefs, values, opinions, or characteristics as we do.

Memory biases: We all store memories differently, and our biases affect what we remember. As an example, we can be biased to remember things in a negative perspective forgetting what happened good, or we can forget negative information and this will make experiences appear more positive.

Calculation biases: We often make mistakes in probabilities or other calculations because of certain biases. As an example, if you flip a coin a hundred times and you only get heads you may believe the next flip has a higher probability to be tails. *Yet, the real odds are still 50/50.*

Information biases: We often make mistakes on information by comparing the information to other information that is not relative or relevant.

Social biases: We each have a bias in how others perceive us. As an example, some of us believe they are being noticed more than they actually are (spotlight effect bias.) We have a hard time determining how others see us, because we see ourselves naturally from our own construct, not others.



The Effects of Blind Spots and an Inaccurate View of the World

Blind Spots can lead one to believe that their decisions are objective. This can happen even if they know they have bias in judgements and the decision making process. They miss that the final decision has bias.

Blind Spots can lead one to believe that they and others of like mind are enlightened and those with opposing views are lesser.

Not understanding your bias on education may cause you to overlook the value of experience.

Overlooking the time and effort others have invested in an idea or project can leave the others feeling unappreciated, uninspired, and unmotivated.

A blind spot that believes you are without bias, can leave you without a clear understanding of the role you play in the outcome of a project that may be important to you.

Coping and managing conflict is important in relationships and leadership. Blind spots can leave you conflict avoidant.

Blind spots and bias can leave you avoiding responsibility and blaming others.

Blind spots and how others respond to you from those unrealized bias's can leave you feeling disrespected, a loss of connection, and an inability to move forward.

The halo effect: We tend to believe that someone who is physically attractive is more knowledgeable and has a better personality compared to unattractive people. Not understanding your bias can cause you to overlook talent or opportunities.

The illusion of control: We overestimate our ability to control outcomes where skill is less important than chance. This can cause us to take on financial or business risk even if it is likely to fail regardless of our effort.

The Outgroup of Homogeneity Bias: Seeing people as more individual in groups one belongs to yet seeing people in other groups as being similar to one another. This is partly caused by spending more time with people in your own group and little time with people of other groups. But this can cause us to miss market opportunities, hiring opportunities, and foster miscommunication.

The Zero-sum Bias: The belief that one person or party's gain is proportional to another persons or party's loss. This can cause unnecessary conflict, and also a misunderstanding of the value of resources that you feel is scarce when in fact there is an abundance.

The fundamental attribution error: The belief that people's behavior is based on personality factors and not environmental factors. As an example, if you first meet someone and they are stressed and upset, you may think they are always this way. This false impression causes missed opportunities.

The Treatment for Blind Spots and Cognitive Bias or an Inaccurate View of the World

Regarding naive realism: Understanding your perception isn't necessarily objective.

Regarding introspection illusion: Apply similar standards to yourself you apply to others and vice versa. If you judge you by intention, judge them by intention. If you judge them by actions, judge yourself by actions.

Regarding ego-related issues: All of our egos want us to believe we are not experiencing bias. We need to normalize the belief that all of us are biased, that it is natural, and that if you pretend it's not true, it will reflect badly on you.

Master your emotions: clear, compassionate, non-judgmental two-way communication is how resolution is found, deals get done, marriages are saved.

Stop assuming that others see things the way you do, or feel about things as you do.

Pay close attention to how much time you occupy in a conversation. Ask more questions, be curious, try and be non-judgmental.

Establish rules in a meeting. Especially one that might get tense. Ask others what you might do to keep it productive? Make sure there is enough time to give others the chance to express their point of views. Agree not to let anyone dominate the conversation. Agree that you won't interrupt each other, ask everyone to take notes. Ask people to be honest about how they see the situation, but to be respectful of those who disagree with them. Sometimes two meetings help, one to get out feelings, and then come back to afterthought to discuss possible directions. Afterward, analyze what went right and what went wrong and how to improve.

The Treatment for Blind Spots and Cognitive Bias or an Inaccurate View of the World:

- Listen and care unreasonably: Especially in one-on-one conversations, speak less and listen more.
- Second guess yourself and your assumptions.
- Know you can't get rid of all of your biases, but be very aware they always exist.
- Slow down your thinking.

Regarding System 1 and System 2 and cognitive debiasing:

Improve your intuitions. This requires System 2 to determine what those intuitions are, and evaluate if they are correct. You can also do this by changing the environment where those intuitions affect your communication. If you are making calls to upset customers at the end of the day when you are tired, you may be more susceptible to instincts and intuitions that harm your intent.

Monitor System 1 thinking. This requires System 2 to slow the reasoning process and to think about thinking (metacognition.) This might include:

Identifying key relationships and relevant biases you may hold within the relationship. Think about those biases before you communicate.

Identify biases you may not be able to overcome. These biases may have come from Trauma or they are key to a business plan. While we encourage you to always think again about your assumptions, those biases can be difficult to change when you are profiting from it.

Try and create emotional distance between you and an individual you find it difficult even when you know your bias so you can be better at judgements.

How to help others with their Blind Spots

There are several things that you can do to reduce the bias blind spot in other people, in order to help them become more aware of their biases and of how those biases influence their reasoning:

- No one likes to be analyzed. Be careful of making judgements. Instead ask questions.
- Talk about your own blind spots. That it is hard to see your own bias as it is for everyone.
- Ask them what they think their biases are?

Explain how you try to look at the main causes of this bias including naive realism, the introspection illusion, and ego-related needs.

Instructions for Worksheet:

“What is Known”: Write what you know about yourself and what everyone else knows about you. Also write what they know about the problems you might be having. For example, this could be shyness, stubbornness, or cockyness.

“Blind Spot”: Write about what you might not know about yourself or your problem, but others know it. This might require you to speak with others about this and to ask them. This could include some of the examples from above or it could be, being a perfectionist, lack of time management, or poor prioritization.

“Concealed”: Write about what you know about the problem or about yourself. This information is usually not known by other people. This could include shame, self-doubt, or fears.

“Unknown”: Write about what is not only unknown to you but also unknown to people. This might require professional help to discover. This can be anything from your cognitive distortions to potential you might have that you haven't tested. Examples could be, specific types of stress, trauma, etc.

BLIND SPOTS WORKSHEET

KNOWN TO OTHERS	KNOWN TO YOU	UNKNOWN TO YOU
	WHAT IS KNOWN -----	BLIND SPOT -----
UNKNOWN TO OTHERS	CONCEALED -----	UNKNOWN -----