



Supporting Inclusive Communities



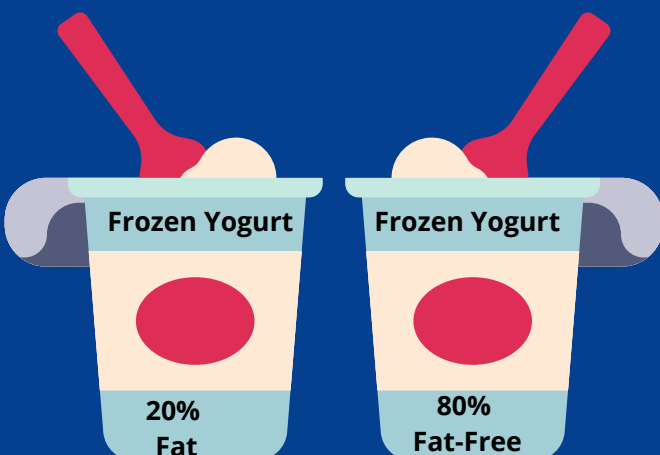
MODULE 6: LINKING BIASES TO INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

The link between framing a situation, which is influenced by our biases, and building supportive and inclusive communities is this: the way we initially frame why another person acted in a certain way is based on our own life experiences, including the advantages and disadvantages talked about [in module two](#), our knowledge, and how information is presented to us in the environment.

This creates an unconscious bias, as introduced [in module five](#), that influences our actions. According to an article [by Organizational Behaviour](#), our perception and interpretation of others behaviours affects our future behaviours. So if we only answer the “why” based on what we know, we might come to conclusions and take actions that are incorrect. This is because what we know isn't always reflective of the full story. Incorrect assumptions that guide our actions can lead to decisions that leave some community members feeling hurt, isolated and wanting to distance themselves from the League Movement. This is why it's important to be aware of our biases and what influences our decision making abilities. We'll explore this more in the next few pages with an example.

Which of these yogurts would you purchase?

According to [Decision Labs](#), most people would choose the 80% Fat-Free yogurt, assuming it is better for them. However, when you take a closer look at both yogurts, you'll probably notice they are both the same. How information is presented to us matters. We need to be able to take a step back and reflect before acting. In the next pages we offer some tools to help you do just that.



LINK BETWEEN FRAMING AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

Here's an example that further demonstrates how we frame a situation and impacts our behaviour.

Ron is the president of the fictitious Community League, Ramsett Park. Twice a year you host a BBQ where you put a lot of time and effort into creating your own beef patties and secret BBQ sauce. For the most part Ron's BBQ is loved by all, and the kids enjoy guessing what's in Ron's secret sauce. Ron notices that every time the same two families show up and never eat your BBQ, instead they just load up on chips and veggies. Ron wonders why they do this? Ron mentions this to another board member who mentions they'd seen the family eat burgers at the local diner before. Ron thinks that maybe the families don't like his burgers and he's hurt by this so he confronts them. Ron asks the families why they don't like his burgers, and what's so special about the burgers in the local diner. The families are then hurt by the fact that Ron assumed that they didn't like his cooking. Both families then disclose that they are vegetarian, that they eat veggie burgers at the local diner, and that they never said anything because Ron never asked about dietary preferences. The families then decide to cancel their League Memberships because they don't feel comfortable.



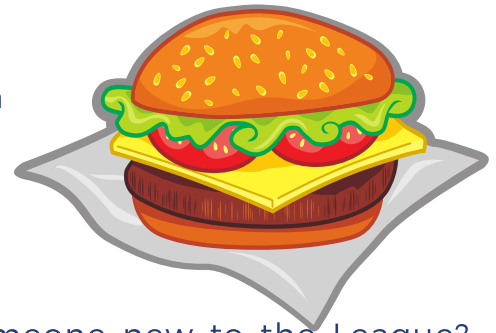
Reflection Questions:

- How was the situation framed to Ron?
- Did framing impact Ron's behaviour?
- What additional information do you think you need before responding to the situation?
- How would you have handled the situation differently than Ron?

COUNTERACTING YOUR BIASES

The way to counteract this unconscious bias is to strengthen our critical thinking skills. According to [this article by Marshall Shepard](#), critical thinking is “the ability to think clearly and rationally, understanding the logical connection between ideas.” Critical thinking happens when we are told something or observe a behaviour and we stop the urge to assign a cause right away and instead gather more information to gain a better understanding of the situation. The ["But, Why?" technique](#) from last week is a great way to support critical thinking. Here's another exercise adapted from [Skills You Need](#) to help support you in exercising your critical thinking.

Going back to our scenario with Ron and his interaction with his fellow board member about the families who didn't eat the BBQ burgers, and answer the following questions.



- **Who said it?**

- Was it someone you (or in your case Ron) know? Someone new to the League? Someone in a position of authority or power? Does it matter who told you (in our case Ron) this?

- **What did they say?**

- Does the person give facts or opinions? Did they provide all the facts or did they leave anything out?

- **When did they say it?**

- Was it before, during or after an important event? Does the timing matter?

- **Where did they say it?**

- Was it in public or private? Did other people or the people the information is about have a chance to respond or provide an explanation?

- **Why did they say it?**

- Was it in response to a question or call for feedback or did they provide this information freely? Did they explain the reasoning behind their opinion? Were they trying to make someone look good or bad?

- **How did they say it?**

- Were they happy, sad, indifferent, annoyed? Did they write it or verbalize it? Did you (in our case Ron) understand what they said?

Had Ron taken a moment to consider the response from his board member he might have realized that he actually didn't have all the facts and he didn't know why the families weren't eating his burgers. He made an assumption off what his board member said that the families didn't like his burgers but that was incorrect because Ron didn't have all the information.

If Ron realized he didn't really understand the situation at hand, this would have changed his behaviour and instead of confronting the families he might have approached them to better understand their behaviour by saying the following:

"Hi, I'm Ron the Board President with Ramsett Park, I noticed that every time there's a BBQ you don't eat the burgers, and I was just wondering if there's anything we can do so that you can try everything that's available at the BBQ."

If you've encountered similar situations where behaviours and situations have been brought to your attention to deal with in your role as a Community Member or a Community League Board Member, try this approach of reflecting through asking more questions. If you come to the conclusion you don't have a good understanding of the situation then the best next step is to gather that information from those who are involved. If you feel like you have all the information to make a decision then you could proceed with your recommendations. The best way to determine if you're ready to act is to consider, *"have you spoken to all affected parties about the situation?"*

Remember when trying to understand the viewpoints of others, it's important that you leave out your thoughts around the causes. This way you're not being biased to act by your own perspective. Critical thinking is a skill that we all need to work on to develop, but is strengthened when we work in diverse teams (more on this in a future module). It's also a skill that requires us to not act in the moment but rather create the time and space to reflect on the information and observations presented to us to make better decisions. Here are some resources to help you strengthening your critical thinking:

- [Ted Talks: 5 Tips to Improve Your Critical Thinking](#).
- [University of Waterloo's Promoting and Assessing Critical Thinking](#).
- [Three Simple Habits to Improve your Critical thinking](#).



As you learn and journey through the process of creating inclusive communities, you will make mistakes and that's okay. In a later module we intend to provide tips for how to apologize and mend relationships that you may have unintentionally hurt. In the meantime know that just the mere act of trying to create and maintain inclusive spaces is an extremely powerful first step.

Reflection question for this week:

The next time a Community Member or fellow Board Member comes to you with a concern how will you incorporate critical thinking into your response?