



Perception Bias

The two versions of the world

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Perception or cognitive bias refers to the tendency of individuals to interpret and understand information in a way that aligns with their existing beliefs, values, and preconceived notions. It is a cognitive bias that influences how we perceive, process, and remember information, often leading to a skewed or distorted view of reality

Another definition of perception bias: is the tendency of individuals to interpret information in a way that supports their preexisting beliefs or expectations. In other words, people tend to see what they want or expect to see, and often overlook or discount information that conflicts with their existing beliefs.

Perception bias

Perception bias can manifest in a variety of ways. Here are some examples of the approximately 180 biases, along with a practice to counteract them:

Confirmation Bias: The tendency to favor information that confirms one's existing beliefs while ignoring or discounting contradictory evidence.

Practice: Actively seek out and consider diverse perspectives and alternative viewpoints. Engage in critical thinking and encourage open dialogue to challenge your own assumptions.

Availability Bias: The tendency to rely on information that is readily available in memory or easily accessible.

Practice: Take time to gather comprehensive and balanced information from various sources. Avoid making quick judgments based on limited or superficial information.

Anchoring Bias: The tendency to rely heavily on the first piece of information encountered when making judgments or decisions.

Practice: Seek multiple reference points and consider a range of information before settling on a judgment or decision. Challenge the initial information by exploring alternative possibilities.

Stereotyping Bias: The tendency to make assumptions or generalize about a group of people based on limited information or preconceived notions.

Practice: Engage in intercultural experiences, cultivate empathy, and challenge stereotypes by seeking individual stories and experiences. Promote diversity and inclusion in your social and professional environments.

Perception bias

Halo Effect: The tendency to generalize a positive or negative impression of someone or something across various attributes or qualities.

Practice: Approach each person or situation with an open mind and evaluate them based on specific attributes rather than relying solely on a general impression. Recognize and challenge the influence of first impressions.

In-group Bias: The tendency to favor individuals or groups that are perceived as similar or belonging to one's own group.

Practice: Actively engage with and seek understanding of diverse groups and perspectives. Foster inclusive environments and challenge your own biases by empathizing with others' experiences.

Authority Bias: The tendency to unquestioningly accept and defer to authority figures or perceived experts.

Practice: Adopt a critical mindset and independently verify information. Seek a variety of expert opinions and consider their credibility, expertise, and potential biases.

Attribution Bias: The tendency to attribute one's own successes to internal factors and failures to external factors, while attributing others' successes to external factors and failures to internal factors.

Practice: Engage in self-reflection and consider the influence of both internal and external factors on outcomes. Practice empathy and consider the diverse circumstances and challenges others may face.

To counter perception biases effectively, it is essential to cultivate self-awareness, actively challenge our assumptions, and strive for objectivity in our thoughts and judgments. Regularly practicing critical thinking, seeking diverse perspectives, and questioning our own biases can help mitigate the impact of perception biases and promote more accurate and fair assessments of the world around us. Lets explore some of this concepts a little further.

Self-Awareness: Cognitive biases often operate at a subconscious level, influencing our thoughts, perceptions, and behaviors without our conscious awareness. By understanding cognitive biases, we can become more aware of our own mental processes and recognize when bias might be influencing our judgments or decisions. This self-awareness allows us to reflect on our thoughts and actions, leading to personal growth and the opportunity to challenge and change our biases.

Decision-Making: Cognitive biases can significantly impact our decision-making processes, leading to errors, flawed reasoning, and suboptimal choices. By understanding these biases, we can identify when they are at play and take steps to mitigate their effects. We can learn to consider alternative perspectives, gather more information, and engage in rational analysis to make more informed and objective decisions.

Critical Thinking: Cognitive biases can impede our ability to think critically and objectively. By learning about these biases, we can become more adept at recognizing and questioning our own assumptions, evaluating evidence, and considering alternative viewpoints. This enhances our critical thinking skills, allowing us to approach problems and situations with a more open and analytical mindset.



Empathy and Understanding: Cognitive biases can lead to stereotyping, prejudice, and discriminatory behaviour. By understanding these biases, we can develop empathy and recognize that our perceptions and judgments may be influenced by biases that prevent us from seeing the full complexity of others. This understanding fosters a more inclusive and tolerant mindset, promoting better relationships and a more harmonious society.

Lifelong Learning: Learning about cognitive biases is an ongoing process that encourages lifelong learning and personal growth. It instills a curiosity to explore new ideas, challenge existing beliefs, and be open to change. By continually examining and questioning our biases, we can broaden our perspectives, expand our knowledge, and continuously improve ourselves.

Understanding cognitive biases is essential for personal improvement as it promotes self-awareness, enhances decision-making skills, improves critical thinking abilities, fosters empathy and understanding, and cultivates a lifelong learning mindset. By actively working to recognize and mitigate our biases, we can strive for personal growth, make better choices, and engage with others in a more objective and inclusive manner.



Pratyahara

Control of the senses



Pratyahara is the withdrawal of the senses indriyas of cognition and action from both the external world and the images or impressions in the mind field 2.54 . The senses are said to follow the mind in the same way the hive of bees follows the queen bee. Wherever she goes, they will follow. Similarly, if the mind truly goes inward, the senses will come racing behind.

In order to master pratyahara, having a certain level of control over asana physical postures and pranayama breath control is crucial.

A steady posture and the ability to regulate the breath in a steady and uninterrupted manner are essential for the full experience of pratyahara. This mastery becomes crucial as it differentiates between those who attain deep meditation and those who only achieve mental and physical relaxation in their practice.

Cessation not suppression

The idea is to disengage rather than suppress. Thoughts will naturally arise, but by not engaging with them, their power over the senses diminishes, disrupting the tendencies of the mind. The goal is not to restrain oneself or the senses from wanting to engage or being attached to external or internal experiences. Instead, the practice is about training oneself to not even have the initial attraction towards them. If any attraction arises, it is so weak that it holds no power over you.



Cessation not suppression

By combining these two concepts, we can explore how perception bias can be mitigated or managed through the practice of Pratyahara. By consciously withdrawing from external sensory inputs and focusing on internal experiences, Pratyahara helps individuals develop a greater awareness of their own cognitive and perceptual processes.

Through Pratyahara, individuals can observe their thoughts, emotions, and biases without getting entangled or reactive. This heightened self-awareness enables them to recognize their perception biases and challenge them. By consciously observing and acknowledging their biases, individuals can strive for a more objective and balanced understanding of the world.

Practicing Pratyahara can also enhance the ability to notice subtle sensory experiences within the body, further deepening self-awareness. This increased awareness can help individuals recognize the physiological responses that may contribute to their perception biases, such as bodily sensations associated with fear or discomfort.



Pratyahara can help mitigate cognitive bias by

Developing self-awareness: Pratyahara involves redirecting attention from external stimuli to internal experiences. By practicing pratyahara, individuals can become more attuned to their thoughts, emotions, and biases. This increased self-awareness allows for the identification and recognition of perception biases as they arise.

Observing without judgment: Pratyahara encourages individuals to observe their thoughts, emotions, and biases without judgment or attachment. By adopting a non-reactive and non-judgmental stance, practitioners can better understand their biases without getting caught up in them. This observation helps create a space for reflection and examination of the underlying factors contributing to perception bias.

Cultivating detachment: Pratyahara involves withdrawing from external sensory inputs, which includes disengaging from attachment to preconceived notions and beliefs. By consciously detaching from rigid viewpoints, individuals can open themselves up to new perspectives and possibilities. This detachment allows for a more objective evaluation of information and reduces the influence of bias on perception.

Pratyahara can help mitigate cognitive bias by

Practicing mindfulness: Pratyahara is closely related to mindfulness, which involves paying attention to the present moment with openness and curiosity. By cultivating mindfulness, individuals can bring awareness to their biases as they arise, acknowledging them without judgment, and intentionally redirecting their attention to the present moment. This process helps create a cognitive space that allows for more accurate and unbiased perception.

Seeking alternative perspectives: Pratyahara can also facilitate a mindset of exploration and openness. By withdrawing from fixed perspectives and habitual ways of thinking, individuals can actively seek out alternative viewpoints and consider different sources of information. This active engagement with diverse perspectives helps challenge and broaden one's own biases.



Conclusion

The synergy between cognitive bias practices and pratyahara practices lies in their shared objective of transcending our cognitive limitations and biases. By integrating these practices, we can develop a multifaceted approach to understanding ourselves and the world around us. The self-awareness cultivated through pratyahara practices can help us recognize when cognitive biases are at play, enabling us to apply the critical thinking skills gained from cognitive bias practices. Similarly, the mindfulness and non-reactivity fostered by pratyahara practices can support us in challenging our biases with an open mind, embracing alternative viewpoints, and making more objective decisions.

By combining the insights from cognitive bias practices and the introspective nature of pratyahara practices, we can strive for a more accurate and unbiased perception of reality. This integrated approach empowers us to navigate the complexities of the human mind, make informed decisions, and engage with the world with greater empathy, open-mindedness, and wisdom.



Practice

Choose one or more of the following practices:

Trataka (mindful gazing) candle, horizon, ocean, lake, night sky, simple objects

Yoga Nidra

Conscious disengagement or training of the mind and senses (for a specific amount of time a day, choose to not engage in whatever is happening around you) no judgement is part of this practice.

More advanced practitioners can do energy withdraw exercises if already familiar with it.

