

Five strategies to combat unconscious bias

1. **Extremely easy to use:** Its user interface is simple to navigate and perfect for families and teachers with *a little to a lot* of experience using technology. In addition to its playful design, ClassTag consolidates all of your class communication and scheduling with parents in one place.
2. **Effective, consistent system:** ClassTag has lots of features teachers will love including a weekly newsletter. The newsletter can be customized and automatically pulls information from your ClassTag dashboard into an easy-to-read digest for families.
3. **Full visibility into parent involvement:** With ClassTag teachers can find out which parents are checking in and accessing their messages. This is helpful when developing a plan that makes sure you reach every family of the students in your class.
4. **Relationship building support:** A new feature in ClassTag helps teachers understand skills and interests parents bring to your class and school community. This can help teachers build relationships and find relevant opportunities to involve parents by making the best use of their skill sets.
5. **Customization for each parent:** Families can now decide what type of communication they'd like to receive from their child's teacher, giving plenty of flexibility on the type of notifications in their inbox.

If you're interested in trying out ClassTag this school year, [visit their website](#) to learn more!

Tapping five strategies

Knowing that unconscious bias leads to disparity, nurses must try to eliminate it. The following five strategies may help.

1. Personal awareness. This is the process of looking inward to recognize beliefs and values that can lead to unconscious bias. Recognition can lead to the development of self-regulatory behaviors to mitigate the influence of bias on patient interactions.³ Acquiring personal awareness requires an internal compass that's used to guide daily interactions. This compass can help nurses recognize acceptable and unacceptable attitudes and behaviors and stay on the right path when faced with the continual threat of unconscious bias. It forces nurses to constantly look inward and creates an awareness of how they're perceived by others, laying the foundation for a therapeutic nurse-patient relationship.

2. Acknowledgment. Without acknowledgment that a problem exists, no action can be taken to solve the problem. With acknowledgment comes the acceptance of accountability and responsibility to make a difference. Nurses and other healthcare professionals must move to suppress unconscious bias by initiating responses to foster positive behaviors, such as empathy.

3. Empathy. Healthcare professionals must be able to empathize with patients and their circumstances to understand what they're feeling. Nurses can develop empathy by making a conscious effort to understand the patient's situation, become fully immersed in the patient's point of view, and get a sense of what it's like to be walking in the patient's shoes.⁴ Most people naturally have a sense of empathy, but some patients and situations can raise a barrier to empathy. For example, caring for patients who participate in risk-taking behaviors that result in adverse health outcomes can make it more difficult for a caregiver to be empathetic. Refusing to acknowledge this emotional necessity can produce negative outcomes during patient interactions and care. To overcome these barriers to empathy, healthcare providers must consciously make an effort to recognize and acknowledge that the barriers exist and deliberately implement a practice that aligns with unbiased patient care.

4. Advocacy. Support for patients as they navigate a complex healthcare system is called advocacy. Nurses can be patient advocates by assisting with communication with other members of the healthcare team, identifying best treatment options, and ensuring that a patient's rights aren't overlooked. In the presence of unconscious bias, nurses' advocacy can support patients to receive the individualized care they need. Nurses must advocate for patients with tact, compassion, and professionalism, and communicate and collaborate with other healthcare team members to support the patients' needs. Patients should be able to sense that their nurses intend to do what's best for them to provide safe outcomes.

5. Education. Enhanced knowledge is central to raising awareness, recognizing the existence of unconscious bias, and reducing its prevalence. Education can be introduced in formal curricula for healthcare providers and nurses. Another approach is to offer education that focuses on sensitivity and the existence of unconscious bias in healthcare facilities. Nurses can educate others during their daily interactions to raise awareness about the consequences of unconscious bias. Routine staff meetings can provide another forum for education, giving nurses an opportunity to share their experiences and beliefs and to explore options to mitigate this challenge. Educating others about unconscious bias helps create an environment that fosters equal treatment for all patients with an open and accepting approach. Besides strengthening the knowledge base, education creates an atmosphere promoting a strong nurse-patient relationship based on empathy and understanding, ultimately resulting in high-quality and equitable patient care.

Positive changes

Although many healthcare providers don't see themselves as being biased, it's a common and persistent problem. Unrecognized and unmanaged, unconscious bias can lead to health

disparities, resulting in potentially negative consequences for patients. Using the five strategies offers a positive framework that can be used by nurses and other healthcare professionals to overcome unconscious bias and provide optimal patient care.
