**AGPA Connect 2023 Presenter Information**

**Course Code:** 31

**Course Title:** A "Race" toward Understanding: Neuroscience and Instinctual Bias

**Course Times:** 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM

**Course Dates:** Friday, March 10

**Instructors:** Lorraine Wodiska

**Course Description:** Becoming an anti-racist therapist is an objective of the highest priority for us in the role of group therapists. Further, it is imperative to begin to work with our groups in a way that furthers anti-racism. In this workshop, we will consider how neuroscience offers us information about our implicit racism and bias and will offer suggestions for how we can move forward as therapists with our groups.

**Learning Objectives**

The attendee will be able to:‎

1. ‎‎‎Differentiate between explicit and implicit racism.‎
2. ‎Explain the role of the amygdala in implicit racism.‎
3. ‎Describe the connection between neuroscience and implicit racism.‎
4. ‎Identify two steps each person can take as we move forward.‎

**Significant Articles:**

1. Bosman, M. (2012). The racist brain: The neuroscience of conditioned racism.‎
2. https://www.stratleader.net/sli-blog/your-racist-brain-the-neuroscience-of-conditioned-racism
3. Dana, D. (2018). The Polyvagal Theory in Therapy: Engaging the Rhythm of Regulation. New York: W. ‎W. Norton & Company.‎ Kubota, J. T., Banaji, M. R., & Phelps, E. A. (2012). The neuroscience of race. ‎Nature Neuroscience. https://www.nature.com/articles/nn.3136‎
4. Marsh, J. Mendoza-Denton, R. & Smith, J. A. (Eds.) (2010). Are we born racist? New insights from ‎neuroscience and positive psychology. Boston: Beacon Press.‎
5. Oviawe, A. (2021). How the body responds to racism. Private Practice. https://www.bacp.co.uk/bacp-‎journals/private-practice/september-2021/how-the-body-responds-to-racism/‎

**Agenda:**

1. Introductions: 15 Minutes
2. Why did you sign up for this workshop?
3. What do you hope to understand at the end of this workshop?
4. Note five identities you hold: three of privilege and two minoritized.
5. Our Focus: 5 Minutes [Objective 1] Lecture/Discussion
6. Address what is covered in this workshop and what is not covered
   1. Looking at the role of neuroscience in implicit bias which is a part of structural racism of BIPOC and other minoritized groups
   2. Not focused on social justice issues
7. Two definitions of Racism—Manie Bosman
   1. Ideological (or Explicit or Overt Racism)
   2. Conditioned (Implicit, Subconscious or Covert) Racism
   3. Our Focus is on Implicit Racism
8. Information about Brain Research on Bias and Racism: 8 Minutes Bosman [Objectives 2, 3] Lecture/Discussion
9. Describe ingroups and outgroups first mentioned in 1906 by William Graham Sumner—he identified it as ethnocentrism
10. Consider in group/out group related to sports teams, red and blue politics
11. Note that perceived differences and triggers to the amygdala. Important to stop yourself and remember you are safe. This is cognitive reappraisal—how you think about a situation. It reduces bias in the moment and moving forward.
12. Emphasize the strong impact of conditioned racism on neural processes that are not in our consciousness or control.
13. Consider that infants are not racist but catch up soon: humans are born with a genetic preparedness to learn to fear individuals from different social groups. Further, we will have a lifetime of social learning to mistrust and fear others as we are continuously exposed to negative images, stories, stereotypes, archetypes and memes of “them”.
14. Mention the Williams Syndrome: abnormally friendly because they lack the sense of fear that the rest of us feel in some social circumstances.
15. Present Information on Neuroscience from Perspective of Polyvagal Theory: 30 Minutes [Objectives 2 and 3] Lecture/Discussion
16. Explain Polyvagal Theory
17. Focus on Neuroception of Safety
18. Describe the role of the amygdala in sorting and consequent racism and unconscious bias
19. Describe the messaging to the hippocampus and cortex
20. Note malleability and rewiring of the brain at any age
21. Stress the importance of co-regulation in reducing implicit racism and outgroup bias
22. Consider How to Move Forward from Implicit Racism in a Group: 5 Minutes [Objective 4] Lecture/Discussion
23. Be clear about how brain science works towards seeking comfort and the natural consequence of implicit racism
24. Understand and identify what is happening in the moment within the self and “say the second thing”
25. Encourage co-regulation of group members
26. Present Bosman Suggestions:
    1. There is a predisposition to label and treat outgroup as a threat
    2. This racial predisposition can be amplified and reinforced but
    3. Rewiring is possible (Add this to your perspective and attitude)
    4. Reframing is necessary – intentionally use your (cognitive) brain (to educate)
    5. Exposure is critical – individual exposure (integrated groups)
    6. Facilitate safe connections between people.
27. In Therapy Groups: 10 Minutes [Objective 4] Lecture/Discussion
28. Understand the frequency and inevitability of implicit racism
29. Present Fiske Perspective
    1. We identify another person’s apparent race, gender and age in a matter of milliseconds. In this blink of an eye, a complex network of stereotypes, emotional prejudices and behavioral impulses activates.
    2. Process them consciously. In less than a second, we can rein in unwanted prejudices
30. Present Johnson Material
    1. Facial expresses betray prejudice even when we don’t want them to.
    2. These prejudices can be dispelled by a smile!
31. Present Amodia Perspective
    1. The neocortex provides a mechanism for fine-tuning and augmenting the functions of subcortical structures
    2. The brain cannot be antiracist because it never stops spotting differences and sorting people into categories. But if the goal is to make judgments without regard to race, the brain can do that, though it takes effort and practice
    3. Slipups lead to renewed efforts to respond without prejudice
32. In Our Therapy Groups
    1. Address microaggressions when they occur
    2. Make the contract clear that you will educate and address this issue
    3. In process and therapy groups: Consider usefulness of Affinity Groups and/or Integrated Groups
33. Questions about the Above Material: 7 Minutes [Objectives 1, 2, 3] Discussion
34. Contract for our Group 50 Minutes [Objective 4] Demonstration Group
35. We will meet for 45 minutes.
36. Note the experience within your body as you look at one another.
37. Pay attention to the inevitable implicit racism that arises with each of us, as we are making assumptions and judgements all the time
38. Talk about it—gently and carefully with one another
39. Note the co-regulation
40. Consider the changes within the self and what you are learning
41. Discussion 15 minutes: [Objectives, 1, 2, 3, 4]
42. Evaluation 5 minutes

**Assessment Questions:**

Question 1 (include possible answers)

Another description of “explicit” racism is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. A. Conscious and clearheaded B. Conditioned and Covert C. Ideological and Overt D. A and C

Correct Answer 1

D: A and C

Question 2 (include possible answers)

Brain research indicates that we are consciously and unconsciously focused on perceived differences. When this happens, the following structure is triggered instantaneously: A. Hippocampus B. Hypothalamus C. Amygdala D. Cortex

Correct Answer 2

C: Amygdala

Question 3 (include possible answers)

True or False: As young children, we are predisposed to label and treat any outgroup as a threat.

Correct Answer 3

TRUE

Question 4 (include possible answers)

Recruiting the \_\_\_\_\_ vagal is an essential element in becoming less racist in the moment.

Correct Answer 4

Ventral

Question 5 (include possible answers)

In Polyvagal Theory, the neuroception of safety: A. Turns on defensive circuitry in the parasympathetic nervous system B. Turns off the defensive circuitry in the parasympathetic nervous system C. Turns on defensive circuitry in the sympathetic nervous system D. Turns off defensive circuitry in the sympathetic nervous system

Correct Answer 5

B: Turns off the defensive circuitry in the parasympathetic nervous system

Question 6 (include possible answers)

Implicit bias occurs: A. When we are physically threatened. B. Nearly all the time C. Hardly ever D. When we are stressed

Correct Answer 6

B: Nearly all the time

Question 7 (include possible answers)

Rewiring of the brain is possible: A. At any age B. Up to age 5 C. Until puberty D. The brain is wired at birth and cannot be substantially changed.

Correct Answer 7

A: At any age

Question 8 (include possible answers)

Because bias can be unconscious A. We are unable to change our prejudices B. We can use the cognitive part of the brain to reeducate ourselves C. We cannot make conscious efforts to educate ourselves about bias D. We will always treat the outgroup with disdain

Correct Answer 8

B: We can use the cognitive part of the brain to reeducate ourselves

Question 9 (include possible answers)

When we smile when we become consciously aware of our implicit bias: A. We lie to cover up what we are truly feeling B. We betray our prejudice unwittingly on our faces C. We can rein in our momentary emotional prejudice D. B and C D: B and C

Correct Answer 9

D: B and C

Question 10 (include possible answers)

When we slip up and note our bias, it is best interest of anti-racism to: A. Defend your understandable position B. Explain your reasoning for the bias C. Embrace the learning with humility D. Manage your feelings quietly and leave the situation as soon as possible C: Embrace the learning with humility

Correct Answer 10

C: Embrace the learning with humility