

My name is Elizabeth Wynn. I'm the Equality and Diversity Manager at the Babraham Institute and today I am going to be giving you a quick talk on unconscious bias and stress. I'm going to cover the basics of unconscious bias, some decision making processes in our brain and how stress can affect us. (0)2.8)461.49.5-1.36)310at Tw -22.52

So heuristics are really beneficial. That's why our brains have evolved to use them. We come across so much information we need to have mental shortcuts in order to process it effectively. So heuristics allow us to make decisions quickly, make decisions with missing information and they reduce cognitive load.

of is the area which has the most sort of control over decision making. So that's the rational side of decision making.

When we introduced stress, for example, a global pandemic, but also things like if you had an argument with a family member, if you haven't had enough sleep, if you're working towards a deadline, we know that stress has a lot of physiological effects on the body, including hormones and neurotransmitters.

And again, in a very simplified and generalized way, when we introduced stress, the amygdala is the area of the brain, which as a result takes precedence in our decision making. So it sort of overrides the prefrontal cortex, activates the basal ganglia, and means we make more decisions based on habitual responses. So we rely more on our heuristics, including the heuristics around unconscious bias.

So there has been, there have been a lot of studies on the effect of stress on behavioural decisions and there's a lot of the variation sometimes. So for example, stress can make certain groups more risk taking and certain groups more risk averse. But some things which are more general across populations: in stressful situations, we make more habitual responses than goal directed choices. W dire/directed (11) 10. 6p (021s)

Another thing you can do is take your time. So I know that this isn't good advice if the reason you're stressed is because you're working to time pressure. But if you are able to take time to make important decisions and you're less likely to rely on your snap judgments, your heuristics, which could introduce bias and you'll have the time to use your rational side of your brain in order to make those decisions. So for example, if you know that you're tired and stressed and in a bad mood because you had a poor night's sleep, see if you can put it off to the next day when you're feeling much more rested.

Create structures like checklists or SOPs, standard operating procedures. So this can be beneficial because it's basically reducing cognitive load by, instead of relying on mental shortcut, relying on sort of physical shortcuts. So again, it makes it easier for you to process the information. You can do it more