

Live better with EAP!



Information & Support



April 2024



## COGNITIVE BIAS PART 1

---

We live in the belief that our actions, decisions and judgements are rational, but in fact cognitive bias is an integral part of our lives. We often make decisions that are not always logical. Why is this so? Why do we sometimes make mistakes despite having sufficient knowledge and experience? In the first part of the newsletter on cognitive bias, we will describe the phenomenon in general and look at specific examples, and in the second part we will look at how not to succumb to these distortions.

### WHAT IS COGNITIVE BIAS?

Cognitive bias involves irregularities in cognitive processes, i.e. in the way people process information, interpret reality and make decisions. They can occur at different stages of information processing, from perception, memorisation to comprehension and inference. We succumb to cognitive simplification on many levels:

- **Perception errors** – they involve incorrect perception of external stimuli, leading to misinterpretations of reality. For example, when people focus on something irrelevant, overlooking relevant information.
- **Memory errors** – people can remember information in a distorted or incomplete way, for example when someone creates false memories based on loose facts or suggestions.
- **Errors of inference** – they involve drawing the wrong conclusions from the available information. An example is when people judge the probability of an event based on the ease with which they can recall similar instances.

### WHAT ARE HEURISTICS?

Heuristics are simplified thinking strategies that facilitate rapid decision-making. That way, we save energy and do not put as much effort into solving problems. However, frequent use of heuristics results in cognitive bias.

Below are the most common examples of cognitive bias:

#### Fundamental attribution error

It is an unconscious assumption according to which someone else's failure is due to that person's characteristics, while we attribute our own failures to negative external influences. That is, we do not take into account the impact of situational factors when someone behaves irresponsibly, but we are as willing as possible to explain our own bad behaviour with them. When we see someone making a mistake or behaving in an inappropriate way, we tend to attribute it to the fact that this person is just 'bad' or 'stupid', instead of considering that it could be the result of a situation, time pressure, lack of knowledge or other external factors.



EAP E-MAIL



EAP HELPLINE

### EAP WEBINARS

1. Log on to our portal:  
[www.myeap24.pl](http://www.myeap24.pl)
  2. Browse through our upcoming webinars and sign up
- Inspire yourself to change for good*





April 2024

Are you aware of your choices? Do you trust your intuition? What are the thinking traps? The answers to these and many other questions can be found in Daniel Kahneman's book [Thinking, Fast and Slow](#)

#### Halo effect

It is the tendency of people to judge other people or their qualities based on a single positive or negative impression. In other words, if someone makes a good first impression on us, we tend to attribute other positive qualities to that person, even if we have no knowledge of them. The halo effect can also work in the opposite way, i.e. if the first impression was negative, we can attribute other negative characteristics to the person without justification. For example, when we meet someone who is physically attractive, we often attribute positive character traits such as intelligence, kindness, etc. to that person, even if we do not have any specific information about them.

#### Confirmation bias

It is the tendency to seek, interpret and remember information in a way that confirms pre-existing beliefs or expectations. By succumbing to this error, we tend to selectively collect data that confirms our pre-existing beliefs while ignoring or downplaying information that contradicts it.

#### Anchoring heuristic

It is a cognitive strategy whereby people base their judgements or decisions on initial information or values that have been presented to them, even if these are completely arbitrary or inappropriate in the context of the situation. Anchoring refers to the fact that initial information strongly influences our subsequent thinking and decision-making.

#### The Pollyanna principle

It is the tendency to prefer and remember more positive than negative experiences or information. The name of this effect comes from a character in the book *Pollyanna* by Eleanor H. Porter – the main character was always trying to find something positive even in the most difficult situations.

#### Appeal to authority

The tendency to succumb to the influence and suggestions of people or institutions who are perceived as authorities in a given field. People tend to adopt the views, decisions or attitudes of these individuals or institutions without critically analysing their rationality. This effect is particularly strong in situations where the person or institution, considered to be an authority, has a higher social status, a great deal of knowledge or experience in a particular area. People may treat their opinion as more credible or true, even if it is not substantiated by facts or reality.

The topic of cognitive bias is very broad and worth exploring in more detail, so we will continue in the next part of our newsletter.

*Don't wait, call us! If you need a new perspective in difficult situations, contact a specialist. We are here to support you!*