

# REDUCING WORKPLACE BIAS: CHOICE SUPPORTIVE BIAS

## SHORT DESCRIPTION

### WHAT:

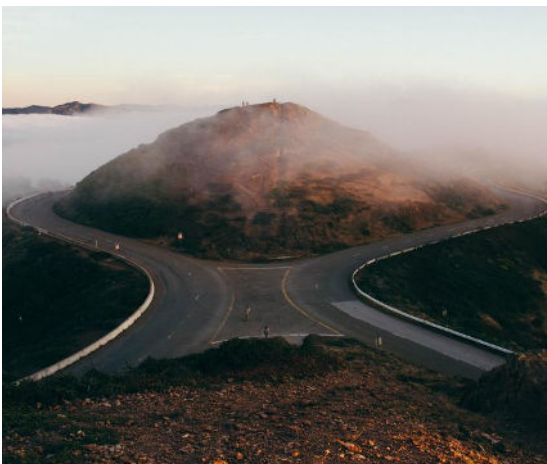
The Choice supportive bias is the tendency to see one's past decision-making as more effective than it was.

### PROBLEM:

The choice supportive tendency reflects an inability to accurately reflect on your past behavior, especially your decision-making, blinding you to how you can be more adaptive through ore effective actions.

### SOLUTION:

The lesson and meditation will help you consider your past actions and decisions more accurately, thus reducing denial and increasing responsibility.



The Choice-supportive bias is the tendency to remember one's choices as better than they actually were. People don't like to admit they are wrong, or even worse that they were wrong.

Unless you are facing the fallout of a poor decision in the immediate moment, it is likely that previously poor choices can be explained away.

And even when facing negative consequences in the moment, we can always find a good reason ( i.e. create a good story) as to why our choice made sense at the time.

As we have seen in the *Hyperbolic Discounting Bias* we live in the present and predicting the future is difficult. As a result, most of our long-term predictions are likely to be inaccurate and hence strewn with biases and rationalizations to reassure ourselves that we are not stupid but are effective and successful.

The choice supportive bias often involves invoking a whole variety of factors that were not predictable at the time of making your decision. So, you can attribute your choice's failure as a function of the weather, world events, other people's actions, and a whole variety of factors outside your control.

The problem is that choices ideally are made with some consideration of the possible effects of choices outside your control. For example, your hiring of a controversial spokesperson, sparked more pushback than you expected.

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You then defend the decision by painting the opposition you're getting, as misinformed, biased, driven by other agendas, and so on. That may all be true but you still underestimated the reaction, no matter how illogical it might seem to you. The problem with the choice supportive bias is that you are not accurately reviewing your decision-making process, which potentially has some long-term effects.

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*Rationalizing is faulty, defensive thinking, motivated by the desire to retain self-respect. It serves this purpose, at least temporarily, by enabling us to avoid facing issues and to excuse our failures.*

– Norman Leslie Munn

You don't want to excuse your failures. You want to identify them, understand and adapt.  
You don't want to avoid facing issues. You want to identify them, understand and adapt.

Often, the evaluation of past choices is done very minimally if at all. But critical evaluation of the decision-making process is important in order to learn how decisions could be made more effectively.

The critical analysis of past decision-making will lead to more mindful and effective future decisions.

Cognitive biases, like the choice supportive bias, can turn reason into rationalization. In trying to justify your decisions rather than critically analyzing them you are being led by your ego rather than critical thinking. Moreover, one rationalization can lead to another as you try to defend previous decision-making rather than analyze and understand it.

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*The sad but amusing side of rationalization is thinking that you are brilliant while you are acting foolishly.*

– Gilbert Beers and Ron Beers

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*People can rationalize in funny ways to hold onto their dreams and needs.*

– Jesse Plemins

## MEDITATION

One of the biggest problems with human beings is that we have the capacity and apparently the need to minimize emotional comfort. As a result, it is hard to face up to decisions, or any behavior, which subsequently is shown to be flawed, irrational or unsuccessful. However, the effective leader knows that it is reason and critical thinking that must prevail not wishful thinking.

Critical thinking not wishful thinking.

A successful organization cannot be run on rationalizations.

A successful organization cannot be run by catering to the needs of emotional comfort of individuals.

A successful organization faces up to reality not story-telling.

A successful organization must identify and eliminate cognitive bias and rationalization.

People can rationalize in funny ways to hold onto their dreams and needs. Rationalization sacrifices the truth for emotional comfort. To realize your goals you must distinguish between dreams and reality.

The sad but amusing side of rationalization is thinking that you are brilliant while you are acting foolishly. It's always important to do a reality check when you think you are brilliant, because you might be acting foolishly. It's not amusing when it's you and your organization who are deluded in their thinking.

Cognitive bias is the bridge between reality and emotional comfort. Don't think you are brilliant when you are acting irresponsibly. Don't think you are brilliant when you are just seeking emotional shelter. You are brilliant when you are not deluded in your thinking. You are brilliant when you don't allow emotional discomfort and cognitive bias to distort reality. Reasoning is man's most useful tool for making adaptations at high levels, whereas rationalizing is man's most useful tool for preventing just that.

High level adaptation is based on reasoning not rationalization.

High level adaptation is based on the truth not emotional comfort.

High level adaptation is not about ego, it is about we-go, as in together we seek to find the reality through critical thinking.

The more people that are involved in the assessment of previous decisions, the less likely it is that decision will be hijacked for the protection of one or two individuals. Always take time to review previous decisions with honesty, integrity, critical thinking and other people. People can rationalize in funny ways to hold onto their dreams and needs. The sad but amusing side of rationalization is thinking that you are brilliant while you are acting foolishly.



*Reasoning is man's most useful tool for making adaptations at high levels, whereas rationalizing is man's most useful tool for preventing just that.*

– Florence Meredith and Warren Southworth