

The Cognitive Bias Stack

Humans are weird. They take all kinds of mental shortcuts which, whilst often working out, sometimes cause problems.

Keep this guide handy when talking to a human.

Attribute Substitution

When a human is faced with a complex question, they often unwittingly simplify it to provide a response they think is relevant, but might not be

Endowment Effect

Humans prefer things we already have and develop preferences for things, simply through the act of taking possession of them

Confirmation Bias

Humans seek evidence that confirms our existing beliefs

Cognitive Dissonance

Humans feel discomfort when holding conflicting beliefs in their heads

Consistency Bias

Humans tend to adjust our attitudes after the fact so we can avoid admitting they have changed

Curse of Knowledge

Humans have difficulty imagining they don't know something they already do

Misattribution of Affect

Humans often mistakenly associate a feeling to something or someone

Hot versus Cold States

Humans decision making often varies significantly depending on their physical and emotional state of arousal

Reactance

Humans often strengthen their initial position when they perceive that attempts are being made to limit their choices or actions, in order to reinforce their autonomy

Mere Exposure

Humans often prefer things they have been exposed to

Choice Supportive Bias

Humans tend to remember their own choices as being more informed than they really were, with more positive outcomes

Scarcity Effect

Humans often over or under value something based on how accessible it is

Loss Aversion

Humans are more sensitive to the negative impact of losing something, than they are to the positive impact of gaining something that has identical value

Sunk Cost Fallacy

Humans often make decisions that are based on cumulative prior investments, which they may not make if those investments were not already in place

Peak-End Rule

Humans are more likely to remember both the most intense parts of an experience as well as how it ended

Generation Effect

Humans are better at remembering information if it has been self generated

Salience

Humans seem to judge deviation in behaviour, or object attributes, as being important and worthy of attention

Primacy/Recency Effect

Humans are more likely to remember the first and last items in a sequence, as compared to those in the middle

Implementation Intentions

Humans are more likely to act on their commitments if they specify when and how they intend to do so

Illusion of Progress

Humans seems to work harder on accomplishing their objectives as they get closer to the finish line

Framing

Humans can respond differently to identical conditions depending on how they have been presented

Asymmetric Dominance

Humans can respond positively to one of a number of different options through the introduction of an option that is similar to one, but inferior to it in every way

Representativeness Heuristic

Humans tend to judge how likely an outcome is based on how well it matches previous outcomes based around the same situation

Availability Heuristic

Humans seem to assess the frequency of an event based on how easily examples of it can be brought to mind

Illusory Correlation

Humans seem to sometimes perceive that two variables are related when they are not

Subadditivity Effect

Humans seem estimate the probability of a complex event as lower than the sum of its simpler and composite events

Clustering Illusion

Humans see patterns, even in random sequences

Anchoring

Human judgement can be influenced by values that have been suggested completely arbitrarily

Ambiguity Effect

Humans tend to avoid choices where the probability is unknown

Intergroup Bias

Humans often favour members of groups they are in, over groups they are not in, even when the group is largely irrelevant to the values they considering

Illusion of Transparency

Humans overestimate the degree to which their internal state is understood by others, as well as their own ability to understand the mental states of others

Halo Effect

Humans have a tendency to make general judgements of someone or thing based on a single salient attribute

Extrinsic Incentives Bias

Humans seem to believe that those around them are motivated by external factors, such as money, rather than intrinsic factors, such as well-being

Self-Perception Theory

Humans tend to infer their actions based on their behaviours, rather than behaving on the basis of their attitudes

Self Serving Bias

Humans tend to attribute their own success to internal factors and their own failures to external factors

Moral Licensing

Humans sometimes feel that moral behaviour often justifies later immoral or anti-social behaviour

Illusion of Control

Humans tend to believe they have greater control of events than they really have, even when some events are entirely dependent on chance

Illusion of Asymmetric Insight

Humans often seem to believe they know more about others than those same others do about about them

Omission Bias

Humans often judge visible, salient, harmful actions as being worse than equally harmful failures to act

Identifiable Victim

Humans tend to empathise with specific individuals more than with large groups of anonymous people

Bounded Ethicality

Humans often make moral transgressions not because they are making a conscious, malicious choice, but because limitations in their cognitive capacity, often lowered in times of stress, make it difficult for them to make fully informed judgements

Durability Bias

Humans often overestimated how long feelings will affect them

Affect Heuristic

Humans often select or reject things in their environment based on how it makes them feel, rather than the risk/reward potential

Irrational Escalation

Humans present choice often constrains future choices, based on justifying increased investment in a decision built on prior commitments

