**GCHRO post**

This one’s a tricky one.

I’m sure you’ve heard the riddle of the father and son who have a car crash, the father is killed and the son is rushed to the hospital. The doctor on duty takes one look at the boy and says, “I can’t operate on him, he’s my son.” How’s this possible?

For some, the answer is obvious, but for others, there’s much head scratching. How can the doctor suddenly be alive? The answer is that the doctor is the boy’s mother.

The riddle reflects our unconscious biases.

The word ‘doctor’ brings to mind a man, but it could just as easily be a woman. It tells us that sometimes our gut feeling about someone can be wrong.

Unconscious bias happens when someone who doesn’t know you makes assumptions about your character, intelligence or capabilities based on how you look, speak or behave. But that person doesn’t even realise that they’re thinking this way.

Like I said, it’s tricky.

I work in a multicultural, diverse work environment. Ooredoo encourages diversity. We pride ourselves on it. We know the benefits of multiple viewpoints shared to solve challenges, but the initial challenge is making sure that those viewpoints are equally regarded.

There’s no way to force someone to look inward at any bias they have, and unconscious bias training can only go so far, although it’s a first step.

There are two ways we can begin to unpack unconscious bias: ask questions and be kind.

The onus is on us as individuals to confront our own thinking. It requires self-awareness and self-reflection, the willingness to challenge our own often irrational beliefs about someone who is different from us. It’s uncomfortable. It can feel threatening – anything different to our brains is always greeted with scepticism rather than curiosity. It doesn’t come naturally. Be kind to yourself, we are always learning, always growing.

We don’t know what we don’t know. Ask. Ask yourself questions. Ask others. Be curious. Keep a beginner’s mind. Ask the “stupid” question.

But especially, be kind.

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