

CONFIRMATION BIAS

A confirmation bias is a type of [cognitive bias](#) that involves favoring information that confirms previously existing beliefs or biases. This type of bias can prevent us from looking at situations objectively, can influence the decisions we make, and can lead to poor or faulty choices. The more strongly we believe in a position the greater the tendency to give more attention and weight that confirms our belief.

EXAMPLE: In politics, confirmation bias explains, for example, why people with right-wing views buy right-wing newspapers and why people with left-wing views buy left wing newspapers. In general people both:

Why do we do this?

Confirmation bias helps us make sense of the world but it also affects the way we see and respond to each other. Studies have shown that when you are talking to someone who agrees with you position, you are inclined to lean closer to that person and give non-verbal gestures of agreement. When we are talking to someone who disagrees with us we tend to sit back and often cross our arms and there is very little to no

non-verbal feedback. In fact, most of the time we are not listening and trying to comprehend another position. Instead, we are preparing the response in our heads.

Why is this a problem?

Because confirmation bias stops you from hearing and responding to all of the relevant information.

ANCHORING

This bias is the tendency to jump to conclusions – that is, to base your final judgment on information gained early on in the decision-making process. Anchoring may happen if you feel under pressure to make a quick decision, or if you have a general tendency to act hastily.

Think of this as a "first impression" bias. Once you form an initial picture of a situation, it's hard to see other possibilities.

If a husband is doing ten times more housework than his dad ever did, he may feel entitled to a "best husband of the year" award from his wife. Imagine his surprise then, when his wife berates him for not doing enough. What's going on here? Blame it on the anchoring effect. His anchor is what his dad used to do. Her anchor is the amount of housework she does. Fair is fair, she says. After all, I'm working full-time too.

As lawyers we do this all the time. We've heard one person tell us that he's been looking for a job but can't find one and we already presume how the motion will proceed, instead of paying attention to what our non-custodial parent has to say.

