Linda Warren: Welcome back. One key ingredient to mentor-coaching is building a strong, honest and trusting relationship. That relationship is also a key ingredient to the observation process. As a mentor-coach, you can work toward building that relationship by looking at yourself and becoming aware of your own personal and cultural values.

Your culture-based values and beliefs may influence how you look at what your protégé is doing, especially if your protégé's cultural-based values differ from your own. So the better you understand your own culture and values, the more you can be aware of how they may influence your observations. In Unit 1, we discussed a general definition of bias. Now we're going to think about observer bias. Let's take a look at the definition.

[Slide, music]

Slide reads: Observation Bias: A way of thinking that prevents someone from seeing a situation or a person fairly.

From that definition, we can see that observer bias would get in the way of someone's ability to do an accurate observation. All of us look at events through a lens that is shaped by our culture and experiences. And that lens can influence what we pay attention to during an observation. Being aware of our lens helps us remain objective and avoid observer bias. Here's an example. Some mentor-coaches may view protégés through a halo if they've had a previous positive relationship with the protégé. Or the mentor-coach may not really observe closely if the protégé comes with good credentials.

In that case, the mentor-coach thinks she has nothing to teach the protégé. On the other hand, a mentor-coach may view a protégé's performance through a negative lens without even knowing it. Perhaps the two have very different personal styles and have not yet built a trusting relationship. This lens keeps the mentor-coach from seeing the positive aspects of the protégé's work.

Finally, there's a middle-of-the-road approach. Many new mentor-coaches don't think they can accurately assess a protégé's work because they don't have enough experience. In this case, they may always score the protégé in the middle no matter what. Dee and Brenda, what are some strategies you use to become aware of your own lenses?

Dee Ard: Well, one of the things that I've encountered with teachers or a new classroom, you may have heard some things from other mentors and it's best to block those out. I have a good example of that. I had heard some things that were not completely positive about one of our teaching staff. And, as it turned out, this staff person, this teaching assistant, just needed someone different to work with and needed her area, which was art, to express herself.

She turned out to be fabulous. So that's a really positive thing. But you really have to be careful, as you said, and step back, take a deep breath and try to be as neutral, as positive, as you can. The other, the, when you talked about the halo effect, I have a center that I absolutely love my teachers, I do. I just think they can hang the moon. And one thing that we do to help with that is we buddy up.

We work with some other mentors and they can come in and sometimes give more of an objective observation and that helps us a great deal. Because when you just love those teachers, sometimes you forget to watch for certain areas, you tend to become very, very global and not watch for the specific areas you want them to grow in.

Brenda Eliand-Williford: And what we've found in our program that has helped our mentor-coach teachers has been to provide them opportunities to reflect -— do self-reflection. To really talk about their experiences with their teachers and to talk about some of the things that they're biased about and how they're going to work through that so that they can work effectively with teachers. We have sessions for our mentor-coaches/master teachers just like they mentor-coach the teachers, they get it.

We feel it has to be a parallel process so that they can work with those issues of bias when they work with the teachers and be more effective. So that has helped them, to have those sessions, to be self-reflective and to talk about some of the things that they have to talk with the teachers about that really, as we call it, helps them to be brave in the face of conflict.

They have to step up to the teacher and really talk about, you know, this is something that we feel, because of our program practices and curriculum, we need to talk more about and we need to figure out how we can help support you in implementing these in our program. So, having that opportunity for our mentor-coaches to be self-reflective, to feel that process, just as they're giving that process, has been very helpful.

Linda: Wow, these are very powerful strategies and I think Dee you you had the opportunity to identify some potential bias before getting into the observation and also you've come up with some strategies for preventing that in classrooms that you viewed as your, you know, could be your favorite classrooms. And this is a powerful preventative strategy where you really are having, you know, incorporating self-reflection.

Brenda: Yes, the master teachers/mentor-coaches talk about how do you work with teachers when you have to talk about those non-negotiables? You go in and you give them suggestions but sometimes you have to go in and say "You know, this is our curriculum. This is best practice, this is how we need to do it." So those sessions for them really help.

Dee: That's a good time to use those closed observations because that, you can say okay, you know, this, this, this, and this, and this is where we need to grow. This is part or our policies and procedures.

Brenda: And becomes a long-term goal for the teachers as well.

Linda: Good point, thank you. Now, you are going to take some time to continue thinking about observer bias. Stop the tape and resume when you have completed your discussion.

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