

## Thinking Like a Psychologist

### Slide One:

Often when people consider psychology, they overestimate their ability to describe, predict and explain human behavior. Since psychologists study human behavior and we are after all humans ourselves, we often consider ourselves experts on the subject. Let's examine what some of the limits of our everyday common sense approach to understanding psychology and why psychologists use science instead.

When conducting interviews, managers often rely heavily on their gut feeling about the job applicants. Why? They tend to recall the times they successfully hired a good candidate and dismiss or ignore those times they did not. We make this mistake often. We can usually recall vivid examples of unusual events and we tend to forget the mundane or everyday examples that occur more often.

### Slide Two:

Another trap we often fall into in our everyday thinking about the world around us is to believe, after the fact that we knew it all along. This hindsight bias was evident after the 911 bombings. Many people felt that the American government should have anticipated the threat and acted to stop it. Things seem obvious to us after we've learned the outcome.

### Slide Three:

Because we tend to associate and form friendships with people who share our worldview, we have a tendency to overestimate the extent to which others share our beliefs and behaviors. Because those who live around us often share our political, religious, or social beliefs, we may have very limited contact with others who do not.

This false consensus effect gives us a sense that everyone believes as we do, when in fact our exposure to the rest of the human population is very limited and certainly not representative of everyone.

### Slide Four:

To counter the effects dramatic examples and bias can have on our thinking about human behavior, psychologist use the scientific method to describe, predict, and explain human behavior.

They make observations of human behavior or mental processes and then based on those observations, formulate theories to explain their observation. A theory must always be testable.

To test the theory psychologists propose a hypothesis. The hypothesis specifies which result will either support our theory or cause us to reject it.

Psychologists design a study to test the hypothesis. There are five different research methods psychologists might use to test their hypothesis. Each of these methods has its advantages and disadvantages. It's important to remember that psychology uses the scientific method to avoid bias in its findings.