I. Cognitive Bias
Cognitive bias: our tendency to seek out evidence that supports the things we believe and avoid the evidence that is contrary to it.

II. The “Wason Game”
The “Wason game,” named after psychologist Peter Cathcart Wason. I come up with a series of three numbers that correspond to a rule I have in mind. You get to guess the rule. To help you guess it, I do two things: First, I provide a series of three numbers that obey my rule: 2, 4, and 6. Second, I let you give me other three-number series and respond by telling you whether they do or don’t follow my rule. When you are confident that you know what my rule is, you give me your answer. If you are right, you win.

III. Some Observations
1. We don’t like finding out that we are mistaken. We like even less for other people to find out we are mistaken; consequently, we don’t like to publicly change our mind. As a result, it is intellectually dangerous for us to publicly state any half-baked opinions we might form.
2. We don’t like to admit that we are ignorant of something. Tonight Show video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=frjaQ17yAww
3. It is very difficult to persuade people by arguing with them.
IV. Philosopher Daniel Dennett’s Strategy for Persuading

Philosopher Daniel Dennett’s strategy for persuading people:
1. You should attempt to re-express your target’s position so clearly, vividly, and fairly that your target says, “Thanks, I wish I’d thought of putting it that way.”
2. You should list any points of agreement, especially if they are not matters of general or widespread agreement.
3. You should mention anything you have learned from your target.
4. Only then are you permitted to say so much as a word of rebuttal or criticism.

(See: http://www.brainpickings.org/2014/03/28/daniel_dennett_rapoport_rules_criticism/)

V. How to Avoid Falling Victim to Cognitive Bias

How to avoid falling victim to cognitive bias: Seek out intelligent, articulate people who hold contrary beliefs. Instead of arguing with them, listen carefully to them. Then do your own research on the issues they raise and make up your mind. You will find that the issue is rather more complex than you had imagined.

VI. Assignment for the Audience

My assignment for the audience: In this next week, explore what the other side says about some issue you feel passionately about. As the result of your exploration, change your mind about something. The change need not be an about-face; it need only be a modification of your views. (If you can’t find anything to change, it is evidence that you are in the grip of a severe case of cognitive bias!) Then tell someone about the change in your beliefs. It is a simple enough exercise. It is one that might transform the way you think.