

Understand Emotions.

Become Resilient

to Disinformation

Activity Scenarios for Children and Young People

**FAKE
NO
MORE**

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Timing



Suggested Age of Participants



Group Size



Thematic Area

Introduction

Our world is constantly changing, in part because of the fast-paced development of new technologies—the internet, social media, and artificial intelligence. Continuous access to large amounts of data online is making us increasingly vulnerable to phenomena such as disinformation. This problem not only affects adults but also children and young people.

According to the report from a Polish nationwide survey of students and their parents, [Nastolatki 3.0](#), only 25% of students are concerned about online disinformation. By comparison, 60% of the surveyed parents share this concern. At the same time, only 37% of students below the age of 15 are confident about their competences when it comes to searching for and analyzing information online ([ySKILLS](#), 2022).

We believe that building immunity to disinformation should begin with understanding the emotions and internal states that we experience when dealing with disinformation-based content. This is why the Fake kNOw more curriculum does not focus on how we can identify and counter fake news. Instead, it shows the psychological mechanisms activated when we are exposed to content based on disinformation and how we can become better at protecting ourselves against such content by reinforcing the internal resources at our disposal.

Better self-knowledge when it comes to our resources and vulnerabilities allows us to see the effect disinformation has on us and find ways of reacting to it that will help us protect ourselves from its impact in an informed manner. We know that disinformation-based content not only affects our emotions but also our senses, cognitive functions, and behavior. For this very reason, self-knowledge applies to five different elements that are discussed in subsequent parts of this publication and can be summarized by the following overarching statements:

- The heart, i.e. the way I feel,
- The head, i.e. the way I think,
- The eyes, i.e. the way I see the world,
- The breath, i.e. the way I react,
- The hands, i.e. the way I act.

These statements are meant to encourage self-reflection and place analysis of oneself and one's own reactions at the core of all our activities.

Each of the five elements corresponds to a specific issue—a section of our publication. The heart is the aspect responsible for emotions and the signals that our feelings send in the context of disinformation. The head invites us to reflect on the thought patterns activated when we are exposed to disinformation and on how they help us protect ourselves from that disinformation (so-called slow and fast thinking). The eyes symbolize cognitive biases and other “pitfalls of thinking”—they are the lenses through which we see the world. The breath stands for well-being and mindfulness, which allow us to keep a healthy distance and, as a result, choose better responses to disinformation. Finally, the hands stand for our behavior on social media—in other words, both our reactions to information and the content we create. These subjects are interconnected, but the structure of this publication allows the participants to gain new knowledge and new skills in an organized manner.

Since the measures taken by schools only provide a partial response to disinformation, we are also looking for allies in places where this subject has not been tackled before. We would like to encourage educators from day-support centers to make use of our publication and join us in our efforts. Thanks to the close relations developed with their charges, as well as their trust, educators can effectively support young people as they gain critical thinking skills.

This gives us a chance to reach young people who otherwise would not have an opportunity to talk about their online presence in a safe environment and to expand their knowledge and competences when it comes to protection against disinformation. At the same time, materials included in this publication can also be used in a school environment by teachers when talking to young people—including about emotions, thought patterns or their presence online.

The publication contains suggested activity scenarios for young people aged 10–12 and 13–15, participating in those activities in smaller or larger groups, or in some cases individually. We hope that thanks to this, anyone who is interested will be able to find materials that fit the specific needs of their work and group.

Each chapter starts with a theoretical introduction to help the educator obtain basic information from a given field. The theory is followed by a few suggested activity scenarios related to the subject of the chapter. The scenarios are based on Kolb's cycle, which involves learning through experience.

According to this method, effective learning should be based on engaging experiences that are followed by reflective observations and gaining theoretical knowledge, and finally turned into practical applications. For this very reason, our activity scenarios are divided into four parts:

- My experience—a description of the actual activity/experience,
- My reflections—a discussion of the activity with questions for consideration,
- My new knowledge—theory for participants,
- Seeing the connection and building immunity—developing a connection between the experience and knowledge gained and the phenomenon of disinformation.

Each scenario is also accompanied by [additional materials—slideshows](#) that can be used during the class and printable materials.

We hope that this publication will help you build more self-awareness in young people—and therefore make them more resistant to disinformation.

The School with Class Foundation and Demagog Association Team



What I feel?



The Way I Feel



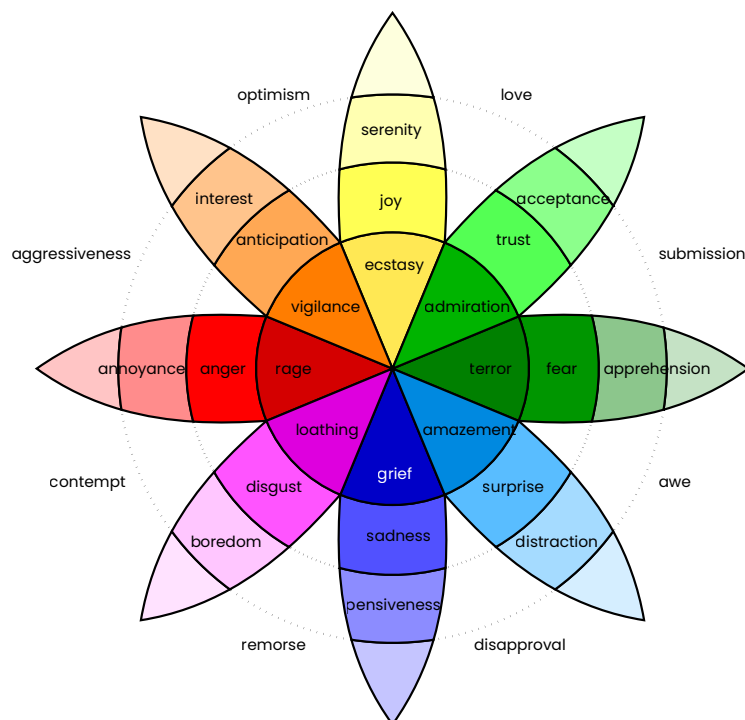
How Emotions Affect Vulnerability to Disinformation

How are You Today?

As children, we were taught to read and count, but most of us had no one to teach us how to tell the difference between our own feelings and talk about them. Although we are experts in various fields, many of us struggle to put into words how we feel inside at a given moment. Our culture makes us inclined to ignore our emotions rather than take them seriously. Life also gives us many good reasons to keep emotions at bay. We know what an intense outburst of anger can lead to or how difficult it is to bear overwhelming fear or sadness. Some of us may prefer to pretend that feelings do not exist instead of facing them. Many of us might have lost our natural ability to be in touch with our feelings because of our environment and therefore need to learn this skill anew.

Wheel of Emotions

The emotional reality is complex. There is no consensus as to how many emotions there are and what their names mean exactly. We sometimes need guidance to navigate this world and one of the things that may help us label and understand our feelings is [Robert Plutchik's wheel of emotions](#).





According to this model, there are eight basic emotions, while their combinations form more complex states. Plutchik observed that we frequently feel a blend of different emotions, which can also be of varying intensities. In the diagram above, more intense emotions are marked with darker colors. The ones on opposite sides of the diagram are opposing emotions (e.g. anger and fear or joy and sadness). Plutchik's wheel can be seen as a map that allows us to make sense of our emotional paths.

However, there is no need to memorize the names of those emotions or to know any diagrams in order to start recognizing what we feel. A good starting point is **asking a simple question** that everyone has probably heard from others. "How are you?" or "What's up?" are questions that our friends typically ask when greeting us. We often answer them in an offhand way, with a customary "okay" and without seriously considering the deeper meaning of these questions.

We can also ask ourselves such a question every morning (or in any situation) and look for an authentic answer to it. Plutchik's wheel of emotions can serve as a source of inspiration, but we can also use our own words to describe what we find when we focus on our inner world.



Bear in mind that feelings should not be confused with thoughts, personality traits (e.g. "I feel that I'm hard-working"), or behaviors (e.g. "I feel that he's unfair"). In our culture, it is more common to label personality traits or describe behaviors than emotions, so you have to be especially careful in that regard.

Descartes' Error—The False Division Into Body, Emotions, and Rationality

Over the ages, emotions have been ascribed different roles and showing them was considered more or less desirable, depending on the era. Nowadays, even though expressing one's emotions is seen as unprofessional in many circles, an increasing emphasis is placed on the impact of emotions on cognitive development, interpersonal relations, and leading a satisfying life. **Emotional intelligence**—the ability to recognize one's own emotions and the emotions of other people—is becoming an important skill.

Modern-day science constantly finds new evidence for the importance of emotions in everyday life and the severe consequences of ignoring them. We know that the long-term suppression of feelings can have a negative impact on our well-being, cause somatic diseases, or hamper our cognitive functions¹.



Emotions—aside from being reactions to what happens in the outside world and reflecting our inner life—are also connected to the biology of the nervous system. They are regulated, among other things, by the autonomic nervous system, which wraps around our internal organs, receives stimuli from outside, and then reacts to them by initiating processes in our body that are independent of our will.

Let us take a look at a simple example. Imagine that you have a stressful exam ahead of you. Your body will respond to this information with an increased heart rate, sweaty palms, faster breathing, and tension in your shoulders. These signals—sometimes subtle—sent to us by our body are called bodily sensations. They are typically accompanied by emotions such as stress, nervousness, fear, or uncertainty. We do not have to be aware of them in order to feel them—they simply occur to help our body adequately face various situations in life.

Research carried out by neurobiologists has shown that both emotions and the accompanying cues from the body have a huge impact on the rational decisions made by our mind. In his book *Descartes' Error*, the neurobiologist Antonio Damasio recounts stories of people who were unable to make important life decisions because

1. The impact of emotions "frozen" in the body has been explored, among others, by Alexander Lowen, a psychiatrist and psychotherapist, in publications like *Depression and the Body* (Polish translation published by Wydawnictwo Czarna Owca, Warsaw 2012) and by Gabor Maté in his book *When the Body Says No: The Cost of Hidden Stress* (Polish translation published by Wydawnictwo Czarna Owca, Warsaw 2022).



of damage to the brain structures responsible precisely for processing emotions. Damasio demonstrates that emotional states are the foundation of rationality, which undermines our culture's age-old dichotomy between the rational and the emotional.

No Life Without Feeling

This text uses several terms to describe what we feel: **bodily sensations, emotions, and feelings**. According to psychologists, these differ in terms of their duration (feelings last the longest) or degree of awareness—some claim that a feeling is an emotion that a person has deliberately reflected on. This distinction is not that important for the purposes of this text, especially since even people who deal with emotions professionally can sometimes understand these terms in different ways.

What is more crucial is realizing that feelings help us survive. They are not our enemy but our friend, informing us about things that are important to us. It is sometimes difficult for us to accept them because they mean unpleasant news (for example, pain—a bodily sensation that informs us about an illness, or sadness—a feeling that reminds us about the loss of something important), but they are always a source of knowledge about ourselves. Acknowledging them helps us live more complete lives and understand ourselves better.

2. Marshall Rosenberg,
Porozumienie bez przemocy.
O języku serca [Nonviolent
Communication: A Language of
Life], Czarna Owca, Warsaw 2011,
pp. 59–60.

Marshall Rosenberg, a psychologist, mediator, and originator of Nonviolent Communication, claimed that **emotions are signals that inform us about important needs**². Difficult feelings such as fear or anger are typically a reminder that one of our important needs has not been met. On the other hand, the pleasant ones, like joy or bliss, often accompany satisfied one's needs. To understand this concept better, let us go back to the example of taking an exam. A few moments before the exam, you may feel uncertainty and stress, which inform you about the importance of the need for development, accomplishment, or appreciation. On the other hand, after passing an exam with flying colors, you might feel overjoyed, satisfied, or relaxed. These feelings are pieces of information that the same needs have been met. When your body feels hunger, it lets you know that you have to satisfy your basic nutritional needs, and when you experience a lot of warm feelings while thinking about a person you are in love with, it probably means that you hope that person will meet the important needs for love, intimacy, being seen and being cherished.

We all require our important needs to be met in order to continue living and developing. When those needs are not satisfied, we typically experience difficult, uncomfortable feelings. Their point is precisely to remind us about what is essential for our lives.



LIST OF NEEDS

PHYSICAL WELL-BEING

- Air
- Food
- Water
- Shelter
- Movement/exercise
- Rest
- Sleep
- Touch
- Sexual expression
- Safety, etc.

AUTONOMY

- Making your own plans, choosing goals and dreams, values
- Choosing your own path to achieve them, etc.

INTEGRITY

- Authenticity
- Self-esteem
- Self-acceptance
- Self-respect, etc.

INTERCONNECTION

- Company
- Closeness
- Relationship
- Attention/consideration
- Emotional security
- Honesty
- Empathy
- Acknowledgment of feelings and needs
- Equal opportunities
- Being seen
- Understanding and being understood
- Trust
- Warmth
- Consolation
- Love
- Intimacy
- Inspiration
- Community
- Cooperation
- Mutuality
- Self-acceptance
- Self-respect, etc.

CELEBRATION/MOURNING

- Celebrating needs met, dreams and plans fulfilled
- Mourning unmet needs, losses, etc.

HAPPINESS

- Play
- Humor
- Joy
- Ease
- Adventure, etc

SPIRITUALITY

- Inspiration
- Simplicity
- Hope
- Beauty
- Being in touch with nature
- Harmony
- Order
- Coherence
- Peace, etc.

List of needs developed by Marshall Rosenberg.



What Should We Do About Our feelings?

In a highly emotional situation, answering the question: “What are you feeling?” can be a real challenge. It is difficult to label our feelings when we are overwhelmed by them, so it is a good idea to first practice recognizing emotions under less intense circumstances. That is when you can direct your focus inwards, pay attention to your bodily sensations, and name them. You can even briefly shift your attention inside yourself while reading this text and ask yourself what you are feeling right now. Taking a few breaths and finding at least two minutes of uninterrupted focus can help.

You can do it as often as you wish, concentrating on individual body parts: arms, stomach, legs, or feet, and checking if they feel tense, relaxed, or if you feel anything else. Over time, it will become easier for you to label these states and even observe the subtle differences between some of them.

If you have no experience with naming your emotions and bodily sensations, metaphors could help you. In her book *Your Resonant Self*, Sarah Peyton points out that metaphors not only help us name what we are experiencing in a given moment but also provide guidance to others, like children and young people, when they are overwhelmed with intense feelings.



Metaphors. Helpful questions for intentionally experiencing bodily sensations (start by asking them yourself):

- What can you compare your feelings to?
 - What animal can you compare your state to?
 - What weather phenomenon can you compare yourself to?
 - What image could convey what you are experiencing right now?
-

Many of us believe that once we have recognized our feelings, we have to “do something about them”. There is some truth to this. To continue with the assumption made by Marshall Rosenberg—that feelings point to important needs—it would be good to focus precisely on those needs and consider how we can meet them or who can help us with that.

However, it is not always possible to satisfy those needs quickly. In such cases, you can simply take note of and acknowledge your emotions and underlying needs—that alone can be comforting. Remember that you do not have to change or adjust those feelings (which can be difficult and sometimes completely unnecessary). Emotions tend to ebb and flow, sometimes very quickly, which also informs us about the changing states of our bodies.



A Task for You

During the following week, try to find 5 minutes for yourself every day. You can do this right after waking up, when you take a break at work, before you go to bed, or at any other time. Take a few deep breaths and ask yourself the following question: “How are you?” Analyze how your body responds to this question. Name that feeling or bodily sensation. Then, look at the list of needs and think about which need this feeling may be connected with.

You can also keep a diary of feelings and needs. After a few days, you will notice which feelings were predominant, for example in a given week, and which feelings did not occur at all.



Emotions and Disinformation

Feelings not only inform us about the quality of our life, but are also a reaction to what is going on around us: what we see, hear, or read. A lot of the content we are exposed to, for example online, evokes emotions in us: we feel joyful and relaxed when we look at funny memes, we are moved while watching animal videos or afraid when we hear painful news about wars around the world.

Some content encountered online evokes stronger emotions because it was created in a specific way—it is supposed to provoke an emotional reaction in us. The internet is a constant battleground for our attention and the easiest way to capture it is precisely by evoking strong feelings. Disinformation frequently employs this mechanism and relies on creating an emotional reaction at the cost of truthfulness or the reliability of information.

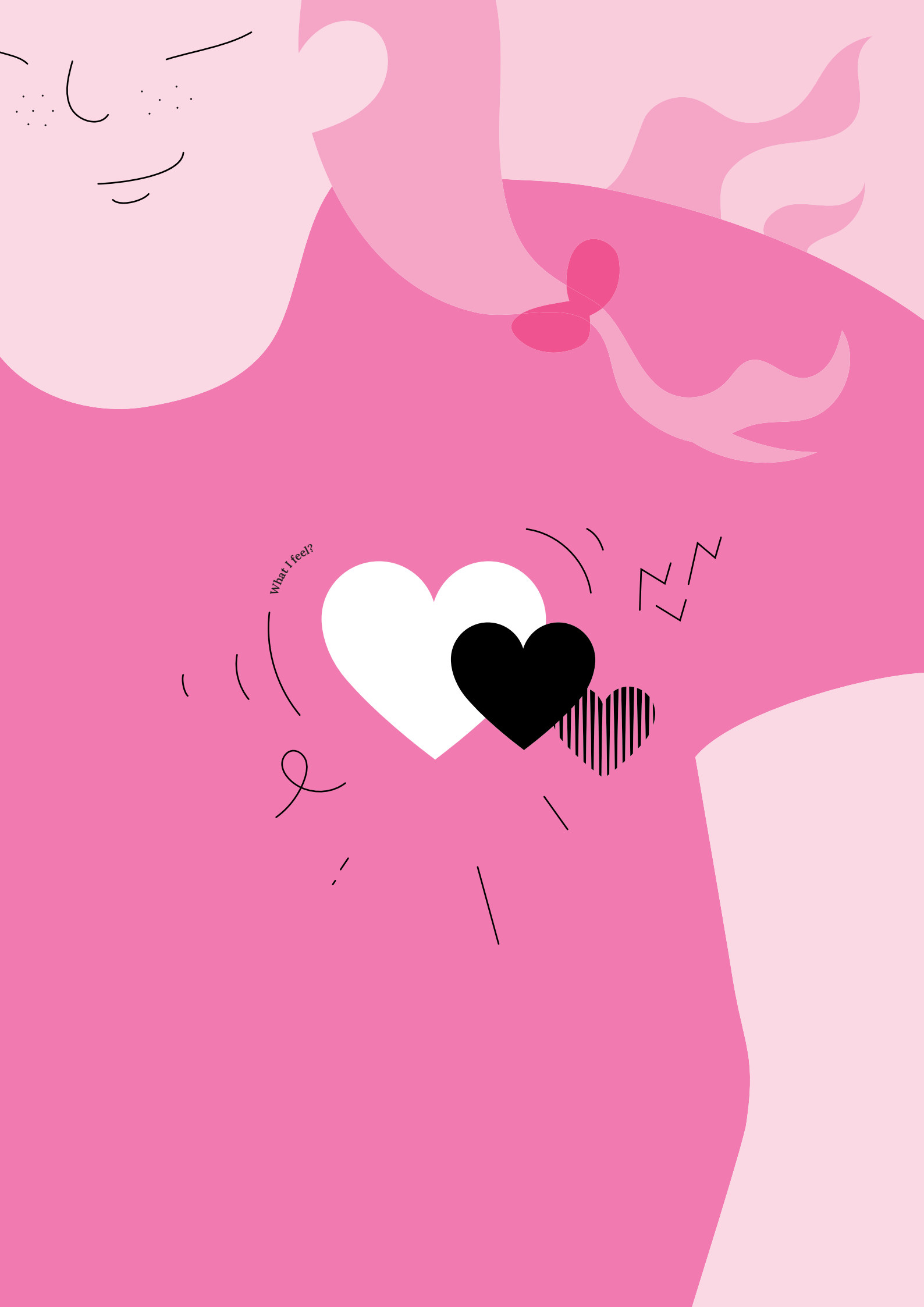


Disinformation involves actions aimed at harming us by deliberately misleading us, presenting superficial knowledge, and convincing us to make decisions that are detrimental to us. Playing with our emotions is a useful tool for introducing disinformation. It creates the risk of a person losing their own beliefs and becoming a part of a manipulated society.

When we experience strong emotions, we are typically willing to act without hesitation, sometimes against our own interests. It is therefore extremely important to observe the emotional states that arise in us in response to disinformation. Being able to do so will allow us to react in a more informed way and build immunity to fake news.

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What I feel?



Scenario 1

Feelings, Thoughts, and Personality Traits



30 minutes

10–12
13–15

up to 20 people



naming emotions

Objectives

This activity will allow the participants to:

- deepen their knowledge of emotions and learn to distinguish them from thoughts or personality traits.

Materials

[download](#)**For this activity, you will need:**

- sheets of paper and pens for each group,
- a blackboard, whiteboard, or a large sheet of paper,
- a flipchart and marker or chalk.

Activity
Summary

1. Divide your charges into groups. Ask each group to list as many names of emotions on the sheet of paper as possible.
2. In front of everyone, check how many names of emotions they were able to list. Ask the participants how difficult they found this exercise.
3. Together, consider whether the states listed by them are feelings, thoughts, personality traits—or perhaps something else? Try to categorize them.
4. Think about why telling the difference between feelings, personality traits, and thoughts can be important in everyday life.

My Experience

1. Divide the participants into groups of several people.
2. Give each group a sheet of paper and a pen.
3. Tell them that their task is to list as many words describing emotions as possible in 5 minutes. To make the activity more dynamic, you can introduce elements of rivalry—for example, the group that comes up with the most names wins.

Alternative setup: If you want your charges to reflect more deeply on the presence (or absence) of emotions in our lives, divide them into two groups and have one of them list emotions, while the other one lists people's traits. Check which task was easier. It is usually easier for us to list personality traits because we judge or label other people's behaviors more often than feelings and emotions. You can discuss why that is the case, whether such an approach helps us build relationships, and in which situations it is better to focus on emotions and in which on personality traits.

My Reflections

When the participants have completed the task, ask them whether they found it difficult, and if so why. You can also ask them if they had any doubts while performing the task (e.g. whether a given state is a feeling).

My New
Knowledge

Sum up how many feelings each group was able to differentiate. You can ask the participants if they know how many feelings people can have. Explain that although some experts talk, for instance, about several basic feelings, the list of feelings is actually infinite because some of them can have different shades and intensities.



Next, divide the board or sheet of paper into three parts. Label one of them **FEELINGS**, one **THOUGHTS**, and the third **PERSONALITY TRAITS**. Ask the participants to take a look at the words on their sheets of paper and check whether, in their opinion, all of them should be included in the **FEELINGS** category. Write down a few examples in each category, for instance:

- **FEELINGS**: anger, joy, sadness, curiosity,
- **THOUGHTS**: this category can include sentences, such as “I feel like tomorrow’s gonna be a nice day”, “I feel like I’m going to fail my exam”, etc.,
- **CHARACTER TRAITS**: positive, optimistic, nice, introverted, crazy, etc.

Ask the young people what differences they see between these three categories. Take note that feelings are the least permanent states and can change quickly. Character traits typically describe our long-term predispositions, while thoughts are opinions, impressions, predictions, or memories that pop up in our heads. All three states can but do not have to be connected. Personality traits are usually visible, while thoughts and feelings can remain hidden and do not have to affect our behavior.

Seeing the Connection and Building Immunity

Finally, ask the participants if they think that differentiating between thoughts, feelings, and personality traits can be useful in everyday life. You can ask yourselves the following question:

- What do you think affects our behavior more: feelings, thoughts, or character traits?

Notice that disinformation typically affects both our thoughts and our feelings. Texts or videos based on disinformation point our thoughts in a specific direction, which then makes us feel, for example, fear or anger. Being able to tell the difference between thoughts, feelings, and personality traits can help us better understand the reactions caused by disinformation.



Scenario 2

Emotional “Weather Map”

20–30
minutes10–12
13–15

up to 20 people



wheel of emotions

Objectives

This activity will allow the participants to:

- find out about the emotional climate in the group,
- think about how people experiencing difficult emotions can be supported.

Materials

[download](#)**For this activity, you will need:**

- Plutchik’s wheel of emotions (preferably in a larger format),
- erasable markers or tags or small post-its for each participant.

Activity
Summary

1. Display the wheel of emotions in a visible spot in the room.
2. Ask everyone to put a dot next to the feeling they are experiencing in the given moment (this can be done anonymously). The placement of the dots reflects the emotional climate in the group.
3. Analyze the emotional climate in the group on that day together.
4. If there are dots next to difficult emotions, talk about what can help people when they are experiencing those emotions and what people in the group can do for each other when one of their friends is feeling difficult emotions.

My Experience

Before starting the activity, display Plutchik’s wheel of emotions in a visible place in the room. When your charges gather, ask each of them to write their name or place a dot (if they want to remain anonymous) next to the feeling they are experiencing in that specific moment. Give them a few minutes but emphasize that they should not think about it too long.

My Reflections

When the participants are done, ask them the following questions. If their answer is “yes”, tell them that they should raise their hands.

- Was it difficult for you to find the right word to describe what you are feeling?
- Did you feel uneasy when you were marking your feeling in front of everyone?

If you notice that more names have appeared next to a certain feeling and only one next to another, you can follow it up by asking how people who know that they share a given emotion with somebody else feel and how those who are alone in experiencing their emotion feel.

My New
Knowledge

Point out that the previous activity allowed you to quickly create the group’s emotional map. Tell the young people in your care that the map can be interpreted in a similar way to a terrain map. Ask them what we can learn about the group from this exercise. Draw your conclusions together. You can look for a metaphor to describe the emotional climate of the group on a given day.

Point out that the emotional map differs from a map of the terrain because it is constantly changing. In this sense, it is more like a weather forecast: your emotional map can already look completely different at the end of the meeting because feelings can change within just a few minutes.



Seeing the Connection and Building Immunity

Tell your charges that in the natural world, the weather can change (e.g. rain following a drought); similarly, it is natural for people to sometimes experience more difficult emotions like sadness or anger. Together, think about and write down methods that help people who are experiencing difficult feelings. If you wish, you can use the metaphor of an umbrella that we use when it is raining. What could be our umbrella when we are feeling bad? Look for methods that you can apply in your group.

If the young people end up enjoying this activity, you can do it at the start of every meeting, dedicating 5 minutes to drawing up the “emotional weather map” in the group.



The Way I Think



The Way I Think



About Thinking, Fast and Slow

What is Your Way of Thinking?

Every day is full of things that we need to get done. We go to work, we do our chores, we learn and pursue our hobbies and interests. On top of that, we often have to make decisions and coordinate our actions with other people. All of that requires thinking, but do you always focus on problems in the same way? Not quite.

You will put more effort into solving a math task or planning your vacation in detail than in crossing the street. In the latter case, you will receive a quick, brief message—a green light—and start walking in the blink of an eye. You will not consider all the other possible options because you know that the green light means “walk”.

However, when making an important decision (like choosing a new job), your attention will be focused on multiple aspects of the problem, its impact, and risks. You have to admit that considering a difficult issue is more exhausting and requires more “mental effort”—however, you know it is necessary to reach the right conclusions.

See for Yourself

The examples above show very clearly how our mind analyzes information. Before you find out more, however, try to solve the following puzzles:

1. An Olympic team won 60 medals. Tall athletes on that team won three times as many medals as the short ones. How many medals did the short athletes win?
2. Kate and Liz are jogging around the stadium at the same speed, but Liz sets off later. When Liz has run 5 laps, Kate has already done 10. How many laps will Kate have run when Liz has completed 10 laps?

Psychologists use tasks like the ones above to [study](#) when people think analytically. Perhaps you managed to answer the questions immediately, but the first answer to such puzzles hinted at by our intuition is very often wrong. For example, our mind reflexively—almost immediately—tells us that the answer to the first puzzle is 20. It takes a moment and some brief calculations to arrive at the correct response—15.

When do You Think Fast and When do You Think Slow?

Take a moment to think about your work with young people. When it comes to creative tasks and tasks that require logical thinking, the first idea that comes to our mind may appear to be good. Sometimes, however, we come up with new, better solutions over time, as we focus more on the task at hand.

This is how “brainstorms” work—we want as many people as possible to put their ideas forward. First, we generate solutions to “warm up” our brains, and only then do we assess the quality of those solutions. That is why we first go for the solutions proposed by our fast mind and then we come up with better and better ideas, created by the analytical mind.



This is how the **two systems of thinking** work and you are going to learn more about them in this chapter. Two famous psychologists, Amos Tversky and Daniel Kahneman, came up with the theory of fast and slow thinking based on a series of experiments. The latter scholar received the Nobel Prize for his discoveries in the field of economics.

Intuitive and Analytical Thinking

Our intuitive reactions are what guide us in the case of the first idea that comes to mind when solving puzzles and when we cross the street once the light turns green. The first possible answer appears in our head before we have even considered all the possible options.

This answer often proves to be useful and sufficient. That is the point of intuitive thinking—to come up with conclusions that are **“correct at first glance”**. Of course, they will not always be true.

That is why, when we feel that our goal is more important, our mind shifts into the “analytical gear”, which requires focus and more effort.

The Rally Driver and the Navigator

Imagine a race between two cars. On the starting line, we have a tuned racing car with a modest family SUV next to it. So long as the objective is to cover a straight route quickly, the driver of the first car will do a great job.

However, if the route is complex and includes winding sections, frequent turns, and orienteering, it is better to place your bets on the slower car. Its driver will move at their own pace and take note of all the important guidelines, look at the map, and consider every turn. The rally driver will set off with tires screeching and be the first to end the race—but we cannot be sure if they even took the correct route and arrive at the finish line.



These are our two systems of thinking: sometimes, we need the **fast driver**, and sometimes the **careful navigator**.

The Internal and External Perspective

While using fast thinking, you resort to the immediately available hints that can be quickly accessed when drawing conclusions—for example, the memories or emotions you feel in a given moment.

For the same reason, as long as information seems familiar and compatible (consistency and coherence) and a given piece of information comes from a person or website that we typically trust (credibility), the fast thinking system will be trusting and will go easy on assessing the truthfulness of the evidence.



However, when we adopt the “external perspective” to have a broader view of the problem, the analytical thinking system will allow us to take a better look at the issue. We will make sure that the information is in line with scientific knowledge, not just the knowledge we already have. We will verify whether it comes from a reliable source that has no ill intentions toward us. We will make sure that the consensus is not a result of disseminated disinformation or that the available evidence offers a good explanation of the issue.



“One Time, My Aunt...”—Anecdotal Evidence

As it turns out, the fast thinking system finds **anecdotal evidence**, which is **based** on a single story or one-off experience, incredibly interesting—even though its credibility has no universal implications. Anecdotal evidence typically starts with expressions like: “I know someone who...”, “I’ve heard that my aunt did...”, “I know of a situation where...”. You have certainly heard such arguments before. Think about whether you thought they were **credible** at the time, and if not—why?

Remember that it is a good idea to confront one-off situations with evidence supported by the scientific method or statistics. Critical assessment requires the intervention of our inner skeptic, who will look at the available information from a broader perspective. Otherwise, there is a risk that if we believe fake news once, we will soon fall for it again and again until we are lost in a web of disinformation.

A Lie Repeated a Thousand Times...

...becomes truth. You know this saying. As you can remember, consistency with the knowledge you already have makes the new piece of information appear more reliable. This can lead us to a dead end, **as confirmed by** psychological research on the **illusory truth effect**.

Repetition makes it easier to retain information. What makes use of retained information a lot? Our mind, when thinking intuitively. This is how rumor spreads. We start believing a story after hearing it from several sources even if it is not based on facts.



The **illusion of truth** is a mechanism through which we start believing that something is true because we already know it, even if it is not true in reality. It happens when we have seen a given piece of information many times in the past and we start assuming that it is “common knowledge” that does not need to be verified. Exposure to specific content makes it easier for us to remember it and therefore conclude that we already know it.

The Same Life, Many Perspectives

The illusion of truth makes us think that certain things are obvious and not worth questioning. As a common saying goes, “When all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail”. Beliefs work in a similar way. Holding onto a certain vision of the world makes us eager to seek out information that confirms what we already believe.

When someone is trying to correct us, it can **trigger cognitive dissonance**, which is an **attitude** that makes us reflexively deny information that we disagree with when we encounter it.



Cognitive dissonance is a feeling of unpleasant psychological tension, experienced when the new piece of information is inconsistent with what we already know. It involves the need to ensure coherence between one’s beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. The solution to cognitive dissonance is either abandoning the current stance or refusing to accept the new one. When we receive information that is not in line with our beliefs, we feel discomfort and can attempt to deny what we have just heard.



Thinking Under Pressure

Life requires us to act here and now. We have to make decisions on an ongoing basis and cannot analyze everything all the time. What happens when we are under time pressure or a lot of stress? Uncertainty is an extremely unpleasant feeling. We prefer to know exactly what is happening around us and what we can anticipate.

When we are upset due to stress, fear, or anger, we prefer simplified explanations about the world that allow us to stay calm. In order to explain why certain people draw conclusions too quickly, without waiting for evidence, psychologists coined the concept of the **need for cognitive closure**.

Imagine that your mind is a hand. You can use it to grasp new information, exchange stories with others, pass them on from hand to hand, as well as put aside things that you are not certain are true.

What happens in a stressful situation? The hand turns into a fist. Whatever it was holding in a given moment is well protected against falling out or being exchanged.

A mind works in a similar way—when it has a strong grip on one interpretation of the world, it is difficult to persuade it to “take” a different one. A person who behaves like that can seem “deaf” to new arguments.

Tangled in the Chaos of Information

In the context of disinformation, this is a huge problem, especially when it accompanies difficult subjects such as pandemics, wars, natural disasters, or protests. In such situations, we are vulnerable to **doomscrolling**—uncontrolled, compulsive information tracking. When something causes fear or presents a threat in our city, country, or the world, we want to know as much about it as possible. We seek consolation in the web of media.

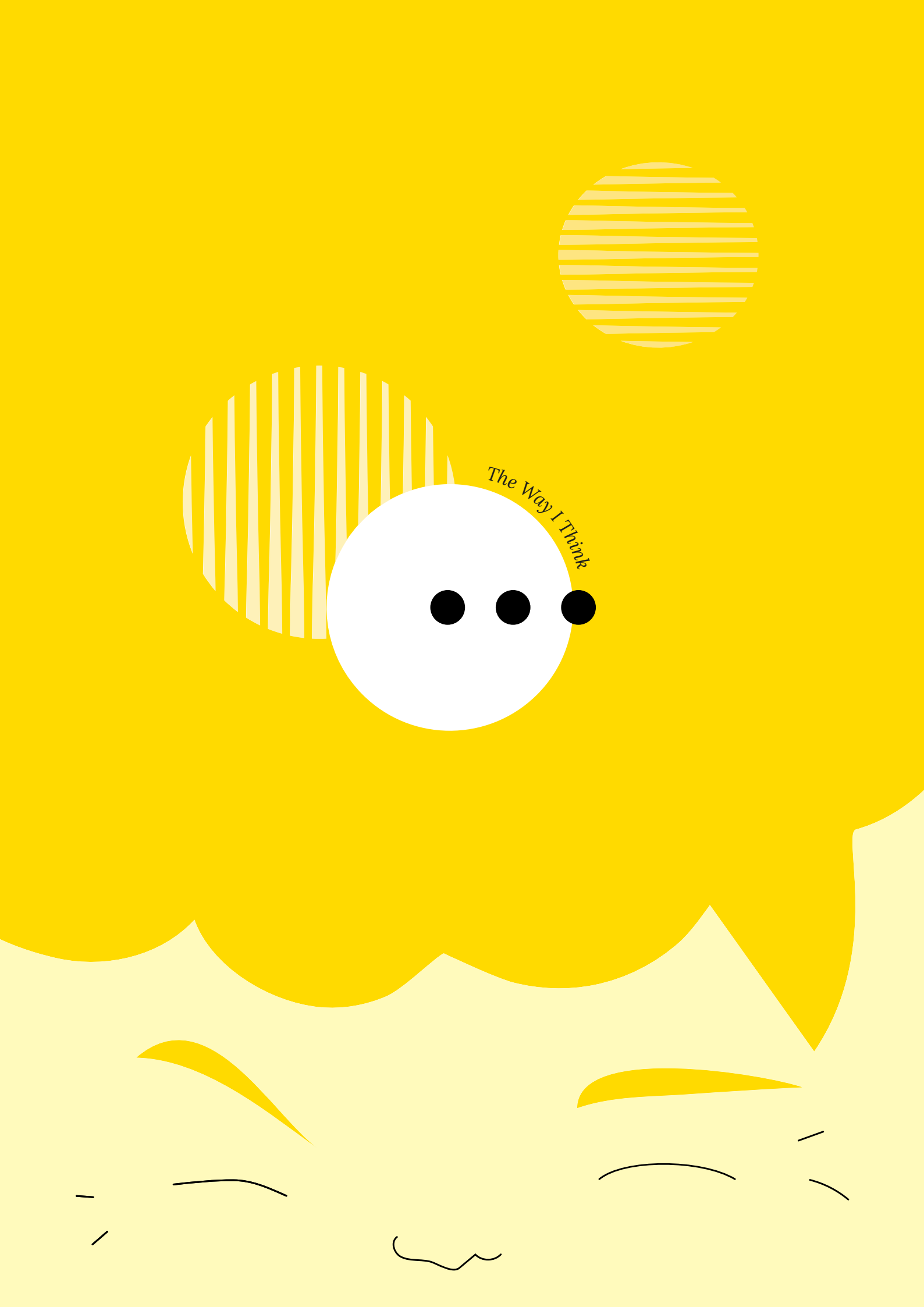
A Final Note About Emotions

Fake news frequently “plays” with difficult emotions. When your mind feels threatened, you reflexively use intuitive thinking, which allows it to quickly make sense of the situation. It is much more difficult to use slower, analytical thinking.

When our mind prefers using intuitive thinking, we sacrifice quality in favor of acting quickly. People who spread disinformation know this very well and will attempt to appeal to your fast-thinking system. It is in those moments—when we are at our least alert—that we can fall for fake news. Engaging in analytical thinking can get us out of trouble.

Further reading:

- Kahneman D (2011) *Thinking, Fast and Slow*. Penguin Books.
- Raeburn A (2024) What are heuristics and how do they help us make decisions? Asana, 15 January. Available at <https://asana.com/pl/resources/heuristics> (accessed 14 March 2024).
- Dale S Heuristics and Biases – The Science of Decision Making. *Business Information Review* 32 (2), June. Available at https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281232107_Heuristics_and_biases_The_science_of_decision-making (accessed 14 March 2024).



The Way I Think



Scenario 1

Share a Story

90 minutes
(activity in a
single room)10–12
13–15

small/larger

fast thinking: the
illusion of truth

Objectives

This activity will allow the participants to:

- experience how everyone pays attention to different details,
- see the mechanism behind distortions and rumors.

Materials

[download](#)**For this activity, you will need:**

- a story that you will pass on to the participants according to a specific pattern; you can use our suggestion or create your own story,
- sheets of paper and pens,
- large sheets of paper or a flipchart,
- markers, crayons.

Activity
Summary

1. The facilitator chooses up to 5 participants—others will act as observers. The selected young people receive sheets of paper and something to write with.
2. The first participant receives the story. They read it, memorize it, and then write it down on their sheet of paper.
3. The next participant receives the story written down by the previous participant, reads it, memorizes it, and writes it down on a sheet of paper.
4. The process is repeated as many times as there are participants.
5. The last person writes the story down on the board or flipchart. All the participants check together how much the first version of the story differs from the last one.
6. The facilitator presents selected information from the theoretical section *My New Knowledge*.
7. The young people are divided into groups to prepare a poster titled “How to Spot a Rumor?”

My Experience

Distribute sheets of paper and writing utensils among the participants.

1. Give the first participant the story written down on a sheet of paper. Have them read it quietly. Note! They must not read it out loud. After reading, they should return the story to the facilitator.
2. The first participant writes down what they remember of the story on their sheet of paper and then hands it over to the next person.
3. The second participant reads the story written by the first one, gives the sheet of paper back to the facilitator, and writes down what they remembered.
4. The time taken to write down the stories depends on how many people are participating in the activity. To retain your charges' attention, we recommend that up to 5 people are involved in writing down stories.
5. Everyone else can act as observers and share their thoughts at the end of the activity. The observers are in the room throughout the activity.
6. The last active participant in the activity writes down the story they remembered on the flipchart or board.
7. Read the original story and together, check whether they differ a lot.



Alternative suggestion:

If you have two rooms at your disposal, you can conduct this activity by having the selected participants go to the other room (“waiting room”), then come back individually to the main room to recount the story to each other verbally.

Stories

Story 1 / Snow White has wanted to travel and see the world since she was a child. However, it was difficult while she lived with the seven Dwarves. She took care of the hut, cooked meals, cleaned their dwelling, and made sure the Dwarves were comfortable. One day, she met the Prince, who invited her on a trip around the world. She wasn't sure that was a good idea. She was afraid the Dwarves wouldn't be able to manage on their own. However, the Dwarves showed empathy and understanding. They thanked Snow White for her many years of assistance and helped her pack for the journey. Snow White was about to start a new chapter in her life. (115 words)

Story 2 / When Cinderella met the Prince, her life took a U-turn. She became incredibly rich. She could shop, go to the spa and enjoy a lot of fun activities and perks every day. Buying footwear became her new favorite hobby. And rightfully so, since it was a shoe that changed her fate. Her favorite shoes were various types of slippers. She had as many as 500 pairs of them! Many years after her death, her great-grandchildren opened the Cinderella museum, in which the main attraction was precisely that slipper collection. (90 words)

Story 3 / The Ugly Duckling couldn't understand what was going on. It published a new Instagram post and immediately started receiving nasty comments and hate, even though the Ugly Duckling was such a smart and kind person. It felt really sad, but it decided not to give up. After all, everyone has to go through puberty. Its various symptoms, like skin blemishes, will pass. The Duckling put a lot of effort into studying, exercising and working on its talents. It grew up to be a beautiful, kind Swan. It became an incredibly successful YouTuber thanks to its channel “To be a Swan”. (99 words)

Story 4 / Robert Lewandowski is a Polish soccer player of worldwide fame. He's been interested in soccer since he was a child. He could bounce the ball while doing his homework or eating. In 2006, he joined the Znicz Pruszków soccer club. He played for clubs such as: Lech Poznań, Borussia Dortmund, and Bayern Munich. He currently plays for FC Barcelona. He does not eat products that contain gluten or lactose and stays away from sweetened beverages. Before a game, he eats meals with a high protein content and has fruit after a game. (93 words)

Story 5 / Weronika “Wersow” Sowa is a popular influencer and YouTuber. She mainly gained popularity thanks to being a member of EKIPA, a group established by a YouTuber nicknamed “Friz”. Wersow created her channel in 2013. It is currently one of the top channels in Poland when it comes to the number of subscribers. Wersow uses it to publish materials on various subjects like fashion, makeup or event reviews. She also takes part in pranks. She enjoys being active—she loves roller-skating. According to her, the coolest cartoon is “How to Train Your Dragon”. (93 words)



My Reflections

Conduct a discussion with your charges at the end of each variant. You can use our suggested questions as part of the summary:

1. How did you feel during the activity? (You can use the wheel of emotions to describe what you felt).
2. What did you find difficult or easy?
3. Did anything about this activity surprise you?
4. What did this activity show you?
5. How much does the original story differ from the final one, written down on the flipchart or board?

My New Knowledge

During this exercise, the young people in your care should—with your help—observe that even if they did not intend to do so, when they repeated unverified information, they put both themselves and others at risk of memorizing the erroneous information that crept into the original story.

Tell your charges about the illusion of truth. Its main principle is: **A lie repeated many times becomes truth.** When fake news appears in multiple places, we can prematurely mistake it for a reliable piece of information. Merely coming across a piece of information a few times causes our **intuitive system** to decide that this information is familiar and therefore true (when in fact it is only in line with what we previously saw). This is how rumor spreads. We start believing a story after hearing it from several sources even if it is not based on facts.

Seeing the Connection and Building Immunity

To summarize the knowledge gained, ask your charges the following questions:

1. Does the same thing happen in real life when various people repeat the information they hear? In which situations?
2. Have you seen a similar mechanism online, at school, among your friends? Can you give any examples?

Next, divide the participants into groups of several people, give them large sheets of paper, markers, or crayons, and ask them to make a poster titled “How to spot a rumor?” together.

After the groups have created the posters, present them in front of everybody and then display them in a visible spot so the rules can be used on a daily basis.



As part of the summary of the whole activity, offer reinforcement to your charges. At the end of the process, give each participant a message indicating at least one positive thing you noticed during the activity. This way, you will emphasize their “small wins”.

Examples of behaviors that could constitute a “small win” throughout the process:

- active participation in the “Share a story” activity,
- respecting the rules—in the case of observers and participants who have already heard the story, e.g. giving someone room, staying quiet, not dropping any hints,
- involvement in the summary of the activity,
- sharing their reflections, thoughts, or experiences.



Scenario 2

Hats

30–60
minutes10–12
13–15individual/small/
largerSlow thinking: analysis from different
perspectives, cognitive dissonance

Objectives

This activity will allow the participants to:

- earn how to take a stance on a given matter in an objective and unbiased way,
- see the various perspectives for discussing a given subject,
- practice and adopt a specific thinking style.

Materials

[download](#)**For this activity, you will need:**

- colorful sheets of paper corresponding to the colors of the hats, which can be handed out to the participants so that they know which hat they will use to “think” (optional: paper hats in appropriate colors),
- a brief description of the way of thinking represented by the hat they will be using during the activity,
- for the individual summaries: worksheets with uncolored hats and their descriptions, markers, or crayons.

For younger participants (10–12):

- as part of the introduction to this activity, you can prepare paper hats in colors corresponding to the hats from the description, which your charges can put on during the activity.

Activity
Summary

1. The facilitator describes how the thinking hats work and assigns hats to the participants.
2. The facilitator reads out a story, problem, or dilemma. The participants talk about the subject according to their assigned hats.
3. The facilitator presents selected information from the theoretical section My New Knowledge.
4. The participants choose the hat that is the most comfortable for them: they stand next to the drawings of hats placed around the room. They check which hat they would like to use most on a daily basis.

My Experience

“Thinking hats” is an activity based on a technique developed by a psychologist and physician from Malta—Edward de Bono. In this technique, a given problem is analyzed from the specific perspective of six thinking hats. Each hat has an assigned color and focuses on a particular way of thinking (to learn more about the thinking hats technique, see Edward de Bono’s book *Six Thinking Hats*).

- **White hat—facts:** a way of thinking based on facts, data, and figures. It leaves no room for emotions or speculation—only what is certain and verified matters.

Sample expressions: “Data analysis shows...”, “According to figures...”, “It’s a fact that...”, “Let’s focus on the facts...”

- **Red hat—emotions:** being driven by emotions, feelings, hunches, and intuition. What matters is what one feels. Using this way of thinking, you do not need to reflect, only act according to your mood.

Sample expressions: “I feel that...”, “It seems to me that...”, “My intuition tells me that...”, “What emotions does this situation evoke?”





- **Green hat—creativity and opportunities:** it means coming up with innovative, creative, new, and unusual ideas. There are no limits to your imagination.

Sample expressions: “I have an idea...”, “Let’s think of something new, creative...”, “Let’s think outside the box...”, “Let’s see where our imagination takes us...”



- **Yellow hat—optimism:** this means being optimistic, seeing the positive side of things, advantages, and benefits, pointing to positive outcomes.

Sample expressions: “Let’s look on the bright side...”, “This has many advantages, such as...”, “Let’s approach it optimistically...”, “I can see a lot of positive effects, such as...”



- **Black hat—pessimism:** this way of thinking focuses on the negative, faults, and weaknesses.

Sample expressions: “This idea has a lot of disadvantages, such as...”, “This is a bad idea...”, “I don’t like this...”, “I don’t think this is going to work...”



- **Blue hat—the moderator:** this means observing the rules of the meeting, controlling its course, and making sure everybody gets their turn to speak.

Sample expressions: “Let me remind you about the rule...”, “Person A, please speak your mind...”, “Now for person C’s arguments...”, “Please be quiet...”

As the facilitator of the activity, familiarize your charges with the colors of the hats and ways of thinking assigned to the hats in specific colors.

How to Assign Hats to Participants:

The blue hat is typically the moderator of the entire process, so we suggest giving this hat to the facilitator of the activity, i.e. the educator, instructor, or teacher. If any young people in the group can handle this role, you can assign it to them. Support that person if needed.

After excluding the blue hat, all that remains is to distribute the five remaining hats.

Hat types can be assigned at random or deliberately by the facilitator. If you know that one of the young people under your care has a clearly defined way of thinking—for example, they are highly critical in every situation, you can assign them a yellow or green hat on purpose so that they can practice a different way of thinking and approaching the problem.

Overt or Covert Hats:

The participants can know who has which hat, i.e. which way of thinking they will follow during the exercise.

You can also introduce another rule, namely: after being assigned a hat (deliberately or randomly), the participants cannot disclose which hat they will be using to “think”. After solving the problem, people must guess which hats their colleagues were wearing.

You do not need to distribute all the hats and the same hat can be assigned to multiple people. For instance, if you are conducting the activity for three people, you can assign just three hats or assign two hats to each person.

Divide your charges into teams and assign the hats to them. Each group must focus on stating ideas and arguments according to the way of thinking of the assigned hat.

1. After deliberately or randomly assigning hats to specific people, read out a story or problem that the group is supposed to solve together, taking into account the rule that each person can only speak and present their ideas and arguments within the limits determined by the specific hat.



2. The participants have up to 30 minutes to complete the task. Remember that each person should get a chance to speak at least once (per round). The suggested speaking time per participant is 2-4 minutes per round. Each person will be able to take part in a discussion. If you have the blue hat, moderate the discussion and watch over the course of the conversation. If one of the participants is fulfilling this role, they need to make sure the rules are observed and you should support them in that task.

You can use our bank of ideas for the discussion. You can also come up with your own topics or invent them together with the participants before the discussion with the hats begins.

Alternative suggestions:

- For individual work

The facilitator reads out a story, problem, or dilemma, while the young person can come up with solutions and arguments for all the hats, one hat or several of them.

- For work in a small group

Only assign as many hats as there are people in the group or assign two hats per person; the hats can repeat.

Proposed Subjects/Dilemmas:

- **Subject 1** / A new classmate is about to join you. You find out that he runs a YouTube channel dedicated to video games. Unfortunately, opinions on the channel are negative. Some of the comments accuse that YouTuber of being a cheater.
Your task: Discuss what kind of welcome you should give him in your class.
- **Subject 2** / There is a growing issue of noise in your community center or youth club. During the day, when there are many people around, everyone talks really loudly and it is difficult to have a chat, do your homework, or play a game in peace.
Your task: As representatives of the community center / youth club, come up with ways to solve the issue of noise.
- **Subject 3** / You are a group of storks getting ready to fly south before the winter.
Your task: Develop a travel plan and a list of things you need to prepare.
- **Subject 4** / You can hire an instructor in your community center or youth club to conduct additional activities.
Your task: as representatives of the community center / youth club, come up with an idea for the additional activity.

My Reflections

At the end of the selected activity variant, conduct a discussion with your charges. You can use our suggested questions as part of the summary:

1. How did you feel during the activity? (You can use the wheel of emotions to describe what you felt).
2. What did you find difficult or easy?
3. Did anything about this activity surprise you?
4. What did this activity show you or what did you get out of it?
5. Was it easy for you to take on the assigned/randomly chosen role—in other words, to think according to the rules of the hat in a given color?

My New Knowledge

Tell your charges about how **cognitive dissonance** impedes group work—when it is difficult for us to adopt other people's vision because we already have our own. Similarly, a person wearing an optimistic hat finds it hard to communicate with a person with a pessimistic hat. They use completely different assumptions. When we



are excessively attached to a point of view or conviction typical of a given hat, we are less inclined to hear out the arguments of the other side.

Use the wheel of emotions to talk to your charges about what they feel when they disagree with someone or something. Dissonance is an unpleasant sensation: it feels tense and we somehow have to deal with this tension. When we encounter something that can shake our belief system, it is easy for us to simply reject the new information—to ignore it or deny it.

Seeing the Connection and Building Immunity

During this exercise, the participants could see that holding onto a single point of view actually made it more difficult to develop a solution. Use this fact and reference the negative aspects of cognitive dissonance in your discussion. What did the young people feel when they had to confront a different point of view? Try to label those emotions together with them. Was it irritation, for example?

Next, invite your charges to sum up the entire process. Together, consider the following questions:

1. Is it easy for me to “switch” between hats?
2. How could one “switch” between different hats easily?

To sum up the whole activity, spread pictures of colorful hats or sheets of paper in colors symbolizing the hats on the floor. Ask the participants to stand next to the hat or sheet of paper they can relate to the most. Next, ask the participants which hat they would like to use more than they do right now. You can provide the following example: as an optimist, I focus on the positive sides of situations, but I sometimes fail to notice the downsides that could warn me about certain things—that is why I would like to make more use of the black hat. Ask the participants to complete the following sentences on sheets of paper: “The hat I relate to most is... because...” and “I would like to make more use of the... hat because...”.

Sum up: All the hats are important and necessary, just like various ways of thinking. It is good to use different ways of thinking and look at a given subject or situation from different perspectives.



As part of the summary of the whole activity, offer reinforcement to your charges. At the end of the process, give each participant a message indicating at least one positive thing you noticed during the activity. This way, you will emphasize their “small wins”.

Examples of behaviors that could constitute a “small win” throughout the process:

- active participation and involvement in taking on the role of a specific hat,
- providing arguments as part of the assigned or randomly chosen role,
- involvement in the summary of the activity,
- sharing their reflections, thoughts, or experiences.



Scenario 3

Filling in the Gaps



40 minutes

10–12
13–15individual/
small/larger

cognitive closure

Objectives

This activity will allow the participants to:

- experience cognitive closure,
- see how cognitive closure can affect the perception of media.

Materials

[download](#)**For this activity, you will need:**

- images depicting partially obscured objects (e.g. animals, everyday objects, etc.).

Activity
Summary**Alternative for younger participants:**

1. The facilitator shows the participants a partially obscured image.
2. The participants guess what the image depicts and then the facilitator shows them the full picture.
3. The facilitator asks the participants how they recognized what was in the picture, what was helpful, and what was misleading, then repeats the process with several other pictures.

Alternative for older participants:

1. The participants split into three groups and prepare a meme that depicts “young people's problems”.
2. Each group presents their work in front of everyone. The remaining groups try to guess what the authors of the meme wanted to say and present their own interpretation or explanation of the meme.
3. The meme's authors describe what they wanted to convey through the meme.

Continuation after the main activity

1. The facilitator presents selected information from the theoretical section *My New Knowledge*.
2. The young people talk about how their bodies react and the feelings and thoughts they get when they are in a stressful situation. The facilitator writes down their responses.

My Experience

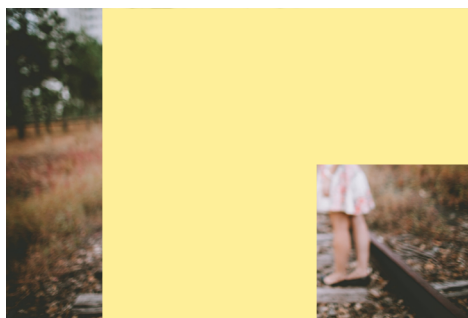
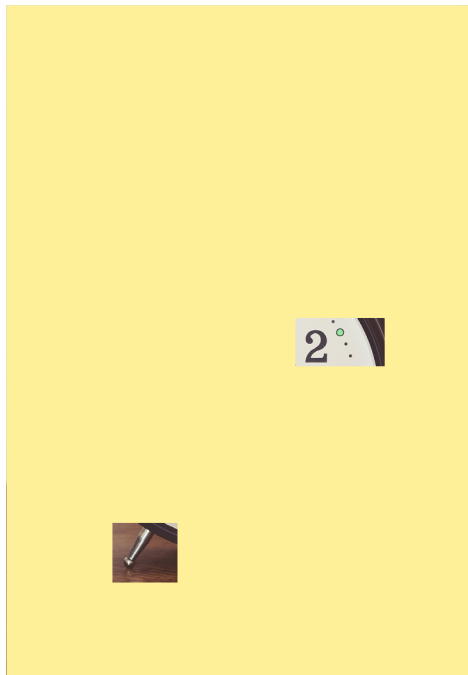
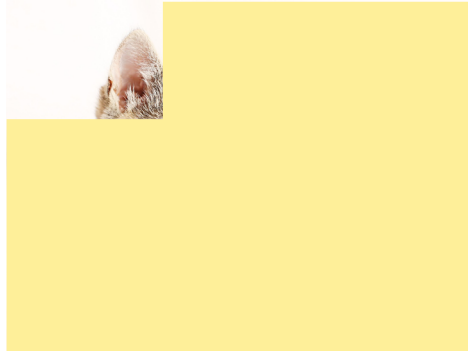
Alternative for Younger Participants:

1. Prepare several pictures in which only parts of objects or animals are visible, for example, individual animal body parts like a head, tail, or limb.
2. Show your charges one picture at a time. Ask them to guess, based on the available hints, what animal or object is depicted in the picture.
3. Point out that the participants are trying to fill in the information gaps based on the visible fragments.
4. After eliciting their responses, show the full picture and compare it with the participants' answers. Together, discuss what information was available and how they attempted to fill in the missing elements based on visible hints.
5. Repeat this process for several pictures to give your charges more opportunities to observe and discuss their “cognitive closure”.

This activity can also be conducted during individual meetings with young people.



Suggested Images



Alternative for Older Participants:

1. Divide the participants into three groups. Each group is tasked with preparing a meme depicting “young people's problems”. Give them 15 minutes to complete the task.
2. Then, invite the first group to present the meme. Ask the two remaining groups to answer the following questions:
 - What did the meme's authors want to convey?
 - How would you interpret or explain this meme?



3. After they finish speaking, ask the authors to share their vision. Check whether their guesses were close to the actual intentions of the meme's authors.
4. Repeat the process with the two other groups.

My Reflections

Conduct a discussion with your charges at the end of the selected variant. You can use our suggested questions as part of the summary:

1. How did you feel during the activity? (You can use the wheel of emotions to describe what you felt).
2. What did you find difficult or easy?
3. Did anything about this activity surprise you?
4. What did this activity show you or what did you get out of it?

My New Knowledge

Invite your charges to sum up the entire process. Our mind automatically fills in the gaps and makes connections based on the available elements. It is like solving a jigsaw puzzle, even if we are missing certain pieces. That was the case both during the exercise with the memes, where we added our own interpretation to a simple message, and during the exercise with the incomplete pictures.

When we cannot see the full picture, we start guessing and relying on associations. Where do they come from? **The need for cognitive closure** makes us “latch onto” the immediately available interpretation or feeling and subsequently refuse to let go of it. Our opinion is “frozen”, which makes it more difficult to convince us to change our stance.

In difficult, unexpected situations that give rise to numerous emotions, we tend to jump to conclusions quickly. Stressful circumstances make us less resistant to uncertainty and ambiguity. We seek something that we can use as a framework for interpreting the new events. Talk about this using the wheel of emotions.

Seeing the Connection and Building Immunity

Ask the participants about the bodily reactions, thoughts, and feelings that occur during a stressful situation (like the one presented in the memes). Write down their suggestions on the flipchart or board.

Body	Feelings	Thoughts
------	----------	----------

How do they behave in a stressful situation? Do they involuntarily shut out new information and avoid discussions? Do they try to find as much new information as possible to better understand what is going on? Or perhaps they try not to think about this situation at all and accept the first available interpretation or way out? Talk to your charges about the fact that stress can both motivate and paralyze.

Invite the young people to a brainstorming session that involves completing the following sentence: “When I’m browsing stress-inducing content online, I can...”. Write down the ideas on the flipchart or board. Tell your charges that one of the strategies for coping with stress in such situations can be to refrain from adding their own story to the information they read, see or hear.

To sum up, ask the participants to complete the following sentence on sheets of paper: “Next time, when I notice myself adding my own story to information even though I don’t know all the facts, I will...”. Attach the sheets of paper to the poster you prepared together.



As part of the summary of the whole activity, offer reinforcement to your charges. At the end of the process, give each participant a message indicating at least one positive thing you noticed during the activity. This way, you will emphasize their “small wins”.

Examples of behaviors that could constitute a “small win” throughout the process:

- active participation and involvement in guessing what the picture represents,
 - involvement in the summary of the activity,
 - involvement during group work,
 - sharing their reflections, thoughts, or experience.
-



Scenario 4

Trial Simulation

140
minutes

13-15



small/larger

slow thinking, truth criteria,
evaluation of evidence quality

Objectives

This activity will allow the participants to:

- improve their ability to use their second (slow thinking) system to construct arguments, express their opinions, and change their perspectives,
- discuss the evaluation of the reliability of evidence and its sources,
- discuss online idols and their conduct, and analyze which of their behaviors are honest and which can result in their fans being put in dangerous situations.

Materials
[download](#)**For this activity, you will need:**

- role sheets for the participants,
- an additional sheet for the person playing the Judge,
- a sheet of paper / flipchart sheet and markers.

Activity
Summary

1. Each participant receives a role sheet.
2. The facilitator reads out the story.
3. The participants write down the arguments and prepare their statements, depending on the role assigned to them.
4. The trial simulation takes place according to the script.
5. The facilitator presents selected information from the theoretical section *My New Knowledge*.
6. The participants work in groups on the assigned issue. Next, each group presents its work.
7. The participants answer the following questions: What situations similar to this one have occurred in the real world? Do you know such situations from the world of influencers or YouTubers?

My Experience

“Trial simulation” is a longer activity that can be spread over several days or completed in a single day.

Your charges’ task will be to take on the roles of:

- The Defendant (if you know that introducing this role to your group can be difficult, you can change this role to an additional Lawyer or Defendant’s Representative),
- The Lawyer,
- The Prosecutor (or team of Prosecutors),
- Witnesses,
- The Judge (or team of Judges).

In these roles, they will assess the story you read to them, present the arguments, and decide on the outcome of the trial. You can create additional roles for the trial simulation as needed.

1. Assign a role to each participant or allow them to pick their roles randomly. The role sheets will contain a brief description of a given character’s behavior and knowledge.



2. Tell your charges about the story in which they will be playing their roles. Our suggestion is at the end of the activity description.
3. When you familiarize them with the story, their first task will be to write down arguments and come up with statements in line with their roles. Give them enough time to prepare.
4. Then, each party will have an opportunity to make a statement. The Prosecutor, the Lawyer, and the Judge can ask additional questions. As the facilitator, set the time for the entire trial and for each party's statements. Support the person playing the Judge in conducting the trial.

We suggest the following time intervals for individual elements:

- preparation of arguments by the participants—20 minutes,
- the whole trial—100 minutes, including time for each party to make a statement—limit the speaking time to a maximum of 4-5 minutes and the number of questions for Witnesses to 1-2,
- activity summary—20 minutes.

The duration of the activity will depend on the group dynamic and how involved and willing to speak the participants are.

After hearing out all the parties, the Judge or team of Judges is tasked with presenting the verdict.

Finally, each person can read their role description aloud so that others can learn what the role sheets say.

Introduction to the Story (read it out loud to all participants):

Coraline is a famous influencer and YouTuber. She runs her own YouTube channel called "Coraline's World". Her videos are about fashion, beauty, and a healthy lifestyle.

She is the girlfriend of a rapper called Frog. They appear together as a couple on Coraline's channel and record conversations on life-related subjects. Coraline is also active on other social media. She has millions of followers. Companies pay her to advertise their products through her channels. Coraline prepares short video reviews of those products. Typically, when a company pays her for an ad, she discloses that her post is sponsored.

Recently, Coraline started recording her songs. She also collaborates with rappers who are starting their careers.

Coraline received a message from "Salve", a company that is just entering the market. The message asked her to advertise their online beauty products store. In the ad, Coraline is supposed to share a special code that grants buyers an 80% discount on the first purchase. Shopping in the online store requires access to a payment card.

Coraline agreed to this collaboration.

Sometime later, she started receiving comments on her profiles that the online store was scamming its customers and collecting full purchase amounts, without including the promised discount.

Coraline receives a letter from the Court, stating that a trial is about to commence. She has been accused of fraud through misleading her fans*.

**Fraud is regulated in Title 18 of the U.S. Code § 1341.*

Role Sheets

The following information is only available to individuals who receive the specific role sheets.



Role: The Defendant (Defendant's Representative)

You feel uncertain in this situation. You could be in trouble. “Salve”, the company that suggested the collaboration informed you that the 80% discount would only apply to the first 50 people who make a purchase within a specific time limit. Subsequent customers would have to pay the whole order amount. A representative of “Salve” asked you not to disclose this fact to customers in the store's advertisement. You agreed to this condition. You presented the information about the discount as if it was supposed to apply to any customer who shops on the company's website.

During the trial, do not plead guilty at first. Look for arguments that you could use in your defense. In the end, you should admit that you made a mistake and tell the truth. Try to see at what point the arguments of the parties or their statements make your character want to tell the truth. If you decide that no such moment occurred during the simulation, remember that your character's task at the end is to tell the truth. You can either express remorse about what happened and apologize or maintain that you would do the same thing all over again.

If you are the Defendant's Representative, come up with who you are as the person authorized by the Defendant to speak in her name. You can be a second Lawyer, but in that case, you cannot share all your knowledge with the chief Lawyer.

Role: The Prosecutor (or Team of Prosecutors)

Your task is to lead to the truth being revealed. Is Coraline indeed guilty of the whole situation? Did she conceal information on the discounts from the customers?

According to the evidence gathered, Coraline's boyfriend, Frog, participated in a few conversations with representatives of “Salve”. He may know whether Coraline was aware of the scam and whether she took part in it herself.

Your task is to ask probing questions in order to uncover the whole story with as much detail as possible.

During the trial, you can question the Defendant or her Representative as well as the Witnesses. At the end, you need to deliver the closing argument. Depending on the direction the story ultimately takes, ask the Court to resolve the situation as appropriate.

Role: The Lawyer

Your task is to defend your client: look for arguments in support of her good will and good intentions, or alternatively her ignorance.

Based on the story you hear, prepare arguments in support of your client's innocence. During the trial, you can question the Defendant or her Representative, as well as the Witnesses. At the end, you need to deliver the closing argument. Depending on the direction the story ultimately takes, ask for a resolution of the situation that is appropriate for your client. You can request that she be found not guilty or that her penalty be as mild as possible.

Role: The Judge (or Team of Judges)

Your task is to ensure that each party involved has a chance to make a statement. You summon each person and assign them time to speak.

Listen carefully to all the arguments. At the end of the trial, your task is to make a decision and announce it. When talking to everyone, try to act as neutral as possible.

You will have the facilitator's/teacher's support.



Role: Witness 1—Online Store Customer

You are a customer of the online store with beauty products, run by “Salve”. Your idol, Coraline, advertised this store and its products on her social media. She also shared a code that granted an 80% discount on the first purchase! It was huge. You placed a big order and had to provide your card number to make the payment. That’s normal—you had to do the same thing in the taxi app, so you weren’t surprised. You entered the discount code. Everything seemed fine. However, when the transaction was completed, it turned out that the whole amount was charged! It was an enormous sum! You were really upset and filed a complaint. When you saw comments under Coraline’s post saying that the same thing happened to other people, you decided to testify during the trial.

You feel bitter about Coraline scamming her fans. About scamming you.

Role: Witness 2—Frog, a Rapper and Coraline’s Boyfriend

You are not happy about this trial. You don’t want to provide any information, but on the other hand—you know you have to say something. However, your own good also matters to you. You don’t want to be held responsible.

You and Coraline have only been dating for a short time, but you think this relationship has potential, especially from a professional point of view. You can see how much you can achieve together and how much money you can make. Do you love Coraline? You like her, but you are looking at it through the lens of money. You stand to gain a lot from this relationship.

Coraline started collaborating with “Salve” on her own. She told you that the company’s representatives offered a higher fee if she refrained from disclosing complete information about who can get a discount on the first purchase. The 80% discount on the order was only supposed to apply to the first 50 people who make a purchase within a specific time limit. Everyone else would pay the regular amount. You advised your girlfriend to agree to those terms. Who’s going to prove that Coraline knew about it? All the details were conveyed over the phone. Besides... What is important is what you can gain, not what people will lose.

Try to use short sentences and provide mere traces of information. Only respond to those questions that people ask you.

Role: Witness 3—a Fan

You are Coraline’s biggest fan and run her official fan club. You get to meet your idol in her own apartment! Together, you plan her posts and meetings with other fans. You feel really lucky that you can be close to her and be friends with her. Yes—for you, it’s a form of friendship.

You really trust Coraline and appreciate her work. You admire her. In the future, you want to be just like her: have your own channel and make money doing only pleasant things.

You aren’t too fond of her boyfriend, Frog—something about him doesn’t sit well with you. Perhaps it’s the fact that Coraline has become a slightly different person with him around. She has started eating more fast food, even though she claims to eat healthy on her channel. You get the impression that Frog has a bad influence on her.

Recently, when you visited her to discuss the next meeting with fans, you overheard a strange conversation. Coraline was talking to Frog about her new collaboration with “Salve”. You had already heard that your idol would be promoting an online store with beauty products. What surprised you was that Frog was being rude and unpleasant toward Coraline. You heard him say, “Why do you care about people? This collab will make us a ton of cash. Who’s gonna prove that the discount is only for a certain number of people?!”



The Judge Role Sheet—Conducting the Trial

- A court hearing in the case of Coraline and the possibility of her committing fraud against her followers is open.
- The first to make a statement will be the Prosecutor. Please tell me why you believe that Coraline is guilty of fraud against her fans (time for the statement).
- The Lawyer will speak now. Please tell me why you believe that Coraline is not guilty of fraud against her fans (time for the statement).
- Now, it's time for the Defendant or the Defendant's Representative to make a statement (time for the statement).
- Does the Prosecutor have any questions for the Defendant?
- Does the Lawyer have any questions for the Defendant?
- I summon the first Witness—an online store customer.
- Please introduce yourself and tell us what you know about this case.
- Does the Prosecutor have any questions for the Witness?
- Does the Lawyer have any questions for the Witness?
- Thank you, Witness number one. I summon the second Witness—Frog, the rapper.
- Please introduce yourself and tell us what you know about this case.
- Does the Prosecutor have any questions for the Witness?
- Does the Lawyer have any questions for the Witness?
- Thank you, Witness number two. I summon the third Witness—Coraline's fan.
- Please introduce yourself and tell us what you know about this case.
- Does the Prosecutor have any questions for the Witness?
- Does the Lawyer have any questions for the Witness?
- Thank you, Witness number three.
- Prosecutor, please deliver your closing argument.
- Thank you. Lawyer, please deliver your closing argument.
- Thank you. We shall take a recess to make a decision.
- After the break: I hereby announce the verdict in Coraline's case.
- Coraline was found guilty / not guilty.
- The court presents the arguments put forward by the parties.
- The court presents the arguments for its decision.
- The case is closed.

My Reflections

The participants symbolically abandon their roles: shake hands with the person sitting or standing next to them and tell them your real name.

Use our suggested questions in the summary:

1. How did you feel while playing your role? (You can use the wheel of emotions to describe what you felt).
2. What was difficult about your role?
3. What was easy about your role?
4. Was it easy to put together and present your arguments?
5. What feelings accompanied you when making the final decision in this case?
6. Which arguments felt more relatable to you and which did you disagree with?
7. What feelings accompanied you when one person or multiple people were making the final decision in the case?
8. What did you learn about yourself thanks to taking part in this activity?



My New Knowledge

Refer to the earlier activity to show that in some situations “**conclusions good at first glance**” will be insufficient—like during the scene in the court. When our decisions and views have serious consequences for ourselves, people close to us, and others, we should seek more reliable evidence and scrutinize it more carefully.

Talk to your charges about the difference between **anecdotal evidence** and better-quality evidence. Together, analyze examples of arguments used during the trial simulation.

Think about which pieces of evidence were “easy to grasp” and which required more thought. Did it affect their appeal and credibility? This is a good moment to present the difference between intuitive (fast) thinking and analytical (slow) thinking.

Seeing the Connection and Building Immunity

Invite your charges to sum up the entire process. Divide everyone into 3 groups. Give each group large sheets of paper and markers and assign them a question/issue. Ask the group to write it down at the top of the sheet of paper. Give each group 10 minutes to list all their ideas in response to the question/issue. When the time is up, ask the representative or representatives of each group to present the responses.

Questions/issues for group work:

1. What evidence should we take into account when we have to make a decision on whether a given situation is true?
2. What can impede our decision on whether a given situation is true or the data are reliable?
3. What can help us make a decision on whether a given situation is true or the data are reliable?

Ask all the participants the following questions: **What situations similar to this one have occurred in the real world? Do you know any situations like this from the world of influencers or YouTubers?**

Read a story that actually took place. Han Ni from Singapore who fell for a love scam. It shows that by sharing her story, Han Ni hopes to expose the tactics of scammers to prevent others falling for them. [Link to the story.](#) _

NOTE! This video contains explicit language. We advise against playing the video when conducting the activity with your charges. However, we suspect that they will be aware of this story. You can reference it during the summary or check if your charges know it.



As part of the summary of the whole activity, offer reinforcement to your charges. At the end of the process, give each participant a message indicating at least one positive thing you noticed during the activity. This way, you will emphasize their “small wins”.

Examples of behaviors that could constitute a “small win” throughout the process:

- getting into the role, the “Trial Simulation” participants realistically playing the characters,
- involvement in creating arguments in the “Trial simulation”,
- sticking to the allocated speaking time and making use of that time,
- involvement in the summary of the activity,
- involvement in group work, cooperation within the group,
- presenting the work of one’s group in front of everyone, showing courage, and making the presentation interesting,
- noticing the connection between the story in the trial and real online situations.



The Way I See the World



The Way I See the World



About Cognitive Biases

Nobody is Infallible

You probably have in-depth knowledge of many subjects. You also have certain interests, values, and professional qualifications. Are you always right about everything, though? We all make mistakes because to err is human.

Besides, we are under no obligation to be skilled in every field. Some of us know how to teach others, some of us know quantum physics and medicine, while others are experts on many different issues that are important to society. We share out knowledge with each other and organize it together.

Sometimes, however, **fake experts** enter the stage. They can be people who, despite lacking both expertise and proper qualifications, speak out and mislead others. They can also be people who are “only” repeating unverified news that they heard or read elsewhere. Fake experts can aid the spread of disinformation—deliberately or unknowingly.

Pitfalls of Thinking

You probably know people who believe fake news they encountered online. They may not have any bad intentions at all—it is not their fault that they have been misled. But why did they end up believing that false information?

Typical reasons include ignorance and an inability to verify information. They could also fall victim to scams. However, these are not the only explanations. It turns out that our psychological predispositions might also be to blame.

Our brain is not used to living in a world where so much information is available at our fingertips (literally—since all you need to do is touch your smartphone screen). Just as our eyes can sometimes fall for optical illusions, every so often our minds can be tricked by **the impression that certain things are true**.



In this module, you will learn more about **cognitive biases**—[psychological mechanisms](#) that can lead even the most rational people to make mistakes in their conclusions about the world. The theory of schemas is frequently referenced in [discussions](#) about falling for fake news, pseudoscience, or conspiracy theories.

We often give in to such schemas subconsciously. Although we typically fail to notice our own cognitive biases, we can learn to recognize situations in which they start to take over our thinking. There are many types of these cognitive biases and we will only go over a few selected ones in this module—those with the greatest impact on our vulnerability to manipulation.



The Self as a Point of Reference

You are probably wondering why our brain, which developed over thousands of years of evolution, allows for these biases in our thinking. The truth is that the human brain applies these mechanisms on purpose because schemas [allow](#) us to make decisions when we have access to limited information.

Cognitive biases can be attempts to minimize effort—**the brain does not like to exert itself**. They can also result from [emotions](#), such as anger, stress, or [social factors](#), the need to belong to a group or an attachment to our identity.



Cognitive biases rely on what we already know about the world. They are subconscious beliefs—our **private mental map**, thanks to which we can explore and learn about the world. However, our map can sometimes contain gaps, dead ends, or hastily scribbled notes. In certain situations, before we fully get our bearings, clinging to the map at all costs can lead us astray.

Our map of beliefs is formed based on three statements.

1. “My experience is a good point of reference”

When you open your map, at its very center is a point marked “You are here”. That is your point of reference when you want to explore new regions of knowledge. However, you always go back to what you already know. Cognitive biases make it more difficult for us to accept the volatile nature of the world.



In everyday interactions with people, we can experience the so-called **halo effect**. This means a [tendency](#) to ascribe positive traits to other people (and therefore also to trust them) on the basis of the first impression alone.

If a trusted colleague from work has always shared interesting trivia with us, it is [natural to conclude that they typically tell the truth](#). As a result, we will be less

skeptical when they share fake news on their social media profile.

The opposite of that will be the **golem effect**—ascribing an excessive number of negative traits to someone after the first meeting.

Influencers operate in a similar manner. What they develop with their followers—including your charges—is a **parasocial relationship**, i.e. [a relationship](#) in which the person on the other side of the screen [appears to be](#) our trusted friend. We know everything about the influencer—their interests, their everyday life—and therefore we trust them even if they are not a reliable source of knowledge. This is also where the risk of disinformation occurs.

2. “The group I belong to cannot be wrong”

No man is an island. We live among other people—we have families, friends, and individuals with a similar approach to life. They are also present on our map and serve as our signposts. Thanks to them, when we encounter a subject we know little about, we ask ourselves: “What do people like me think about this?”

Our minds [can be](#) excessively attached to our environment—even more so than to truth. **In-group bias** [can cause us to](#) unconditionally accept and defend the beliefs of people from the group we belong to.



“You are either with us or against us”

At the same time, we tend to be less trusting of people we do not know. That is not surprising—after all, we cannot be certain of their intentions. This bias can be accompanied by another one—the **out-group homogeneity effect**.



This means a [tendency](#) to think that members of a group we do not belong to are more similar to each other than they are in reality. Such individuals become homogenous and simple to judge in our eyes.

This division into the “in-group” that we trust and the “out-group” fuels **polarization**—a process through which society is [divided](#) into two camps that are deeply convinced they are in the right and drift further and further apart in terms of their choices, opinions, and worldview.

True or just popular?

Imagine that you are shopping online for a new board game for your institution. Would you be more willing to trust a website on which the game received a lot of reviews from other educators or a website that features no such reviews? The former, of course. An even better option would be to get an opinion from someone you know. Typically, you are unlikely to buy something unless someone close to you recommends it.

This is also the case with convictions and information about the world, politics, and health. **We have a preference for the points of view of people we know** and the more people support a given position, the more sensible it appears to us.



However, this is not always true. When we do not have an opinion on a given subject, we are willing to follow what the majority of our group thinks [due to](#) a phenomenon known as **social proof**. This way, our mind [chooses](#) the popularity of a given thesis as the criterion of truth instead of its credibility.

3. “I am almost always right”

Who catches your attention first when you see a group picture from a party or meeting with your friends? It is almost certainly yourself. That is perfectly normal—after all, you are the most important person in your own life. How others look in the picture is of secondary importance. Our mind takes a similar approach when using the aforementioned map. It always prefers its own to someone else’s since it cannot know what others might have scribbled on it.

People with specific political views often reflexively tend to [consult](#) magazines or [news sites](#) that are in line with their beliefs and [pay less attention](#) to content from websites that represent a different worldview. When we already believe something, we naturally seek more evidence to confirm it. This bias can cause us to [over-interpret](#) certain events so that they align with our visions and values.

All of the cognitive biases discussed above [work](#) in conjunction with the **bias blind spot**, due to which we [assume](#) others are more naïve than we are and [think](#) that we never fall prey to cognitive biases ourselves.



Which ear do you use?

Errors in how we interpret the world are not only caused by the mechanisms described above, but also by the ways we listen to other people. Sometimes, the way we interpret their words differs from what they were trying to say. In the context of psychoeducation, Friedmann S. von Thun proposed a [concept](#) known as the “four-ears-model”. Verbal communication takes place on four levels: factual, self-revealing, relationship, and appeal level.

Depending on our attitude to the interlocutor or the topic, messages can reach us through different metaphorical “ears”: the factual ear (we pay attention to the information contained in the message), the self-revelation ear (we observe what is happening to the interlocutor), the relationship ear (we focus on our attitude to the interlocutor) and the appeal ear (we try to guess the interlocutor’s wishes).

It would be a mistake to say that only one of these approaches to processing information is correct since each of them leads us to different conclusions. Therefore, relying on information from one channel alone can be the wrong choice and can lead to communication issues.

There is Nothing Wrong with Admitting You are Wrong

Unfortunately, we often cling to the idea that our interpretation of the message was flawless. This attitude, which we intuitively adopt on a daily basis, is called **naïve realism**. It means that we believe the world is exactly the way it appears to be and our convictions are true. Bear in mind, however, that we can often be [wrong](#) and our views can change. Mistakes happen.

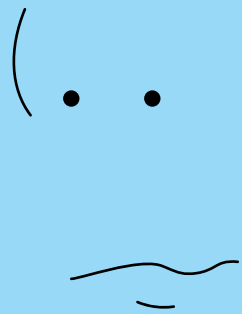
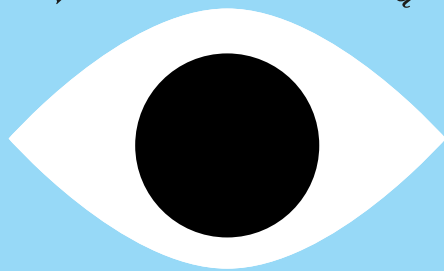


Someone who cares about the truth is able to admit an oversight on their part. There is nothing wrong with your eyes falling for it. However, it is good to be aware of the fact that we are prone to cognitive biases that make us vulnerable to the impact of disinformation.

Further reading:

- Meyer Ch. *Mental Shortcuts: 5 Ways Heuristic Can Lead to Poor Decision*. The Mind Collection. Available at <https://themindcollection.com/mental-shortcuts-and-misapplied-heuristics/> (accessed 14 March 2024).
- Meilleur C (2020) *Cognitive Bias: When Our Brain Plays Tricks on Us*. Knowledge One, 15 July. Available at <https://knowledgeone.ca/cognitive-bias-when-our-brain-plays-tricks-on-us/> (accessed 14 March 2024).
- Frank N (2023) *Psychology & Reality Construction: Challenges to Naive Realism*. Owlcation, 28 October. Available at <https://owlcation.com/humanities/Psychology-and-the-Construction-of-Reality-Challenges-to-Native-Realism> (accessed 14 March 2024).

The Way I See the World





Scenario 1

Who do You Agree With?



60 minutes

10–12
13–15

small/larger

the halo effect / the horns
effect or the golem effect

Objectives

This activity will allow the participants to:

- check what they pay attention to first when interacting with another person,
- see what can be done about first impressions when interacting with another person.

Materials
[download](#)**For this activity, you will need:**

- printed pictures with various people. If you cannot print anything, you can cut out some pictures, e.g. from a newspaper (as long as they depict different-looking people) or show the pictures as a slide show,
- pieces of paper for each participant to mark their answers (as many as there are characters in the pictures times the number of participants),
- descriptions of dilemmas that you will read out to the participants,
- markers.

Activity
Summary

1. The participants consider who the people in the pictures are and what they do.
2. The facilitator reads out several dilemmas. Together, the participants think about what the people in the pictures would have to say about them.
3. The facilitator reads out each dilemma once again, along with the comments of individual people in the pictures. The participants have to guess who the author of a given statement was.
4. The facilitator presents selected information from the theoretical section My New Knowledge.
5. The participants write down examples of situations from their lives when they trusted someone based on the first impression, both offline (“My life offline”) and online (“My life online”).

My Experience

1. Spread out the pictures with characters in front of the participants. You will find the suggested characters below.
2. Ask the young people who they think these individuals are, what they do, and what kind of people they are. Talk about each person. You can write down the key ideas on the board or flipchart.
3. One by one, read the proposed dilemmas and ask the participants what the individual people from the pictures would have to say about them, in their opinion.
4. Give each participant four pieces of paper and markers.
5. Ask them to write down their names on each piece of paper.
6. Read out the first dilemma again, followed by statements made by individual people from the pictures. You can write down the dilemma on the board or flipchart and place the answers of specific characters next to their pictures. This will make it easier for people to focus and make a decision.
7. The participants' task is to consider these statements and place the piece of paper with their name next to the picture of the person whose opinion aligns the most with their own.
8. Repeat this process four times to see how the participants' choices turn out. Sum it up in a few sentences (just the facts, no opinions). Point out whether a given person always chose the opinion of a given character from the picture or whether their choices varied.
9. Proceed to discuss the activity.



Dilemma 1

Compulsory education should end at the age of 15. After that point, young people should be able to choose if they want to continue learning or go to work.

Dilemma 2

If someone doesn't want to be hugged, touched, bothered, or pinched, you have to respect that. You should never touch people without their consent.

Dilemma 3

Women should stay at home, take care of children and cook. Making money is a man's job.

Dilemma 4

There's nothing wrong with incinerating garbage. It's a great recycling method.

Pictures and Statements of the Characters

Character 1 Simon



Dilemma 1

It's a good idea. Work and skills are important, though education can help you land a better job. You can work wherever you want, not where you have to.

Dilemma 2

Absolutely. No one has the right to bother others. Doing so is hurtful.

Dilemma 3

Women are definitely better at cooking and cleaning, but men should help, too.

Dilemma 4

When it gets cold, it doesn't matter what you burn, as long as you can warm up.

Character 2 Alice



Dilemma 1

I think it's a great idea! This way, everyone could choose what's best for them and follow their heart!

Dilemma 2

Truuueee... on the other hand, it's fine if that's how you express yourself. I'm not talking about violence, of course.

Dilemma 3

You've got to be kidding me! Women are made for better things!

Dilemma 4

That's disgusting! It goes against what we know about environmental protection! People should go to jail for something like that.



**Character 3
Matti**



Dilemma 1

School is awesome! You can meet lots of people and learn a ton of things. I can't imagine not being able to write, count, or not knowing the history of my own country.

Dilemma 2

My body is mine and no one has the right to touch me if I don't want them to.

Dilemma 3

No, that's a terrible approach. When you're in a relationship with someone, you have to take turns doing chores. Otherwise, it won't last.

Dilemma 4

No, you shouldn't do things like that. You have to be an informed citizen of the world. If we burn garbage today, future generations will have nowhere to live.

**Character 4
Deborah**



Dilemma 1

This would be reasonable if young people made good choices, but at that age, they could end up regretting the decision to leave school further down the line.

Dilemma 2

It's true, but people are sometimes just asking for it. If a girl wears shorts and a crop top, no wonder boys can't help themselves. You gotta have a bit of imagination.

Dilemma 3

As long as the man makes a lot of money, the woman can do that. Spending time with children is amazing. That's our role.

Dilemma 4

Of course. Environmental protection is a load of nonsense. The smoke disappears moments later anyway.

**Character 5
Betty**



Dilemma 1

All in all... School can sometimes be a tough place to endure. This way, those who don't want to learn can at least do something productive.

Dilemma 2

That depends on who's touching us. Our close family members can do it. I can't imagine not hugging and kissing my grandson.

Dilemma 3

That's how it used to be, in the good old days. Modern women have some strange ideas.

Dilemma 4

Depends on what kind of garbage. You can burn paper or old furniture. Not plastics, though, because they smell bad.



Character 6 Miriam



Dilemma 1

Going to school is both an obligation and a privilege. You have to take advantage of this opportunity and time. Not everyone can do it.

Dilemma 2

If you want someone to respect your decisions, you have to respect theirs.

Dilemma 3

Not all women can make that choice. If it was up to them, I don't think all of them would want such a life—though many probably would.

Dilemma 4

I wouldn't want to live in a world with no air to breathe.

My Reflections

You can use our suggested questions as part of the summary:

- How did you feel during the activity? (You can use the wheel of emotions to describe what you felt).
- What did you find difficult or easy?
- Did anything about this activity surprise you?
- What did this activity show you?
- Why did you agree with the opinions of a specific person?
- Did the way this person looks or the way you think they behave matter at all? If so, in what way? If not—why?

My New Knowledge

Talk to the participants about what they pay attention to when they meet someone. For example: the **halo effect** makes us see someone exclusively in a positive light based on first impressions only.

This is a cognitive bias resulting from the need to quickly form an opinion about someone based on insufficient information. We do not know much about that person, but we got to know their good side, so we make a positive generalization about them. We keep relying on that initial impression later on, even if that person proves less trustworthy in certain respects.

That person's reputation serves as a guideline regarding their credibility. If someone appears competent or looks good in a given outfit, introduces themselves professionally, and is a good speaker, it does not matter if they are not a doctor. If they tell us that green tea is a good remedy for toothache, there is a good chance we will believe them.

The **golem effect** is the opposite of this phenomenon. It involves ascribing excessively negative traits to someone, which results in a loss of confidence in that person.

Seeing the Connection and Building Immunity

Invite your charges to sum up the entire process. Ask: How does relying on first impressions affect our relationships with others?

Next, divide the board or flipchart into two parts. On one side, write: "My life offline", and on the other: "My life online".

Ask the participants to think about what they can do in order to avoid the pitfalls of the halo effect or the golem effect in everyday life and in the online world. Anyone who comes up with an idea should write down their example on the flipchart or board using keywords.



As part of the summary of the whole activity, offer reinforcement to your charges. At the end of the process, give each participant a message indicating at least one positive thing you noticed during the activity. This way, you will emphasize their “small wins”.

Examples of behaviors that could constitute a “small win” throughout the process:

- involvement and active participation in the activity,
 - respecting the rules and the time when another person was speaking,
 - involvement during the activity summary,
 - providing your own example and writing it on the flipchart or board.
-



Scenario 2

Your Opinion



60 minutes

10–12
13–15

small/larger



social proof

Objectives

This activity will allow the participants to:

- see whether they are guided by their own thoughts or by the beliefs of the majority when expressing their opinions and making decisions,
- find out how they can support their own opinions.

Materials
[download](#)

For this activity, you will need:

- envelopes and descriptions,
- two sheets of paper with “Agree” and “Disagree” written on them,
- a flipchart or board,
- large flipchart sheets,
- markers.

Activity
Summary

1. The facilitator reads out one description at a time. The participants’ task is to decide whether they “agree” or “disagree” with the statement on a given issue.
2. The facilitator writes down who picked which position and then invites the participants to present their arguments. If someone is swayed by the arguments they hear, they can change their position. The facilitator marks it next to that participant’s name.
3. The facilitator presents selected information from the theoretical section My New Knowledge.
4. The participants work in groups on the assigned subjects: Following the group—Upsides, Following the group—Downsides, Sticking to your guns—Upsides, Sticking to your guns—Downsides.

My Experience

1. Before starting the activity, hide the envelopes with descriptions in various places around the room.
2. Put two sheets of paper on the floor, on the opposite sides of the room. One of them should read “Agree” and the other “Disagree”.
3. Draw the following table on the flipchart or board:

	Agree	Disagree
Round 1 (description 1)	(place for the participants’ names)	(place for the participants’ names)
Round 2 (description 2)	(place for the participants’ names)	(place for the participants’ names)
Round 3 (description 3)	(place for the participants’ names)	(place for the participants’ names)
Round 4 (description 4)	(place for the participants’ names)	(place for the participants’ names)

4. Your charges will listen to the four descriptions as you read them out and then decide which side they will take—they need to take a stance. Point out that in the decision-making stage, the participants should not consult with each other about which position they are going to choose.



Try to see if any of your charges are carefully observing the decisions of their colleagues and making their decisions based on that. This can be a useful piece of information for you—you can later invite that young person to work individually on their assertiveness.

5. Your task will be to write down the names of those participants who “agree” and “disagree” in each round. When working with a larger group, you can use post-it notes. Ask the participants to write their names on the post-its and attach them in the right spot on the board or flipchart.
6. After all your charges have picked their positions in a given round, ask people on each side why they made this particular choice (What were their arguments? What do they think about it?). After the participants on both sides have spoken out, ask whether anyone—having heard other people’s opinions—would like to switch sides. If so, mark that person’s change of heart with an arrow on the flipchart or board (as shown in the sample table).
7. Repeat the same process for four rounds.

However, before you read the descriptions to your charges, they have to find them! Start reading the descriptions in the order in which they discover them.

Description 1a

It’s okay for my peers to consume energy drinks despite the ban. It’s cool and the drinks themselves taste good. Besides, having an energy drink helps you focus or relax.

Note: This subject is worth discussing if—despite [the ban on the sale of energy drinks to minors in Poland as of 2024](#)—young people still end up having access to energy drinks, for example with the help of older friends. Alternatively, you can discuss the additional description about freak fight shows.

Description 1b

Watching fights during Fame MMA or freak fights is a great pastime. It’s a good combination of sports and being able to get to know famous people better.

Description 2

Spending your free time in front of a screen (phone, computer, or TV) for more than two hours a day has a negative impact on your physical and mental health.

Description 3

Being respected by your peers is the most important thing in life. You should act in a way that makes them accept you and like you.

Description 4

Cheating on an exam or test is better than receiving a negative grade. What matters is getting a good grade, regardless of the means.



My Reflections

You can use our suggested questions as part of the summary:

1. How did you feel during the activity? (You can use the wheel of emotions to describe what you felt).
2. What did you find difficult or easy?
3. Did anything about this activity surprise you?
4. What did this activity show you?

Note! Write down the responses to the following questions on the flipchart or board in three columns.

1. Did you take into account what your friends were doing when making your decision?
2. What made you stick to your guns?
3. What made you change your mind?

My New Knowledge

Your charges may remember from the previous task that we are more inclined to trust a well-known person with a good reputation due to the halo effect. A similar mechanism is at work at the group level. Together, consider the extent we trust people that are close to us.

When looking for confirmation, people close to us are an excellent point of reference.

If you are a fan of a certain YouTuber, you can talk about them with other people who like them. That means they are a good, trustworthy creator. If all your friends are saying this new student is a bit weird, they must have a good reason to think so—so you are also going to avoid them. Your siblings started talking about the supposed health benefits of vaping? They would not lie to you, would they?

This is how **social proof** can affect your thinking process.

This cognitive bias makes us inclined to trust information, recommendations, and encouragements coming from a large number of people, especially people who are close to us. When we lack an opinion on a given subject, we prefer to follow the majority of our group. Since we cannot verify something ourselves, we trust that others have done it for us. Instead of considering what is true, we choose what is popular.

Seeing the Connection and Building Immunity

Invite your charges to sum up the entire process. Divide the participants into four groups. Give each group previously prepared flipchart sheets with the following topics written at the top of the page:

1. Following the group—Upsides
2. Following the group—Downsides
3. Sticking to your guns—Upsides
4. Sticking to your guns—Downsides

Give the groups 4 minutes to list all their ideas on a given topic. Next, ask them to exchange their sheets of paper by handing them over to the group to their right. Now, each group has 3 minutes to add their ideas to the topic of the group next to them. 3 minutes later, they should swap the sheets of paper again. Repeat the process until each group gets its original sheet back. Ask the representatives of the groups to present all the ideas.



Both following the group and sticking to your guns have their upsides and downsides. Ask everyone:

- What is easier: sticking to your guns or following the group?
- What do they choose to do online?
- When using social media, do they make their own decisions or are they influenced by the opinion of their peers or the number of likes? Do they, for example, like their friends' photos because they actually think they are cool or because the majority of their friends have done the same thing?
- Do they follow creators because they really like them and because they create content in line with their values or because their friends follow them?



As part of the summary of the whole activity, offer reinforcement to your charges. At the end of the process, give each participant a message indicating at least one positive thing you noticed during the activity. This way, you will emphasize their “small wins”.

Examples of behaviors that could constitute a “small win” throughout the process:

- Involvement and active participation in the activity, courage in expressing one's opinion,
 - respecting the rules and the time when another person was speaking,
 - involvement during the activity summary,
 - involvement in group work, cooperation,
 - providing own examples and ideas, sharing them with others.
-



Scenario 3

Things We Have in Common



60 minutes

10–12
13–15

small/larger

the out-group homogeneity
effect, stereotypes

Objectives

This activity will allow the participants to:

- check what traits and interests they share with other members of their group and what traits and interests are specific to them. This way, they will be able to see how much they have in common with their peers and how they differ from them,
- find out about the potential effects of emphasizing the differences between groups,
- reinforce the attitude of being interested in the other person, without judging them and unconditionally picking a side.

Materials

[download](#)

For this activity, you will need:

- large sheets of paper, flipchart sheets,
- markers.

Activity
Summary

1. In groups, the participants draw a flower on a sheet of paper. The flower should have a center and as many petals as there are people in the group.
2. In the center, they write everything that they have in common, and on the petals, things that are specific to individual people. Next, each group presents their work.
3. The facilitator presents selected information from the theoretical section *My New Knowledge*.
4. In the same groups, the participants consider how they can use what they have in common to do something together.

My Experience

1. Divide the participants into groups of 3–5 people. If there are up to 5 people in your group, you do not need to split them into smaller groups. Try to divide the participants so that individuals who do not know each other well or do not spend a lot of time with each other end up in the group together.
2. Give each group one large sheet of paper or flipchart sheet and markers.
3. Ask each group to draw a flower the size of the sheet of paper. It should include a center (circle) and as many petals as there are people in the group.
4. Ask each member of the group to put their name inside one of the petals (a signature in the petal's corner).
5. Give the group members 10 minutes to think together about what they have in common and write it down in the center of the flower.* In order for something to be written in the center, all the group members have to agree about it. For example, if everyone likes hot chocolate, they can put it in the center of the flower. If even one person disagrees because they do not like hot chocolate, it cannot be written in the center. Then, group members who enjoy hot chocolate can include it in their individual petals.
6. Ask the groups to find as many things that their members have in common as possible.
7. Then ask the groups to present the things they have in common and the things that are specific to individual members of the group.



Suggested categories: *Things we have in common*

- sports
- music
- color
- games
- pets
- cartoons and movies
- hobbies and interests
- food
- habits, routines (e.g. things you do after waking up, like having breakfast)

My reflections

You can use our suggested questions as part of the summary:

1. How did you feel during the activity? (You can use the wheel of emotions to describe what you felt).
2. What did you find difficult or easy?
3. Did anything about this activity surprise you?
4. What did this activity show you?
5. What are your thoughts and feelings when you see how much you have in common with others?
6. Do you think the members of other groups have more in common with each other than members of your group?
7. Imagine that we invite people from a different youth community center to join us. How do you think you would find as many things in common with them as in our group?

My New Knowledge

Let us consider how we treat others. It is natural for people to form groups. Together, we feel happier and it is easier to look for things we have in common. On the other hand, once we split into groups, we start to notice what sets us apart from others. The psychological effect known as **in-group bias** encourages us to stick with “our people”.

Stereotypes play an important role in this process. **Stereotypes** are simplified and generalized ideas or beliefs about members of another group. They are frequently based on cultural, ethnic, religious, or racial differences, interests, or place of residence. When we do not know much about the other group, we think that everyone who belongs to it is the same. We know most about people from our own group and less about others, so we tend to come up with our own stories about them. This is caused by the **out-group homogeneity effect**.

Seeing the Connection and Building Immunity

Invite your charges to sum up the entire process. This activity is a great opportunity for them to develop good habits and a polite approach to others. Think about what the groups have in common with each other, as well. Perhaps some of the “shared” things overlap in all of them? Discuss what could be gained if we focus on what we have in common instead of what sets us apart. Ask whether the participants have experienced something similar in their own lives—for example, when they assumed something about another group and the truth turned out to be completely different.



Suggestion for the educator

If there are people of different nationalities in your group (or area), it could be a good opportunity to check how the people in your care react to them: Are they tolerant? Do they look at the things they have in common or the things that set them apart? Are there any stereotypes?



Ask the participants what makes groups stop liking each other, in their opinion. What is the impact of stereotypes and the out-group homogeneity effect?

We often use stereotypes to create a simplified vision of another person. Later on, we can be pleasantly surprised when we learn more about them. Think about what could be done to prevent such stereotypical thinking during everyday interactions.

Ask your charges to consider—in the same groups they worked in earlier—how they can use what they have in common to do something together. Ideally, they should focus on finding common activities that they can engage in together. How can we use this to foster integration, strengthen the group, tackle stereotypes, and promote cooperation?

Invite each group to present its ideas in front of everyone. Finally, encourage the participants to try to act on some of those ideas in the near future.



As part of the summary of the whole activity, offer reinforcement to your charges. At the end of the process, give each participant a message indicating at least one positive thing you noticed during the activity. This way, you will emphasize their “small wins”.

Examples of behaviors that could constitute a “small win” throughout the process:

- involvement and active participation in the activity, identification of shared interests, discovering similar experiences,
 - respecting the rules and the time when another person was speaking,
 - involvement during the activity summary,
 - involvement and creativity when coming up with joint activities,
 - providing own examples and ideas, sharing them with others,
 - strengthening bonds in the group,
 - mutual support and positive reactions during the presentations.
-



Scenario 4

Which Ear do I Use?

60–90
minutes10–12
13–15

small/larger



von Thun "ears"

Objectives

This activity will allow the participants to:

- see what they pay attention to when listening to different messages and how they react to the information being conveyed,
- find out how they can improve their communication with others,
- see what this can lead to in the context of disinformation.

Materials
[download](#)

For this activity, you will need:

- a printed test sheet,
- printed answers,
- pens,
- a flipchart or board,
- a marker.

Activity
Summary

1. The facilitator reads out several messages and the participants try to guess the intention of the author of each message.
2. The facilitator briefly describes the message communication model according to von Thun's theory.
3. The participants complete the test and then check which "ear" they use when listening to messages.
4. The facilitator presents selected information from the theoretical section *My New Knowledge*.
5. The facilitator and participants think about additional questions that could prevent a conflict occurring in a conversation or the conversation from ending.

My Experience

As part of the activity, you will help your charges find their main "ear". This way, in the future, they can pay attention to how they react during conversations and whether they ascribe additional intentions to the interlocutor. We are trying to give them a chance to offset a critical approach to themselves and others.

Stage I—Messages

1. Read out the first message—a sentence.
2. The participants' task is to guess together what the person saying it wanted to achieve and in what situation that message could appear.
3. Read out the next 3 messages. After each one, invite the participants to consider the goal and intention of the message, as well as the circumstances in which it might have appeared.

This exercise can be conducted during individual activities with a young person.

Message 1: You barged into my room without knocking again.

Message 2: I forgot the math textbook again.

Message 3: What are you looking at?

Message 4: I don't like Brussels sprouts.



Stage II—the Test

This activity is based on a theory by Friedemann Schulz von Thun, a German psychologist specializing in communication-related issues. According to the theory, people can interpret messages they hear on four different levels or through four different “ears”.*.

1. Start by telling the participants (very generally at first) that people can interpret messages through four types of “ears”. Explain the types of “ears” and say that today, they will find out which “ear” is their strongest one.



Types of “ears”:

- **Factual ear** — when listening through this “ear”, you pay attention to facts and specifics. You take the message literally, without any subtext, emotions, or feelings.
For example: “Do you know what time it is?”—Your response: “Yes.” The person asking the question did not tell you that they wanted to know the time.
 - **Relationship ear** — when listening through this “ear”, you focus on the emotions, feelings, and motivations of the other person. You can attempt to interpret what the message says about your relationship.
For example: “Do you know what time it is?”—Your response: “Do you think I’m always late?” You focus on what could be behind the question.
 - **Self-revelation ear** — when listening through this “ear”, you focus on what the message says about the other person and how they feel. This can result in over-interpretation—adding things to the message that are not really there.
For example: “Do you know what time it is?”—Your response: “Are you in a hurry? Do you have to leave already?” You wonder why the person even asked.
 - **Appeal ear** — when listening through this “ear”, you focus on what the other person expects, what their covert request or intention is.
For example: “Do you know what time it is?”—Your response: “Of course! I’m about to serve lunch, you must be starving”. You look for a hidden expectation in the message.
-

2. Give the participants pens and tests to check which “ear” is their dominant ear, i.e. the most important thing when they talk to others. Note! This test is meant to reveal a certain tendency, not an absolute truth. It is intended to help your charges reflect and take a look at whether that is actually the case. They do not need to share the test results with the rest of the group.
3. Tell the participants that in this test, each of them will be able to determine which things are most important for them when they talk to others.
4. After completing the test, reveal the answer key to your charges. If needed, help them figure out the result.
5. Invite the participants to sum up this activity.



Test—Check Which “Ear” is Your Dominant “Ear”.

1. After entering your room, your mom says: “What a mess!”. You respond by saying:
 - a) It’s true, the room is messy.
 - b) Are you upset about that?
 - c) You’re making a fuss over nothing again!
 - d) Ugh... Fine, I’ll clean up in a bit.
2. When you take out your lunch at school, a classmate tells you: “I bet it has a million calories!”. You respond by saying:
 - a) So you think this could be bad for me?
 - b) To be exact—400 calories.
 - c) Do you think I’m fat?
 - d) Fine, I’m not gonna eat it.
3. You asked your friend to lend you a bike for one day. He says: “This bike was expensive”. You respond by saying:
 - a) I’ll be careful.
 - b) Yes, I know, you’ve told me before.
 - c) I know this bike is important to you.
 - d) Don’t you trust me?
4. During class, the teacher points out that the girl next to you doesn’t have a book: “Kate doesn’t have a textbook”. You respond by saying:
 - a) Should I share my book with her?
 - b) Kate, sit a bit closer so you can see what the book says.
 - c) You’re right, she doesn’t.
 - d) It’s fine, I can share mine with her.
5. Your older brother is upset and tells you: “Snitches are losers”. You respond by saying:
 - a) Fine, I won’t tell mom anything next time.
 - b) Don’t be mad at me, I just freaked out.
 - c) You’ve always hated me!
 - d) That depends on the situation.
6. You asked your boyfriend or girlfriend to help you buy an outfit for a party. They say: “How long is this gonna take?” You respond by saying:
 - a) An hour, tops.
 - b) Are you tired?
 - c) Don’t you like spending time with me?
 - d) It’s the last time, I swear!
7. A friend tells you: “I really wanna go to the movies”. You respond by saying:
 - a) Fine, I have cash, I can lend you some.
 - b) Go, then.
 - c) Do you need to unwind?
 - d) I can’t go, I’m grounded.
8. At the crosswalk, your friend says: “Are we waiting for the light to turn green?”. You respond by saying:
 - a) Yes. You can’t cross on a red light.
 - b) Fine, let’s go, I can’t see any cars now.
 - c) So you don’t like waiting?
 - d) Yes—because I care about our safety.



9. Your grandma tells you: "I'm too tired to do anything anymore...". You respond by saying:
- You look exhausted. Did you sleep well?
 - Let me make you some hot tea.
 - I'm gonna come again tomorrow so we can talk.
 - You're not too tired to talk.
10. You're helping your dad repair the car by aiming a flashlight at the engine. Your dad says: "Are you holding it for me or yourself?". You respond by saying:
- For you.
 - You can't see well?
 - You always complain about something.
 - Is that better?

Answers

Mark your answers on the board. Count the "ears" to discover your dominant ones.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
a	F	S	A	S	A	F	A	F	S	F
b	S	F	F	A	S	S	F	A	A	S
c	R	R	S	F	R	R	S	S	R	R
d	A	A	R	R	F	A	R	R	F	A

F—factual ear

A—appeal ear

S—self-revelation ear

R—relationship ear

My Reflections

You can use our suggested questions as part of the summary:

- How did you feel during the activity? (You can use the wheel of emotions to describe what you felt).
- What did you find difficult or easy?
- Do you agree with the test result?
- Which situations in your life confirm the result and which ones contradict it?

My New Knowledge

Verbal and written communication is not perfect. Misunderstandings are common in conversations, during online discussions, or in text messages. When we are listening, we can also wrongly interpret someone's words because we misunderstand their intentions. Our ear can be sensitive to one type of message reception: appeal, factual information, relationship focus, and self-revelation. It will be easier for us to understand ourselves when we can see how our "ears" work.

People typically fail to see their mistakes and ignorance and refuse to admit them, yet it is easy for them to notice other people's mistakes. The situation is similar when it comes to reading the intentions and goals of other people. When we focus on receiving messages with one "ear" only, we miss out on a lot of information.

Seeing the Connection and Building Immunity

Your charges already know their test outcome. Divide them into groups, depending on which "ear" they use the most. Go back to the messages from the first stage of the activity and assign one message to each group.

Ask the participants to think about and write down—in groups—additional questions that could be asked to open up a conversation instead of reacting automatically, which can lead to a conflict or to closing the conversation.

Ask each group to present its suggestions. If necessary, propose how the questions can be adjusted.



When we are listening with one “ear” only, we leave ourselves no time to take note of different perspectives. We can overlook a lot of things. When we miss out on important facts, we can fall into the trap of disinformation or conflict between peers. When something is unclear to us, we do not need to jump to conclusions immediately. Maybe “listening with another ear” can clarify the issue?

For this reason, suggest that the participants make inquiries, ask open-ended questions, and give both themselves and the other person time to understand what they heard.

Point out that the test your charges took only shows a certain tendency. Everyone can listen with more than one “ear”. Crucially, there is no such thing as a “perfect ear”. Together, think about what you should pay attention to given that you have that tendency and what you can do to “switch” to other ears.



As part of the summary of the whole activity, offer reinforcement to your charges. At the end of the process, give each participant a message indicating at least one positive thing you noticed during the activity. This way, you will emphasize their “small wins”.

Examples of behaviors that could constitute a “small win” throughout the process:

- involvement and active participation in the activity,
 - respecting the rules and the time when another person was speaking,
 - involvement during the activity summary,
 - proposing an additional question.
-



The Way I React



The Way I React



How Social Media Impacts Our Well-being and Mindfulness



Social Media and Well-being

Each of us comes across many different situations in our personal and social life. Our interactions with others create experiences—sometimes good, sometimes bad. Bear in mind that well-being is related not only to how we feel about ourselves, but also to our sense of belonging and acceptance in our environment. Social media have a significant impact on how others see us, so the role they play in society cannot be overlooked when discussing the well-being of young people.



In the social world—which social media are also a part of—children, young people, and adults experience both positive and negative interactions. On the one hand, the internet is a place where you can “meet” a lot of people, introduce yourself to others, and experience many enjoyable events. On the other hand, the world of social media exposes us to constant judgment and the resulting stress. Will anyone like my post? How many people will approve of the way I look? Will my friends like my latest picture, or will it be met with hate? Questions like these have a significant impact on how we feel not only in relationships with other people, but also alone with ourselves. As we can see, the online world also affects our self-esteem.



How Do Social Media Affect Us?

Research by Blease (2014) indicates that frequent use of Facebook contributes to reduced self-esteem and emotional states that accompany mild depression. This is typically explained by the discrepancy between beautiful moments immortalized on the social media site and everyday life, where a meal is not always a work of art, not every sunset is a deep existential experience and not every weekend can be spent on camelback near the Egyptian pyramids.

On the other hand, using Instagram too often can result in a distorted body image. This correlation is the strongest among women characterized by low self-esteem (Fardouly, Vartanian, 2016). Research by Barry et al. (2019) also suggests that enhancing reality by applying color filters to Instagram pictures is something a large portion of users cannot resist.

The latter social media site is also conducive to unrealistic self-presentation. On Instagram, it can be easy to believe that the only socially acceptable look is a slim, athletic figure with a face like that of a Hollywood celebrity. Although only a small percentage of people meet those standards, it could be seen as the norm by teenagers. This effect will be reinforced by the quantity of content shared online and the overwhelming social approval in the form of hundreds or sometimes thousands of “hearts” or “likes” under the posted pictures. The discrepancies between the idealized appearance created by social media and what people look like in reality can give rise to difficult emotions, such as sadness, frustration, or sorrow, and therefore have a negative impact on our well-being.



Information Stress

Apart from affecting our self-esteem and the quality of our interactions with others, the internet can also impact how overwhelmed and stressed we are, which is another significant factor when it comes to our well-being. The amount of information we are exposed to online is becoming increasingly onerous. More and more people are becoming exhausted by this data overload. As pointed out by Maria Ledzińska, “a single weekly issue of the New York Times contains more information than an average 17th-century English citizen could read in a lifetime” (Ledzińska, 2009, p. 29).

It turns out that from the evolutionary point of view, we are not adapted to “metabolizing” information in such a way. Our brains have limited neural efficiency (Levinson, 1999). Access to practically unlimited information has both cognitive and emotional consequences. Information stress is a more and more frequently mentioned phenomenon, which manifests as psychological stress caused by exposure to huge amounts of data that are impossible (or very difficult) to absorb from a cognitive point of view (Ledzińska, 2009).

The sense of information overload typically increases as a result of multitasking while using digital media. We reach for the phone and watch, read, or comment on the digital reality casually, while doing other things. We often watch TV or play video games with a phone in our hand. That makes us extremely distracted, especially if we are taking care of other demanding activities as well. When following the latest news on the phone, we can fail to notice what is happening around us. This can disrupt our ability to focus on our own needs and the needs of other people. It is rather difficult to simultaneously be online and actively, deliberately partake in direct interactions.

Multitasking is not an issue when one of the activities we perform is automatic, repetitive, and simple. Watching a movie while ironing or listening to the radio while driving a car (for experienced drivers) will not be a major problem for our ability to focus. It only becomes an issue when we are dealing with tasks that are not automatic for us. A driver who is just learning to handle a car will find it difficult to control it and converse or listen to the radio at the same time. A person watching TV and simultaneously replying to a text message will use more attention to complete these two tasks together because in such situations, the amount of information reaching us is drastically increased (Spitzer, 2013).

Research shows that multitasking is often very enjoyable. It creates a sense of agency and makes people feel like they are effectively experiencing multiple situations. Unfortunately, it turns out that such activities are frequently superficial and shallow (Carr, 2013). We remember few of those activities and perform them considerably less efficiently than we would if we were doing them separately, one after another. The sense that we are in several places at once can increase the level of stress, which may have a negative impact on our well-being.

Taking Care of Your Well-Being

Social media are a staple of our life. The amount of information available there and the need to react quickly limits (hampers) our mindfulness of ourselves and makes it more difficult to focus on our own feelings, thoughts, and needs. In other words, when we watch videos or obviously scroll through posts, it is difficult to pause and think whether what we are doing is good for us.

Meanwhile, the basis for cultivating well-being is the ability to stop and be mindful. Reflecting on what we want and what we feel can be the best method of coping with information overload. It is important to learn to tell ourselves “STOP”—to pause for a moment in order to check how our actions affect how we feel. This ability to take a short break from what we are doing and focus on our own emotions and experiences is the first step toward taking care of our well-being.

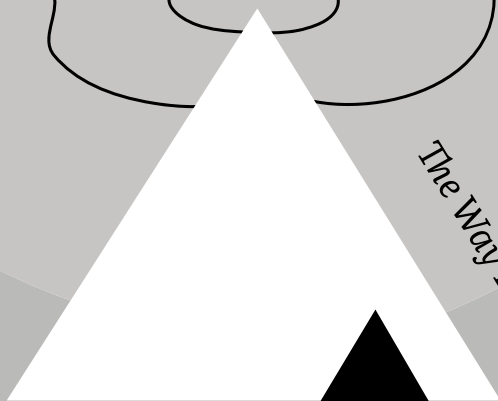
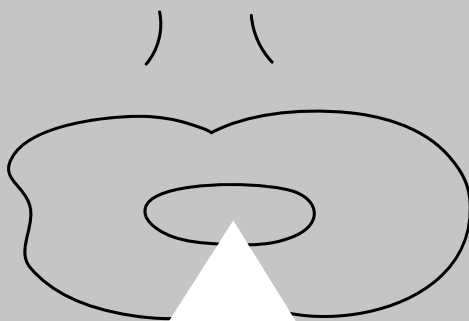
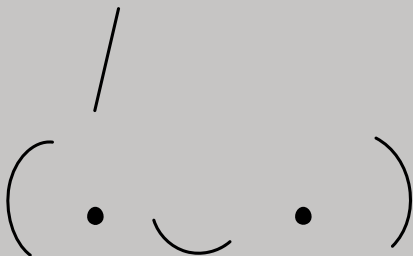
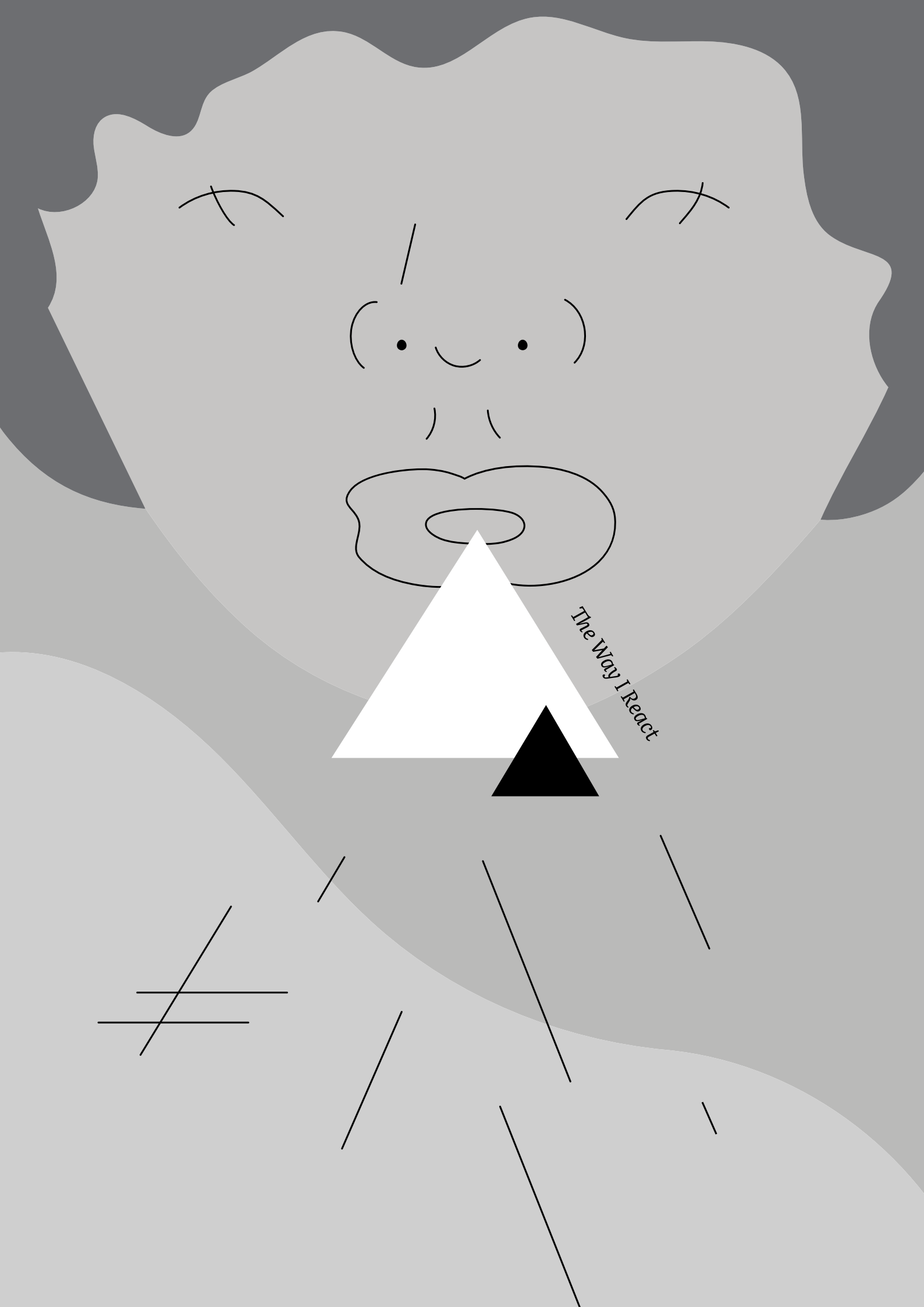


What we call mindfulness is nothing more than being able to focus on a part of our experience, on remaining in the “here and now”. If we want to ensure our well-being, we should take a moment to focus on the emotions we are experiencing. Bear in mind that they can be our greatest ally because they show us whether what we are experiencing is good or bad for us—whether or not it is beneficial. If we feel anxiety, stress, or pressure in a given moment, it indicates that the situation we are in is not a good one.

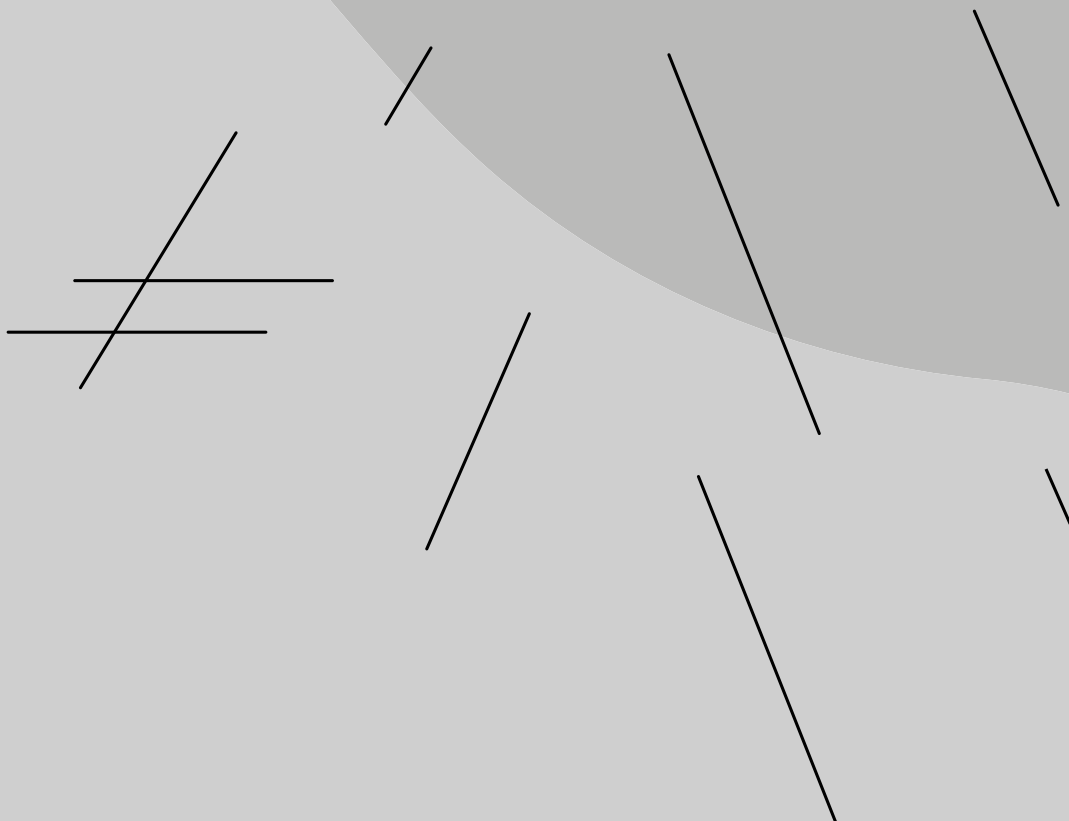
If that is the case, it is better to do something that will help us take care of ourselves. One of these things could be limiting the use of social media (if we feel that they have a negative effect on our self-esteem) or deciding to make a change in our lives (e.g. to start working out, eating healthier, etc.). Bear in mind that our well-being not only depends on ourselves but also on whether we live in a beneficial environment. That is why an important part of caring for our well-being is building relations with people who do not judge us and who mean well for us.

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The Way I React





Scenario 1

Filters



45 minutes



13–15



small/larger



filters

Objectives

This activity will allow you to:

- create an opportunity for self-reflection on the methods of developing self-image online.

Materials

[download](#)**For this activity, you will need:**

- sheets of paper with an outline of a head,
- markers, crayons; other art supplies (optional),
- post-it notes,
- a blackboard, whiteboard, or wall.

Activity Summary

1. In pairs, the participants create—using art supplies—a social media “filter” based on a randomly assigned description.
2. In front of the group, they describe how they created the “filter” and what its purpose is, according to the description.
3. During the discussion, present selected information from the theoretical section *My New Knowledge*.
4. On the post-it notes, the participants write down examples of other situations in which they embellish reality to look better in other people’s eyes. Next, they decide together whether misleading others in a given situation will be more likely to have positive or negative consequences.

My Experience

Ask your charges to split into pairs.

1. Each pair receives a sheet of paper with an outline of a person’s head.
2. The task is to create—using crayons, markers, and other art supplies—a “filter” thanks to which a fictional person will be able to achieve their goal in terms of their image on social media.
3. The pairs randomly draw one objective from a bag. In larger groups, several pairs can work on the same objective.
4. The participants have approximately 10 minutes to create the “filters”.

If the activity is organized as part of an art class, you can take it a step further and suggest other techniques instead of drawing—for example, digital photography using accessories.

There is no need for professional equipment—a smartphone will suffice.

Sample Objectives:**Objective 1**

My dream is to become a professional stylist and makeup artist in the future. I would like to publish my makeup looks on my profile, but before I gain enough experience, I intend to use filters to emphasize my artistic personality.



Objective 2

I have a lot of insecurities related to my appearance. That's why I use slimming and beauty filters when I publish my videos on social media. This way, I can focus on sharing my interests without constantly worrying whether I look good enough.

Objective 3

I get no pocket money so I can't afford a new lip gloss or mascara. I could take a hundred selfies, but none of them would be good enough to publish on my profile. Thanks to filters, I can achieve a good result without spending a single buck.

Objective 4

All the boys on my team are starting to get more and more masculine bodies, but I still look like a child. I have a baby face with zero facial hair. This summer, I've decided to experiment with filters to look more serious and feel a bit better about myself.

Objective 5

Privacy is very important to me. I try to make sure my pictures are not circulated online. That's why—when writing about books on Instagram—I use filters that replace my face with an avatar, like a cat or dog. This is how I stay anonymous.

My Reflections

Ask your charges to describe, in front of the group, how they created the “filter” and what its purpose is, according to the description.

Together, think about answers to the following questions:

- Why do social media users decide to apply filters?
- When is using filters to change your appearance acceptable and when is it not?
- How would you feel if it turned out that the person you have been following for a long time looked different in reality than they do on social media?
- Do you use filters yourselves? What do you use them for?

My New Knowledge

According to research, using Instagram too often can result in a distorted body image. This correlation is the strongest among women characterized by low self-esteem (Fardouly, Vartanian, 2016). Research by Barry et al. (2019) also suggests that enhancing reality by applying color filters to Instagram pictures is something a large portion of users cannot resist.

Activity on this social media site is conducive to unrealistic self-presentation. On Instagram, it can be easy to believe that the only socially acceptable look is a slim, athletic figure with a face like that of a Hollywood celebrity. Although only less than 1% of people worldwide meet those standards, it could be seen as the norm by teenagers.

This effect is reinforced by the quantity of content shared online and the overwhelming social approval in the form of hundreds or sometimes thousands of “hearts” or “likes” under posted pictures. Emotions that appear in response to what we see on social media sites can make us feel good or bad. We can achieve well-being, but we can also be subjected to a lot of stress.



Seeing the Connection and Building Immunity

1. Ask the participants to write down on post-it notes—individually and anonymously—examples of other situations (outside social media) in which they sometimes embellish the reality to look better in other people’s eyes. One post-it should only contain one situation, but your charges can write more situations on several post-its.
2. Next, ask the participants to attach their post-it notes to the board or wall.
3. Then, read out a situation written on a selected post-it.
4. Ask the young people to think, together, about whether misleading others in a given situation will be more likely to have positive or negative consequences for a given person. Move the post-it to the appropriate spot on a board divided into halves: “positive” and “negative”. If the opinions in the group are split, put the post-it note between the two columns.
5. Do the same thing with the remaining post-its.
6. At the end of the activity, ask:
 - What could be the negative consequences of enhancing your image with filters on social media?
 - Will they be similar to or different from the negative consequences of the situations described on the post-its?
 - According to the participants, what makes the use of filters on social media so popular and what would need to change in order for users to decide to touch up their appearance in this way less frequently?
7. Write down the conclusions on a large sheet of paper.



Scenario 2

Information Chaos

40–60
minutes

10–12



small/larger

information stress,
well-being

Objectives

This activity will allow the participants to:

- experience what information stress is,
- find out how to reduce this stress and improve their focus.

Materials

[download](#)**For this activity, you will need:**

- online version: smartphones with internet access (at least one per group) or one PC that can play videos and sounds, as well as selected videos, e.g. on YouTube,
- offline version: selected texts (newspapers, books, or textbooks).

Activity
Summary

1. Split the young people into two or more sub-groups.
2. Some of them will watch the first selected video or read a text, while others will perform the tasks described below. Next, everyone will watch the next video or read a text quietly.
3. After the exercise, ask the participants about the information they remembered, their conclusions drawn from the activity and the emotions they experienced in the process.
4. Present selected information from the theoretical section *My New Knowledge*.
5. Together with the participants, create a list of good practices that help reduce information stress.

My Experience

As part of this activity, you will help the people under your care limit information stress. It will be a good opportunity to deliberately reduce distractions in information processing and practice assertive communication, especially when it comes to the participants expressing their needs.

1. Split your charges into two groups. If there are a lot of participants, you can create 3–4 teams.
2. Ask all the groups apart from one to attentively watch an educational video (on their smartphones or a PC).
3. One group will have a different task: its participants should assume different roles so that some of them talk loudly, some of them use objects that make a lot of noise (e.g. slamming the door, dragging a chair on the floor), while others can, for example, sing a song or look over the shoulder of the people who are watching the video, etc. These behaviors are supposed to create new stimuli for the group watching the video that may take up some of their attention. Note: convey these instructions to the group creating distractions so that the other groups cannot hear what you say—the element of surprise will be important here.

Alternative setup: If you cannot use smartphones or a PC, instead of watching videos, you can have the participants read a text, e.g. a newspaper, book, or textbook. Ask the participants to pay attention to what they read.

4. During the first round, some of the young people watch a video or read a text, while others are creating distractions. During the second round, everyone watches the next video or reads a text quietly.



5. If your time is limited, choose one video or text and ask the participants to watch or read a different, short fragment of it in each round.

Suggested videos from the YouTube channel [Minute Physics](#)

1. [Should You Walk or Run When it's Cold?](#) (00:02:16)
2. [Why is it Dark at Night?](#) (00:03:52)
3. [What is Gravity?](#) (00:01:25)

My Reflections

After the exercise, ask the participants to share the information they remembered, their conclusions from the activity and the emotions they experienced while taking part in it. You can use our suggested questions as part of the summary:

1. What did you remember from the videos you watched or the texts you read?
2. What did you find difficult or easy?
3. Was your perception of the message (video or text) different in a quiet environment and in a noisy one?
4. What emotions accompanied you at different stages of the activity? You can use the wheel of emotions to describe what you felt.
5. Have you experienced similar situations in your life?
6. What did this activity show you?

My New Knowledge

Tell your charges that the human capacity to process information is limited from an evolutionary point of view. Our brains cannot handle excess information, as the people under your care have just learned first-hand. An excessive number of messages, especially from social media, can cause so-called information stress—i.e. information overload. This is the case in particular when we cannot control the amount of information that reaches us and when we multitask while using digital media. It can lead to distraction and loss of focus. In everyday life, it can make it more difficult for the participants to e.g. effectively learn and memorize information. That is why it is so important to ensure our well-being—including online—by reducing the level of stress and creating circumstances where we have a sense of agency and are satisfied with our lives.

To take care of our well-being, we have to learn to control the information we are exposed to. We need to make informed decisions about what we want or do not want to hear, as well as the circumstances in which we want to access information in order to stay comfortable and focused. Deliberately avoiding situations with excess stimuli is the foundation of maintaining emotional balance online. Emotions play an important role—they act as a radar that lets us know whether a given piece of information or the moment when we are using it contributes to our well-being or creates a threat.

Staying focused while using information online makes us resistant to disinformation because it reduces the risk of thoughtlessly consuming content that is deliberately misleading. Without this focus, young people may not realize that the information they receive is completely fake or distorted. The experience of information stress can be accompanied by strong emotions that make your charges more willing to like, comment on, or share unverified information under the influence of those emotions.



Seeing the Connection and Building Immunity

Together with the participants, create a list of good practices that will enable them to reduce information stress. In an offline situation (for example, while reading school notes), stress can be induced by noisy classmates or the sounds of phone notifications. There are tons of such distractions online. Try to provide examples of them and include them on the list, along with the emotions experienced by your charges that can warn them that the situation they are in is not conducive to making effective use of information. In other words, it is destructive to their well-being. You can display the list in a visible spot and adopt it as a set of applicable rules in the group. If you have enough space, you can invite your charges to take part in a creative activity.

What do I need? Things that help me focus:

1. ...
2. ...

What do I avoid? Things that make it hard to focus:

1. ...
2. ...

At the end of the activity, help the participants learn to communicate their needs in an assertive way—including their communication needs. Ask the following question in front of everyone: “How can you politely ask someone not to disturb you?” Next, create a list of responses that they can consult if needed.

Here is an example of such a message: “I feel angry or irritated when I can hear noise/ people talking because I can’t focus on reading/studying/watching a movie. I would like you to let me finish”.



As part of the summary of the whole activity, offer reinforcement to your charges. At the end of the process, give each participant a message indicating at least one positive thing you noticed during the activity. This way, you will emphasize their “small wins”.

Examples of behaviors that could constitute a “small win” throughout the process:

- involvement during group work or direct interactions with the facilitator,
- sharing one’s experience, reflections, and emotions,
- involvement in the summary of the activity and creating a list of good practices and polite messages.



Scenario 3

Deleted App

30–45
minutes13–15 + any
duration of the
experiment with
the deleted app

small/larger

information stress
and well-being

Objectives

This activity will allow the participants to:

- find out how much time they spend on social media,
- consider the emotions evoked by lack of access to a selected application,
- search for alternative methods of spending free time outside social media.
-

Materials
[download](#)

For this activity, you will need:

- phones (this activity will only work for institutions/schools where using phones is permitted),
- wheel of emotions,
- markers or pens,
- pieces of paper to log the screen time (it can also be logged in a notebook),
- printed and cut-out methods of using the regained time (they can also be displayed on a slide).

Activity
Summary

1. Using the wheel of emotions, talk about the emotions they are experiencing on that day.
2. The participants estimate how much time they spend on social media and then verify their screen time, compare their results, and share their conclusions.
3. The group agrees on the duration of the experiment. The young people delete a selected app from their phone and write down the emotions that accompany them while they do so.
4. The young people talk about their experiences. You present selected information from the theoretical section *My New Knowledge*.
5. Your charges are randomly assigned or choose the method of making use of their free time and coping with the discomfort caused by the limitation on social media usage.

My Experience

1. Ask the participants how they are on that day. Ask each person to place a dot on the wheel of emotions next to the emotion that they feel the strongest in that specific moment (this can be done anonymously). You can talk briefly about the experienced emotions.
2. Next, give each person a piece of paper so that they can write down answers to two questions:
 - Which phone app do you spend the most time on?
 - How many minutes or hours—roughly—do you spend every day on social media (e.g. TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, BeReal, Facebook)?

Ask the participants to answer honestly. Collect the pieces of paper and read the responses out loud. Depending on how much time you have, read all responses or only some of them.



3. It is time to check how much time they actually spend on social media. To verify that, you have to use the screen time function (this function can be accessed through the phone settings. For Android, go to: Settings -> Digital Wellbeing; for iOS: Settings -> Screen Time). If you do not mind, share your results.
 - Do you spend less time / the same amount of time / more time on social media than you thought?
 - How do you feel about the amount of time you spend using different apps?
 - Can you imagine a day without social media?
 - Do you think giving up on social media is easy or difficult?
4. Invite the young people under your care to take part in a one-day experiment. In this experiment, each person will temporarily uninstall a selected social media app. We encourage you to take up the challenge together with your charges—this can be an additional incentive for them to take part in the experiment. Uninstall the selected apps. Together with the young people, determine how long the experiment will take and how you are going to keep track of your emotions. You can log your emotions on an ongoing basis, e.g. as notes on the phone. The suggested minimum duration of the experiment is one day but we recommend adapting this time to what your group can handle—from several hours up to several days.

My Reflections

Immediately after deleting the application, ask each person to mark the strongest emotion they are experiencing on the wheel of emotions. Check whether there has been a change in the group's emotions compared with the beginning of the activity. Discuss the experiment results during the next meeting. It is important for your charges to try to name the emotions that accompanied them during the challenge. Ask the participants to discuss the results of their experiments in front of the entire group. You can ask them a few questions, for example:

- Did you make it all the way through? Or did you reinstall the deleted app?
- Did you experience any emotions during the experiment? If so, what were they? Were they strong?
- Were you bothered by the absence of the app?
- Did you feel anything positive during the experiment? If so, what was it?
- What concerns did you have before the experiment? Were they justified?
- Did you install another app in place of the deleted one?
- What did you do with your extra time?
- What did you learn thanks to taking part in the experiment?

Go back to the emotions from the beginning of the activity. Sum up people's reactions.

My New Knowledge

According to research, young people who spend more than 3 hours a day on social media can be more prone to mental health issues, including symptoms of depression and anxiety (Riehm et al., 2019). That is not all—there is a correlation between the excessive use of social media and poor sleep quality and sleep deprivation, and therefore also deteriorated mental health (Alonzo et al., 2021).

The “Nastolatki 3.0” survey, carried out in the fall of 2022, showed that on average, Polish teenagers spend 5 hours and 36 minutes online per day on weekdays and 6 hours and 16 minutes at weekends (Lange et al., 2023). As many as 10% of the respondents spend more than 10 hours online during the week. At weekends, that number increases to 14%. That is a lot!



The authors of the “Polish EU Kids Online 2018 survey” emphasize that long hours spent online can be associated, for example, with neglecting food or sleep, boredom during lack of internet access, using the internet even when one is not interested in it, neglecting learning, spending less time with friends and family, and even conflicts resulting from that fact (Pyżalski et al., 2019).

The internet includes social media, so these problems can also concern your charges—especially those who spend several hours every day on apps like TikTok, YouTube, or Snapchat, or those who found it difficult to delete an app or stick to the experiment. Limiting or withdrawing from social media can cause discomfort but it helps us ensure our digital well-being.

Seeing the Connection and Building Immunity

Tell the young people under your care that limiting the time spent on social media helps us take better care of our digital well-being. That way, we are exposed to less content that is primarily meant to mislead us. Time saved thanks to avoiding mindless scrolling through social media can be spent reading, watching, or listening to something more valuable or taking a break from information intake.

Take a moment to think about why we are so attached to social media. What do they give us? What do they take away from us? What do we risk if we spend hours on end browsing social media? What unpleasant content can we come across there? What if at least some of that time is freed up by taking control of our favorite apps?

It is time to take back control over our phones and emotions. Prepare pieces of paper with ideas for spending the newly regained time. Read them out loud and let each participant choose an idea or draw a random one. If they choose their options, you can ask them to justify their choice. Explain to the group that these ideas can help them cope with the difficult emotions that can come up when we are not using our phones.

Suggest that the participants deliberately try to remember the positive emotions accompanying activities performed during the regained time. Congratulate them on participating in your shared experiment and show appreciation for their efforts.

Sample ideas for spending free time:

- taking a stroll,
- lounging,
- getting more sleep,
- hanging out with friends,
- talking to a person close to you,
- playing with a pet,
- watching a movie you had no time for before,
- listening to music,
- reading something interesting you had no time for before,
- drawing, creating something.



As part of the summary of the whole activity, offer reinforcement to your charges. At the end of the process, give each participant a message indicating at least one positive thing you noticed during the activity. This way, you will emphasize their “small wins”.

Examples of behaviors that could constitute a “small win” throughout the process:

- strong self-awareness (if someone provided a more or less accurate estimate of the time spent on social media),
- sharing the emotions experienced, especially discomfort.





The Way I Act



About Social Media Algorithms

The social media have undoubtedly played a role in making the phenomenon of disinformation ubiquitous in the last decade. Thanks to functions such as sharing, commenting, and reacting, users are no longer merely recipients, but also broadcasters of information. Since using these functions is effortless and merely takes a split second, the social media have become a space conducive to the spread of fake news or distorted information. While regular users typically share fake news unintentionally (misinformation), certain entities also exploit the vulnerabilities of these platforms for the deliberate disinformation of the audience.

The creation of social media was accompanied by other phenomena that are directly or indirectly connected with the issue of disinformation. In this part of the book, we will take a look at some of them: marketing influencers, clickbait, the recommendation system, the filter bubble, and the echo chamber.



Influencers and Smart Shopping

Thanks to social media, we have access to various types of content: from posts published by our friends and relatives who want to share their vacation experiences as soon as possible, through information from the world of politics to viral videos that provide easy entertainment. Apart from the huge amounts of data left by users, using social media in their basic version remains free. This is possible thanks to an advertisement-based business model. However, the advertised content is not always labeled properly, which can result in the user being misled.

Whenever an influencer receives a material benefit, like a fee or a gadget, and the purpose of the material is to advertise a product or service—according to the European Consumer Law, the post on social media **must be tagged as an advertisement**. You can find specific examples of such situations on the [website of the European Commission](#). Thanks to this obligation imposed on influencers, we—the audience and social media users—can identify ads much easier and therefore protect ourselves against manipulation.



Of course, the point of an ad is to convince the audience to purchase a given product or service. Although according to [applicable laws](#), the content of an advertisement should not be misleading, that is not always the case in reality. In traditional media, the absence of adequate labeling can result in advertising (sponsored) materials being mistaken for information. Social media and other online services, on the other hand, make it possible to expand the coverage of specific content thanks to [paid advertising](#). Unfortunately, content that spreads disinformation can also be amplified in this manner, even though the platforms themselves [declare](#) that they are taking steps to counter this phenomenon.



One of the answers to the issue of the ubiquitous—and sometimes improperly labeled—advertising is the concept of [smart shopping](#). This means making purchase decisions without rushing, in a thought-out way, taking into account the criteria of price and quality, especially in the case of products that we only purchase occasionally (such as household equipment and electronics).

Clickbait and Other Emotional Content

Another phenomenon typical of new media is clickbait. Clickbait are headlines constructed in such a way that not only do they evoke emotions in the audience, but they first and foremost entice the audience to click and go to the website containing the whole article.

Imagine the home page of a news website featuring the following headline: “Horrible news. Strawberry enthusiasts will be devastated”. What is this “horrible news” about and how does it affect strawberry enthusiasts? Is it about the increasing prices of these fruit? Or perhaps new scientific research that suggests an adverse effect on our health? We will only find out after clicking the link.

Why would anyone want to attract our attention in this particular way? No, this is not about encouraging us to read the entire article and learn the broader context of the issue. Every click is a chance for advertisers to interest us in a service or product, and for the website owner it is an opportunity to make money by selling advertising space.

This mechanism is also sometimes used by content creators on streaming platforms like YouTube. On those websites, clickbait takes the form of thumbnails that suggestively present content that is not featured in the video itself.

Social Media Algorithms

The number of stories shared on Instagram within one minute is in the hundreds of thousands. On YouTube, every single minute, as much as 500 hours of new content is [published](#). However, not all news ends up in our feeds (in the case of social media like Facebook and Instagram) or on our home page (in services such as YouTube). Why is that the case?

So much information is published online that some selection seems necessary. However, the way this content is filtered is not without an impact on the people using a given service. At the moment, the method of content selection is meant to primarily retain the user’s attention so that they remain on the platform for as long as possible. As a result, they can see more ads, which translates into more profit for the company². As a consequence, the more time we spend on specific social media, the more traces of our activity we leave there. Thanks to this, the algorithm suggests more and more interesting content to us that is even more effective at grabbing our attention. It is a vicious circle.

To understand the importance of the content selection mechanism, we need to realize that what we see on a given platform is determined primarily by an algorithm. As users, we can search through the content of specific social media, but we are much more likely to rely on automated choices, as evidenced by continuous—sometimes mindless—scrolling through news in search of new sensations. This generates more and more doses of [dopamine](#)—a neurotransmitter strongly connected to the reward system, which makes us spend even more time using the app.

If the only consequence of content selection by algorithm was a few wasted evenings, we could easily dismiss it. However, it turns out that automated content selection can sometimes have more serious consequences.



According to [research](#) conducted by the Center for Countering Digital Hate, teenagers who use TikTok, a platform that is quickly gaining in popularity, come across content that is harmful to their mental health within the first few minutes of using the service. Unfortunately, young people who show an interest in mental health very quickly encounter videos about suicide attempts, self-mutilation methods, a lack of self-esteem due to body weight, or eating disorders. Similar [research](#) proved that TikTok is regularly feeding young users misinformation.

A similar effect can also be observed on other platforms, like YouTube. Despite the functionalities built into the interface—such as the “I dislike this” button in the form of a thumb-down icon—users still [have little impact](#) on the recommendations mechanism. This is because recommendations are not accompanied by [mechanisms that guarantee the credibility](#) of automatically displayed materials. As a result, users can accidentally fall victim to disinformation.

The Filter Bubble and Echo Chamber

In the media, you can encounter the term “information bubble”, which indicates that a given person or group of people does not have access to some information published via traditional and social media. There are two other, more precise concepts that will allow us to better understand this phenomenon.

A **filter bubble** is a consequence of automated content filtering processes in online search engines and on social media. This means that only some of the available pieces of content are displayed to the user. Decisions are made based on algorithms that take into account multiple variables (such as the location, search, and browsing history) and interactions (e.g. likes, comments, and shares).

The amount of content published every day online and on each social media site separately makes it impossible to read or watch all of it. This is why content selection, known as personalization, has become essential. However, since users have limited options when it comes to determining the content that is displayed, as a result, we can fail to find materials that would expand our horizons or allow us to confront our current beliefs with other points of view.

We can find ourselves in a bubble not only online, but also offline. If we spend time among people who think in a similar way, reach for the same sources of information, or share the same interests on a daily basis, we are also at risk of becoming isolated from other perspectives. What negative consequences could this have? For example, we could be unable to understand a different worldview, as well as make decisions based on an incomplete view of reality. However, the other side of the coin—discussed on “Podcast Demagoga” [“Demagogue’s Podcast”] by the writer and columnist Michał R. Wiśniewski—is that online bubbles are also safe spaces for people facing similar problems. It is where they can share their own experiences and find the information and support they need.

An **echo chamber**, in turn, is a situation where a person reaffirms their current convictions as a result of the same content being repeated multiple times in a closed-off circle of people. This can happen, for example, in closed groups on social media. What is more, such separation is conducive to limiting access to divergent opinions.

This way, we can get the erroneous impression that the opinions we come across reflect the views of the rest of society, while in reality, they can be completely different.



Imagine a Facebook group whose founders invite people who support the abolition of compulsory education to join. Before joining the group, the candidates must fill in a form and obtain the admin's approval. One of the questions on the form is as follows: "Do you think that abolition of compulsory education is the only correct solution?" If you agree with this thesis and the application is considered positively, you will join a group of people who also share this belief.

In the following days, you will definitely come across multiple arguments in support of such a solution, but you will probably not find out what the arguments against it are. Perhaps you will end up taking part in a demonstration for the abolition of compulsory education without knowing the possible negative consequences of such a scenario (e.g. greater difficulties in mitigating the differences between children from families with different cultural capital).

References:

- Wylie Ch (2020) *Mindf*ck: Inside Cambridge Analytics Plot to Break the World*. Profile Books.
- Zuboff S (2019) *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*. Profile Books.



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The Way I Act



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Scenario 1

Clicking—and the Emotions that Follow



30 minutes



13–15

small (work
in pairs)

clickbait

Objectives**This activity will allow the participants to:**

- label the emotions that accompany them while browsing online content (in particular, content aiming to evoke strong emotions),
- find out how clickbait content is constructed,
- build emotional resistance as internet users.

Materials
[download](#)**For this activity, you will need:**

- wheel of emotions,
- online content (one set per pair)—cut up so that each piece of content is separate.

Activity Summary

1. The participants analyze the emotions they feel when browsing online content.
2. Together, you consider how clickbait headlines are created and how you can handle the emotions they evoke.
3. The young people fill in worksheets aimed at reflecting on how they can build resistance to challenging online content.

My Experience

1. Split the young people into pairs and tell them that they are going to play a game about emotions.
2. Each pair should be able to see the wheel of emotions (it can be printed or displayed using a projector) and boards with various examples of online content (you can find sample content at the end of the activity description).
3. Ask your charges to first take a look at the wheel of emotions. Ask whether they know and understand all of them. Ask them to try to find an example from their lives when they felt a selected emotion and then share this experience with their partner.
4. Ask the pairs to place the boards with online content one on top of another so they cannot see what is depicted on them. Their task will be to flip the boards one by one and then indicate on the wheel of emotions what emotions the contents of the board evoke in them.
5. After looking at each board, ask the pair to answer the following questions:
 - Do you experience the same emotions when you see the same online content? Does each of you react differently to it?
 - Are the emotions you feel difficult? How do you feel on a daily basis when you look at such content?
6. Each pair should analyze all the boards with online content in this manner.

Alternative suggestion: this activity can also be performed without printing the materials. You can use our slideshow with sample online content and display the pieces of content one by one on the screen. Give the pairs time to indicate their emotions and answer the questions.

The examples provided are only suggestions and they can be substituted by the facilitator—including in collaboration with the participants themselves, who know their interests and the sources they use most frequently better than anyone else. The young people can send the facilitator screenshots from online videos that recently made them experience strong emotions.

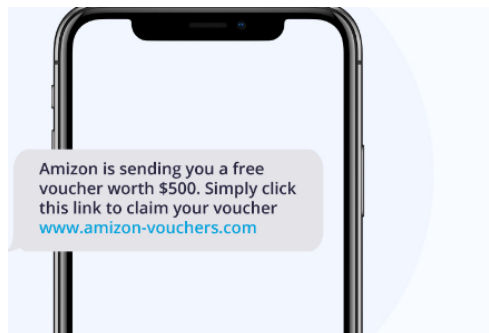


Boards with Online Content



Europe On The Brink Of War? German Defence Minister Warns | 'We Must B...

Obejrzyj >



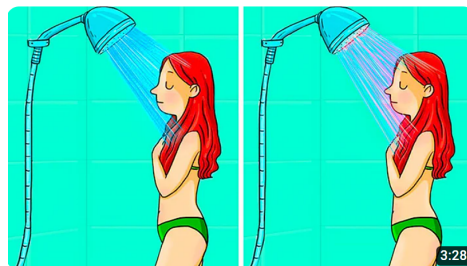
🔥 **Amazon** is selling everything at lowest prices! Shop online or in-store at **Amazon** for the best tools, electric bike, Generator, laptop and home decor! 🍌 I'm pleasantly surprised by how affordable this was. It's always nice to save some money. 🍌



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Shop now



3 Ways to Lose Weight Without Dieting

13 mln wyświetleń • 6 lat temu

BRIGHT SIDE ✓

How we'd all love the excess inches on our waist to go away all by themselves... ..

Napisy

Contrast shower | Massage |... Liczba momentów: 3



I PROBABLY SHOULDN'T SHOW YOU THIS!

240 tys. wyświetleń • 1 rok temu

Froggy Flips ✓

I PROBABLY SHOULDN'T SHOW YOU THIS! Garage sales and yard sales are slowly starting back up. Unfortunately I didn't find ...

Foods That You've Been Eating WRONG Your Entire Life!



In todays video I react to Foods That **We've Been Eating WRONG** Our Entire Life!

YouTube · Luke Davidson · 31 mar 2022

**My Reflections**

After analyzing all the boards, ask the participants to pick, together, the one that evoked the strongest emotions in them. Why was it that particular one? What do you think? Ask the pair to share their feelings in front of the whole group.

Next, ask your charges to think about why so much online content relies on two rules:

- Evoking strong emotions.
- Not fully explaining what the article is about.

Discuss your ideas together.

My New Knowledge

The purpose of the task was to familiarize young people with the mechanism of creating clickbait online content and strengthen their ability to remain critical of such content.

The point of clickbait is to make you click a given link. Many people, including influencers, make money thanks to the large number of views their articles get. This is why they are created in a way that is meant to evoke emotions, attract attention, and capture the audience like a fish on a hook.

Seeing the Connection and Building Immunity

At the end, ask the participants to think about the challenging emotions that accompany online browsing. What helps them deal with those emotions? Print the following worksheets and ask each person to try to answer the questions. Next, share your answers in front of everyone.



When I see

I feel (emotions),

because (why I feel this way)

In such situations, I need

Example: When I see a headline about a war, I feel fear because I'm afraid it could affect me, as well. In such situations, I need to talk to a friend about my feelings.

Do you agree with the following statements? Write down what you think.



I know what to do when I'm upset about online content.

What I do:

I know how to support someone close to me when they are upset about online content.

What I do:.. ..



Scenario 2

In a Bubble



40 minutes



10–12



small/larger



filter bubble

Objectives

This activity will allow the participants to:

- determine to what extent the opinions they come across online reflect the beliefs of all people, and to what extent the beliefs of a group selected by the algorithm,
- learn what the filter bubble and echo chamber are,
- use their knowledge to search for opinions that differ from their own.

Materials
[download](#)**For this activity, you will need:**

- sheets of paper with characters,
- sheets of paper with a bubble (for work in 4 groups and an individual one for each participant).

Activity
Summary

1. The participants take part in a simulation game. They take on randomly assigned social roles and think about how they would react to vacation being one month shorter.
2. Based on conclusions drawn from the game, think about the “information bubble” mechanism.
3. Your charges reflect on what kind of “information bubble” they operate in and check what people who view similar content write online.

My Experience

1. Divide your charges into four sub-groups.
2. Each of them draws a random role. During the exercise, the young people will represent the randomly assigned groups, but they cannot tell the others who they are. Explain that in this exercise, the groups are taking part in an online discussion on the following subject: Vacation has been shortened by one month.

There are four possible groups:

- Students (the same age as the participants).
 - Parents of such students.
 - Teachers, who often worry that the school year will be too short to get through the whole curriculum with their students.
 - CEOs of large corporations, who believe that you have to work hard, first and foremost, and should start preparing for it from a young age.
3. Once the participants have acquainted themselves with their roles, present them with the following task:



A decision has been made in Poland that vacation will be one month shorter and students will go to school in July. The Minister of Education has already issued the appropriate regulation and does not intend to change this decision. Starting next year, all children and young people will only have one month of vacation instead of two.

You are discussing this change online with other people. Remember, though—you should do so from the point of view of your randomly assigned role.

Think about the comments that come to mind when you put yourselves in the shoes of your characters. How do you feel about this news? Is it fair or not? Will it be good for students and teachers?

Write down 6–7 different opinions and statements that such people could publish online. Put all these opinions inside your bubble.

4. Ask the participants to draw a soap bubble on a sheet of paper. They can use the pattern displayed on the slide as inspiration.
5. Once all the groups have completed their work, ask them to read the opinions and statements they prepared out loud. Other participants should try to guess the role assumed by a given group in this exercise.

My Reflections

You can use our suggested questions as part of the summary:

1. What emotions did you experience during the exercise? (You can reference the wheel of emotions).
2. Were your responses different or similar? Why, in your opinion?
3. Was it easy for you to get into the role and come up with what a given group thinks about vacation being shorter?
4. Do you come across different opinions, as you did in this exercise, when you open YouTube or TikTok or use traditional media?
5. Can you say that one of the groups was right? Or perhaps they just presented different perspectives?

My New Knowledge

The point of the task was for the young people to understand how online filter bubbles work. When we use social media, we often have a misleading impression that the people we talk to or whose comments we read express opinions that are held by everybody. We do not realize that we live in a “bubble”, which means we are more likely to come across people who think similarly to us.

A filter bubble is a consequence of automated content filtering processes in online search engines and on social media. It means only some of the available pieces of content are displayed to the user. Decisions are made based on algorithms that take into account multiple variables, such as the location, search and browsing history, and interactions (e.g. likes, comments, and shares).

An echo chamber, in turn, is a situation where a person reaffirms their current convictions as a result of the same content being repeated multiple times in a closed-off circle of people. This can happen, for example, in closed groups on social media. What is more, such separation is also conducive to limiting access to divergent opinions.

This way, we can get the erroneous impression that the opinions we come across reflect the views of the rest of society, while in reality, they can be completely different.

When we live in a “bubble”, we can fail to understand why so many people in the real world have opinions that differ from ours. We might also not believe that other opinions exist at all. As a consequence, people who do not leave their internet bubbles are easy to mislead.



Seeing the Connection and Building Immunity

At the end of the exercise, ask the participants to open the channel of their favorite YouTube creator and read the comments. What “bubble” do the most frequent commenters on that channel belong to? Have a discussion about it. You can also read the most frequently recurring comments out loud. Next, ask the group the following questions:

1. If you were to come up with a name for this bubble, what would you call it?
2. How would you describe the people who belong to it?
3. Now imagine that you would like this group to meet another group that would show them a different point of view on a subject that is important to its members. Who could they meet?



Scenario 3

Algorithm Families



40 minutes



13–15

small,
3–6 people
(players)

filter bubble

Objectives

This activity will allow the participants to:

- explain what an online algorithm is,
- understand how algorithms work.

Materials

[download](#)**For this activity, you will need:**

- A4 craft paper sheets,
- markers or pens.

Activity
Summary

1. The task is for the young people to open YouTube (in an app or browser) and find out—in pairs—where the algorithm takes them using a card game created by them.
2. Together, discuss how the algorithms are created. Then, have the participants think about how much depends on the algorithm when they are browsing online content.

My Experience

As part of the activity, the participants prepare, on their own, a game called “Algorithm Families” based on the rules of the “Happy Families” card game. Its objective is to collect as many “families” as possible by completing sets of 4 cards associated with a given YouTube algorithm. The card deck contains 10 families, each of them comprising 4 different titles of YouTube videos suggested to users by the platform based on its algorithm. Every card is different, but the family it belongs to is marked with a number in the upper right-hand corner of the card. The participants create the cards themselves based on the example provided.

How to make the cards:

Before the participants start playing, they have to make the cards. They will need A4 craft paper sheets and markers or coloring pencils. Cut each A4 sheet in half 3 times to make 8 even-sized rectangles. The game requires a total of 40 rectangles.

Next, each participant receives a number for their family (from 1 to 10) and writes it down in the upper right-hand corner on all four cards. Every family comprises 4 cards. Depending on the number of people taking part in the exercise, the number of families each participant will have to prepare will vary. For example, if the families are prepared by 2 people, each of them is tasked with creating 5 sets of cards with different numbers. If 4 people are doing it, each person prepares 2–3 families. The objective of the activity is to create 10 family sets of 4 cards each.

The next step is to open YouTube on a phone and select any video suggested by the app. The participant writes down its title on the card (they can also make a symbolic drawing). Next, they tap the first video following that one, also suggested by the algorithm. They write down its title on the next card from the same family. They repeat this step 2 more times and create 4 cards from the same family, reflecting subsequent videos suggested by the YouTube algorithm. To create the next family, the participant goes back to the YouTube homepage and repeats the 4 steps again, starting with a different video.

Once the participants have made 40 cards (10 algorithm families), they proceed to play the game according to the following rules.



Rules of the game:

1. Shuffle the cards and deal them to the participants so that the players cannot see each other's cards. The players look at their own cards and check if they have any sets of four (complete families). If a player has a complete set, they put it on the table face-up.
2. The person who has the lowest number of cards starts the game. If everyone has the same number of cards, the dealer starts.
3. The person starting the game tries to obtain a card they are interested in from any player (to complete a set). To get a card, they have to ask the chosen person a question about a specific card, stating its family number.
4. If that person has the card they were asked about, they have to give it to the person asking the question.
5. A player who manages to obtain a card continues the game in the same manner. Their turn ends if any of the people they ask do not have the card they are interested in. Then, it is the turn of the person who was answering the question to try to complete a set of four.
6. The players display complete sets face-up on the table.
7. The person who collects the most "families" during the game wins.

My Reflections

You can use our suggested questions as part of the summary:

1. What emotions did you feel during the activity? (You can use the wheel of emotions to describe what you felt).
2. What did you like?
3. What did you find difficult or easy?

Next, take a look at each family and the resulting algorithms. Analyze the algorithm logic together:

- What was the sequence in each family of videos? Was it difficult to guess?
- Did the theme of the videos change a lot based on the given algorithm? Or perhaps it remained similar?
- Did you notice any differences in how algorithms work for different people?

My New Knowledge

The more time we spend on specific social media, the more traces of our activity we leave there. Thanks to this, the algorithm suggests more and more interesting content to us that is even more effective at grabbing our attention. To understand the importance of the content selection mechanism, we need to realize that what we see on a given platform is determined primarily by an algorithm.

As users, we can search through the content of specific social media, but we are much more likely to rely on automated choices, as evidenced by continuous—sometimes mindless—scrolling through news in search of new sensations. This generates more and more doses of dopamine—a neurotransmitter strongly connected with the reward system, which makes us spend even more time using the app.

The mechanism behind the algorithm was described in an accessible way in a [video](#) by the Panoptikon Foundation. You can watch it together with the people under your care.



Seeing the Connection and Building Immunity

Finally, ask the participants to consider answers to the following questions in pairs:

- What does my algorithm “say” about me?
- What will happen if the algorithm starts suggesting fake content, like videos containing false information about a diet or events that did not take place?
- Do you know how you can cause YouTube to display what you want to see?

Articles published by the platform itself in the “Help” section can assist you in answering the last question—for example, “Understanding the basics of privacy on YouTube apps” ([link](#)). Together with the participants, take a look at the settings. Make any changes that you think are appropriate.



Scenario 4

Octogram Game

up to 50
minutes for the
whole activity10–12
13–15

3–7 players



social media

Content[download](#)**The game contains 102 cards:**

- 6 character cards
- 30 share cards
- 31 comment cards
- 11 like cards
- 9 cards with the required amount of comments
- 15 octopus cards

About the Game

The game Octogram is fictional and has a fictional plot, **but much of what happens while playing the game can be applied to real life.** The game aims to simulate social networks, their algorithms, and filter and information bubbles. The higher purpose, in addition to having fun playing the game, is the introduction of phenomena that manifest themselves on social networks and perhaps also the creation of environments and situations in which players can find themselves. The goal is therefore to offer experience and information that will help players in the future to understand how social networks work and how to maneuver amid the mentioned issues.

This document is suitable for facilitators overseeing the progress of the Octogram game. In this document, facilitators will learn how to effectively conduct the game and a reflection.

Objectives

The players will:

- be aware of social media algorithms and how their behavior determines what content they see there,
- learn how to use social media more responsibly,
- discover new terms connected to online life and be able to discuss them,
- improve their communication, cooperation, and teamwork skills.

Didactic Structure of the Activity**Stage 0 (for facilitators) – Receiving the game and materials for reflection**

- Printing the game.
- Reading the rules of the game before you play it with children.
- Try to be familiar with cards and their meanings.
- Read the reflection paper and adjust it if needed.

Stage 1 (10 minutes) – Get familiar with the rules

Activity: Go through every part of the game, let the children see the cards and be sure you explain their meanings. Read the rules out loud.

Stage 2 (15 minutes) – Play a test round

Activity: Play one round of the game to understand the mechanisms.

Try to remember the rules with a demonstration. This should help the children understand the cards better.



Stage 3 (10 minutes) – Read additional materials

Activity: Read the parts of the rules that the children didn't understand.

Stage 4 (unlimited, 15 minutes per round) – Play the game

Activity: Play it until enough time remains in your schedule for reflection.

Stage 4 (voluntary; +15 minutes) – Play the advanced version of the game

-Activity: If this is too easy for the players, you can play the advanced version. In the rules, you can find out how to play it on page 13.

Stage 5 (15 minutes) – Synthesis

Activity: At the end, hold a debate. Share your opinions about the new experiences and knowledge you learn.

How to lead the debate? We have prepared a reflection for you, which you will find in Chapter 5: Reflection.

Proposal of Possible Adjustments and Modifications

The duration of the work is only an estimate. Facilitators should be able to adjust the duration of the course according to their experience and competence. However, on the other hand, it could happen that the course will not be long enough. We recommend preparing enough questions for the final reflection and to encourage discussion.

Before You Start the Game

Print the Cards

Print the cards (in color or B&W, double-sided, preferably on hard paper) and then cut them out with scissors and laminate them if you want to reuse them.

- OCTOGRAM.pdf contains basic green cards
- OCTOGRAM-extended.pdf contains pink cards for the extended version
- OCTOPUS.pdf consists of cards with octopuses

Select Cards

There are two colors of cards: green and pink (also recognizable by the symbol +). The green ones are the core cards that are used in every game. The pink are additional cards used when playing in a bigger group or when choosing to play a more difficult game. Otherwise, players separate them from the pile. The number of octopus cards never changes.

Story

Welcome to the year 2150, in a galaxy far, far away... the galaxy is inhabited by creatures called the Bubblenauts. Living in their bubbles, unable to make any new friends, they have one thing in common: access to the same social network – Octogram. However, unfortunately, this social network is not very beneficial to them as it is almost impossible to make new friends there. Why is this? Because this social network is under the firm control of a mean and unfriendly octopus. Due to the algorithms, all the Bubblenauts were only receiving information that was pleasant for them and they were only in touch with Bubblenauts with the same opinions: therefore they got locked into the information and social bubbles.

Now, it is your turn to take the stage. Beat the octopus, help the Bubblenauts make new connections on the network, and become the hero they deserve!



Game Flow

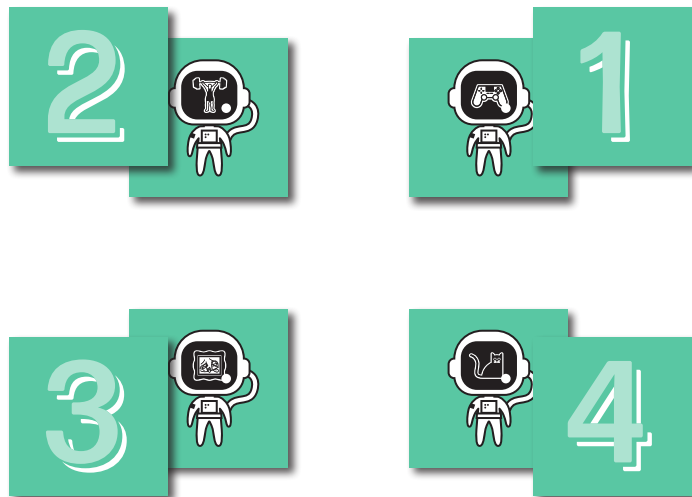
1. Goal

The main goal of the game is to connect all the characters using the playing cards. Each of the characters should be connected, including connections made 'across' the board. It is important for each connection to be one way only.

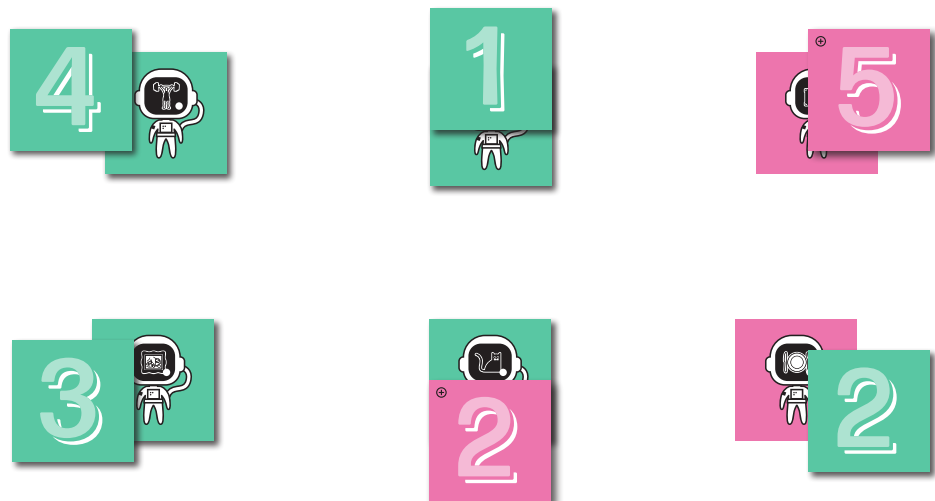
2. Start

Each of the characters has a predetermined interest, which determines which sharing cards can be placed next to the character card. At the start of the game, there are as many cards randomly drawn as there are characters in the game. These cards determine the number of comment cards necessary to make a connection to each character. The character cards are placed on the game board at the vertices of an imaginary square. One of the drawn number cards is then put on each of the characters.

The basic version of the game is played with four characters, while the version with two additional characters is intended for more advanced players wishing to increase the difficulty. It is also recommended to play with all six characters if a larger number of players want to play the game (five or more).



Picture: The opening of the game with four characters

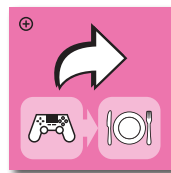


Picture: The opening of the game with six characters



3. Playing Cards

There are three main types of playing cards: shares, comments, and likes. The playing cards also contain cards specifying the number of required comments, character cards, and octopus cards. With each turn, a different person (moving clockwise) starts by drawing an octopus card. At the start of each turn, players draw two cards from the deck. The players do not need to hide their cards and they can show them to the others. During the turn, they can play either none or exactly one of these cards (unless otherwise specified by a special card, see the section about octopus cards). Anyone can start by placing the card, though the person who draws the octopus card has priority. Every turn, a different person draws an octopus card; you can move this function clockwise.



Share

The 'share' cards represent the origin point of a connection. They contain two symbols of interest connected with an arrow. These cards are placed in such a way that the interest symbol at the base of the arrow is next to the character with a matching interest symbol. At the same time, the share cards should point toward the character that has the interest symbol matching the symbol at the tip of the arrow. During the first turns of the game, it is ideal for players who have share cards on hand to play first. This can change in later turns, when there will be share cards placed between all or almost all of the characters and it would be less important to play them as first. If the players decide to play the share cards, they also have to come up with a story that connects both of the symbols featured on the card they played. This story will be used later during the play.



Example: You want to connect two Bubblenauts in the direction from left to right. The example story might be: The **athlete** was **playing an online game**.

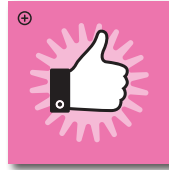


Comment

The 'comment' cards represent the main element of a connection. Each of the cards has a character or an item on it. The player who plays the comment card can only place it next to an already placed share card. If the player places the comment card, they need to come up with an extension to the story that already exists between the two characters, as already determined by the placed share card.



Example: You have to connect these two Bubblenauts via a comment and you choose a picture of a planet. The example story might be: The **athlete** was **playing an online game** while traveling around the **globe** for the competition.



Like

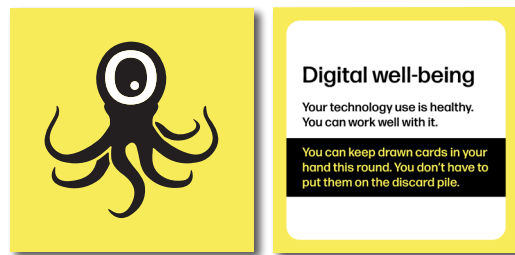
The 'like' cards represent the finishing point of a connection. Whenever there is a share card and a sufficient number of comment cards between two characters, a player can place the like card next to the already placed comment cards in that connection. By doing this, the connection is considered to be complete.



At the end of each turn, the players place the unplayed cards on a discard pile. When the main playing deck of cards runs out, this discard pile is then turned over and shuffled and serves as the new main playing deck.

Octopus

The game flow can be influenced by the special 'octopus' cards. They are drawn starting from the second turn onward. Before the players draw their cards for the turn from the deck, one of the players draws the top card from the octopus deck and reads it aloud. The octopus cards represent various phenomena that can be encountered on the social networks. Their main task is to influence the course of the turn for which they were drawn. Each of the cards describes a constraint that is then applied to the given turn and players must play cards or perform activities according to this constraint. After the turn ends, the active card is placed on a separate discard pile for octopus cards. After all the octopus cards have been played, the octopus card discards pile is turned over, shuffled, and serves as the new octopus deck.



Exercise ideas for “Infostress”, “Information Need”, and “Multitasking” Octopus cards

These exercises are an activity that can help with digital diseases caused by the use of technology. You might find a call to action on the octopus card to do an exercise. It is up to you which one you choose.



Posture and Neck

- **Chin Tuck** – Straighten up and, facing forward, tuck your chin back to create a double chin. Repeat 10 times.
- **Neck Stretch** – Bow your head to the side. Hold the position for 20-30 seconds, then switch sides.
- **Exhale** – Bend your head with your hands behind your back. As you exhale, bend your head toward your chest, pull your elbows together, and slightly round your upper back. Breathe freely and try to stay in this position for at least 15-30 seconds.

Eyes

- **Blink Faster** – Blink 20 times, then close your eyes and take 3 deep breaths.
- **Eye Rolling** – Hold the same position and only move your eyes. First look to the right, then up to the ceiling, then to the left, and finally down to the ground. Repeat 5 times. You can go both ways.
- **Palm Exercise** – Rapidly rub your palms together until they are warm and then place them comfortably over your eyes so that no light penetrates through them. Breathe deeply.

Hands

- **Prayer position** – Place your palms together with your fingers pointing up and your elbows out to the sides. Hold this position for 30 seconds.
- **Palm stretch** – Grasp the fingers of the other hand with one hand, which will be held outstretched, and hold the position for 30 seconds. You can switch hands and turn the outstretched hand downwards and upwards during the exercise.
- **Circles** – Make small circles around your wrists. Spin your hands to both sides 10 times clockwise and the same counterclockwise.

Example Turn

What follows is a description of an example game turn.

There is **no set order of play** – the players decide among themselves who plays when.

If this is the first turn of the game, the turn does not feature the actions described in this paragraph. The turn begins with one of the players drawing the top card from the octopus deck, reading the card to other players, and placing it next to the octopus deck, with the side of the card featuring the description facing upwards.

If the octopus card (drawn according to the previous paragraph) does not determine otherwise, **all of the players draw two cards** from the playing deck. Then, the turn begins. During the first turns of the game, it is recommended for players who have a 'share' card on hand to play these cards first. During the later turns of the game, when shares have been placed between all or almost all the characters, it is recommended for players with comment cards to play them first.

If a player plays a share card, they also have to **create the base of a story** that connects the interest portrayed on the played card. If a player plays a comment card, they need to extend the existing story set by the share card to include the symbol or character portrayed on the placed comment card. They can only place the comment card if other players decide that this story extension is good enough.



If a player wants to play the like card, they can only do so by placing it next to a connection that already features a share card and a sufficient number of comment cards as determined by the number card underneath the character to which the connection is pointing.

During the turn, a player can play a maximum of one card from their hand (unless specified otherwise by an octopus card applying to that turn). The players also do not need to play any cards from their hand if they don't want to or if there is no suitable place for them to put their cards.

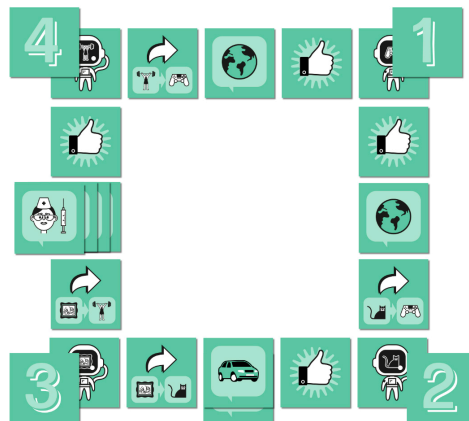
After all the players have either played a card or decided not to play any, the turn ends and the players place their remaining cards on the discard pile. Afterward, the octopus card applied to that turn is placed on the octopus cards discard pile, and a new turn starts with a player drawing another octopus card.



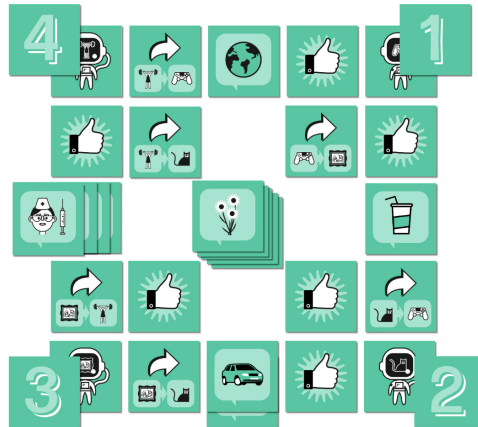
Picture: What the connection between two Bubblenauts may look like

End of the Game

The game ends when the players **manage to create a connection between all the characters** in the game. It is also possible to **set a maximum number of turns** to be played; in this case, the game would end when this turn is reached or by connecting all the characters before that. Another possible limitation on finishing the game is **setting a time limit**.



Picture: All the Bubblenauts connected in lines



Picture: A finished game with both connections in line and crosswise

Difficulty Extensions

For players who have already mastered the game mechanics well enough, it is possible to increase the difficulty of the game.

The first of these is an option to **change how the comment system works**. In this extended version, if a player wants to play a comment card, not only do they need to come up with a story that connects the symbols on the relevant share card, but also the symbol on the comment card being placed and the symbols on all the already placed comment cards (if any) in the connection.

Another possibility for increasing the difficulty is to **increase the number of game characters** from four to six. In this case, the players put the additional cards (differentiated by color) from the game deck into the playing deck. The characters are placed on the playing field in the vertices of an imaginary rectangle, as well as in the middle of its longer sides.



Picture: Successfully connected characters with 6 Bubblenauts

The game featuring six characters ends either by reaching the last turn if a maximum number of turns has been set, by reaching the time limit if it was set, or by connecting all the characters. In this case, it is not necessary to connect the characters placed in the vertices of the rectangle and you can decide before the start of the game whether you want to do a crosswise connection or not.

Reflection

The reflection time comes after the game. First, it is time to debate the points of interest and the information obtained. A group of players or combined groups will form a circle and discuss different experiences.



At this point, players should express how they think they did and what interested them. Everyone should try to avoid criticizing or evaluating others. Rather, they should focus on praise, positive experiences, and encouraging curiosity and creativity.

Example: Peter tells the others that he liked how they connected the two aliens with a funny story. Claire continues and recalls how she pointed out that they can choose a different strategy in one of the game rounds. Jane tries to remember similar situations, but she cannot think of anything. The others will help her and praise the decisions she made in the game. When the talking gets stuck and Philip has nothing to say, you place yourself in the situation and suggest a conversation topic. You ask directly how they reacted at a certain moment.

Possible guiding questions:

- Have there ever been any disputes? How were they resolved?
- Who reminded players about reading the octopus cards and kept track of the game flow?
- Have you ever helped each other come up with a story?

These questions should be directly related to the game and its gameplay, as such. It is appropriate to focus on cooperation, social dynamics, and involvement in the group.

This is followed by a debate on the content of the game session itself. Conversational suggestions will help you do this. They are meant to spark the talking and focus on certain phenomena, definitions, or concepts. It is desirable to be aware of what players have encountered, either by asking them or listening to them play. This section is also suitable for explaining terms or specific situations that arise.

Example: Jane raises the question of how to maintain digital well-being. Claire tells her that she can maintain it by meditating. Filip tells her that she's wrong, and that it's about not using technology at all—that it's a total detox. At this point, you insert yourself into the debate and adjust the information accordingly. You explain exactly what that means and ask if they know how they can foster it.

Conversational suggestions:

- Have you ever had a social network delete or hide your post? Is censorship a negative process? When do you think it could be a positive action?
- Have you ever come across deepfake videos? If so, how did you find out they were fakes? Did you find it funny or did it make you more nervous?
- Have you ever encountered disinformation? If so, how did you behave? Was it isolated disinformation or an entire disinformation blog or profile?
- How do you maintain your own digital well-being? How is it different from a digital detox? Do the social media ever cause a bad mood? How and in which way?
- Are you aware of your digital footprint? Before you post something, do you consider whether it will affect your future? Do you think more about text or photos?
- What do you think about the recommendation algorithm? Does it harm us? Is it beneficial? Do you find what social networks recommend interesting or do you prefer to search for information and content yourself?
- Do you know what filter bubbles are? How does the fact that you are in a filter bubble and the fact that you are in a social bubble manifest? How would you go about getting rid of them?



- Are you hashtagging your posts? How and why do you hashtag? Is it different how you hashtag on different platforms?
- Which internet creators would you describe as an influencer? Why would you say so? How many influencers do you follow? Have you ever bought or tried a product they recommended or used because of them?
- How do you think infostress manifests itself? What can you do with it?
- Which meme have you discovered recently? Do you know of one that isn't popular anymore but you still like it? Why do you think some memes die out quickly and some are still popular?
- How often do you multitask? What actions do you take? Can you always focus sufficiently on both activities? Why do you multitask?
- Have you ever found yourself in a loop of repetitive content that you couldn't get out of? Was it content that you didn't like or that you got sick of after repeating it over and over?
- When you're on social media, do you also follow what's trending? Do you click on all the trending topics or just the ones you already know something about? Have you discovered any new fandoms, topics, celebrities, events, or more by following what's trending?
- Have you ever noticed a viral post? Why do you think it went viral? What was the tone of the content of the post, was it funny, provocative, or scandalous?

In the last stage, it is important to get the players involved as much as possible. It is advisable to ask all players the same question and then wait for them to think about it. It's okay if some answers are duplicates.