> MEDIA LAB

EMPOWER EDUCATORS

Methodological material
for media literacy trainers

theory + game methods

01

Contents

New East Culture Institute
For new education, engaged
citizens and positive change

The Importance and Role of Media Literacy in the Modern World

In today's world, where information spreads rapidly, media literacy has become a necessary skill for everyone. It is not just the ability to read news or watch television programs — it is the ability to critically evaluate information, understand who creates it, for what purpose, and what consequences it may produce. Media literacy helps people avoid falling into manipulation and fake news traps, and protects against the influence of propaganda and disinformation.

In Europe and the Baltic region, especially in Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, media literacy is even more significant. The region is subjected to constant external pressure from countries like Russia, Belarus, and China, which actively use the media for spreading propaganda and manipulation. The purpose of this book is to offer proven and effective methods for promoting media literacy among seniors, with a special focus on minority representatives who are more exposed to disinformation risks. The compiled methods and approaches have been practically tested in the Latgale region, in minority communities located near Russia and Belarus, which are particularly susceptible to disinformation.

We at New East see the development of media literacy as an important element of resilience building for local communities.

Our goal is to help every person in the Baltic region develop critical thinking and information analysis skills to make more thoughtful decisions. This is especially important for population groups often overlooked, such as seniors, rural residents, and vulnerable communities. We hope that this material will become a useful tool for both seniors and educators, and will promote stronger and more informed communities capable of recognizing manipulation and resisting disinformation attempts.

In our training material, we offer to review media literacy from various perspectives you encounter in your field of activity. For example, in healthcare, it is impossible to educate effectively without delving into myths and analyzing disinformation examples related to vaccination, treatment, or healthy lifestyle. In the cultural sphere, you often encounter various narratives, many of which can be examples of misleading or harmful information deliberately distorted to manipulate society (malinformation). Even in entrepreneurship and financial literacy, where various fraudulent schemes are flourishing today, it is important to develop the ability to critically analyze content to protect people from deception and financial losses.

We aim to offer universal materials that will help develop media literacy and critical thinking in various contexts. Whether you work with youth, adults, or seniors, our resources will help more effectively teach media literacy and apply these skills in specific domains — health, culture, entrepreneurship, or public activities.

Everything we will share in these materials are simple and effective tools that have been tested in practice. We have been working in the field of media literacy for more than 8 years, and during this time we have tried many methods. Here we have compiled those that have proven to be the most interesting, engaging, or simply most understandable, so that you can use them in your work. We believe that accessibility is the key to a successful and engaging learning process.

We pay special attention to the game format, which has become one of the most powerful tools for engaging different audiences, especially those more exposed to disinformation. Games help maintain attention and interest for both youth and seniors. Therefore, our material will not contain complex theories — instead, you will find the most simple and comprehensible forms that are easy to adapt to work in your communities.

Media literacy is a long-term skill that not only helps distinguish truth from lies but also teaches active engagement in public life, creating a safer information space for everyone.

What is Media Literacy and Why is it Necessary?

Media Literacy is Important in Various Life Domains

Media literacy is the ability to critically perceive, analyze, and evaluate information received from various media: internet, television, social networks, newspapers, and other sources. It includes understanding how information is created, who creates it, for what purpose, and the ability to distinguish reliable data from false or manipulative content. Media literacy helps navigate the complex information world that is overflowing with data that is not always true.

Why is it Needed?
In today's world, where information spreads instantly and is accessible to everyone, media literacy has become one of the most important skills. On the internet and social networks, it is easy to encounter fake news, disinformation, and propaganda that can manipulate people's views and influence their decisions. Without critical thinking and media content analysis skills, we risk becoming victims of disinformation, which can lead to incorrect conclusions and actions.

For Decision Making	Being media literate means being able to make well-founded and conscious decisions based on verified information. This applies to both personal and public issues—from health to politics.
Protection Against Manipulations	Media literacy helps recognize propaganda, fake news, and manipulations aimed at distorting reality or promoting hidden interest goals.
Social Engagement	In a democratic society, it is crucial for citizens to be able to analyze media content, critically evaluate news, and participate in public discussions. This strengthens democracy and protects society from authoritarian threats.
Online Self-Defense	Social networks and digital platforms are often sources of cyber attacks, fraud, and disinformation. Media literacy helps recognize suspicious content and verify sources, thus protecting oneself from these threats.

The Significance of Media Literacy in Society

Media literacy has not just personal, but global importance. It helps build society resilience by strengthening the ability to resist external and internal information threats. Today, propaganda is often used as a tool for dividing society, promoting ethnic hatred, xenophobia, and radicalization. Media literacy skills play a crucial role in limiting these processes, helping people recognize manipulations and develop a more objective and critical perception of information. Developing media literacy is not just an individual security issue, but a social **necessity**. When society can critically evaluate information, it becomes less vulnerable to propaganda, disinformation, and hostile narratives. This helps maintain social unity, prevent conflicts, and protect democratic values.

This is especially important during global crises, such as the Ukraine war or the conflict in Israel, where information wars complement actual military actions, intensifying polarization and fear. In the context of these challenges, special attention must be paid to critical thinking and media literacy programs for middle-aged and older people, as well as seniors. These audiences are often especially vulnerable to propaganda and disinformation, making them a primary target for educational initiatives. Developing media literacy in these groups not only improves their ability to navigate the information space but also promotes the creation of more resilient and cohesive societies.

Media Literacy as a Life Necessity

Thus, media literacy is not just a skill — it is an integral part of modern life. It helps us better understand the world around us, protect ourselves, and make more thoughtful decisions while creating a safer and more sustainable information space for everyone.

Theoretical Basis for Media Literacy

Key Concepts of Media Literacy

Media literacy is a person's ability to analyze and critically evaluate media messages, understand how and with what purpose they are created, and the ability to resist manipulations. Below are the key terms and concepts that will help understand media literacy:

Fake News	Fake news are completely or partially untrue statements spread to manipulate public opinion or gain some benefit. They are usually presented as reliable facts, making their recognition difficult. Fake news is often sensationalist to evoke strong emotions in readers.
Disinformation	This is the deliberate spread of false information to mislead the audience. Unlike fake news, disinformation is an intentional attempt to manipulate people's perception, often with political or economic goals.
Malinformation	Malinformation is true but distorted information used in a context that can cause harm or create a misleading impression. It can be incomplete reporting of facts or taking them out of context to alter the perception of events.
Propaganda	Propaganda is the systematic dissemination of ideas, beliefs, and information to influence people's opinions and mobilize them towards specific goals. It can be both positive and negative but is often used for political or social manipulation.
Fact-Checking	Fact-checking is a process of verifying the truthfulness of information. It's important to understand how to distinguish reliable sources and check information from them. Including fact-checking skills in educational programs helps people evaluate information and distinguish truth from lies.
Misinformation	Information spread without intentionally deceiving (for example, accidental journalist errors or rumors and gossip from friends). The main difference between misinformation and disinformation is intent. Misinformation is not created to deceive or manipulate, but its spread can have negative consequences if people perceive it as truth.

The Role of Media in Society

Media plays a significant role in shaping public opinion. They not only inform people about current events but also influence world perception. It's important to understand that media can be both an objective source of information and a tool for manipulation:

Information Dissemination	Media spreads important information that can impact people's lives (news, analytical articles, reports). However, not all information we receive is neutral — it is always interpreted and reflected through the author's or editorial filter.
Agenda-Setting	Media often determines which topics seem important to society. For example, if a news channel constantly talks about migration, this topic becomes more significant to viewers. This is not always bad, but it's important to understand how the media influences our perception of events.
Social Polarization	So-called "echo chambers" on social networks create a situation where people receive information only from sources that support their existing views. This can promote societal polarization and make dialogue difficult.

Challenges of Modern Media Space

In the digital age, the media landscape becomes increasingly complex and multifaceted. The main challenges are as follows:

Algorithms and Echo Chambers	Social network algorithms tailor content to user interests, creating "echo chambers". This means people see only information that confirms their beliefs, thus limiting critical thinking and ability to perceive different viewpoints.
Disinformation and COVID-19 Pandemic	The pandemic clearly showed how disinformation can endanger human lives. False theories about virus origin, vaccination, and treatment spread worldwide, hindering pandemic control. This highlights the importance of critical analysis skills during global crises.
Political and Economic Manipulation	Authoritarian regimes like those in Russia, Belarus, and China use the media for propaganda and societal manipulation. Their goal is to undermine trust in democratic institutions and create chaos in society. Such media attacks can be part of hybrid warfare, where information is used as a weapon.
	Modern media space experiences unprecedented changes, where political and economic manipulation become powerful influence tools. Populist and ultra-oriented political forces often use disinformation, exaggerated messages, and polarizing rhetoric to divide society and strengthen their influence. Economic manipulation manifests as hidden promotion of corporate interests, often using sponsored news or fake facts to mislead consumers.
	Critical thinking is a crucial weapon for detecting and understanding such manipulations. It helps analyze information sources, distinguish facts from interpretations, and expose hidden motives. By developing this skill, we become more resilient to propaganda, malicious influence, and false information, able to make conscious and informed decisions based on true data and ethical principles.

What Types of Skills and Competencies Does Media Literacy Develop?

Learning media literacy and critical thinking helps develop a wide range of skills and competencies useful not only in working with media but also in everyday life. These skills allow for conscious information perception, making thoughtful decisions, and protecting oneself from manipulations. Media literacy is crucial for increasing societal resilience against manipulation attempts. The goal of disinformation is often to divide society, create distrust, and promote conflicts. By developing media literacy, we create an educated, critically thinking society capable of not only recognizing but effectively responding to such manipulations, thereby strengthening the foundations of democracy and cohesion.

The main types of skills and competencies developed through media literacy learning are outlined below:

Critical Thinking Skills

• Information Analysis: Ability to break down messages into components, identifying main and secondary ideas, and determining hidden intentions and goals.

• Source Evaluation: Skill to check the reliability and authority of an information source. This includes analyzing who created the source and what their potential interests might be.

• Logical Thinking: Ability to identify causal relationships, evaluate arguments, and uncover logical fallacies, such as concept substitution, false conclusions, or manipulations.

• Skeptical Attitude: Skill to ask questions and not immediately accept information as true without verification and analysis.

Media Skills

• Media Environment Understanding: Ability to comprehend how different media types work, what technologies are used for content creation, and how media influences the audience.

• Fact-Checking: Skill to quickly and effectively verify the truthfulness of information using reliable sources and verification tools.

• Disinformation and Fake News Recognition: Ability to identify various manipulation types, such as disinformation, malinformation, and propaganda.

• Ethical Media Competence: Ability to evaluate the ethics of media practices and analyze how content impacts society and personal views.

Interpersonal and Social Competencies

• Communication and Discussion: Skill to create argumentative dialogues and participate in discussions, defending one's opinion while respecting the opponent's viewpoint.

• Intercultural Understanding: Ability to recognize and consider cultural nuances that influence information perception and interpretation in different countries and societies.

• Social Empathy: Skill to understand various perspectives and contexts, promoting dialogue between different social and age groups.

Digital Literacy

• Digital Tool Usage: Skill to use modern technologies for information searching, analysis, and processing, including technical aspects and online safety and privacy understanding.

• Content Creation: Ability to create high-quality media content that is ethical, reliable, and interesting to the audience.

• Information Flow Management: Skill to effectively manage data flows, filter unnecessary information, and find relevant and useful content.

Skills for Protection Against Manipulations

• Manipulation Technique Detection: Ability to recognize emotional and rhetorical techniques used for manipulation, such as fear-mongering, stereotype creation, or appealing to false authorities.

• Understanding Cognitive Biases: Comprehension of how personal biases and perception distortions can influence decisions and opinions, and how these distortions are used for manipulation.

• Emotional Reaction Control: Ability to resist emotional influence often used by propaganda or fake news to manipulate thinking.

Social Responsibility and Ethics

• Ethical Online Behavior: Understanding responsible information handling and interaction with others online, observing digital etiquette and communication norms.

• Civic Responsibility: Skill to assess information's impact on society and one's behavior as an engaged democratic citizen.

These skills and competencies not only help people better understand the world but also make them more active, informed, and responsible society members. They protect against propaganda and disinformation, strengthen democracy, and promote social cohesion.

Terminology study

Goals and Tasks within the Block

Goals:
• Develop skills in using media, information, and digital competencies.
• Ensure a shared understanding of key media literacy terminology.

Tasks:
• Introduce participants to key terms such as: media, information and digital competencies, fake news, disinformation, malinformation, propaganda, fact-checking.
• Promote common terminology for further discussions.

Theory

In this session, we will introduce participants to the most important terms in media literacy. Understanding these terms is crucial for participants to confidently discuss media, critically evaluate information, and make informed decisions. Here are brief explanations of key terms:

• Media Literacy: Ability to analyze, evaluate, and create media messages.
• Fake News: Misleading or false information materials aimed at manipulation or disinformation.
• Disinformation: Deliberately spread false information with the intent to manipulate.
• Malinformation: Factually-based information used to cause harm.
• Propaganda: Systematic spread of specific ideas to influence public opinion.
• Fact-Checking: Process of verifying the accuracy of facts and information.

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Practical Task

Form: Group work

Method: Divide participants into small groups. Give each group pre-prepared cards with terms (cards contain terms and their definitions).

Task steps:
1. Each group member randomly selects one card with a term.

2. Participants, without using phones or computers, try to explain the chosen term based on their knowledge and intuition.
3. After discussion, the group prepares a short (up to 3 minutes) presentation about the term, including their explanation and examples from everyday life.
4. Each group presents their results to other participants.

Materials for trainers

• Sets of cards with terms and their definitions (10-15 cards per group).
• Paper and markers for writing down definitions and examples.

Questions for participants

For children:
• What fake news do you encounter in daily life?
• Why is it important to know what disinformation is?

For youth:
• How do you understand the term "critical perception"? How can it help in everyday life?
• Why is it necessary to verify information? Give examples.

For seniors:
• How do you perceive information from the news? What do you encounter most often?
• What does being media literate mean to you? How does it affect your daily life?

Assessment methods

1. Observation: The trainer observes how participants engage in group work and how actively they participate in discussions.
2. Group presentations: The trainer evaluates how well and clearly the groups explain concepts, and whether appropriate examples are used.
3. Feedback: At the end of the session, the trainer conducts a survey about how understandable the terms were and which ones participants would like to learn about in more detail.

"The information age demands from us not only the ability to read and write, but also the ability to understand what happens beyond words."

**Patrick Fogart, media literacy expert**
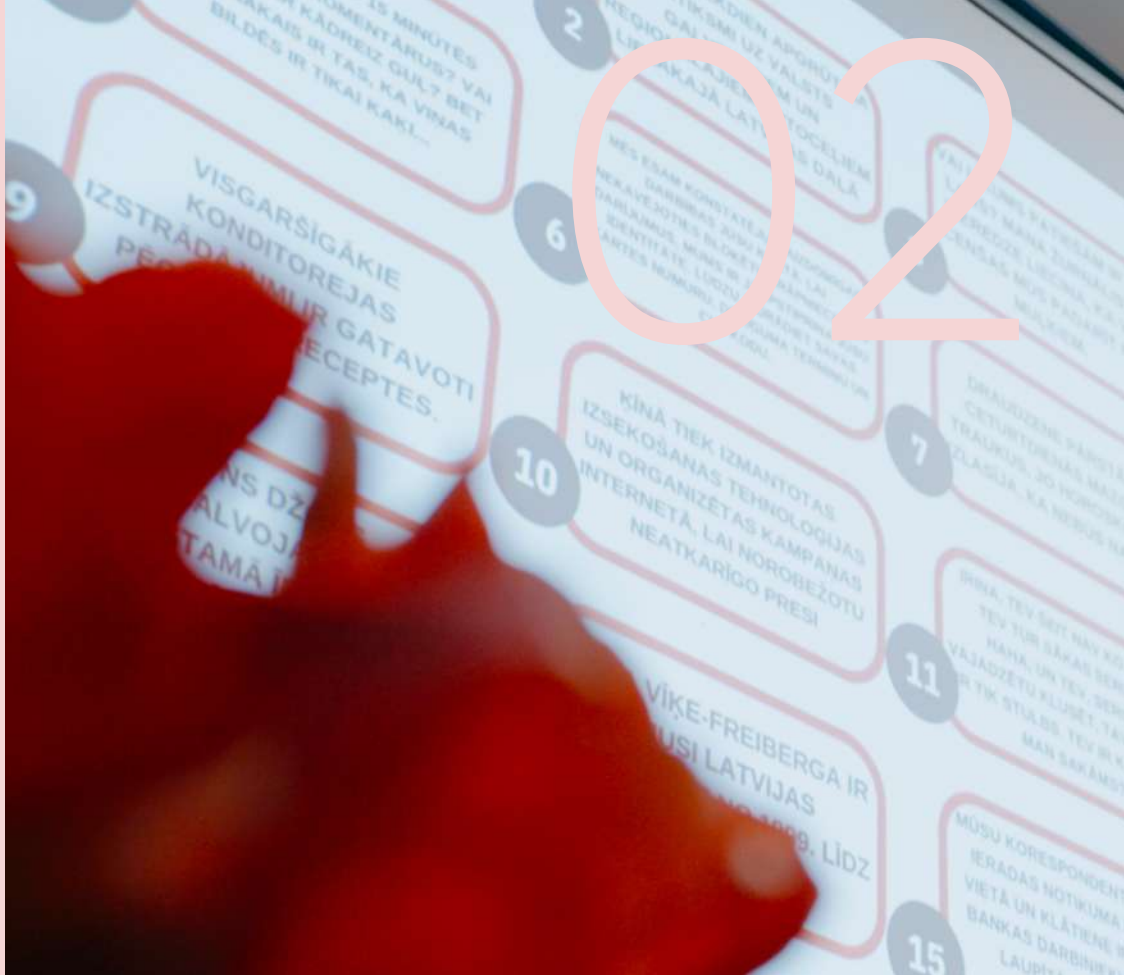
BINGO

Practical Task

Form: Group work

Method: Divide participants into small groups. Give each group pre-prepared cards with terms and examples.

Participants receive a set (16 cut-out terms) and a sheet with 16 examples (on 2 pages). The participants' task is to match the appropriate terms to the examples.

One of the term cards is blank because one of the examples does not correspond to any of the mentioned terms and represents a person's statement without manipulation, disinformation, or lies.
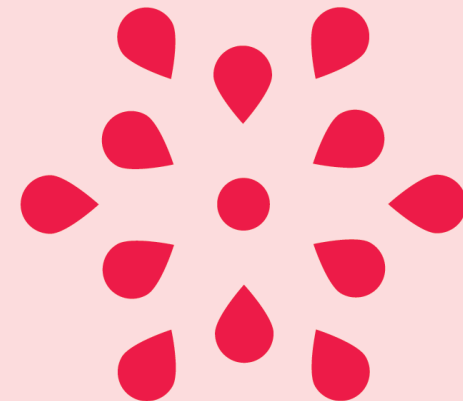
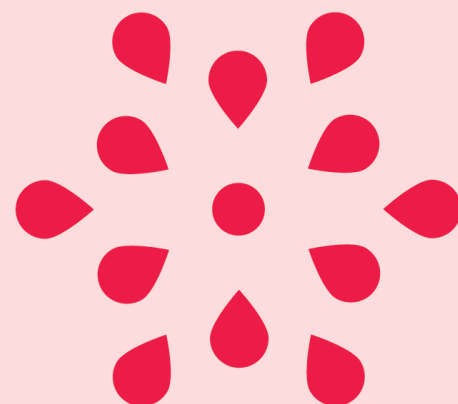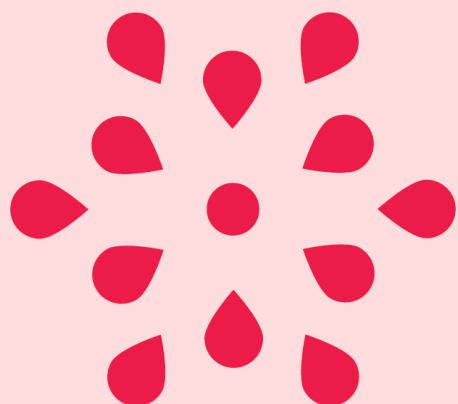|			
BOT	VIOLATION OF LAW	JOURNALISTIC SUBJECTIVITY	UNETHICAL JOURNALIST
OPINION	CENSURE		FAKE
UNRELIABLE EXPERT	FACT	COGNITIVE DISTORTION	HATE SPEECH
MISPRINT	NO SOURCE	TROLL	MANIPULATION

1. MY NAME IS DELANA FEDERICA I AM FROM GERMANY, I AM 35 YEARS OLD, NOW I LIVE IN FRANCE, I AM WRITING TO YOU ABOUT A JOB OFFER, BECAUSE I THINK I AM A SUITABLE CANDIDATE.

2. SNOW ON FLIDAY MAKES TRAFFIC DIFFICULT ON MAIN AND REGIONAL ROADS IN MOST PARTS OF LATVIA.

3. IS THE LAW REALLY THAT GOOD? FROM MY OWN EXPERIENCE, I WOULD SAY THAT THEY ARE TRYING TO MAKE A FOOL OF US.

4. POPULAR SINGER ARTEM BAIGA WAS SPOTTED AT THE AIRPORT WITH A BAG FULL OF GOLD BARS, WHICH HE ALLEGEDLY STOLE FROM A FAMOUS BUSINESSMAN.

5. HOW DID SHE MANAGE TO WRITE 55 COMMENTS IN 15 MINUTES? DOES SHE EVER SLEEP? BUT THE WEIRDEST THING IS THAT ALL SHE HAS IN HER PICTURES ARE KITTENS.

6. WE HAVE DETECTED SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY ON YOUR ACCOUNT. IN ORDER TO BLOCK FRAUDULENT TRANSACTIONS IMMEDIATELY, WE NEED TO CONFIRM YOUR IDENTITY. PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR CARD NUMBER, EXPIRY DATE AND CVV CODE.

7. A FRIEND STOPPED WASHING DISHES ON THURSDAYS BECAUSE SHE READ IN HOROSCOPES THAT THERE WOULD BE NO MONEY.

8. ALL RUSSIAN SPEAKERS ARE CRIMINALS AND MUST BE DRIVEN OUT OF OUR COUNTRY. THEY ARE ONLY DAMAGING OUR CULTURE AND FUTURE.

9. THE MOST DELICIOUS BAKED GOODS COME FROM A HOMEMADE RECIPE.

10. CHINA HAS SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGY AND TARGETED ONLINE CAMPAIGNS TO SILENCE THE INDEPENDENT PRESS.

11. IRINA YOU HAVE NOTHING TO DO HERE, THERE IS A SERIES STARTS HAHA, AND YOU SERGEI BETTER SHUT UP, YOU HAVE A STUPID NAME, DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO ANSWER ME?

12. THOSE WHO DON'T SIGN AGAINST THE PARTNERSHIP LAW WILL BE BLAMED FOR ALL THE PERMISSIVENESS OF SOCIETY.

13. ELTON JOHN SAYS REAL ESTATE PRICES WILL START TO SKYROCKET IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF 2024.

14. VAIRA VIKE FREIBERGA WAS PRESIDENT OF LATVIA FROM 1999 TO 2007.

15. OUR CORRESPONDENT WAS THE FIRST TO GET INTO THE THICK OF THINGS AND INTERVIEWED THE BANK EMPLOYEES WHO WERE PHYSICALLY INJURED AT THE HANDS OF THE BEATERS.

16. AN ANONYMOUS SOURCE INDICATES THAT THE AUTHOR OF THE FAKE ARTICLES AND PHOTOS ON OUR CITY'S PORTALS IS A CERTAIN JOREN D.

Test yourself! If you don't know the correct answers, you can find them on the next page.
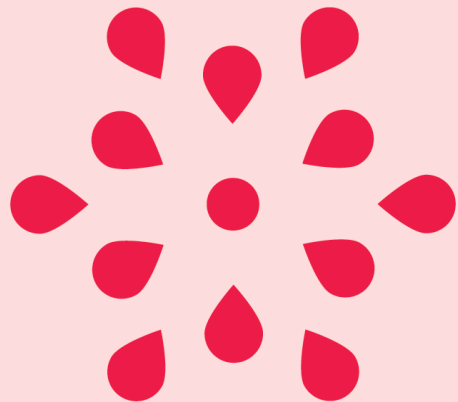
Materials for trainers

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MISPRINT

IS THE LAW REALLY THAT GOOD? FROM MY OWN EXPERIENCE, I WOULD SAY THAT THEY ARE TRYING TO MAKE A FOOL OF US.

3

JOURNALISTIC SUBJECTIVITY

POPULAR SINGER ARTEM BAIGA WAS SPOTTED AT THE AIRPORT WITH A BAG FULL OF GOLD BARS, WHICH HE ALLEGEDLY STOLE FROM A FAMOUS BUSINESSMAN.

4

FAKE

HOW DID SHE MANAGE TO WRITE 55 COMMENTS IN 15 MINUTES? DOES SHE EVER SLEEP? BUT THE WEIRDEST THING IS THAT ALL SHE HAS IN HER PICTURES ARE KITTENS.

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BOT

WE HAVE DETECTED SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY ON YOUR ACCOUNT. IN ORDER TO BLOCK FRAUDULENT TRANSACTIONS IMMEDIATELY, WE NEED TO CONFIRM YOUR IDENTITY. PLEASE PROVIDE YOUR CARD NUMBER, EXPIRY DATE AND CVV CODE.

6

VIOLATION OF LAW

A FRIEND STOPPED WASHING DISHES ON THURSDAYS BECAUSE SHE READ IN HOROSCOPES THAT THERE WOULD BE NO MONEY.

7

COGNITIVE DISTORTION

ALL RUSSIAN SPEAKERS ARE CRIMINALS AND MUST BE DRIVEN OUT OF OUR COUNTRY. THEY ARE ONLY DAMAGING OUR CULTURE AND FUTURE.

8

HATE SPEECH

THE MOST DELICIOUS BAKED GOODS COME FROM A HOMEMADE RECIPE.

9

OPINION

CHINA HAS SURVEILLANCE TECHNOLOGY AND TARGETED ONLINE CAMPAIGNS TO SILENCE THE INDEPENDENT PRESS.

10

CENSURE

IRINA YOU HAVE NOTHING TO DO HERE, THERE IS A SERIES STARTS HAHA, AND YOU SERGEI BETTER SHUT UP, YOU HAVE A STUPID NAME, DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING TO ANSWER ME?

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ELTON JOHN SAYS REAL ESTATE PRICES WILL START TO SKYROCKET IN THE SECOND QUARTER OF 2024.

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UNRELIABLE EXPERT

VAIRA VIKE FREIBERGA WAS PRESIDENT OF LATVIA FROM 1999 TO 2007.

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FACT

OUR CORRESPONDENT WAS THE FIRST TO GET INTO THE THICK OF THINGS AND INTERVIEWED THE BANK EMPLOYEES WHO WERE PHYSICALLY INJURED AT THE HANDS OF THE BEATERS.

15

UNETHICAL JOURNALIST

AN ANONYMOUS SOURCE INDICATES THAT THE AUTHOR OF THE FAKE ARTICLES AND PHOTOS ON OUR CITY'S PORTALS IS A CERTAIN JOREN D.

16

NO SOURCE

MEDIA AND MASS MEDIA

Media and Mass media

Theory

Mass media (MM) are systems and platforms designed for broad distribution of information and content. These include television, radio, newspapers, magazines, and internet platforms (websites, social networks, blogs). The role of mass media in society has several dimensions - informing, educating, entertaining, shaping public opinion, and influencing the perception of various phenomena.

According to the Republic of Latvia law, press and other mass media include newspapers, magazines, bulletins, and other periodicals (published at least once every three months, with a single print run exceeding 100 copies), as well as electronic media, newsreels, news agency announcements, and audiovisual recordings intended for public distribution. A website can be registered as a mass medium. The provisions of the law do not apply to instructions from state power and administration institutions, materials published by educational and scientific institutions, and informative publications of local governments.

Media and Mass Media Functions:

• Informative: delivering current news and events to society in real-time.
• Educational: raising society's knowledge level and promoting awareness.
• Entertainment: creating content that attracts and entertains the audience.

• Public Opinion Formation: influencing the perception of events, people, and phenomena through editorial policy and content selection.
• Socio-political: influence on political processes and participation in shaping state policy and public order.

Media Owners and Their Influence:

Private Owners:	These media are managed by companies or private individuals with the aim of making profit. For example, large media holdings. Private owners often strongly influence content, publishing policy, and information interpretation.
Public Media:	These are financed and managed by the state or public organizations. The goal of these media is not profit, but providing information serving public interests, ensuring diversity of opinions and objectivity. Example - BBC.
Non-governmental Journalism:	Independent and non-commercial media whose main task is promoting quality journalism and defending public interests. Examples - ProPublica or similar local portals.

The three main types of media owners - public, non-governmental, and private - differ in their funding sources, goals, and methods of influence, creating unique dynamics in the information space. Public media are funded by public resources, for example through taxes or subscription fees, and their main goal is to inform, educate, and entertain society rather than generate profit. Public media, such as Latvian Public Media (LSM), are focused on the common good of society, providing objective, diverse, and quality content. They also often serve as a platform for minority or marginalized group voices.

Non-governmental media operate as independent organizations funded by various non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international funds, or donations. Their goal is often to defend democratic values, promote human rights, or fight against disinformation. For example, Re:Baltica is an investigative journalism center that often covers issues that might remain in the shadows in other media. Such media help strengthen media literacy, critical thinking, and social justice.

Private media are owned by individual entrepreneurs, companies, or investors, and their main goal is often to make a profit. These media try to attract audience attention by offering content that meets market demand. In Latvia, for example, TVNET and Gorod.lv are private media whose content is often adapted to audience interests or advertiser requirements. However, this commercial approach can sometimes lead to sensationalism or one-sided information.

How to Determine Who Owns the Media?

Understanding who controls the media allows us to evaluate its reliability and objectivity. Here are some ways to check media owners:

Website Section Check:	Many reliable media outlets indicate owners and editors in "About Us" or "Contacts" sections.
Media Registry:	Some countries have publicly available registers containing information about media owners, licenses, and registration.
Internet Resources:	Projects like Media Ownership Monitor compile data about major media owners and sources of influence.
Authorship Verification:	Reliable media indicate their article authors and provide contact information or links to their profiles.

What to Do if Owners or Authors are Not Listed?

Lack of information about owners or authors may indicate media unreliability.

Warning signs:
 • Anonymity of owners and authors.
 • Large amount of sponsored materials or clickbait tactics.
 • Spreading unverified news or creating content that causes public panic.

Practical Task

 • Divide participants into groups of 2-4 people.
 • Provide a list of 5-10 media outlets (for example, Baltijas Balss, TVNET, Gorod.lv, LSM+, Divu Krastu Radio, Radio Marija, THT, Chayka, Re:Baltica).

Group task:
 • Find information about the chosen media outlets' managers and chief editors.
 • Check if information about their working journalists is available (names, contacts, social media profiles).

The task result will be a short group presentation:
 • What data was possible to find?
 • Were there media outlets where this information wasn't available?
 • What might this mean regarding media reliability?

This task develops critical analysis skills and helps participants evaluate media transparency.

Methods for Training Media Literacy:

Analyze Examples:	Study the influence of different mass media owners on content by comparing, for example, private and state media.
Group Discussions:	Divide the audience into groups tasked with identifying specific mass media owners and discussing content objectivity.
Critical Thinking Training:	Teach how to evaluate information, verify facts, and use various sources to gain a more complete understanding.
Interviews with Journalists:	Organize meetings with journalists who can explain professional standards and the importance of media transparency.

These activities promote the audience's ability to critically evaluate information and trust reliable sources.

6 Types of content

Goals and Tasks Within the Block

• Introduce participants to six types of content: reportage, commentary, advertising, social advertising, PR (public relations), propaganda.

• Develop critical thinking and media skills that help analyze and recognize different types of content.
• Teach the use of media literacy-related terms in discussions.

Theory

Content that we see daily in media and on the internet is divided into several types. Each has its own function and target audience. Understanding these types will help better navigate the information environment:

Reportage
• Provides facts about events, describing them objectively and truthfully.
• Goal: to inform the audience without emotional or subjective interpretation.

Commentary
• Expresses opinions or analyzes events, often subjectively or through interpretation.
• Goal: to help the audience understand events by offering authors' views or perspectives.

Advertising
• Created to promote goods and services, often using bright visual and textual elements that attract attention.
• Goal: to promote sales and consumer interest.

Social Advertising
• Draws public attention to socially significant issues and problems to change people's behavior or thinking.
• Goal: to promote positive changes in society.

PR (Public Relations)
• Includes strategies aimed at creating and maintaining a positive image of an organization or individual.
• Goal: to build trust and goodwill in the eyes of the public.

Propaganda
• Information used to promote specific ideas or opinions, often with manipulative intent.
• Goal: to influence audience beliefs and opinions to achieve ideological or political goals.

04

6 Types of content

Content type	Reportage	Commentary	Advertising	Social advertising	PR	Propaganda
Form	Informing	Persuasion	Persuasion	Persuasion	Persuasion	Persuasion
Facts or opinions used?	Mostly facts. Opinions are allowed from cited sources, not from content creator	The author expresses his own opinion. The best submissions are supported facts	Opinion that you should buy a product or use a service	Opinion on what behavior should be	Opinion about company	Opinion, often about politics, worldviews
For what purpose?	Inform	Influence (what to believe)	Influence (what to buy)	Influence (what behavior is for your good or the public good)	Influence (what and how you think about the company)	Influence or coercion (your political views, your ideological choices)
What emotions, perceptions, or effects does it evoke?	Interest, curiosity, exploration	Fear, anger, anxiety Positive feelings	Desire, joy, concern	Altruism, fear, concern	Positive feelings/ attitudes towards company	Pride, a sense of belonging, fear, a desire to act. Anger, hatred and terror
How it works (by what mechanisms)	Description, comparison, image	Arguments, description, comparison, appeal to emotions	Appeals to desires, appeals to (or blocks) imagination	An appeal to morality, sympathy, a sense of responsibility, a desire for self-improvement	Appeals to positive emotions, associations	Insults, innuendo, exaggeration, distraction, appealing to authority figures, fudging facts, manipulating symbols and stereotypes, and constant repetition
Attitude towards the subject	Neutral	Positive or negative	Positive	Positive (as prevention, action to solve the problem) and/or negative (about the problem)	Positive	Positive or negative

Practical Exercise

Methodological material: Prepare a table showing 6 types of content and 5 characteristics: fact or opinion, purpose, emotions evoked, influence mechanisms, attitude toward the subject.

Team Formation: divide participants into 3 teams. Each team is assigned one topic:

• Team 1 — Reportage
• Team 2 — Propaganda
• Team 3 — Advertising

Exercise stages:

1. Find examples of your content type (videos, articles, images, etc.).
2. Answer the following questions:
 • Which audience is this content aimed at? Who is it addressed to?
 • What is its purpose?
 • What emotions, perceptions, or effects does it create?
 • How does it work (what mechanisms are used)?
 • What is the attitude toward the topic in this text/content?
 • What is the impact on the audience (media users)?
3. Presentation: Representatives from each team present their results to other participants, sharing their found examples and discussing answers to questions.

Questions for Participants

For Youth:
 • What examples of social advertising are you familiar with and how have they affected you?
 • Why do you think propaganda is important in our society?

For Seniors:
 • How do you understand the difference between PR and advertising?
 • What types of content appear most often in news, and how do they influence your opinion?

Assessment Methods

 • Observation of participants during the exercise (activity, engagement).
 • Group discussions and final presentation (ability to explain and share opinions).
 • Participants survey at the end about what types of content they can now recognize and understand.

SPECTRUM OF PERSPECTIVES

Spectrum of perspectives

Game Objective

To demonstrate the diversity of viewpoints and approaches to the same things, develop critical thinking and creativity.

Practical Exercise

Material Preparation:
 • Create identical sets with approximately 12 items in each.
 • Examples: office supplies (paper clips, pens, notepads), ribbons, balloons, kitchen utensils (spoons, forks), sweets, brochures, small flags.

Participant Division:
 • Divide participants into teams of 3-5 people.

Game Leading Instructions

Task Description:
 • Distribute one set of items to each team.
 • Task: group items from their set based on any logical or unusual criteria. Participants can use any approach they find creative or interesting.
 • 5-7 minutes are allocated for task completion.

Results Discussion:
 • Each team presents their item grouping method and explains why they chose specific criteria.
 • The facilitator asks questions:
   ◊ Why did you choose this principle?
   ◊ Was it difficult to agree within the team?
   ◊ How do you think your grouping differs from other teams' approaches?

Questions for Participants

Were there different opinions in the group?	• This is an opportunity to let participants express that their opinions differ and their ideas were very diverse, not always similar.
Were you surprised by other groups' examples?	• This is an opportunity to notice differences in our thinking. Usually, the variants offered in different groups are very different, and this gives participants a chance to discuss the diversity of opinions and views.
Did any new ideas emerge during discussions?	• Often during discussions, participants can come up with new ideas for dividing items – give them an opportunity to share their ideas.
Why is this important?	It's the ability to not only analyze information but also consider different perspectives. It helps to: • Evaluate data reliability. • Understand how emotions, context, or personal experience influence our perception. • Search for alternative viewpoints.

Conclusion:
 The game with objects isn't just entertainment, but also an excellent way to observe in practice how differently we look at the world. During the discussion, participants will understand that our perception is shaped by individual experience and context. This realization serves as a bridge to discussing more complex media literacy issues, such as the interpretation of news, images, or videos.

Methodological Emphasis

Diverse Viewpoints:
・ Participants will understand that their grouping criteria (by color, material, functionality, etc.) are not the only possible ones.

Transition to Media Literacy:
• **Information and Perception:** Similar to objects, news or images create different interpretations for different people.
・ It's important to understand that the same text, headline, or image can trigger different reactions in different contexts or individual experiences.

Critical Thinking:
・ This game clearly demonstrates that critical thinking is the ability to look at things from different perspectives.
・ Participants learn to ask questions and analyze: **Why do I perceive it this way, while others perceive it differently?**

Reflection:
・ Discuss observations with the group:
・ How the same objects can be perceived differently.
・ How diverse our approaches are to organizing and understanding the surrounding world.

"Media literacy is not just understanding media – it is the ability to realize how media influences our life, our opinions and choices."

James Sharp, media pedagogy researcher

Opinion Thermometer

Exercise Objective

· Develop critical thinking, argumentation skills, and the ability to express one's opinion.
· Show how diverse participants' views are on various issues.
· Promote team cohesion through exchange of opinions.

Preparation and Rules

Room Setup:
· Imagine or mark a line in the room.
· Mark one end of the line as **"Definitely YES"**, the other
as **"Definitely NO"**.

Preparation and Rules

Instructions for Participants:
1. The facilitator states a thesis, for example, "I always check news sources before sharing information on social media."
2. Participants must choose their position on the line according to their opinion:
· If they fully agree – stand at the "YES" end, if they disagree – at the "NO" end.
· If the opinion is moderate, they can stand closer to the center of the line. **A neutral position is not allowed.**

Discussion:
1. The facilitator invites participants to express their opinion:
· First those who chose extreme positions ("Definitely YES" or "Definitely NO").
· Then those who are closer to the center, to show the spectrum of different opinions.
2. The facilitator should emphasize that opinions are not criticized – the main goal is to understand participants' arguments.

Example Theses for Discussion

Emotional Mood and Readiness:	· "I feel good and am ready to learn a lot today."
Information Consumption Habits:	· "I periodically disconnect from the information flow." · "I always verify information sources before sharing on social media." · "I trust the state news media." · "I know what bots and trolls are."
Media and Censorship:	· "Censorship is necessary in the country to prevent disinformation spreaders from spreading lies." · "I always believe the local media." · "I believe media experts should have more control over internet content."
Social and Civic Topics:	· "I believe every person can distinguish true information from manipulation themselves." · "I think social networks should fight fake news more actively."

Methodological Emphasis

Group Activation:
• Participants are immediately involved in discussion, which helps reduce barriers and promotes dialogue.

Range of Different Opinions:
• Different positions show how contradictory opinions about media and information are. This illustrates the importance of critical thinking in seeking balance.

Opinion Change:
• If participants change their position during discussion, this is a positive result. The facilitator can ask them to explain why they changed their minds.
• This shows flexibility in thinking and ability to accept new arguments.

Connection to Media Literacy:
• Participants begin to understand how personal beliefs influence information perception.
• Discussions about trust, sources, and data verification form the foundation for deeper information analysis work.

Tips for Trainers

• **Encourage Participation:** Motivate everyone who wants to speak to do so.
• **Create a Safe Environment:** Emphasize that all opinions are important and participants should respect others' views.
• **Control Time:** If discussion runs long, summarize main points and move to the next thesis.
• **Choose Diverse Theses:** Use formulations that encourage different opinions.

Conclusion:
This activity helps participants open up, actively analyze information, and practice argumentation skills. Moreover, discussions create a connection with media literacy, allowing deeper understanding of issues about trust, sources, and information analysis.

"Critical thinking – it is the art of doubting what you hear, what you read and what you are told."

Richard Paul, philosopher and educator

07

Information bubble

Theory

An information bubble is a closed environment where a person consumes only information that matches their existing views. It limits the perception of alternative opinions and distorts the sense of reality.

Causes of Information Bubble Formation

Algorithms
• Social networks and search engines personalize content based on user interests and behavior.
Example: if you frequently read articles on certain topics, the algorithm offers similar content.

User Choices
• People choose to follow sources that support their views and avoid those that challenge them.
Example: following only news channels that align with political beliefs.

Cognitive Biases
• **Confirmation Effect:** tendency to seek information that confirms existing views.
• **Filtering Effect:** tendency to ignore data that contradicts those views.

Impact of Information Bubble

Opinion Polarization
• Strengthens division between "us" and "them".
Example: in political discussions, groups reinforce their positions by ignoring opposing arguments.

Dialogue Difficulties
• Lack of understanding between groups with different ideologies.
Example: inability to find compromise in interpreting events.

Perception Distortions
• One-sided information creates an incorrect worldview.
Example: excessive focus on negative news creates an impression that "everything in the world is bad".

How to Overcome the Information Bubble?

Diversifying Sources
• Follow sources representing opposing viewpoints.
Example: read both state and independent media.

Critical Thinking
• Analyze each piece of information received.
Example: verify data from multiple sources before trusting or sharing.

Openness to New Ideas
• Be prepared to consider and discuss alternative perspectives.
Example: participate in discussions, respecting different opinions.

Information Network

Goals and Tasks of the Block

• Develop skills to distinguish facts from opinions in the media.
• Strengthen critical information perception.

• Build the ability to analyze and evaluate the reliability of information sources.
• Increase understanding of the role of subjectivity in event interpretation.

Theory

What is a Fact?
• A statement that can be verified and proven based on objective evidence.

What is an Opinion?
• A personal judgment, feeling, or belief that often relies on subjective perception

How to Recognize a Fact?
• It is based on data, research, documents, or evidence.
• It can be verified in other reliable sources.

How to Recognize an Opinion?
• It uses words that express feelings, such as "I think", "it seems", "in my opinion".
• Usually lacks verifiable justification.

08

Practical Task

Preparing Materials:

Prepare cards with various statements, for example:
 • "The sun rises in the east" — fact.
 • "Sunsets are the most magnificent view in nature" — opinion.
 • "Egils Levits was elected President of Latvia in 2019" — fact.
 • "People emigrate from Latvia because it's difficult to earn a decent living here" — opinion.

Include more complex and current examples, such as:
 • "Spring is the favorite time for Baltic Sea coast residents" — opinion.
 • "A morning cannot be successful if it doesn't start with coffee" — opinion.

Procedure:

1. Participants work individually or in teams (up to 3 people).
2. Each group is given a table with headings "Fact" and "Opinion".
3. The trainer reads or shows one statement at a time.
4. Participants raise a "Fact" or "Opinion" card depending on what they consider the correct answer.
5. Afterwards, participants argue their choice and explain why the specific statement is a fact or opinion.

Questions for Participants

If Participants are Children:
 • What do you think speaks only facts? (for example, scientists, teachers)
 • Can you name a fact you recently learned?

If Participants are Youth:
 • Why is it important to distinguish facts from opinions on social networks?
 • Can opinions be harmful? Why?

If Participants are Seniors:
 • Do you notice that news more often contains opinions rather than facts?
 • How often do you verify information before sharing it?

Assessment Methods

Card Classification:
 • Evaluate how accurately groups classified each statement as a fact or opinion.

Mini Survey:
 • Ask participants if they feel more confident about their ability to distinguish facts from opinions after the session.

Real-life Examples:
 • Invite participants to share experiences where their opinion turned out to be incorrect because they had taken it as a fact.

This game helps participants develop critical thinking by strengthening their ability to distinguish objective information from subjective judgments, which is a crucial skill in today's media world.

Expert Verification

Goals and Tasks within the Block

• Learn skills to critically analyze information about experts.
• Learn to determine specialists' competence in specific fields.

• Develop the ability to verify the credibility of statements published in media or social networks.

Theory

Why is it important to verify experts?

• Unchecked claims from "fake" experts can mislead society.
• Incorrect expert selection for publications undermines media credibility.

Example:

"Swiss Biologist Wilson Edwards"
• A network of 500 accounts associated with China was discovered and deleted on Facebook, spreading false information supposedly from Swiss biologist Wilson Edwards.
• Wilson Edwards, who didn't actually exist, was used to claim that the US interfered with COVID-19 origin research.
• These false claims were published in Chinese state media before it was revealed that the "expert" was a fictional character.

Main Methods of Expert Verification

Education and Qualifications:
• Determine the expert's level of education
• Does their education correspond to the discussed topic?
Work Experience:
• Does the expert have practical experience in the relevant field?
Publications and Achievements:
• Has the expert published in scientific journals?
• Do they have recognition in professional circles?
Reputation and References:
• How do colleagues or clients evaluate the expert?
Media and Social Network Activity:
• What topics does the expert cover?
• What is the reaction to their publications?

09

Practical Task

Task Procedure

1. Participants divide into groups of 2–5 people.
2. Each group's task is to verify the competence of a specific expert using the proposed criteria.

Questions for Groups

Group 1: Jurijs Perevoščikovs
• What does he do?
• Is he competent to speak about vaccines?

Group 2: Andris Ambainis
• What is his education?
• Could he be trusted on questions about monkeypox?

Group 3: Igors Rajevs
• What is his professional experience?
• Is he a reliable source of information about nature conservation in Latvia?

Group 4: Ivars Kalviņš
• Does his experience correspond to the topic of Latvia's fashion industry?

Results:
Each team prepares a short presentation with conclusions and explains why the chosen expert can (or cannot) be considered competent in the specific field.

Questions for Trainers

For Children:
• Why is it important to know who an expert is?
• How can we understand if an expert is telling the truth?

For Youth:
• Why should journalists verify experts' qualifications?
• What impact can a "fake" expert have on society?

For Seniors:
• Have you had instances when you doubted a specialist's opinion?
• How can you distinguish a real expert from a self-proclaimed one?

Assessment Methods

Feedback after the Task:
• Which expert verification criteria seemed most useful?
• Were there difficulties in searching for information?

Practical Assessment:
• Participants check new examples (additional "experts")

Written Reflection:
• What new things did you learn about expert verification?
• How do you plan to apply this skill in daily life?

This task helps develop the ability to critically evaluate expert competence, which is essential to avoid being misled in media and social networks.

Ready. Steady. Go.

Game Objective

• Emphasize the importance of paying attention to instructions and details.
• Demonstrate how a person can be misled if they do not read the text carefully.

Connection to Media Literacy

• Manipulations or distortions are often hidden in media and content.
• The ability to carefully analyze information helps recognize such traps.

Instructions for Game Management

Preparing Materials:
• Print the task text on A4 format pages (1 copy per participant).

Participant Preparation:
• Distribute task sheets, asking participants not to read the text before the start signal.
• Announce that the game has a time limit – each participant will have 3 minutes to correctly complete all tasks.
• Motivate participants by offering a small prize (for example, a notepad, pen, or a treat) to the first person who completes the task correctly.

Game Start:
• Give the signal to begin tasks.
• Monitor that participants follow instructions and do not help each other.

Game Conclusion:
• End the game after 3 minutes or earlier if you see many participants have completed tasks.
• Begin a discussion with participants.

Discussion Questions:
• How many tasks did you complete?
• What was your strategy - read everything first and then start completing tasks, or read and complete tasks one after another?
• Did you notice hidden instructions or manipulations in the text?
• How does this relate to real-life situations and media content consumption?

Main Conclusions:
• Do not always trust the first impression or seemingly obvious information.
• Be alert and careful, especially when reading instructions or news.

This game is an excellent exercise to develop critical thinking and the ability to carefully analyze information, which are essential skills in today's digital environment.

"Attention to information is the first step to distinguishing facts from manipulation. Without critical analysis, we become prisoners of other people's intentions."

Carl Sagan, astronomer, astrochemist, science communicator, and science fiction writer.

You have 3 minutes to complete this test. Read all tasks and complete each of them as quickly as possible.
The one who completes all tasks faster than others will receive a prize!

- [ ] You can communicate with other participants to obtain information for task completion, but you cannot discuss the progress of task execution. This is very important.

- [ ] Write down the names of three participants sitting next to you. It doesn't matter whether you know them or not.

- [ ] Write down their approximate age in your opinion.

- [ ] Find a participant who can play a musical instrument and write down their name.

- [ ] Count how many women are in the room. Write down the number.

- [ ] Write down some names of participants who have pets.

- [ ] Write down their pets' names.

- [ ] Find three participants with blue eyes and write down their names.

- [ ] Find out which participant has the same birth month as you. Write down their name.

- [ ] Write down the name of a participant who doesn't drink coffee.

- [ ] Shake the trainer's hand.

- [ ] Do not rush if you have not yet started doing tasks. All previous points can be skipped – they are not mandatory. There will be no prize – this is a joke. Please pay attention to the next three points.

- [ ] Please continue to pretend that you are reading the tasks.

- [ ] As soon as the trainer says: "Welcome to the session," stand up and say: "I know how to read carefully."

- [ ] Thank you for reading all points to the end before starting task execution.

11

Emotions as a decision-making factor

Objectives:
· Understand how emotions influence information perception and decision-making.
· Learn how the media uses emotions to attract attention and create viral effects for content.
· Develop the ability to recognize and manage one's emotions.

Practical Exercise

Instructions:
· Participants are shown three photographs or images that evoke strong emotions, in sequence.
· For each image:
  ◊ Participants write 5 words or emotions they feel while looking at the image on stickers.
  ◊ A brief discussion follows each image:

  * What emotions did the image evoke?
  * Why these specific emotions?
  * What might be the content creator's intention?

Image Examples (can be substituted):
• **Disaster or accident** (e.g., overturned car on road).
• **Political event** (e.g., protest or conflict photo).
• **Social campaign** (e.g., child affected by war or polluted nature).

Theory – How Emotions Influence Us

Why are emotions important?
· Emotions guide our perception and response to information.
· Strong emotions speed up decision-making but often reduce rationality.

Emotional Impact on Media and Information:
· Creating viral content:
  ◊ Emotions like anger, fear, empathy, or surprise encourage clicking, sharing, or discussing
  ◊ **Example:** Emotionally charged headlines and images attract more attention

Manipulation of Emotions:
· Media uses strong emotions to influence audiences

Examples:
• **Traffic Accidents:**
Emotionally engaging photos or dramatic narratives attract attention and provoke anger or sympathy, increasing clicks and shares.
• **Political Events:**
Political ads and news often generate fear or outrage, using statements about potential crisis threats. This drives high interest and discussion.
• **Social Campaigns:**
Organizations addressing social issues (e.g., environment or human rights) often use emotional stories to highlight problem severity, based on personal experiences.

Practical Work with Headlines

Task:
- Show several news headlines with images
- Discussion:
  ◊ Why was this specific image chosen?
  ◊ What emotions does it evoke?
  ◊ How does it amplify the information's impact?

Analysis Example:
- Headline: "Shocking Truth About Deforestation!"
- Photo: empty forest landscape with cut trees
- Emotions: sadness, anger, anxiety
- Conclusion: image amplifies headline's effect, urging reader response

Emotion Management

Role of Emotional Awareness:
Helps maintain control over reaction:
- Create a pause: briefly divert attention after emotionally charged content
Ask yourself:
- What am I feeling now?
- Why am I reacting this way?

Name the emotion:
- Example: "I feel anger, but understand it's just a reaction to the image".

Result:
helps regain emotional control

Emotion Circle

Working with Emotion Circle:
- Show participants emotion circle (visual map of emotion spectrum: from joy and love to anger and fear)

Discussion:
- How does identifying emotions help better understand our reactions?
- Which emotions are most commonly used by the media?

Emotion circle
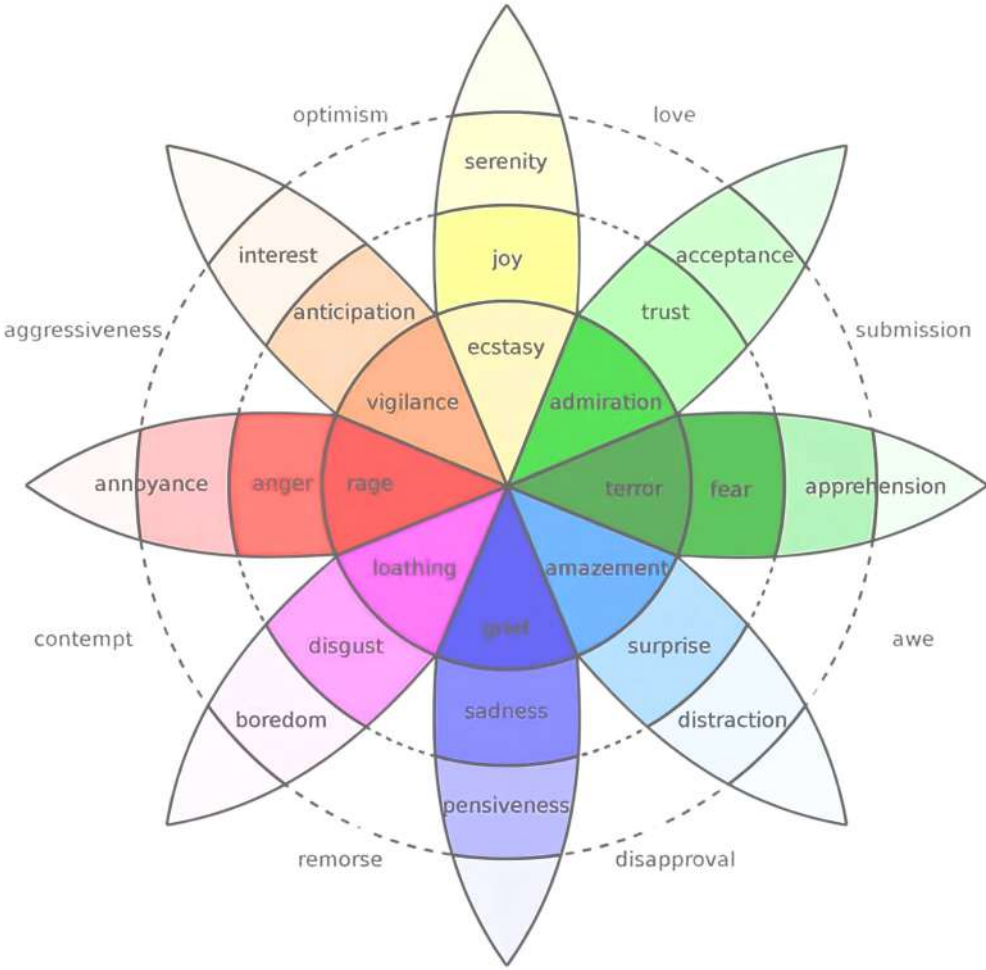
Conclusions and Reflection

Main Conclusions:
- Emotions are a powerful influence tool actively used by media
- Awareness of our emotions helps avoid manipulation
- Critical approach helps perceive information adequately

Discussion Questions:
1. Which emotions do you most often feel when watching news?
2. Have you noticed emotions affecting your reaction to headlines?
3. What strategies help you maintain objectivity?

Anti-discrimination Cards

What is it?

Anti-discrimination cards are a set of 12 infographics explaining key psychosocial mechanisms in intergroup relations. Each card focuses on one of these themes:

- Us/them
- Stereotypes
- Prejudices
- Exclusion
- Discrimination
- Hate speech

- Hate pyramid
- Dehumanization
- Scapegoat
- Conspiracy theory
- Bystander effect
- Ethnocentrism

Why is it necessary?

The cards help:
- Understand discrimination and intergroup conflict mechanisms
- Analyze historical and contemporary social processes
- Reflect on personal views and attitudes toward other groups

When to use?

The cards are useful for:
- Analyzing historical events (e.g., majority-minority group relations)
- Interpreting modern social conflicts or events
- History, social science classes, or critical thinking training sessions

12

How to Use?

Preparation for Trainers:

 • Review all cards before the session
 • Select materials and cards for analysis
 • Prepare examples and supplementary information (e.g., when discussing ghettos, cover stereotypes about Jews in Poland, antisemitism, witness roles, etc.)
 • Introduce cards to group, explain mechanisms affect everyone and that people/groups can occupy different roles – privileged, discriminated, or witnesses – in different situations

Implementing Cards with Group:

 • Explain significance and impact of psychosocial mechanisms on behavior
 • Review cards, have participants guess mechanism names from descriptions or vice versa
 • Explain mechanisms and answer questions

Analyzing Events/Processes with Cards:

Participants use cards to identify mechanisms in discussed situations:
 • Individual work: participants independently analyze events
 • Small group work: discussion in pairs/groups, finding examples of specific mechanisms
 • Group discussion: analysis of complex topics like equality, discrimination, or hate speech

Examples of Application:

 • Individual work: participants independently use cards to analyze historical processes or relationships between two social groups.
 • Work in small groups: participants look for examples of specific mechanisms in historical events or discuss the suitability of chosen cards for explaining a particular event.
 • Work with the entire class: cards are used as a starting point for discussion, for example, discussing equality marches using cards "stereotype", "prejudice", "discrimination", or talking about the "pyramid of hate" in a Holocaust lesson.

Guidelines

 • Discussions about exclusion and discrimination require a delicate approach. Evaluate the level of mutual trust in the group.
 • The "bystander effect" card is particularly important when talking about responsibility towards hate speech, stereotypes, and artificially created "us" and "them" divisions.

Why is this Important?

The cards help:
 • Better understand the causes and consequences of social conflicts.
 • See mechanisms that promote prejudices and discrimination.
 • Promote critical thinking and sense of responsibility in intergroup relations.

Critical Source Analysis
Five Simple Questions
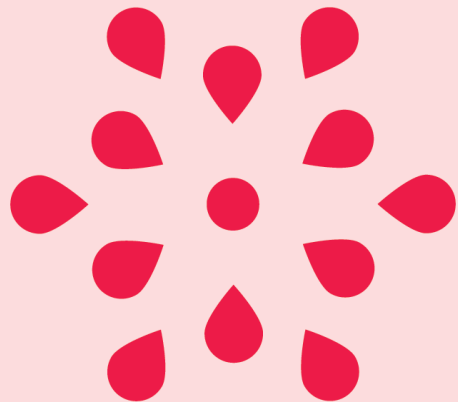
1. Who is the author and what is their purpose?
2. What methods are used to attract and maintain audience attention?
3. What lifestyles, values, and viewpoints are portrayed?
4. How can different people interpret this?
5. What has been left out of focus?
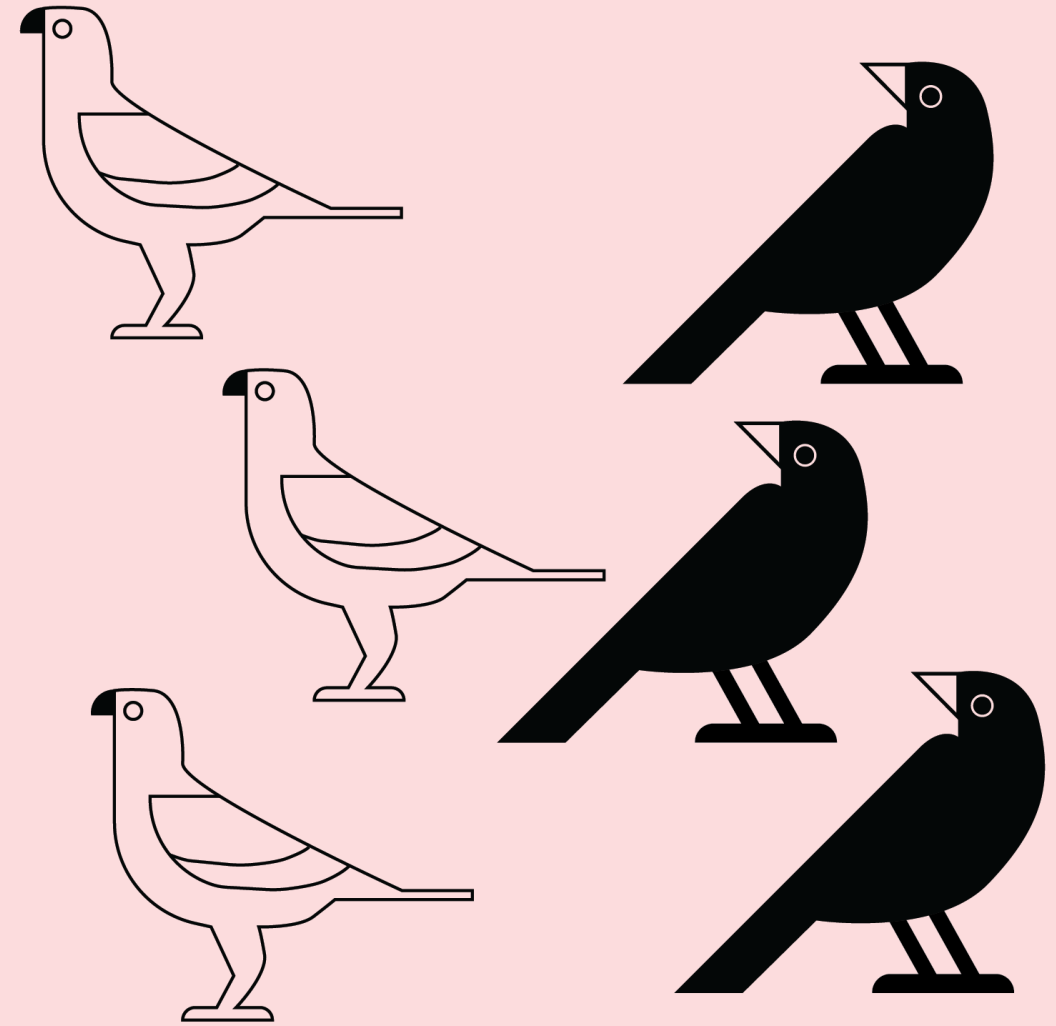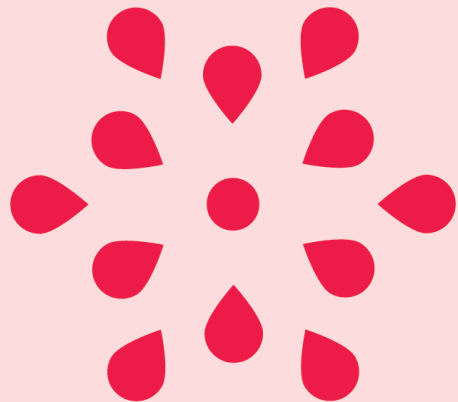
[us/them]

Creating strong distinctions between one's own group (perceived as better) and the foreign group (inferior), often based on obvious differences. This separation is frequently reinforced for special purposes, such as political aims.

①
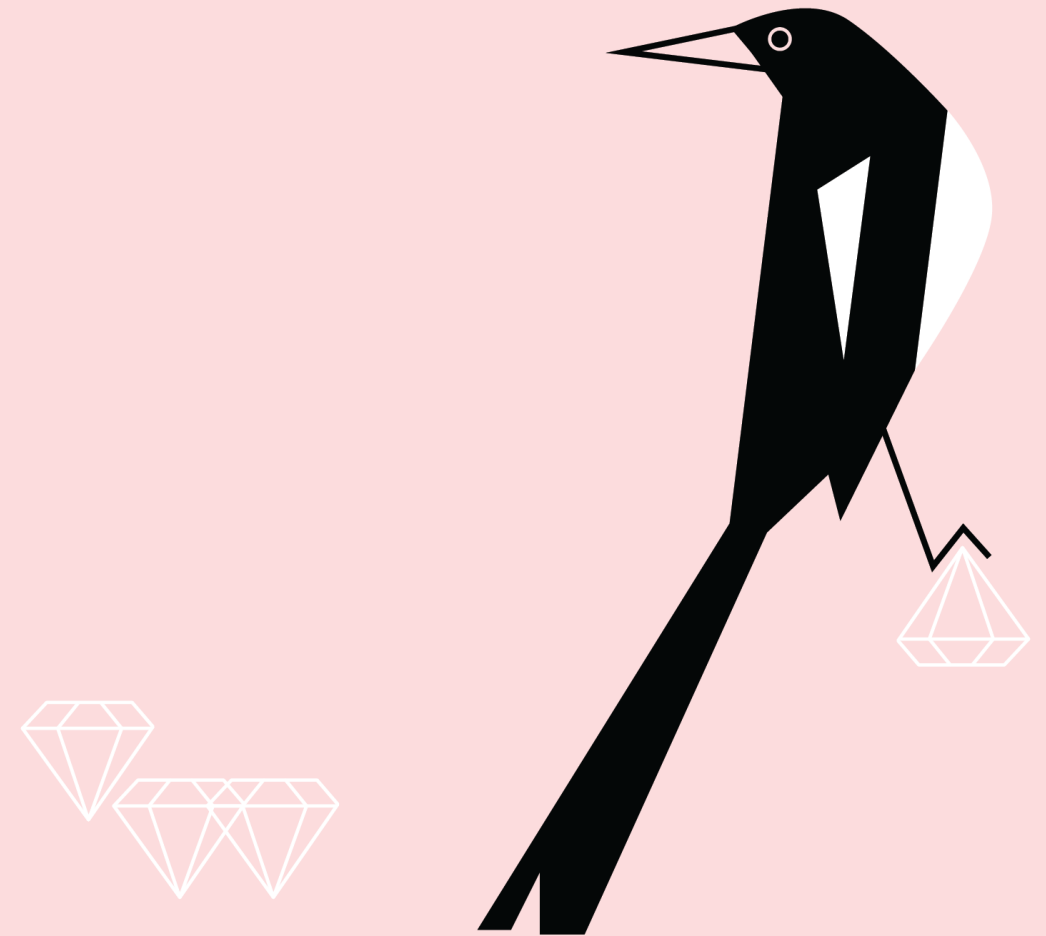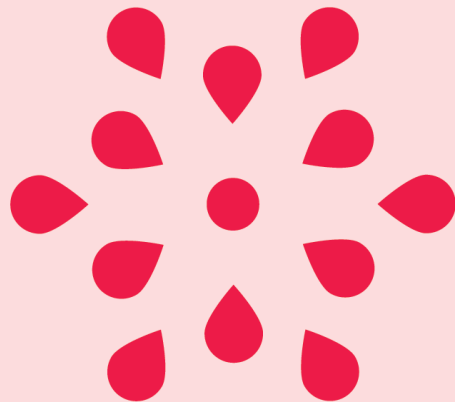
[stereotype]

A simplified perception of another group or people belonging to it. A stereotype attributes certain characteristics or behaviors to the entire group (all its members). At the same time, it does not correspond to reality because it smooths out differences between group members. Stereotypes are used when we lack knowledge – they "organize" reality and reinforce the division between "us" and "them".

②
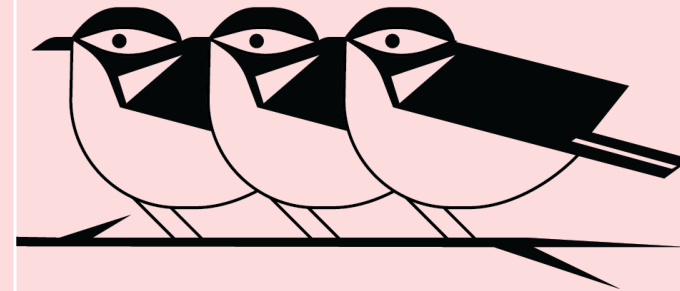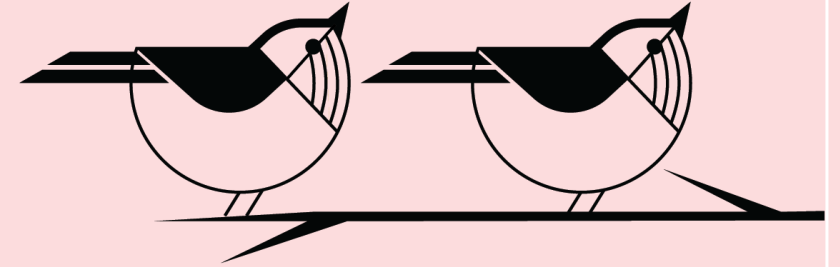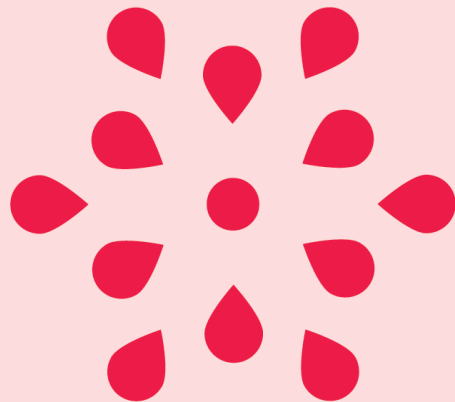
[prejudices]

Negative attitudes towards a specific group and its members (for example, contempt, hatred, disgust). Prejudices are persistent, difficult to change, and are often associated with strong emotions, such as fear or anger. They are frequently based on stereotypes.

③
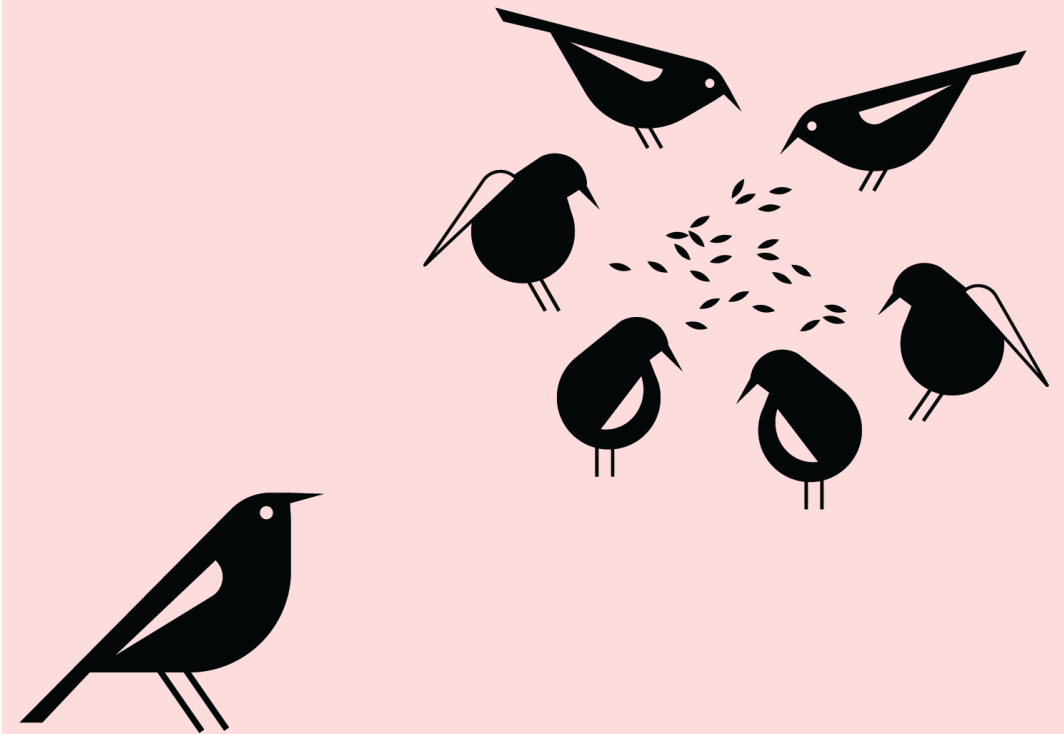
[exclusion]

We speak of exclusion when a person cannot - not by their own will - participate in the life of a certain group. Exclusion can also affect an entire minority group in society. It can manifest in various forms: separation (physical separation), marginalization (constant ignoring of a certain group's needs and aspirations), segregation (dividing groups into "better" and "worse," where the "worse" ones have fewer rights).
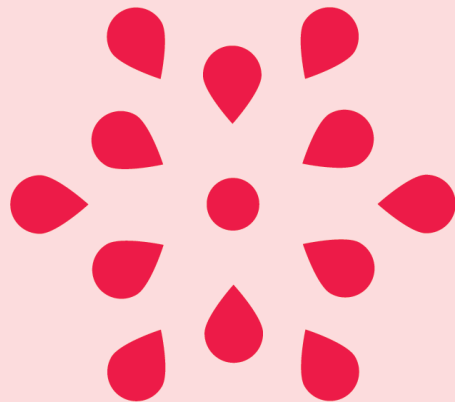
Exclusion can affect various areas of life - education, economy, culture, politics. It reinforces stereotypes and deepens intergroup discord.

④
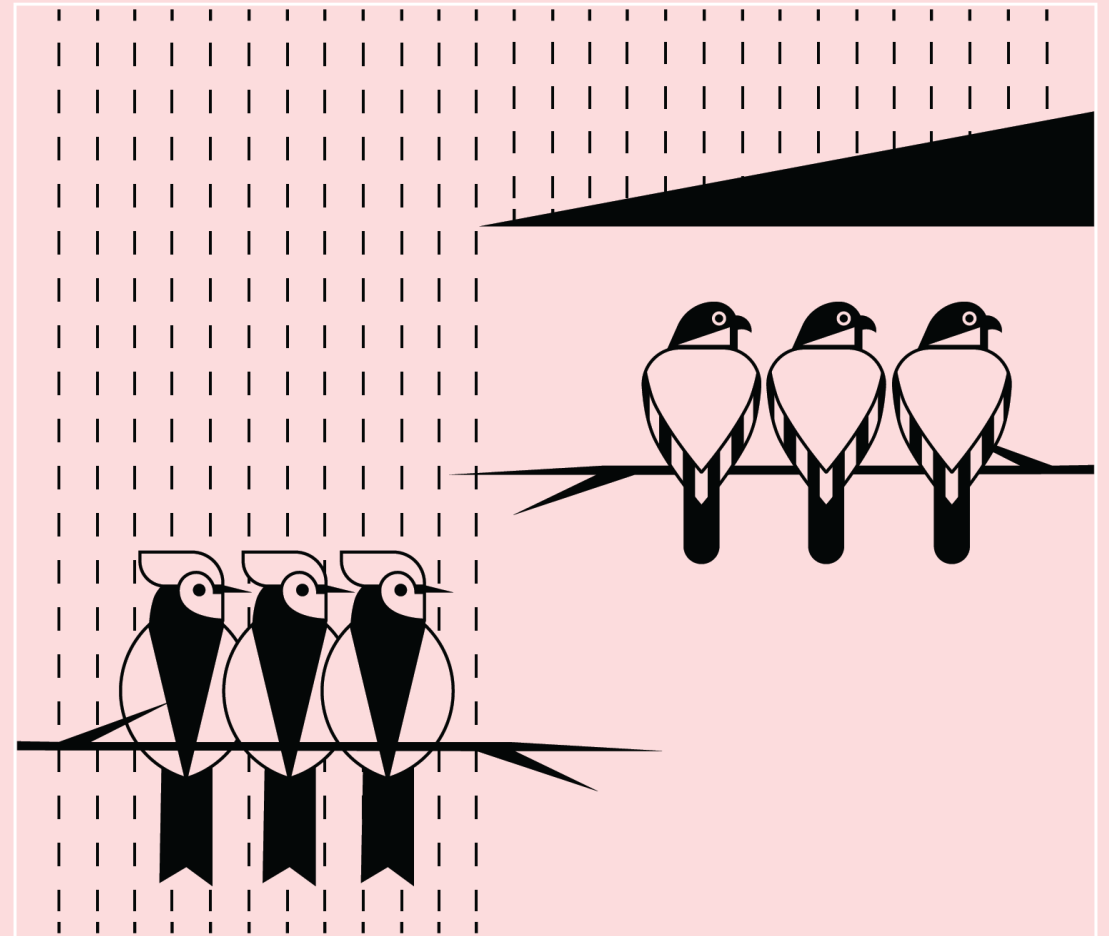
[discrimination]

Discrimination is defined as an action - unequal treatment of a person, in a worse way, based on their identity (who they are and/or how others perceive them), their belonging to a particular social group. Discrimination often stems from stereotypes and prejudices.

It is promoted by intergroup divisions: us/them, minority/majority, as well as one group's power over another. Discrimination can be both the behavior of individual people and the actions of institutions, organizations, and states.

⑤
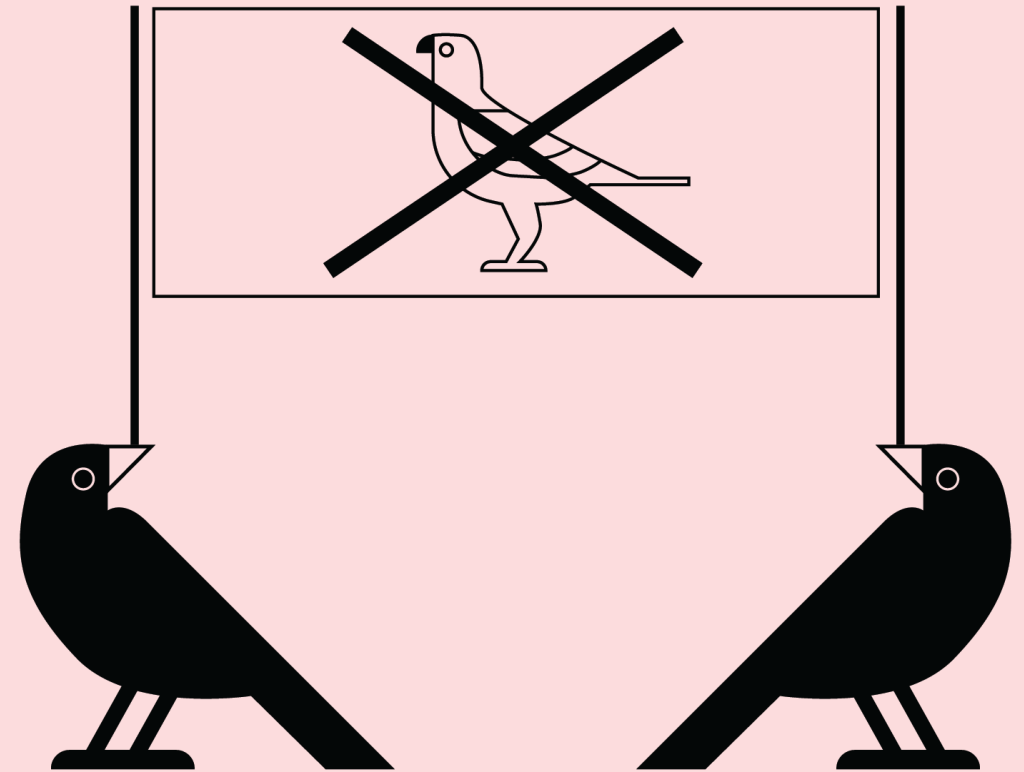
[scapegoat mechanism]

Blaming a chosen person or group for complex, negative social processes. This mechanism is often activated during times of severe crisis (for example, during economic or political crises). It is reinforced by stereotypes and prejudices, which is why minority groups that are perceived as foreign and attributed negative characteristics are often pushed into the role of scapegoat. This mechanism intensifies intergroup contradictions.
It can also exist in smaller groups (for example, a class, group of friends).

⑦
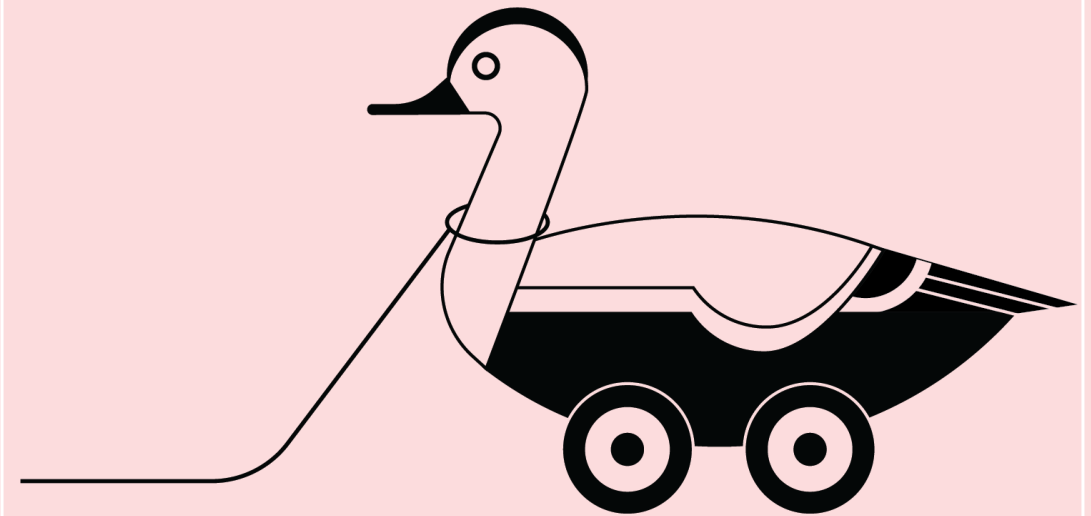
[dehumanization]

Also known as the deprivation of humanity. It means denying the humanity of a specific person or group of people. Dehumanization leads to us beginning to perceive another person as an inferior being, not fully human - as an animal or object that has been stripped of dignity, feelings and emotions, and mental capacity. Dehumanization is particularly dangerous because it makes it easier to justify violence or unequal treatment towards those who are perceived as inferior.
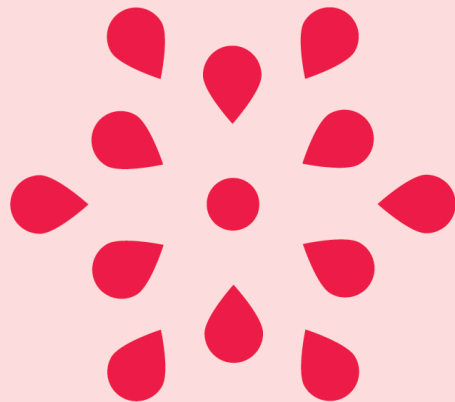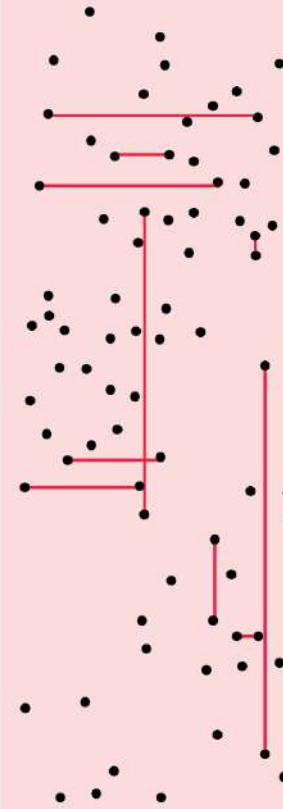
facts | science | conspiracy theory

[conspiracy theory]

An attempt to explain complex events or phenomena by assuming there is a conspiracy – an alleged secret action by a group of people working together, usually to the detriment of society. The source of conspiracy thinking is, in particular, the need for simple solutions to complex problems.

⑧

extermination

physical violence

discrimination

avoidance, isolation

malicious jokes, hate speech
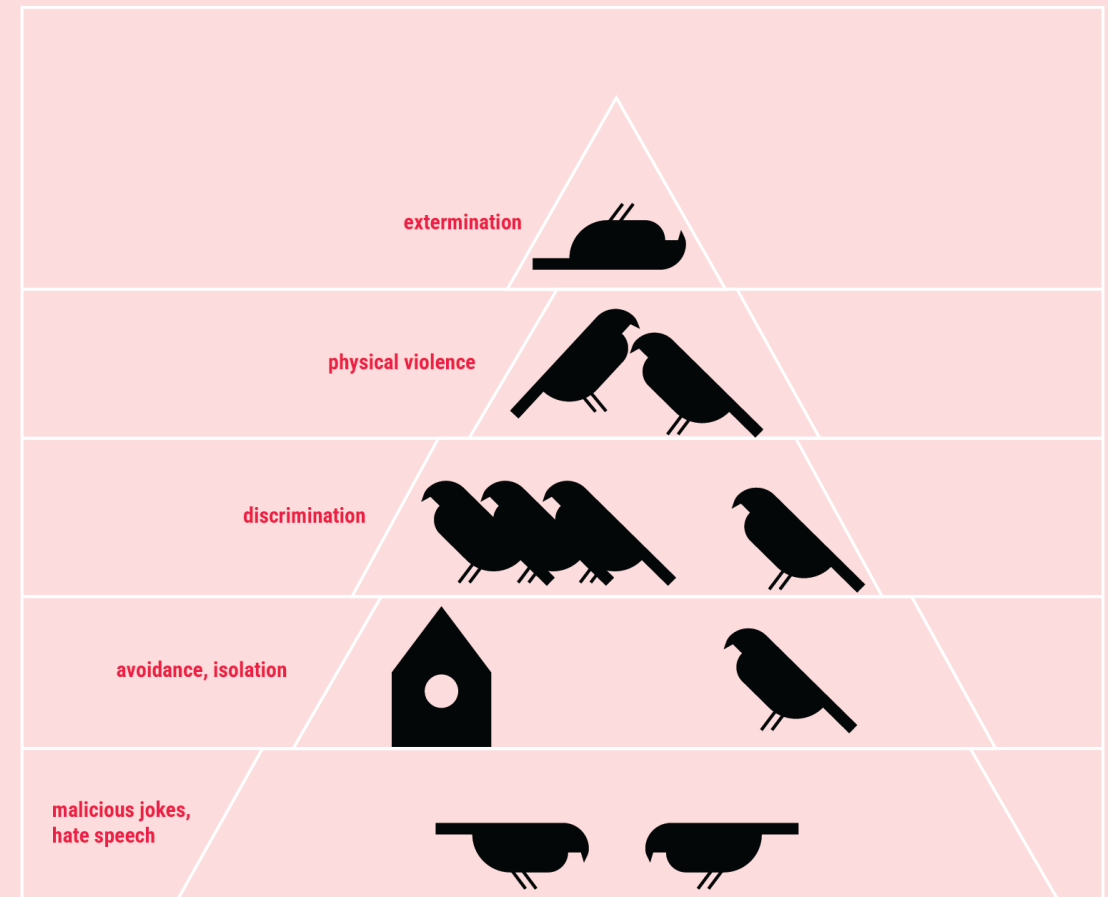
[pyramid of hate]

A model developed by American psychologist Gordon Allport that depicts the process of violence escalation towards a specific group and its members. It shows that genocide doesn't happen immediately but is connected to a series of preceding phenomena. Ignoring these seemingly innocent phenomena, such as hate comments, allows violence to increase. At each successive stage: hate speech – avoidance – discrimination – physical attacks – extermination, it becomes increasingly difficult to stop this process, and ultimately it becomes almost imposible
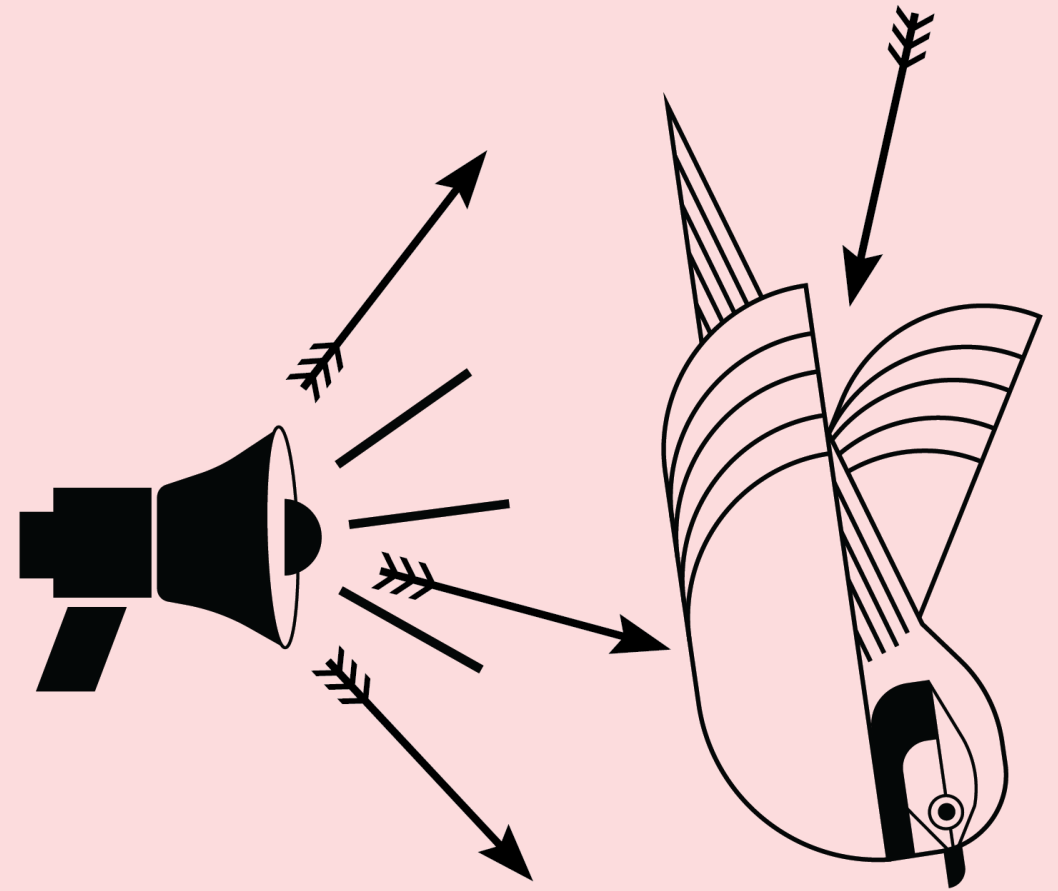
[hate speech]

Statements and images that spread and justify contempt, hostile attitudes, and hatred towards a person or group of people due to some characteristic of their identity. Hate speech is based on stereotypes, dehumanizes, and thus leads to discrimination and violence. Hate speech also includes statements that directly call for violence.

⑩

[bystander effect]

A responsibility distribution mechanism that manifests in the fact that the more witnesses there are to a situation, the less likely it is that any one person will react. In psychology, this passivity is explained by the fact that when something bad happens in the presence of too many witnesses, each of them feels relieved of the responsibility to act.

⑪
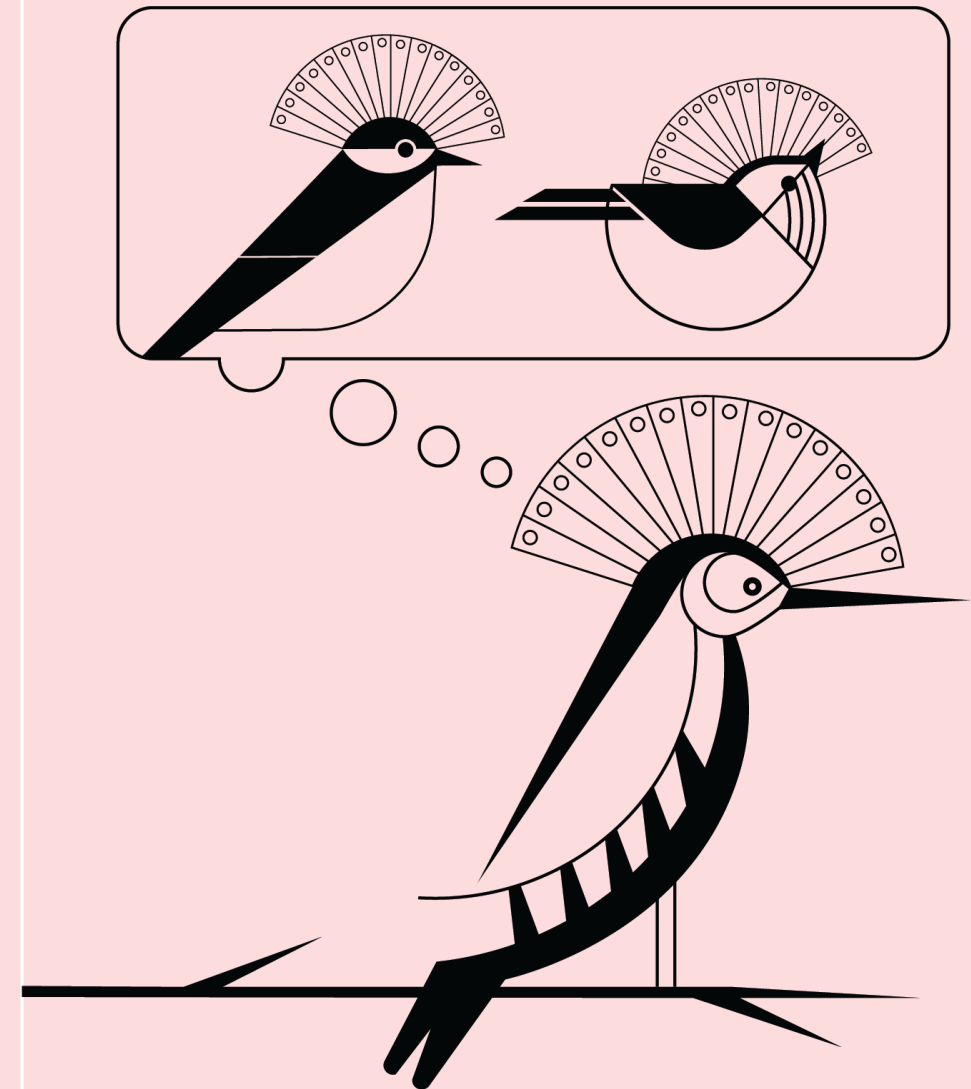
[ethnocentrism]

Placing one's own group (for example, national, ethnic) at the center of attention - treating its norms and values as a reference point for interpreting reality. Perceiving what is "ours" as objectively "normal", "better", "human", while viewing what is different or foreign as "inferior" or "threatening".

⑫
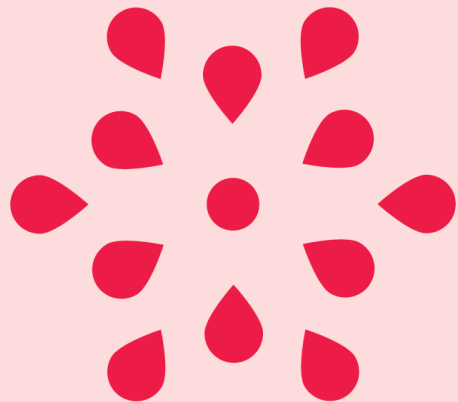
"Tolerance cannot be reduced to just patience towards others' beliefs – it is the readiness to learn from others, respect their views and values."

Karl Popper, philosopher

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Lesson Structure

1. Topic Selection

Choose a main topic relevant to your audience. Examples:
 • Propaganda's impact on family
 • Phone scams
 • Disinformation as a method of social polarization
 • Hate speech
 • Can also use topics from Anti-discrimination cards

2. Brainstorming

Ask participants to share associations, stories, or examples related to the topic. Goal — create shared understanding of the problem.

3. Team Work

 • Split participants into small groups (3-5 people)
 • Each group shares experiences encountering this problem in life
 • Group selects one story to portray in a short performance

4. Performance Preparation

Groups prepare short episodes (3-5 minutes) showing the main situation:
 • Who is the protagonist?
 • Who is the antagonist?
 • How do events develop?
Performance must show conflict or problem related to chosen topic.

Forum Theater

What is Forum Theater?

Forum theater is a method created by Brazilian playwright Augusto Boal as part of the Theater of the Oppressed system. It is used to discuss complex social issues, allowing participants to find solutions to real problems through role-playing and collective collaboration.

Key Principles:

 • **No acting skills required:** What matters is not talent, but the willingness to share experiences and analyze them.

 • **Safe environment:** An atmosphere where each participant feels like part of the community and can freely express their thoughts.

 • **Active participation:** Spectators become participants and influence the course of events.

5. First Performance

Each group performs their play from start to finish.
After performance, trainer leads discussion:
- Who is the hero?
- Who is the antagonist?
- What emotions did the situation evoke?

6. Interactive Performance

During the second performance, any viewer can raise their hand, stop action, and go on stage to replace the protagonist.
- New task: offer solution while staying within conflict.
- Antagonist's behavior remains unchanged. Participant only changes protagonist's reaction and actions.

7. Discussion

After each performance, discuss proposed solutions:
- What changed?
- Were solutions effective?
- What alternatives could be offered?

8. Reflection

End session with group discussion:
- How did forum theater help see problem differently?
- What insights did participants gain?
- How to apply experience in real life?

Forum Theater Benefits

- **Empathy Development:** Participants learn to understand different perspectives
- **Solution Finding:** Method allows safe experimentation with conflict resolution
- **Action Awareness:** Participants see how choices affect situation
- **Critical Thinking Training:** Problem analysis helps deeper understanding of issues and solutions

Tips for Trainers

- **Create Safe Environment:** Explain rules upfront so no one feels judged or vulnerable.
- **Encourage Activity:** Prompt participants to ask questions, offer alternatives, switch roles.
- **Be Flexible:** Adjust timing for each phase if discussions run long.
- **Focus on Learning:** Remind that goal isn't finding "right answer" but exploring approaches.

Forum theater is particularly effective because it combines analysis of complex social situations with active participant involvement in problem-solving. In a safe, creative environment, participants can experiment with different approaches without fear of mistakes or criticism. This process promotes deeper understanding of problem causes and effects, while finding solutions based on participation and collective thinking.

Forum theater is often used to address sensitive and complex issues like discrimination, violence, gender inequality, disinformation, or social division. It allows participants to analyze and understand how these problems affect their daily lives and society while practicing empathy, critical thinking, and conflict resolution skills.

This method is especially valuable for developing social and emotional competencies. Participants learn to collaborate, express opinions, accept other perspectives, and find compromises. For example, when role-playing a situation involving disinformation, participants can explore how it affects relationships between people and practice skills to minimize negative consequences.

This method also effectively builds resilience against polarization and manipulation by allowing participants to "act out" complex issues and find ethical, practical solutions applicable to real life. Forum theater becomes a platform where people not only discuss problems but actively participate in solving them.

"Media literacy is the ability not only to understand information, but also to comprehend how it is created, who creates it and for what purpose."

Peter Hoffman, media expert

Socio-emotional Competencies

Social emotional competencies are essential skills that help people recognize and manage their emotions while effectively collaborating with others. They form the foundation for successful relationships and social adaptation. Within our media literacy and critical thinking curriculum, our exercises promoted these skills' development, helping participants make conscious and ethical decisions, collaborate with diverse people, and protect themselves from media manipulation.

Self-Awareness

The ability to understand one's emotions, thoughts, and values, as well as their impact on self-esteem and behavior in various situations. Use emotion maps to analyze your feelings in different areas of life. The ability to understand your reactions to information from the media allows for more critical evaluation of this information and helps avoid manipulation.

Responsible Decision-Making

The ability to make responsible and ethical decisions regarding one's actions. Crisis situation simulations helped participants reflect on their decisions. In the media context, every choice – whether it's sharing, commenting, or posting – influences how others perceive and spread information. Anti-discrimination cards and forum theater promote understanding of responsible behavior, helping to avoid spreading disinformation and maintain healthy relationships both online and offline.

Social Awareness

The ability to understand other people's perspectives, show attention, empathy, and compassion. In the media environment, it's important to consider the diversity of different opinions and understand how social and cultural contexts influence the perception of information. Empathy and the ability to accept different viewpoints promote constructive dialogue and help avoid prejudices and stereotypes. Forum theater has been an effective tool for developing empathy.

Relationship Building Skills

The ability to build and maintain healthy and productive relationships with various people and groups. Effective communication, collaboration, and conflict resolution are essential skills in the digital world. Building trust online and in social environments helps better understand others and protect against manipulation or aggressive behavior. Group tasks, such as joint problem-solving or bingo games, promote dialogue, cooperation, and learning from others.

Self-Management

The ability to manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behavior (for example, stress, temptations, distractions) to achieve set goals. In conditions of information overload, it's important to filter and manage what we perceive from the media. Media examples and terms can help stay focused, avoid emotional reactions to false or manipulative news, and act consciously and critically.

These skills are the foundation for developing media literacy, critical thinking, and resistance to disinformation. They help make conscious and ethical decisions, cooperate with people, and build healthy relationships both online and in real life.

Final words for Inspiring Trainers

We have strived to offer the most convenient and creative methods for teaching critical thinking and media literacy, so that the learning process would be not only effective but also engaging. It's important to remember that media literacy is not just a set of knowledge, but a skill that needs to be developed throughout lifetime. It is a long-term approach that involves both teachers and students.

Creating a safe and dialogue-friendly space where everyone can learn from each other is the foundation for successful media literacy acquisition. This material can become an excellent supplement to lectures and training sessions on any topic, as media literacy touches all areas of our lives. Regardless of whether we work with youth, children, or elderly people, the ability to critically evaluate information and distinguish truth from manipulation is an essential component of modern education.

We hope that the offered methods and tools will be useful and help create sustainable and conscious communities. In the age of internet and information challenges, media literacy becomes one of the most powerful means for strengthening public dialogue and preventing manipulation.

Thank you for your investment and participation in this process! Your work helps participants not only acquire new skills but also develop understanding and courage to act in complex situations. Remember that every question, discussion, and practical task promotes positive change and develops the society we live in. Your enthusiasm and empathy inspire, and this is an important step toward a purposeful and resilient community!

Good luck!
Best regards,
New East team.

Methodological Material for Media Literacy Trainers
EMPOWER EDUCATORS

www.neweasteurope.com

www.becid.eu

Everything we share in these materials consists of simple and effective tools that have been tested in practice. We have been working in the field of media literacy for more than 8 years, and during this time we have tried many methods. Here we have compiled those that have proven to be the most interesting, engaging, or simply the most understandable, so that you can use them in your work. We believe that accessibility is the key to a successful and engaging learning process.

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