Click E for Ethics-

Navigating the Values of Digital Living

Module 2- Harmful Online Behaviour

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Die EU-Initiative für mehr Sicherheit im Netz

Impressum

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Module 2 - Harmful Online Behaviour

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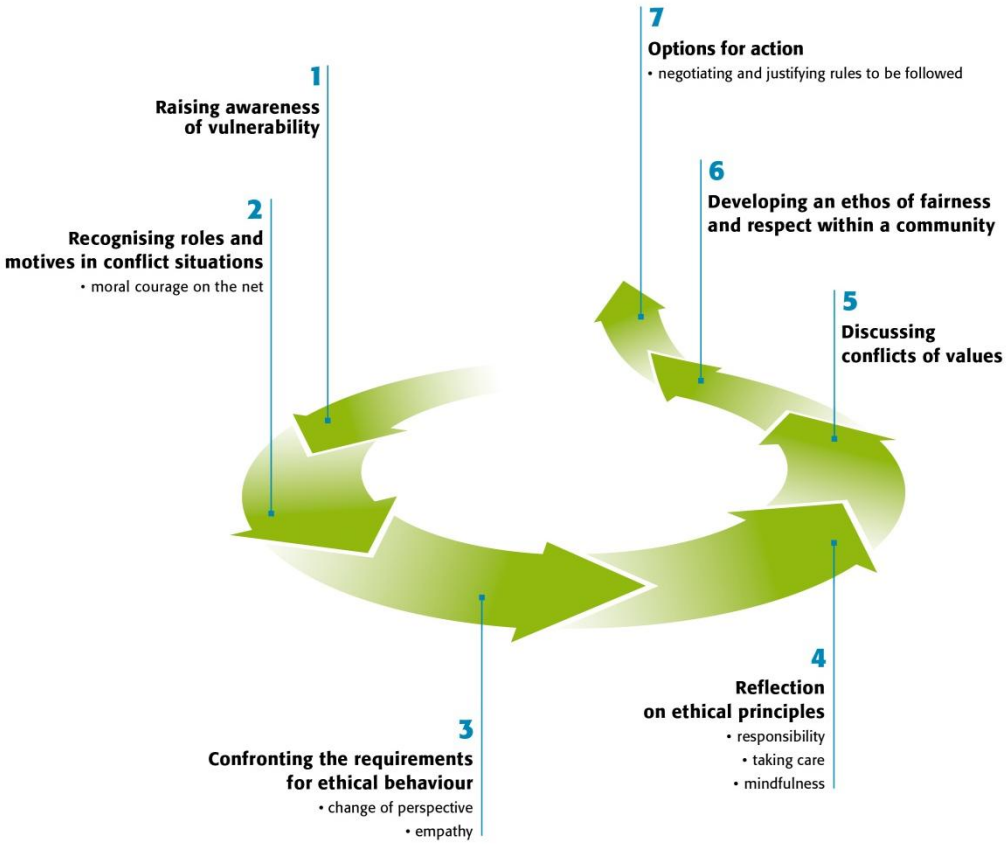
Click E for Ethics – Navigating the Values of Digital Living

Module 2 – Harmful Online Behaviour

Media Ethics Roadmap for "Harmful Online Behaviour"

In confronting insulting or injurious behaviour online, it is essential to initiate thought processes about moral judgements and actions. The aim is to acquire digital competency in dealing with conflicts.



Introduction

The concept of human dignity is the greatest achievement in the cultural history of mankind. Dignity and the value of the human individual are not only established in the Preamble of the UN Charta of Human Rights, but also as a fundamental right in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany. The idea of human dignity is deeply rooted in our thinking: Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) calls it an "absolute inner good". This idea recognises humans as subjects – as opposed to things or objects – sharing a mutual dignity that grants them the right to be respected.

Humiliating or denigrating another person means failing to acknowledge his integrity as a subjective entity; it demonstrates a lack of respect for his dignity and his innate value. Usually the "ego" exerting emotional or physical force upon another is attempting to increase his own power and fortify his position at the head of a group. Here, the aim of the ego is to marginalise the other and relegate him to a "lower" status.

The ongoing development of a media society in which digital interaction predominates has broadened the area in which human conflicts unfold. Cybermobbing, shitstorms, and bashing are among the violent deeds committed in online media (to be designated in the following as "online violence"). What all forms of online violence have in common, however, is that they damage the integrity of a person and his social standing in the real world. This stands in contradiction to the fundamental principle of dignity in our society.

At the same time, such violent acts severely restrict those affected by them from living out their lives successfully. Conflicts and violent acts carried out through media therefore have a bearing on the core ethical issue of our value orientation and approach to life: how do we want to live together with others? In order to empower young people to form moral judgments and to act ethically in everyday situations relating to conflicts, embarrassment, and humiliation in social online media, a process of reflection and motivation in several steps will be offered here. The intent is to provide an **ethical compass** along with incentives for value-oriented behaviour. The aim is to acquire **digital competency** in dealing with conflicts.

1 "Don't hurt me!"

Raising Awareness of Vulnerability

1.1. Every person can be hurt

Question for reflection: What are the consequences of human vulnerability?

Human beings are vulnerable – not only physically, but also emotionally. Anthropologically speaking, this is due to the sensitivity of the body and also to our emotional constitution: it is sometimes referred to as the **human capacity for injury**. Vulnerability is thus an aspect of the **conditio humana** – a circumstance without which we would not be human.[1]

The body and the psyche are so intimately connected that an injury to one generally affects the other as well.[2] As a result, the embarrassment or humiliation of a person (for example, through cybermobbing) can lead to physical afflictions such as eating disorders or sleeplessness, abdominal pain, headache, or nausea. In like manner, acts of physical violence can cause emotional damage, for example anxiety.

Online Violence is Real Violence!

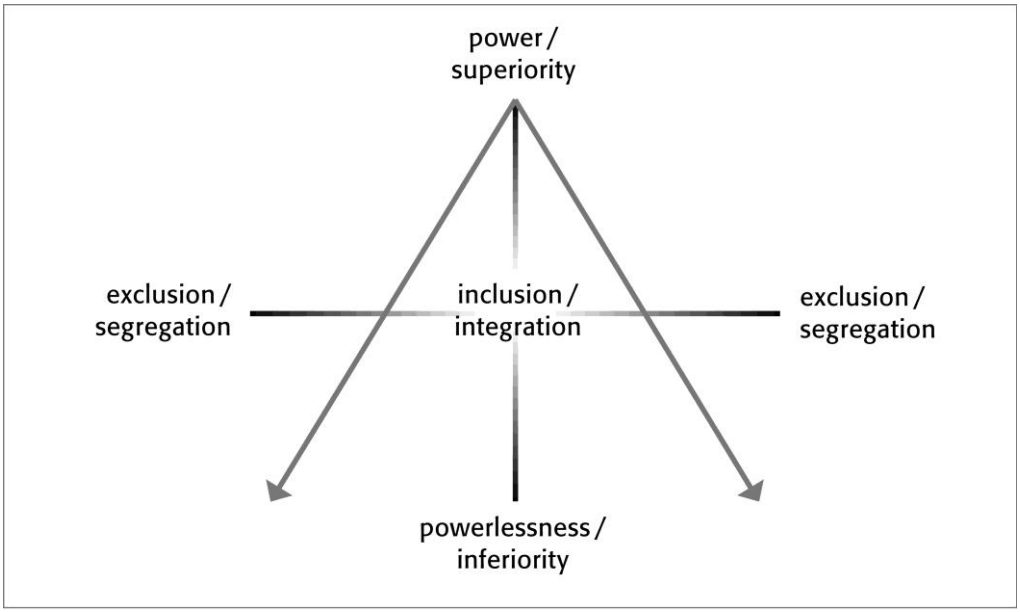
Online violence does not directly damage a person physically, but rather employs the weapons of injurious words, pictures, or videos: it is a **symbolic form of violence**. Such attacks are directed at the social standing, reputation, or image of a person, and therefore at their recognition as an individual. This damage to one's subjectivity denies them the chance to develop their lives freely and successfully.[3]

1.2 "Hey, Victim!" Humiliation, Insult, Exposure to Shame

Question for reflection: In what ways can human beings be hurt?

The point of an **insult** is always – and almost always deliberately – to get at another person 'where it hurts': to make them feel discredited, slighted, injured, embarrassed, or humiliated and therefore devalued. The individual self-assurance of a person is under attack[4]: "Insults are immoral acts of communication because they are **degrading**."[5]

An insult is therefore an act of **social dislocation**: the symbolic aim of the insult is to alter the social standing of the person it is directed towards. Its 'logic' implies the positioning of individuals on an imaginary scale of superiority and inferiority.



The vertical axis indicates **a top-down hierarchy**. This is also reflected in the everyday terms used as synonyms for 'insulting', such as disparaging, degrading, or – in street talk – dissing. There is also a **horizontal dislocation from the centre towards the edges**, since insult is a tool for exclusion and segregation. It pushes individuals out of the middle of society, assigning them a marginal position on the periphery. This exclusions limits their options for social participation.[6]

Symbolic injuries produce a sense of social devaluation. With this loss of social standing, the affected person no longer has the possibility to experience recognition by others in the social environment. Deliberate insults are intended to damage a person's status as an equal partner in communication and interaction. Moreover, such an injury expresses the rejection of an individual's lifestyle. And essentially, only when a person's lifestyle is acknowledged is that person able to receive social recognition and pursue life to their satisfaction.[7]

Humiliation entails injurious acts of communication that treat individuals as if they were objects or inferior beings. Such acts of communication lead to an "involuntary, powerless, coerced, shameful and painful loss of subjective control"[8]. Such humiliations are a violation of human dignity – the worst thing that can happen to a person.[9]

Exposing someone to **public ridicule** and **embarrassment** is another drastic form of injury. Historically, the pillory served as an instrument of domination and punishment, putting a person to shame as a means of robbing them of their dignity. There are many ways of shaming others – by denouncing, mockery,

humiliating or scolding them, by treating them with disdain or scorn, by debasing or harassing them – but also by exposing them to ridicule or by damaging their integrity.[10]

1.3. On the Net – and Caught in a Net
Digital Forms of Injury

1.3.1 Basic Characteristics

"Social" media on the Web 2.0 have created more opportunity for damaging behaviour. And online violence has sustained, long-term effects. Some reasons for this:

Time and space – Invasions of the private sphere are not localized in terms of time and place
Harassment doesn't come to an end when the school bell rings, but rather is continued on the internet. The 'long arm' of the culprits reaches, via smartphone, into even the most remote and sheltered spots, including the home.

Effect – The consequences of violent acts remain unseen
Online bullies can't perceive directly how they injure their victims. This inhibits an empathetic reaction on their part and forestalls any impulse to end the attack.

Dynamics – Media content spreads quickly, with almost no limitation on sharing (e.g., via Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube)
Once they are online, texts, images, and videos can hardly be controlled; they spread like wildfire.

Permanence – The internet doesn't forget
Somewhere, sometime, old content will crop up again. As a result, forgetting and overcoming injuries suffered is very difficult for those who have been targeted. In extreme cases, they may be confronted with old entries years later. This makes it difficult to get a fresh start – for example, in a new class at school or a new neighbourhood. Potentially, the status as a victim may be perpetuated.

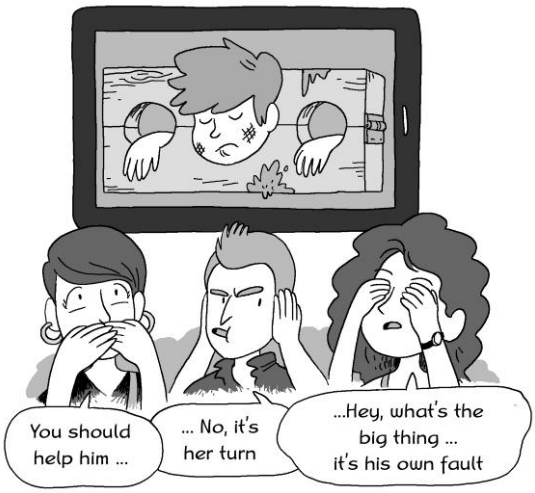
Anonymity – Perpetrator often take cover in the anonymous depths of the net
Under some circumstances, bullies cannot be identified and therefore have no fear of being sanctioned: this can lower their inhibitions. Those being targeted can't avoid the perpetrator, since they don't know who is harassing them. Not knowing the source of a threat can cause anxiety and great insecurity.

It's public – The audience is unlimited
Often it's impossible to know who has seen defamatory comments, images, or videos. The fact that tirades can be read by third parties who may then develop a negative opinion of the victim is a severe burden on those affected.

1.3.2 How is the Damage done? Types of Injuries

Cybermobbing

Cybermobbing is a form of aggressive behaviour acted out repeatedly – and sometimes anonymously – against other users. Young people have a different perspective on this than adults: not every playful argument is considered violent. For adolescents, the borderline between harmless jostling and serious conflict is not always clear-cut.[11] And not every attack is judged to be mobbing. The decisive criteria are **frequency** (repeated injury) and **duration** (over some period of time). In cybermobbing, both criteria are usually fulfilled: once online, disparaging pictures or insulting comments can be retrieved very often and almost indefinitely. From an ethical point of view, the perspective of the victim ought to be the touchstone: "The truth about violence is not in the act itself, but in the suffering."[12]



Ultimately, the issue is the subjective experience of suffering – from what point on does the victim feel embarrassed, defamed, or injured? The perspective of the bully (who may think it's all just 'fun') is not essential, but rather the perspective of the victim.

Cybermobbing occurs in forms described schematically shown here in a chart[13], but they are not always clearly distinguishable from one another.

Type of injury	How it is inflicted
defamation, spreading rumours	calumny undertaken deliberately by posting or mailing rumours/lies intended to destroy friendships or ruin someone's reputation
exclusion, rejection	deliberate exclusion of a person, for example from a chat group or an online game
insult, invective	sending vicious or nasty messages, posting injurious comments and vulgar remarks
chicanery, harassment	repeated sending of malicious, cruel, insulting messages, pin board entries, photos, or videos
assuming a false identity	pretending to be someone else and taking actions online, in that person's name, that will create difficulties for her/him (e.g. using their password to make changes in their Facebook profile)
publication of private information that is compromising	exposure of private habits and intimate secrets against the will or without the knowledge of the affected person (e.g. text, video, or photos taken in the locker room)
deception	enticing someone to reveal intimate details, secrets, or embarrassing images, and then posting them online
threatening	direct or indirect threats of actual physical violence

Shitstorms, Bashing, Trolling

The term 'shitstorm' designates a flood of indignant messages and comments that reinforces itself, gaining momentum and emotional pitch while losing touch with the factual content of the matter and moving onto a more personal level – down to extremely malicious insults. The term **'bashing'** signifies downright wars of insults that include vicious insults and sometimes a complete loss of control. **'Trolling'**

describes destructive and aggressive behaviour in net communication, departing from the objective level and tending towards personal invective. Trolls – those who cultivate this – apparently wish to provoke others, heighten conflicts within a community, or manipulate discussions on the web by introducing false information.

Common to all these forms of injurious behaviour in net communication is one particular characteristic: the danger of **escalation** which emanates directly from insults. Due to the provocation insults contain, they call for a reaction, taunting the insulted person to respond in kind.[14] A dynamic of escalation can easily be set into motion.[15] Schopenhauer regards the insult as an attempt to transform discursive inferiority into social superiority: insult comes into play when a person has run out of arguments. Cooperative exchange is interrupted, and now the blows go 'below the belt'.[16]

The public nature of these forms of violence further heightens their potential for escalation. Social networks, for example, greatly expand the possible number of receptors for the communication. If they are drawn into the conflict, they can have an escalating effect.[17]

The Digital Pillory – Hate, Rumour, and 'Slut' Pages

On hate or rumour pages – which are simple to produce, for example on Facebook or with a simple blogging tool such as Tumblr – photos/videos are posted for comment or the creation of links, with the aim of denouncing a person. These may be images showing the person in an unfavourable light (e.g., at a party) or in an embarrassing situation – but they may also be intimate photos that were intended for a partner. Usually, defamatory comments and remarks are added.

On so-called 'slut pages', visitors are invited to submit photos and personal information about the 'greatest sluts' in an area. The images and/or the girls' data are then published on the page and commented on derisively by users. These young women, exposed on the digital pillory, are more or less helpless to do anything about it. Even if they did manage to get the pictures deleted, it might not help: the images may already have been downloaded and stored elsewhere, so that they can quickly be distributed on other paths – for example, via smartphone (WhatsApp) or e-mail.

Common to hate pages and 'slut pages' is the fact that the visual documents are usually created without the knowledge of those affected, and then posted anonymously. Often, the victims only learn about the pictures when they have been in circulation for some time and the destructive effects of the mockery have already taken hold.

2 What is Moral Courage on the Net?

Recognising Roles and Motives in Conflict Situations

Question for reflection: What roles and motives figure in a conflict?

Ethical reflection and motivation should focus mainly on those who are witness to hurtful behaviour. It is probable that the perpetrators themselves can only rarely be moved to improve their moral standards. Instead, the aim is to weaken the influence of these persons within a community by motivating others, the quiet observes, to stand up and intervene.

2.1 "Why me?!" – The Role of the Bystander

Question for reflection: Why don't people take responsibility?

There are various ways in which people provide support, more or less, for injurious online behaviour: they pass around intimate videos, share embarrassing photos, or 'like' a malicious posting on Facebook. Acts of violence are often group dynamic processes in which **bystanders** play an important role. In a conflict situation, the so-called **bystander effect** can discourage or even forestall attempts at providing help. One explanation for this is the **diffusion of responsibility**. Individuals are less likely to give assistance when others are also present.[18] When the number of witnesses increases, the feeling of individual responsibility decreases and the assumption becomes stronger that everyone has responsibility (and therefore, no one takes it). Typically, people say, "The others can help just as well as I could" or "It can't be that bad", since apparently no one else sees a need to intervene, either. Equally problematic is the idea that it is the victim's own fault. This means ignoring the fact that human beings are fundamentally dependent on one another and, instead, asserting that every person is the master of his own fate – or misfortune.

Those who refuse to provide assistance can be divided into two types, the **followers** and the **spectators**. The followers generally come from the immediate social environment of the bully and adopt his or her aggressive approach – possibly due to peer pressure or fear of being excluded. Therefore, followers often protect or support the main manipulator.[19] The **spectators** who tolerate this, on the other hand, are afraid of becoming victims themselves. They look the other way or laugh when someone is mistreated, so as not to be noticed themselves.[20] However, their very passiveness makes them a party to the abuses: it confirms and encourages the perpetrators and followers in their actions. Because the spectators neither take a stand against the violent acts nor defend the victim, they become **enablers**. Furthermore, they provide an audience for the perpetrators and followers, reinforcing the motivation of the perpetrators – and, the larger the audience becomes, exacerbating the suffering of the victims.[21]

In terms of the ethics of responsibility, as an autonomous subject one is not only responsible for one's actions, but also for one's **omissions**. Omission, in this sense, is a special case of immoral action: "Instead of acting morally, correctly, the person remains inactive and **in doing so** behaves wrongly. The immorality of this non-action is founded on the fact that a morally necessary action was not undertaken."[22]

This confirms, by implication, the famous quote from Wilhelm Busch, "Das Böse – dieser Satz steht fest – ist stets das Gute, das man lässt."[23] ("The good – I am convinced, for one – is but the bad one leaves undone".)

This kind of personal responsibility leads to the question: under what circumstances is a person responsible for something? As Aristotle sees it in his Nicomachean Ethics, an action – or its omission – lies in the realm of accountability when it **results from deliberate** choice: one is able to act and could also have acted differently.[24] However, an omission is only immoral if other persons are damaged by it and if assistance could reasonably be expected – that is, if acting would not result in substantial difficulties for oneself. In sum, from the moral point of view, being witness to an action and **being able to help** is sufficient to **make helping** mandatory. In such circumstances, omission can be just as immoral as active deeds would be in another context. In penal law, this matter of fact is established in the criminal offense of **"denial of assistance".**[25]

3 "I know how you feel"

Confronting the Requirements for Ethical Behaviour

Anyone who speaks out against online abuse is in need of support: otherwise, he may be in danger of failing in his efforts or himself becoming the target of the attacks himself and being isolated from a community by his opponents. The supporters may be friends of the person who is active, showing solidarity; they can also be teachers who serve as counsellors. In chats, a person speaking out can also gain support from those hosting the forum by asking them to intervene. But aside from these external supporters the active person needs an intrinsic **assistant**, preparing his way and enabling him to take a stand against unfair behaviour on the net. The sources of this fundamental support are the ability to change perspective and the capacity for empathy – being able to put oneself in someone else's shoes.

Question for reflection: What do change of perspective and empathy with others mean?

Active persons who demonstrate civil courage and want to put an end to online abuse have the ability to adopt the perspective of others and to feel empathy. Compassion and reciprocity are the requirements of their commitment to action. As a means of motivating young people for such an active role, they should be offered support in learning to take on or at least be able to comprehend the **perspective of others**. With reflection and sensibility, even a person who has never been 'taken apart' on the net can **comprehend** the situation of a person under attack.

The fact and the knowledge that all human beings are vulnerable also connect them to one another – independent of their cultural traditions, gender, or age. Due to this anthropological constant, human beings are able to **make mutual assumptions about their vulnerability**. Becoming fully conscious of the principle of reciprocity in the context of injuries to the 'other' and the 'ego' can help in comprehending the role and the perspective of others.

The American philosopher Richard Rorty has, from a pragmatic point of view, addressed the question of how individuals can be encouraged to avoid "cruelties" inflicted on others through humiliation and lack of respect. He concludes that narratives in the media – e.g., in literature or film – can make a contribution to our gradually beginning to see the other as **"one of us"**, not **"one of them"**[26]. Taking on the perspective of someone who is being painfully exposed, humiliated, and socially isolated becomes more possible, says Rorty, with the aid of fictional roles we assume and stories that give us an ethical nudge.

The art of empathy is an essential **source of motivation** for moral and socially responsible action, and thus also for the successful functioning of a community.

"I feel, therefore I am"

Emotion as a Component of Moral Behaviour

Proponents of an ethics of moral sentiment (Hume) or an ethics of compassion (Schopenhauer) assume that individuals act and form judgements not only due to rational considerations, but also on the basis of emotions. For Schopenhauer, compassion as the antipode to egotism is an essential moral emotion and the source of such values as **justice** and **charity**. Like the ethics of **moral sentiment**, modern psychology accepts the "empathy-altruism" hypothesis which assumes that "humans are capable of helping others in need for purely altruistic reasons (…), without weighing the explicit or implicit costs of their actions"[27].

Empathy not only functions on an emotional, but also on a cognitive level: being able to feel compassion with another means **imagining** how they experience the world, **thinking one's way** into their situation and grasping it affectively. It does not mean experiencing the other person's pain oneself. With the discovery

of so-called mirror neurons, brain researchers have gained important insights into the neuronal processes that play a role in empathy. These mirror neurons form the basis for a mechanism that enables us to comprehend the experience of others. At the same time, it is postulated that certain blockades or filters also influence the development of compassion. Closeness to a person and the moral assessment of a situation or action – for example, whether it is considered unjust – are assumed to be important factors influencing compassion.

In the case of online violence, however, the hurtful action is dissociated from its effect since the perpetrator has no direct impression of his impact: he cannot observe the behaviour of the person, and the injury itself is not visible. At such a distance, there is no impulse that would trigger empathy; perpetrators suffer, so to speak, from 'empathetic myopia'. It is just as difficult to feel compassion for another's suffering across the distance created by media as it is to perceive with one's senses events that occur far away.[28] One study shows that the lack of eye contact on the internet lowers inhibitions. The participants were instructed to discuss an issue in a chat forum, and in one test group they were able to see one another via webcam. The results indicated that those who had no eye contact insulted one another more severely.[29]

For training in empathy, narrative forms are particularly suitable. Telling a story about a conflict – rather than presenting stark facts – makes it more accessible on the emotional level that is essential to empathy.

4 "I'm not an Egoist!"

Reflection on Ethical Principles

Question for reflection: Why should I take a stand against online violence?

In fairy tales, it's often the king who gives a commission to the hero: to find the kidnapped princess or the hidden treasure. In modern narratives, Hollywood films, TV serials, or comics, it's frequently an institution or an intrinsic force such as 'conscience' or 'being in love' that prompts the hero to speak out, engage in some great adventure, or simply save the world. Moral sensibility and an inner system of values are intrinsic factors that lead a committed individual – the person who takes action – to muster his civil courage and take a stand against hurtful online behaviour. In particular, value principles such as **responsibility** and **care** (mindfulness and taking care) can guide people towards moral action.

4.1 Being Free means Taking Responsibility

Question for reflection: What does taking responsibility involve?

Responsibility arises from the human desire for autonomy: freedom and responsibility are mutually dependent. If the human is a rational being claiming the right to freedom and self-determination, then he must also have the capacity for responsible action, otherwise he would forfeit that right. In short, to be free and autonomous, we must also take over responsibility.

Closely related to the concept of moral responsibility is the question **of what** I am responsible for, and **to whom**. A minimalistic answer could be: I am responsible for every matter in which I would also been able to act differently than I did (the principle of options for action). At the same time, I am responsible **to all those** who are affected by my actions or omissions.[30]

What is meant by responsibility?

The concept of responsibility can be explained with a set of five questions: **who** is responsible (subject), **what** for (object), **to whom** (norm giver), **for whom** (those affected), **and why** (standards, laws).

Applied to the problem of online abuse, the model would look like this:

Responsible action requires courage and the ability to deal with conflicts. In the case of online abuse, this means:

helping the victim even when it would be easier to look the other way,

being prepared to accept negative effects, up to a certain point,

speaking out against insults and injuries although others may think they are funny or

not so bad (or that it is the victim's "own fault"),

relying on one's own sense of morals,

requesting help from others whenever necessary.

In addition to courage, one also needs clear-headedness in assessing the situation. In order to judge, it's important to take the perspective of the victim into account, and how deeply they have been hurt.

4.2 Don't take a scare, take care! Ethics of Mindfulness

Question for reflection: What does "taking care" imply?

The fundamental dependency of human beings on one another is an anthropological constant: through their interaction, individuals rely on each other from the moment of birth to the end of their lives. The concept of the person as a "socialised self"[31] sets an emphasis on the role of social relations, as opposed

to an abstract image of the individual as an autonomous subject. Humans are, however, not only connected due to their basic **interdependency**, but also as a result of their "shared experienced of vulnerability and suffering"[32].

From this, the principle of **mindfulness** is derived. Mindfulness means acknowledging others' need for help and their dependency – and also seeing oneself as dependent on others. One of its implications is that a person cannot attain most goals alone.

A correlate of this is the **principle to take care**: "Respecting someone also means not refusing to help him when necessary (taking care), but also not treating him less well than others (equality)."[33] Building on the ethics of **care**[34] – and its practical orientation – together with the **principle of mindfulness and taking care**, the principle of care emerges as an ethos with two essential aspects: **emotional** concern and **effective provision of care**.

"Take care" is in this context an expression of strength: only endurance and competence can enable us to stand up for others and give them protection and support. Seen in this perspective, "care" can also serve as guide to moral decisions. This does not mean that the principle to take care must necessarily aim at reaching agreement, but rather at a culture of understanding in our dealings with one another.

Joan Tronto, who developed an applied ethics of **care**, sees the reluctance of humans to be attentive to one another as a core issue of ethics. This form of irresponsibility is based on self-absorption and ignorance, as well as the refusal to take care of others. In Tronto's thinking, the practice of care comprises four ethical elements: attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and resonance. She associates these with a "process of committed **care**"[35]. Translating these insights into the context of online abuse calls attention to the following phases in which a committed helper has options for action:

1. Sympathy (caring about) as an expression of mindfulness:

- realising that support is necessary
- perceiving a need
- comprehending the perspective of others

2. Support (taking care of) as an expression of responsibility:

- Being prepared to assume responsibility
- Securing ability to act (agency)
- Judging how best to help

3. Compassionate action (care-giving) as an expression of competence:

- Responding directly to the need
- Caring, soliciting help where necessary
- Taking adequate action

An ethics of mindfulness – in the sense of practically **"taking care"** – can motivate young people to address and comprehend the situation of the victim, to consider the options for a response, and to take action.

5. Sometimes you have to weigh the Alternatives...

Discussing Conflicts of Values

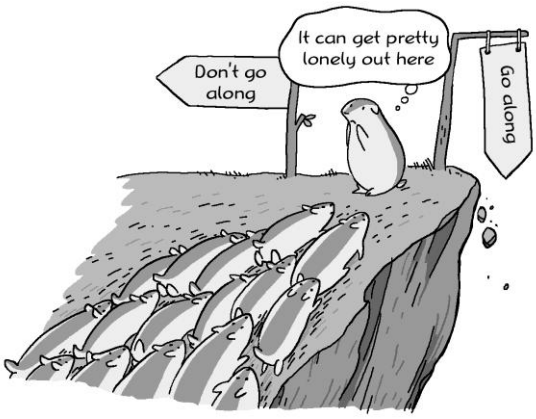
Question for reflection: What ideals can give me orientation in dealing with online conflicts?

Values sometimes conflict with one another. In such cases, one feels unsure of oneself, particularly when one's thoughts, feelings, and actions seem to be moving in different directions. **Friendship**, for instance, is extremely valuable in younger years, where belonging to a group and identifying with it play an important role. But collisions can occur between friendships and one's own sense of fairness and responsibility: could be that fear of losing friends leads a person to tolerate or ignore online abuse, or even to support it. Values such as friendship can come into conflict with the values of fairness, justice, responsibility, courage, respect, and recognition of others.

Values of social cooperation friendship, mindfulness	Values of self-development and -expression courage, ability to deal with conflict, independence
Values in a community responsibility, respect, justice / fairness	Fundamental values respect for and acknowledgement of others, human dignity, freedom (of action) and autonomy

Young people expect themselves and others to be able to solve conflicts themselves. They assume that the conflicting parties will be able to resolve their dissent without outside help. This demonstrates how important skills and values such as independence and assertiveness are to them. Giving high priority to these values can, however, cause problems when young people misjudge a conflict situation or are not (sufficiently) aware of their own responsibility. Misunderstandings about autonomy ("Everyone has to see how he gets by") can also deter those who witness online abuse from intervening.

Telling the story of a **moral dilemma** is a technique that can be used to address value conflicts. It should be an exemplary story that confronts a protagonist with two diametrically opposed actions that he is compelled to perform. What he decides to do, and why, touches on some core issue of ethics, and this gives rise to a reflection on 'right' and 'wrong' behaviour: young people have to define their **own position** in relation to the conflict of values. It is important that the story has a reasonable connection to their everyday lives and that they take up the thread and continue the narrative, explaining why they develop the plot as they do. This storytelling method also satisfies their wish to solve conflicts themselves, since they develop their own attempts at resolution.



6 "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you!"

Developing an Ethos of Fairness and Respect within a Community

Question for reflection: What should an ideal online community look like?

Fairness and justice are moral values that relate to the ethical standards of an individual and, at the same time, those of a community. In the actantial model used to analyse narratives, they are described as goals of action for the protagonist / active individual. But expanding the perspective to that of an entire community is necessary in order to create a climate free of violence and **to establish a norm of behaviour** that takes the problem of abuse into account.

Modern philosophical theories of justice – depending on their emphasis – postulate that fairness in society has to be based on agreement about basic rights and/or an ethics of the good life. Justice is regarded as an ethical concept based on equal distribution of goods, social equality, and the recognition of varying life circumstances (gender, social milieu, cultural tradition, age, etc.). In Martha Nussbaum's view (1999) [36], a just society also requires an **ethics of the good life** that takes into account the basic needs and abilities of humans, as well as the social circumstances in which they live.

One prominent approach is that of John Rawls in **A Theory of Justice** (1979). His model of justice is based on a hypothetical scenario called the "original position": a group of persons endowed with reason is screened off behind a "veil of ignorance". No one knows anything about his or her own "place in society, class or status; nor about his talents, intelligence, physical strength, etc."[37]. From behind this veil of ignorance, the group is to deliberate on basic rules for the society in which they will live. Rawls argues that they will opt for protection of freedom, so that every person has the same right to the most extensive system of basic freedoms that is compatible with the same system for everyone else. Any other outcome would be irrational.

The advantage of this model of justice is that persons can agree upon fair rules that are independent of their own interests. With young people, this thought experiment can be developed in a scenario where they negotiate rules for a fair online community. It could be based on the question: **assuming that you had to define rules for a new online community, but you didn't know anything about your own status and your own situation – what would this community look like?**

As a starting point for developing the scenario, one can set out the principle of **reciprocity** as a core norm of ethics, as expressed in the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." It has a

long tradition in the history of philosophy and can be found in the major religious systems of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, as well as the Indian epic "Mahabharata", the teachings of Confucius, the Egyptian Book of the Dead, the modern social contract, and the principle of perception in German idealism.

7 A Contract for Tolerance

Options for Action: Negotiating and Justifying Rules to be followed

Question for reflection: What kind of netiquette do we want to agree on?

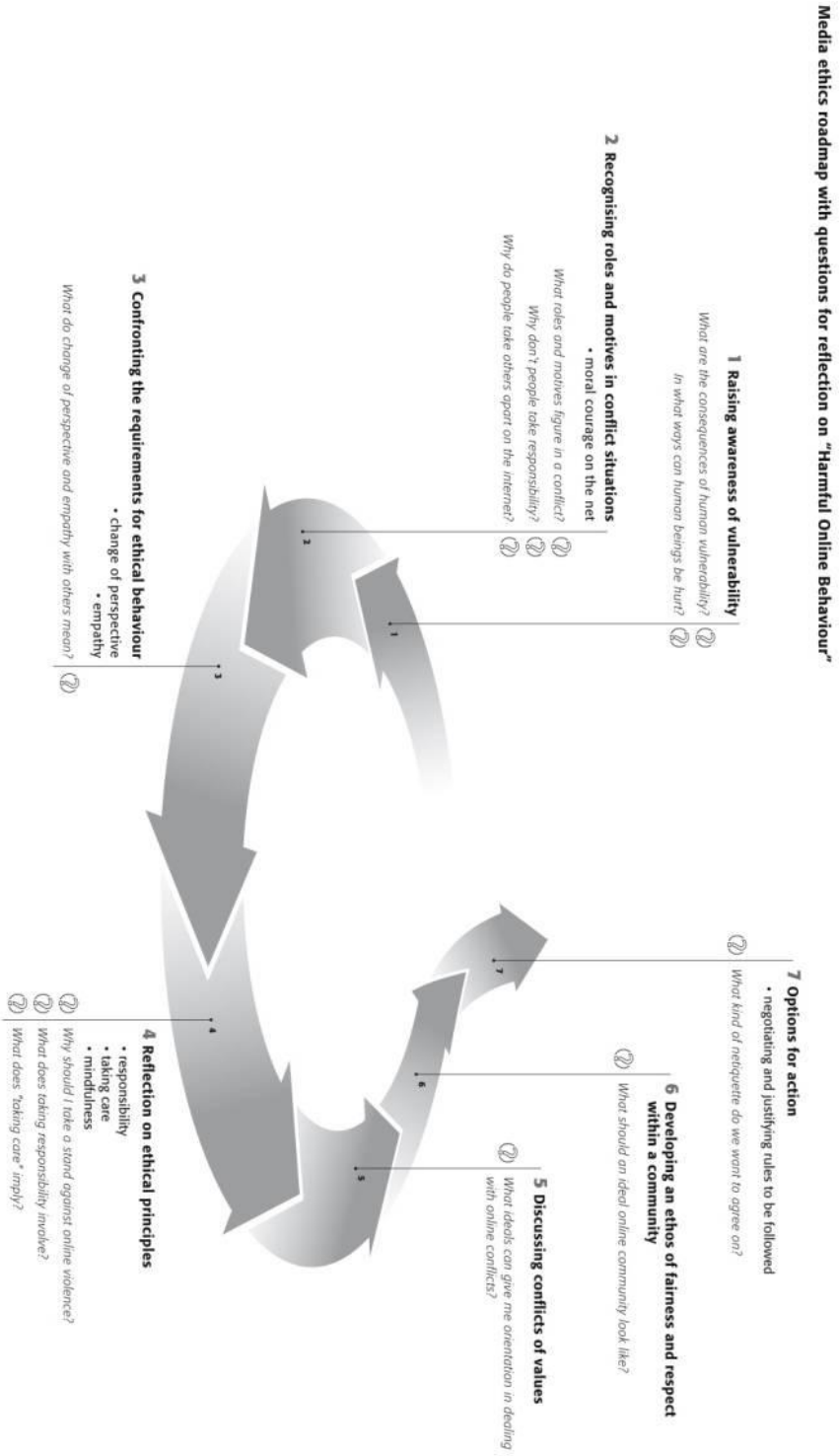
Whether a conflict escalates depends on behavioural patterns that are accepted in the social environment and from normative standards. Agreeing on certain rules or a code of behaviour makes it easier to bar the activities of 'powerful' perpetrators: their violent behaviour can be declared inacceptable, meaning that they can reckon with antipathy, rejection, or even sanctions. A normative contract developed within a community can lay out rules to be conformed to and also can state how the community will respond to harmful online behaviour. Such a system of **netiquette** can be negotiated in group processes – for example, as a contract among school classmates.

Notes

For full bibliographical entries on secondary literature, please refer to the complete version of the Ethics Module on the klicksafe project website at http://www.klicksafe.de/materialien/LH_Zusatzmodul_medienethik_klicksafe_gesamt.pdf. It contains three sections: 1 Privacy and Big Data, 2 Harmful Online Behaviour (reprinted here in modified form), 3 Images of Women and Men in the Media. These are followed by an extensive reference list. Publication dates and page numbers given below refer to German editions of the works.

[1] See Schües 2013, p. 210. [2] Hausmanninger 2002, p. 27. [3] Cf. Herrmann 2013, pp. 111ff.; Pollmann 2010, p. 70; Schäfer 2013, pp. 134f.; Hausmanninger 2002, p. 29. [4] Pollmann 2010, pp. 67ff. [5] Ibid., p. 67. [6] Herrmann 2013, p. 112. [7] Ibid. pp. 112ff. [8] Kapust 2013, p. 139. [9] Ibid. [10] Cf. Marks 2013, pp. 136f. [11] Cf. Wagner & Brüggen 2012, p. 3. [12] Hausmanninger 2002, p. 26. [13] Adapted from Willard 2007. [14] Pollmann 2010, p. 69. [15] Herrmann 2013, pp. 113f. [16] Pollmann 2010, p. 68. [17] Wagner et al. 2012, p. 6. [18] Schweizer & Klein 2008, p. 162. [19] See Sander et al. 2011. [20] Cf. Kretschmer, no date. [21] Sander et al. 2011. [22] Pollmann 2010, p. 200. [23] Quoted in Pollmann 2010, p. 200. [24] For diskussion see Werner 2011, pp. 542ff. [25] Pollmann 2010, pp. 201ff. [26] Rorty 1989, p. 16. [27] Schweizer & Klein 2008, p. 163. [28] See Grau 2008, pp. 33ff. [29] Cf. Lapidot-Lefler & Barak 2012. [30] See Werner 2011, pp. 544ff. [31] Cf. Friedman 1993. [32] Pauer-Studer 1996, p. 268. [33] Birnbacher 2003, p. 80. [34] See, e.g., Kohlen & Kumbruck 2008. [35] See Conradi 2001, p. 225. [36] Cf. Nussbaum 2002. [37] Rawls 1979, p. 160.

Media Ethics Roadmap on Abusive Online Behaviour with Suggested Questions



Examples of Work Sheets for Use in Schools (with Students aged about 14 or older)

Description of Project 1: On the Net – and Caught in a Net

Competencies	School students reflect on the vulnerability of human beings. They are able to identify abusive online behaviour.
Time frame	45 minutes
Methods	Offline posting
Materials	Post-it notes, emotion cards and cards with examples (see following pages)
Access to internet/PC	No
Opener	Offline posting: Distribute post-it notes to the students who are sitting in a circle. Each student writes down something positive or appreciative and 'posts' it on the person sitting to his or her right (an analogy to online posting). A few of the comments are read aloud. Suggested questions for assessment: How do you feel when someone says something positive to you? Show the students a post-it note that says something like "You're a slut!", "You stink!", or "You are ugly." How would they feel if they received a note like that? To be able to articulate a wide range of feelings, use the emotion cards attached here. The students can choose one that fits.
Development	Take the cards with examples of online abuse (copied from the following page and cut out) and spread them out on the floor. In turn, one by one, the students pick a card, read it aloud, and assess it: is it online abuse, or not? To illustrate varying degrees of injury, the examples can be rated on a scale from 1 to 10 or arranged along an imaginary line (with 'yes' at one end and 'no' at the other). Perhaps there may be students who judge situations differently. The examples have been compiled so that they include clear-cut cases of offenses, such as fraud or illegal downloads (subject to penal law), breach of confidence or exclusion from a group, but also cases that are more difficult to assess and may lead to discussion among the students. It should emerge clearly that all human beings can be hurt, which makes for a bond among us all. However, different persons feel injured by different actions, and each person gets to decide for him/herself what those are! Differentiation for older students: they sort the examples according to the type of injury (following the structure suggest by Willard, see 1.3.2), such as: spreading rumours, exclusion, insult, harassment, misuse of identity, publication of private information, deception, or threat. Write these concepts on a board for all to see, or print them in advance and now lay them out on the floor.
Review	The students choose three examples and discuss how they could respond to these situations. What would you do if you or one of your friends were the object of abuse?

If someone excludes you from a group task in an online game (like Quest) or doesn't invite you to participate at all	***If*** someone takes a photo you sent to him or her privately and forwards it to others	***If*** someone in a chat demands a naked photo of you and threatens – if you don't send it – to publish your name and address	***If*** it says under the YouTube video you made that it's poorly made, "unprofessional"
If someone links you to an unflattering photo from the recent class excursion	***If*** you are not invited to join the WhatsApp group of your class at school	***If*** someone uses your name to write nasty stuff on the internet	***If*** someone uploads a photo of you onto Ask.fm and writes underneath it: "sexy or not?"
If it says on a rumour page that you are going out with someone, and that's not true	***If*** your Facebook profile photo shows up in an advertisement for a dating agency	***If*** someone has used your IP address (registration number of your computer) for illegal downloads, and now you have received a warning letter	***If*** your former boyfriend / girlfriend takes a love poem you wrote and publishes it on the internet
If someone 'likes' your new profile photo	***If*** you are nominated on Facebook to post a photo of yourself in underwear	***If*** someone doesn't accept your friendship invitation on Facebook	***If*** someone you were friends with on Facebook 'unfriends' you
If someone comments on your new profile photo, saying "you do look much better now!"	***If*** you post a question on a homework forum and receive the reply that of course everybody knows that already and so your question is totally ridiculous	***If*** someone, without your permission, deliberately gives your mobile phone number to a company because during registration he/she enabled synchronisation with his address book	***If*** you chat with someone for a long time and then find out that he or she hadn't given you their real identity
If it says under an article you wrote for the school homepage that it's badly written	***If*** someone says that the mobile phone you received as a present is a piece of junk	***If*** you produce YouTube videos yourself and you notice that someone is copying your exact way of talking	***If*** someone uses a private message to send a virus that damages your computer
If your boyfriend or your girlfriend doesn't want to post it on Facebook that you're having a relationship	***If*** someone tells you in a chat that he wants a photo of you naked, and says he's going to spread lies about you	***If*** a friend doesn't show up for a teamplay date in an online game and didn't tell you so in advance	an example of your own

happy	sad
disappointed	thankful
content	embarrassed
relaxed	curious
relieved	shocked
speechless	frustrated
helpless	enthusiastic
furious	anxious
overwhelmed	uncertain
puzzled	annoyed
afraid	lonely
ashamed	angry
pleased	jealous
accepted	proud
flattered	guilty

Description of Project 3: Respect and Mindfulness on the Net

Competencies	In a round-about of stations and assignments, school students are given impulses relating to mutual respect and mindfulness on the internet.
Time frame	60-90 minutes
Methods	Diverse
Materials	Description of stations, posters
Access to internet/PC	At individual stations: Net karma, Love is in the web
Opener	At the outset (or the end) of the lesson one can do an exercise for activating respect and attentiveness in the group, for example: Changing sides: The students stand in two rows, facing one another. At a signal ("go") they try to switch sides without touching anyone else. At the next "go", they switch back. The tempo is gradually increased. (Source: R. Portmann, *Spiele für ein faires Miteinander* [*Games for Playing Fair*], Don Bosco Medien GmbH, 2012, p. 25) Always three standing: The students are sitting on the floor around the room. There should always be three of them standing up, meaning that when one sits down, someone else has to stand up. They have to play close attention to one another, and the game should be played slowly. (Source: R. Portmann, *Spiele für mehr Respect* [*Games for more Respect*], Don Bosco Medien GmbH, 2014, p.60)
Development	In small groups (max. 4 persons), the students visit all the stations, which address various topics relating to respect and mindfulness on the net. Every 15 minutes, groups rotate to a new station. It is also possible to set up fewer stations and allow more time for certain selected activities. For some stations, internet access and a tablet/PC are required, marked below as follows: = yes = only to research a link, may be possible with a mobile phone
Review	At the end, the students summarise the outcomes from the last station they visited. Further impressions or remarks can be contributed to the discussion by the other groups who have been there earlier.

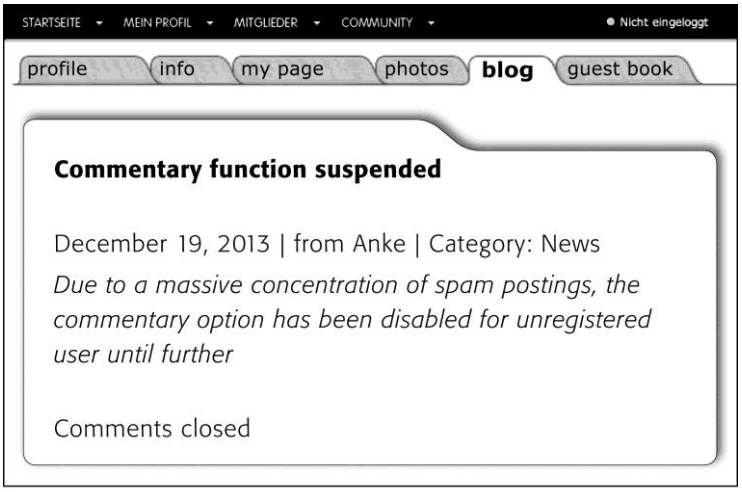
Options for Action against Hateful Comments on the Net

As an individual user:

- report hate talk and person who posted it
- delete hate talk right away
- leave hate talk where you found it (so that others can see it and respond)
- write a critical comment of your own (careful: don't be insulting!)
- reflect on one's own customary style of posting comments

As a service provider:

- disable the commentary function, at least for postings that can be expected to evoke a lot of indignation
- close down the commentary function altogether if remarks get out of hand, and explain the reason for doing so
- make the 'report abuse' easy to find, and call attention to it often
- issue stricter rules for online commentary

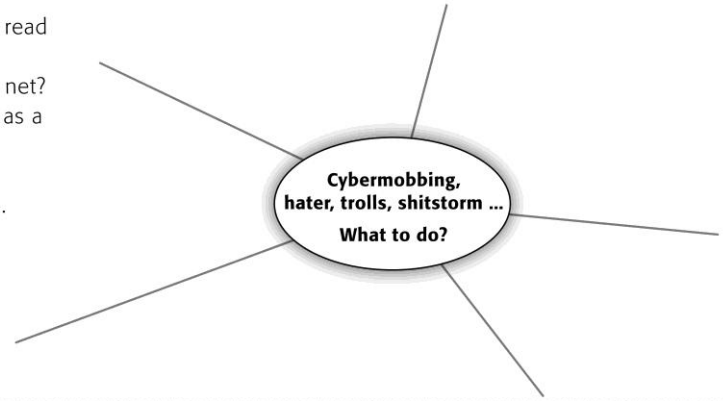


An example of a notice announcing that comments have been disabled on a website.

Station: No chance for haters, trolls, and shitstorms!

Task: In internet forums, you often read "Don't feed the trolls!"
What can we do about hate on the net? As individual users, as a society, or as a service provider?

Gather ideas and make a mindmap.



Station: Online editorial board

Task: Imagine that you are on the editorial board of an online platform and you have to decide on whether or not comments are to be published. Make a decision on each example and give your reasons for it!

Example 1

Kill it off, straight away

Example 2

I wanna see boobs.
Lohan is hot

Example 3

Now everybody's out there pretenting they're Cro, to be honest it's all barf, and for sure you or your sidekick did it, come up with something original, you losers!

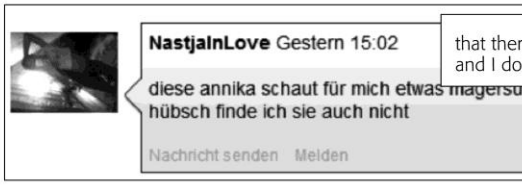
Example 4

I hate Justin Bieber, and I hope that soon he's going to fall flat on u**y face !!!!!!!

Example 5

What do you think about ugly people?

Example 6



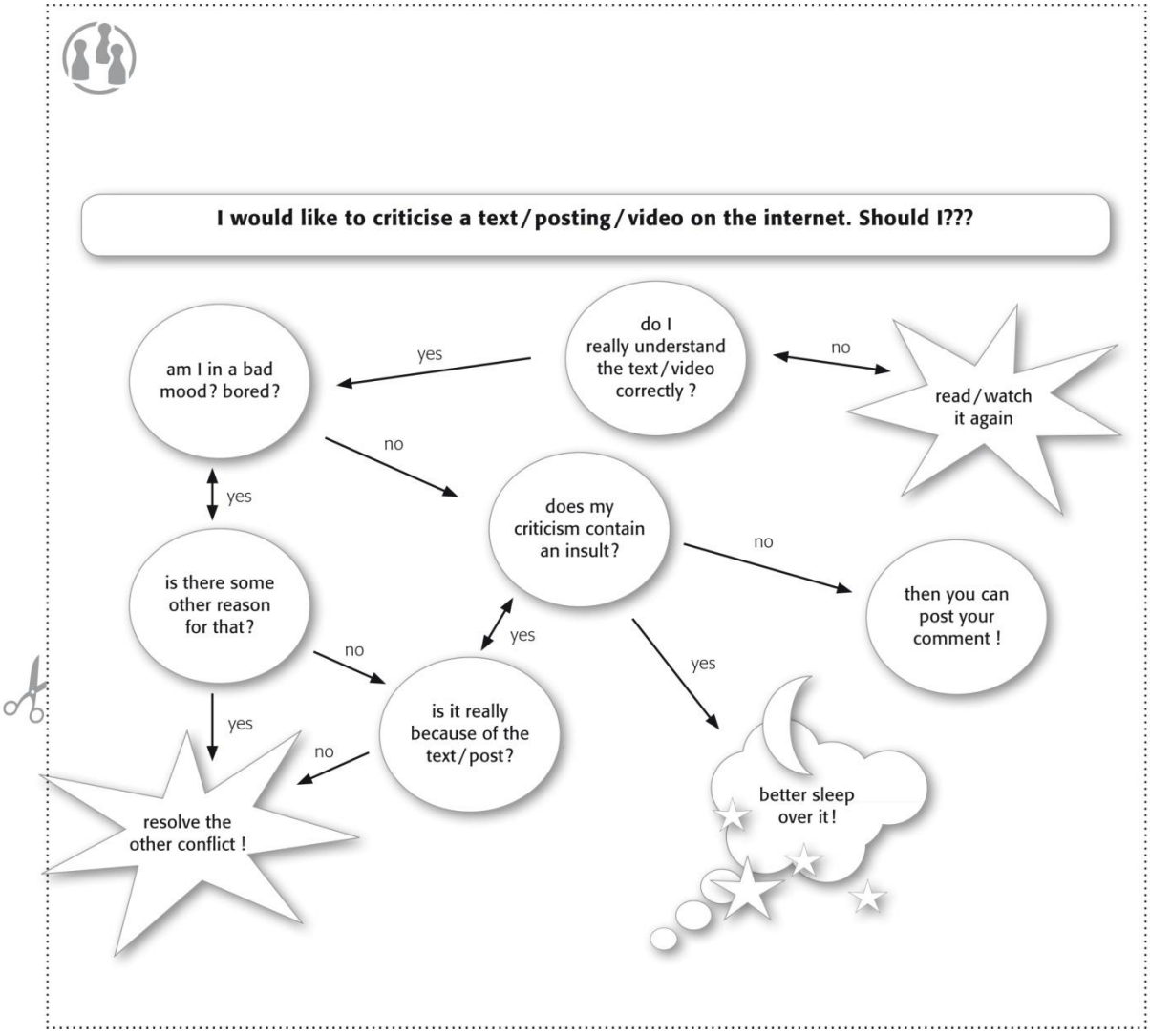
that there annika looks kind of ana to me and I don't think she's good-looking either

Source: the examples are from facebook.de, bravo.de, youtube.de

Station: Keep your grip on your emotions!

Assignment: You want to criticise a text / picture / video on the internet.

- What should you keep in mind?
- What feelings are motivating you?
- How can you keep your criticism impersonal?
- Each of you should choose an example of your own, apply it to the diagramme, and explain it to the others.



Station: Love is in the web

Task: Being nice to one another is not all that difficult. Just think about what does you good. Get together some nice-looking, friendly material – abbreviations, emojis, sentences, photos, films – and make a collage out of it (for a digital collage you can use the app Pic Collage or the programme Glogster from http://edu.glogster.com).

Station: Good net karma

Assignment: Watch the clip *Kindness Boomerang* at http://bit.ly/1be70P9
Scouts do it and YouTuber Le Floid says the same: Do a good deed every day!
How about trying it on the net? What could a good deed on the net look like?
Gather ideas and put them on a poster.

You can find ideas here: online call for a smile mob, support something good on the net, start a group to stand up for something that's important to you, make a small donation, sign an online petition, run the apps Happier or Little Bliss.

Description of Project 4: How should I decide?

Competencies	School students learn to confront difficult situations and to make decisions on the basis of their values.
Time frame	45 minutes
Methods	Discussion of values
Materials	Small cards, cut out examples of dilemmas (see next page)
Access to internet/PC	No
Opener	Sitting in a *circle*, the students each take three cards to write down (one on each card) the values most important to them, e.g., family, peace, good health, honesty, etc. These cards are collected and *tallied*, either at the board or on a computer using the programme from www.wordle.net. In the *analysis* the class talks about the 3 values it found most important. What does that say about the class? Important: Depending on the level of reflection among the students, it may be wise to clarify, in advance of the exercise, what a 'value' is and what values are good for. Values can be explained as standards for orientation and as guidelines that one is often not conscious of. In the accompanying text under point 5 on value conflicts, there is a chart on "value areas" that can be helpful.
Development	How would your students decide? The examples of dilemmas (next page) serve as an impulse to think about issues that can't be answered univocally with 'yes' or 'no'. You can use another class session to discussion selected situations that require a decision, or bring one in regularly after finishing other work sheets. Method for "coming to a decision": 1. An example situation is presented on paper or read aloud. 2. Preliminary vote on the question: what should the person do? (students vote by raising their hands). 3. Group discussion of the rationale behind the decision. Argumentation is documented in short form at the board or on a flipchart. 4. Analysis of the reasoning in terms of value judgments (see values articulated during the opener): what values are inherent to the argumentation? Are important values being ignored? Is there a collision between differing values? Which values influence our decisions? 5. Final discussion: the original question is voted on again. It becomes apparent whether and how opinions may have shifted, and which lines of reasoning bear the most weight. It is also important to focus on the consequences and conflicts that result from the decision. At the end of the exercise, the group can also discuss whether they see a solution to

	the dilemma. Source: modification of a method from G. Gugel (2013), *Didaktisches Handbuch: Werte vermitteln – Werte leben* [*Didactic Handbook: Transferring and living with values*], Berghof Foundation
Review	**Evaluation:** Which decisions were the most difficult for the students? Why? **Additional assignment / homework:** The students can develop situations that require a decision and present them to the class. How to draft a value dilemma: is there really a predicament? No easy way out of the quandary? Is the story short (not more than half a page) and easy to understand? Does it evoke curiosity, empathy, and suspense? Do the persons involved have names? Source: G. Gugel, *Didaktisches Handbuch*, p. 83

How should I decide?

Conflict situation: Cybermobbing

Form 7b at the Uhland Middle School has a new pupil – Alexander, who comes from the Ukraine. He is shy and speaks broken German. Two days before the class is to go on an excursion, Tom sees that another boy, Ole, has linked Alexander on Facebook to a photo showing a heap of excrement. Under the picture it says, "He stinks." Tom himself has previously been mobbed, insulted, and threatened by Ole.

Should Tom do something?

Conflict situation: Lost smartphone

In the locker room of her hockey club, Lisa finds a smartphone that isn't disabled. She wants to check whether she can find some information that will tell her who it belongs to. So she reads the WhatsApp messages and discovers that the smartphone belongs to Karla, one of the girls on her team. Karla is exchanging sweet nothings with Luka, who is on the boys' team and, as Lisa knows, has been going with Frida for the last two years.
Should she inform Frida?

Conflict situation: Anonymous hate

Paul is passionate about parcours and YouTube. He regularly posts videos presenting the best parcours spots in his town. Under one of the videos, an anonymous user has written that Paul is a total beginner, not athletic, and a "disgrace" to the parcours scene. Paul is really angry, partly because he doesn't know who the hater is.
Paul thinks to himself: if anonymity weren't allowed on the net, there would be a lot fewer hate comments.
Should anonymity be forbidden on the net?

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