



Media, Myths and Messages

Key message

This exercise aims to develop a greater awareness among young people of the risks of bias and media manipulation; and how distorted messages reported in the media and 'fake news' can manipulate our perceptions and understanding of events and of people from different cultures or of different faiths and religions. This exercise may encourage pupils to challenge proviolence messages.

Key words: media bias and manipulation, challenging stereotypes, raising awareness

Summary

The objective of the exercise is to encourage participants to reflect on the role that fact, opinion and bias play in media messages and how misleading or distorted messages can change the way a story is presented.

Module	Group size	Group age	Duration
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early detection• Prevention	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• medium• large	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 12 - 15• 16 - 19• 20 - 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 hour

Purpose

- To highlight the way in which biased or misleading information is communicated so participants become aware of the need for critical evaluation of information sources
- To make a distinction between fact, opinion and bias, and encourage debate on these issues
- To present an opportunity to explore how the media might put pressure on governments and public opinion
- To examine the role of the media in terrorism from both positive and negative perspectives

Participants

Suitable for use with a wide variety of groups but may be most relevant to teenagers and young adults; non-gender specific.

Description

Step 1:

The facilitator begins by presenting the following statement to stimulate an initial discussion about the media's role in today's society.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights approved by the United Nations in 1948 states in Article 19: *'Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.'*

Step 2:

Depending on the numbers present, break the main group into small working groups of three or four people.

Step 3:

Having first provided an ample collection of newspapers and magazines, give each group flipchart sheets, adhesives and scissors. Ask them to cut out articles and photographs that they feel depict people involved in radical type behaviour. They are to sort them into categories based on whether the material that is presented is negative or neutral and to collate the images/stories under these headings and stick them onto the sheets.

Step 4:

Each group presents their flipcharts and shares their thoughts on the particular pieces they have selected. The facilitator concentrates their attention on the presentations from each group and then invites comments/questions from the other participants

Step 5:

The facilitator prompts a large group discussion focusing on the following questions:

- Are there recurring themes/images?
- What sort of language is used?
- Are the media and terrorism inextricably linked?
- Do mass media and social networks have a role to play in the development of terrorism, including in recruitment and propaganda?
- Do you believe there is confusion amongst the public at large as to the meaning of the terms terrorism, extremism and radicalisation?
- What are the implications of this for both adults and young people in today's society?

Step 6:

The facilitator reads the following statement that specifically relates to the portrayal of young people in the media and asks the group for a reaction.

'Young people are often perceived as a threat and the media reflects this fear with alarmist stories about youth crime, young people falling prey to radical groupings and so on. This can contribute to the image of young people as a 'social problem' and the view that youth work should be about correcting this problem rather than allowing young people more freedom to express themselves. There needs to be a constant challenging of these 'societal' attitudes and sweeping generalisations. Young people should be encouraged to question their value and position in society.'

Materials needed

A selection of magazines and newspapers, Flipchart Sheets, Adhesive, Scissors

Methodology

Review and analysis of media material, Group work in small teams, Large group discussion

Advice for Trainer

Questions for discussion include:

- Are any aspects of this statement true, if so which ones?
- Do they find any aspect of the language offensive? What parts of it and why those in particular?
- Where and how do we pick up ideas about young people and radicalisation?
- How do the media portray these young people and how does their interpretation influence us?

Source / Literature

Original material developed for the purpose of the YCARE project.



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