

Fake news - Surrounded by frightful news

Exercises to work on the topic at home or at school

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Surrounded by frightful news

In the world of fake news, photoshop and deepfake, it is depressing news that we cannot believe our eyes or the information we read or the so called experts who sometimes even have a Dr., MD in their names. Starting a blog online is not difficult and anyone can be a self-proclaimed expert on almost any subject. Especially if you are aggressive and loud enough in your opinions. This is also a powerful divide in the influencer world, with generational tensions and differences mixed in.

Our first task is to establish credibility, which is not always possible without sources, references or bibliographies. This is where doubt comes into play as a guiding principle - if you are not sure, if it sounds suspicious, if it sounds too good, then decide in favour of the less damaging side: disbelieve it and look further.

Even the best and most credible sites and articles need marketing and a bit of hype, but at what cost. Whether the aim is to increase the number of visitors and clicks or to deliberately mislead is an important question, but it is to our benefit if we do not get our information from one source. If we surround ourselves with like-minded people and news sites, we can easily find ourselves in the middle of a filter bubble – which means, nothing gets through except what confirms that what we see and think is right. Diversity can lead to a broader perspective and critical thinking, which helps to better navigate the world. There is a growing awareness that we need to look after ourselves online too. We can be scammed, ripped off and have our good faith abused, but being prepared and knowing as many of the red flags as possible can protect us.

Let's talk to the children about it!

A well publicised fake news story or personal experience can be a good starting point to talk to children about fake news, either seriously or playfully.

The questions on the next page can help you do this.



Questions that can help to process this section

- Can you give an example of fake news?
- What harm can come from fake news or from believing everything without checking?
- What advice would you give to someone younger/less experienced than you to protect themselves from the discouragement and anxiety caused by online news and influences?
- How can you best balance your time online and offline? What helps, do you have an experience you could share?
- Have you ever heard a story where someone got into trouble because of fake news or reading too much negative news? How can you help when this happens?

Situational exercises to help understanding

- Children may wonder why someone is making fake news.
- What could be the purpose, what could be in their mind?
- How can they help their peers and friends?

The situational exercises on the next page will help answer these questions.



Exercises and techniques for discussion and debate

- Split into 2 groups, come up with a fake news story and try to persuade the other team, who has to check and dismantle it - then swap.
- Collect the thoughts and feelings of someone who feels bad about the quarantine and all the negative news
- Gather solutions or ideas to share with someone who feels they worry too much
- Put yourself in the shoes of the creator of a manipulative content / fake news site. What could be the purpose? What is (s)he trying to achieve?



Task cards

Split into 2 groups, come up with a fake news story and try to persuade the other team, who has to check and dismantle it - then swap.

Task cards

Collect the thoughts and feelings of someone who feels bad about the quarantine and all the negative news





Task cards

Gather solutions or ideas
to share with someone
who feels they worry too
much

Task cards

Put yourself in the shoes
of the creator of a
manipulative content /
fake news site. What
could be the purpose?
What is (s)he trying to
achieve?



Help children to be informed, to consume news consciously!

You can print out a small version of the infographic on the next page and hand it out to your children, or post it on the wall in a larger size to keep it in front of them.



How can you recognise fake news?

Not a credible source

Often the source of the news is not credible: it is fabricated for manipulation or as a joke. Click on the source to check it out! Search other sites for information about the same news!

Manipulated images

Today, artificial intelligence can be used to create realistic images. Tiny errors, inaccurate, blurred details can be revealing. Applications are available to recognise AI-generated images

Sensation chaser title

The title is often more exciting, or does not cover the content of the article, but only aims to increase clicks. Careful reading of the article will help you avoid this trap

Reposted old news

Often old news is shared as new news to suggest that it is still relevant. Always check the date of the original posting!

Untrue facts

We often come across facts that seem real but are not. You can check the veracity of the news on fact-checking sites.