MODULE 4

PROMOTING RESPONSIBLE ONLINE BEHAVIOR AND SOCIO-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

ERASMEDIAH

Educational Reinforcement Against
the Social Media Hyperconnectivity

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Co-funded by
the European Union

Lesson 4.2

Addressing Cyberbullying, Body-Shaming, Online Challenges and Online Conflicts

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Duration: 40 minutes

Objectives:
- To help young people understand the harmful impact of body-shaming and online conflicts on individuals and communities.
- To promote empathy, respect, and positive communication in digital interactions.
- To raise awareness about the consequences of hurtful language and behavior online.
- To equip participants with strategies to address and resolve online conflicts responsibly and constructively.

Key Message(s):
- Body-shaming and online conflicts can cause emotional harm and negatively impact mental well-being—words matter.
- Everyone has a responsibility to foster kindness and inclusivity in online spaces, avoiding judgment or hurtful comments.
- Addressing online conflicts involves understanding different perspectives, staying calm, and promoting respectful dialogue.
- Empathy and accountability are key to building safer, more supportive digital communities.
- By choosing positive, respectful interactions, we can create online environments where everyone feels valued and accepted.

TYPE OF LESSON

Lesson Overview

Today, we will explore the concept of body-shaming and online conflicts and their impact on individuals and digital communities. Together, we will discuss how negative behaviors, such as harmful comments or judgmental actions, affect others' mental well-being and relationships. We'll also identify strategies to resolve conflicts responsibly and foster respect and empathy in online spaces.

The workshop is organized into four steps:

1: Introduction to Body-Shaming and Online Conflicts (5 Min)

2: Understanding the Impact of Harmful Online Behavior (15 Min)

3: Group Activity: Resolving Online Conflicts (15 Min)

4: Reflection and Key Takeaways (5 Min)
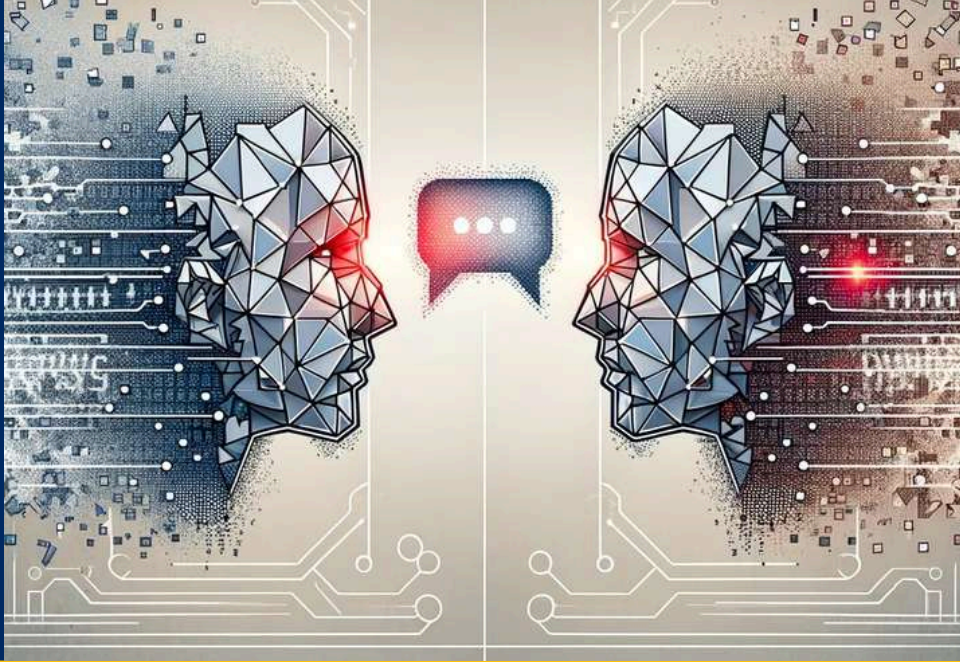
Step 1

Introduction to Body-Shaming and Online Conflicts

Imagine a scenario many of us have faced in the digital world: encountering body-shaming or engaging in online conflicts. In today's interconnected lives, comments on appearance, opinions, or behaviors have become commonplace. While some are uplifting, others can be deeply hurtful. Have you ever paused to consider the impact of these words on others? Or reflected on how online disagreements can spiral into conflicts that strain relationships?

This video explores the reality of body-shaming and online conflicts, highlighting their impact and emphasizing the need for empathy and respect in our digital interactions.
As you watch, reflect on whether you've experienced or observed similar situations. How did they make you feel, and what lessons can we take away to address these challenges? Once the video concludes, we'll dive into your thoughts and ideas for fostering a healthier online environment.
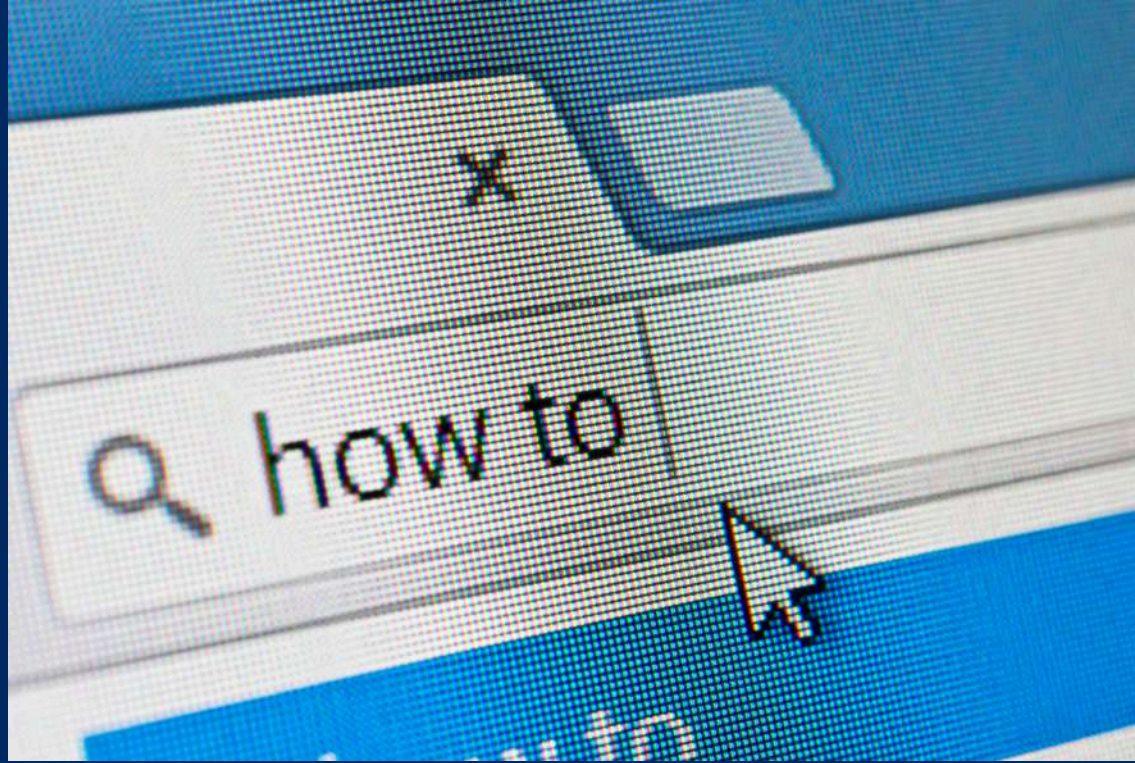
How to spot body-shaming and online conflicts

Let's watch the video:

Now, let's watch a video that explores the effects of body-shaming and online conflicts.

- While watching, consider the examples of hurtful comments or online arguments.
- Did anything surprise you or feel familiar? Have you witnessed or experienced similar situations in your own digital interactions?
- Think about this question: *How do these behaviors affect people's emotions and relationships?*

Once the video ends, I'd love to hear your thoughts-what stood out to you, and how can we respond to such situations in a more positive and empathetic way?

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Introduction to Body-Shaming and Online Conflicts

Did you know that how we communicate and behave online shapes not only our own digital identity but also the well-being of others?

Research highlights that online behaviors, such as body-shaming and harmful comments, can cause significant emotional and psychological harm, especially among young people (Patchin & Hinduja, 2020).

Negative interactions, such as judgmental remarks or online conflicts, often escalate due to the anonymity and immediacy of digital spaces (Suler, 2004), leading to misunderstandings and damaged relationships.

On the other hand, fostering empathy, sharing respectful content, and engaging in thoughtful discussions can build trust and create a supportive online community (Chawinga, 2017). When we understand the impact of our words and actions, we become part of a positive change-promoting digital spaces where everyone feels valued and accepted.

Let's reflect together:

- Have you ever seen or experienced hurtful behavior online?
- How did it make you feel, and what steps do you think we can take to make digital spaces more inclusive and kind?

Understanding the Impact of Harmful Online Behavior

Did you know that harmful online behaviors, such as body-shaming and cyber conflicts, can have long-lasting effects on individuals' mental health and emotional well-being?

Research highlights that body-shaming is strongly associated with anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, especially among adolescents and young adults (Rodgers et al., 2019). Similarly, cyberbullying and online conflicts can lead to isolation, social withdrawal, and reduced life satisfaction (Kowalski et al., 2014). The anonymity of digital platforms often encourages hurtful comments and escalates conflicts, damaging individuals and digital communities (Lapidot-Lefler & Barak, 2012). However, fostering digital empathy—understanding and respecting others online—can effectively reduce conflict and promote inclusive, supportive spaces (Blomfield Neira et al., 2018).

Let's think about this

- Have you ever witnessed or experienced a negative online interaction?
- How do you think such behaviors affect individuals emotionally and socially?
- What steps can we take to encourage kindness and accountability in our digital interactions?

Understanding the Impact of Harmful Online Behavior

LIST of BODY SHAMING ITEMS FOR THE ACTIVITY

- New Study Reveals Link Between Body-Shaming and Increased Anxiety Levels Among Teenagers

- Social Media Platforms Face Criticism for Failing to Remove Body-Shaming Comments

- Influencer Sparks Debate After Promoting 'Body Positivity' While Sharing Edited Photos

- Research Highlights How Body-Shaming Online Leads to Poor Self-Esteem in Adolescents

- TikTok Under Fire as Trends Promote Unrealistic Body Standards Among Young Users

- Survey Finds 70% of Teenagers Have Experienced Body-Shaming on Social Media

- New Initiative Encourages Schools to Tackle Body-Shaming and Promote Body Acceptance

Understanding the Impact of Harmful Online Behavior

What do you think happens when someone posts a negative or hurtful comment about someone's appearance? Have you ever noticed how quickly a single harmful comment can escalate into a conflict, or how it can affect a person's emotions and confidence?

Hurtful behaviors online, like body-shaming, often use judgmental or exaggerated language that targets someone's physical appearance. Such actions can deeply impact individuals, leading to emotional distress, low self-esteem, and even mental health struggles. These harmful interactions not only hurt the person being targeted but also create an environment where negativity thrives.

Let's reflect on this as a group

- Why do you think body-shaming happens online so frequently?
- How might these comments affect someone's feelings and mental health?
- What can we do to stop and prevent this kind of harmful behavior?

Understanding the Impact of Harmful Online Behavior

After discussing examples of harmful online behavior in your groups, you will each share your thoughts. For instance, you might say: "We noticed this behavior was harmful because it used judgmental language, targeted someone's appearance, and could damage their self-esteem.

Let's identify some common "red flags" of harmful online behavior, such as:

- Comments that focus on someone's appearance instead of their actions or ideas.
- Overly negative or emotional language meant to embarrass or hurt someone.
- Posts or messages that escalate conflict instead of resolving it.
- Lack of empathy or understanding in how people respond to one another.
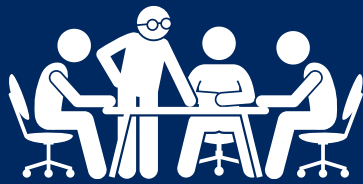
Step 3   # Group Activity: Resolving Online Conflicts

Now that we've explored the impact of harmful online behavior, let's focus on specific techniques to resolve online conflicts respectfullyandconstructively. These strategies are valuable tools when you encounter negativity or escalating arguments in digital spaces.

We will revisit some of the scenarios we discussed earlier-where body-shaming or conflicts occurred-and apply these techniques:

- *Understanding the Situation: Reflect on the emotions and perspectives of everyone involved.*
- *Identifying Escalating Factors: What words or actions made the situation worse?*
- *Choosing Positive Responses: How can calm, respectful communication replace hurtful or judgmental comments?*

When conflicts arise online-whether it's hurtful comments, body-shaming, or escalating arguments- understanding how to respond constructively is key. Just like we verify news by checking sources or cross-referencing information, we can use specific techniques to address and resolve conflicts effectively.
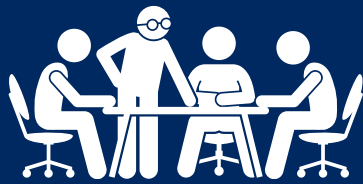
Step 3 | # Group Activity: Resolving Online Conflicts

Here are three techniques you can use to de-escalate conflicts and promote a positive online environment:

1. **Pause and Reflect:** Before responding, take a moment to think about the situation. Ask yourself:

- What is the tone of the message? Is it meant to hurt or provoke?

- How might my response make things better or worse?

2. **Understand Perspectives:** Like checking the source of a story, try to understand where the other person is coming from. Sometimes misunderstandings arise because of differing views or emotional reactions. Responding with empathy can de-escalate tensions.

3. **Use Respectful Language:** Replace hurtful or negative words with calm, constructive ones. For example:

- Instead of reacting angrily, you might say: "I understand your perspective, but let's talk about this respectfully."

- Offer solutions instead of criticism: "I think we misunderstood each other. How can we clear this up?

Instruction

RESOLVING ONLINE CONFLICTS

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

Now that we've discussed the emotional impact of harmful online behaviors, let's focus on applying specific techniques to resolve these conflicts thoughtfully and constructively.

After analyzing the online conflict scenarios in your groups, each group will present their proposed resolution by explaining:

1.The Techniques You Used:

- Did you focus on understanding the perspectives of the individuals involved?
- How did you suggest replacing negative or hurtful language with calm, respectful communication?

2.The Red Flags You Identified:

- What made the conflict escalate? (e.g., hurtful words, lack of empathy, judgmental tone)
- Why was the behavior harmful, and what impact might it have on those involved?

3.Your Resolution and Its Impact:

- How does your solution de-escalate the situation?
- How would this approach contribute to a kinder and more supportive online environment?

Reflection and Key takeaways

To wrap up today's session, let's take a moment to reflect on what we've learned about harmful online behavior and resolving conflicts.

Here's a question for everyone:

"Can you think of a time when you witnessed or experienced body-shaming or an online conflict? How did it make you feel, and how could the strategies we practiced today help you respond differently next time?"

For those who feel comfortable sharing, I encourage you to raise your hand and reflect:

- What's one thing you learned today that you will apply in your digital interactions?
- How might choosing empathy, calm communication, or understanding perspectives create a more positive online environment?

Key Takeaway Summary

Let's summarize the key points we've discussed today about addressing body-shaming and online conflicts:

- **Think Before You Respond:** Take a moment to pause and reflect on the situation before replying to negative comments or online conflicts. A calm and thoughtful response can prevent escalation.

- Practice Empathy: Try to understand the other person's perspective and emotions. Responding with kindness and understanding helps de-escalate conflicts.

- **Use Respectful Communication:** Avoid judgmental or hurtful language. Replace negativity with positive, constructive words that promote respectful dialogue.

- **Recognize Red Flags:** Be aware of harmful behaviors like body-shaming, exaggerated comments, or emotional attacks, and think about their impact on individuals and the online community.

- **Promote Kindness:** Make a habit of encouraging positive interactions and supporting others when you see harmful behavior online. Small actions can create a safer and more inclusive digital space.

Instructions for youth workers, educators, and teachers

Objective:

This lesson is designed to help youth workers, educators, and teachers guide students in understanding online ethics and social media etiquette. The focus is on promoting respectful, empathetic, and responsible behavior in digital environments, while raising awareness about the consequences of harmful behaviors such as body-shaming, negative comments, and online conflicts. Through structured activities and group discussions, participants will develop essential skills to navigate digital spaces positively, fostering safer, more inclusive online communities.

Materials Needed:

- Projector and screen
- Speakers
- Laptop or device for video playback
- Handouts with social media examples and etiquette tips
- Reflection cards with scenarios (for group discussions)
- Critical thinking checklist (for evaluating online behavior)
- Notebooks or paper
- Pens or pencils
- Laptops, tablets, or smartphones (for exploring solutions and strategies)
- Stickers or markers (for identifying respectful vs. harmful online behaviors)
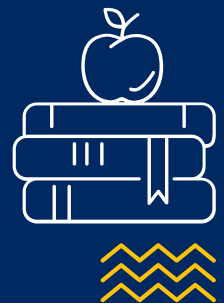
Step 1. Introduction to Online Ethics and First Comments (5 Min)

Welcome and Introduction

Warmly welcome the participants and create a supportive environment. Introduce the session objective: to explore online ethics and understand how our actions and words influence digital spaces. Briefly outline the workshop steps and introduce a video resource to start the conversation.

Video Screening

Suggested Video: "Be mindful of your online behaviour" (Available on platforms such as YouTube or Safer Internet resources).

Alternative Language Resources (available in 6 languages):
- **Italian:** Visit the Media Education Foundation for materials on respectful digital behavior and online ethics.
- **Greek:** Refer to resources provided by the Greek Safer Internet Center focusing on ethical social media use.
- **Hungarian:** Explore the Hungarian Safer Internet Programme for content on digital citizenship and online responsibility.
- **Polish:** Access educational content from NASK on fostering kindness and ethical communication in digital spaces.
- **Turkish:** Use materials from BTK Safer Internet Day resources promoting respectful digital behavior and anti-cyberbullying campaigns.
- **Spanish:** Consider PantallasAmigas videos on promoting empathy, digital respect, and ethical online interactions.

Step 1. Introduction to Online Ethics and First Comments (5 Min)

Explain the Video's Purpose

Introduce the video by explaining its role in highlighting the importance of respectful and ethical behavior in digital spaces. Encourage participants to reflect on how small actions, such as thoughtful comments or empathetic responses, can create a more inclusive and positive online environment.

Key Discussion Points:

- How do negative online behaviors, such as body-shaming or hurtful comments, impact individuals and communities?
- What are the long-term effects of unethical actions on trust and relationships in digital environments?
- How can we contribute to fostering kindness and empathy online?

Step 2. Understanding the Impact of Harmful Online Behavior (15 min)

Analyzing Sample Headlines

Distribute pre-selected headlines to students, guiding them to analyze how harmful online behaviors—like body-shaming—impact individuals and communities.

Divide participants into small groups and assign each group one headline. Ask them to evaluate the issue and discuss:

- **Source credibility:** Is the information coming from a trustworthy source (e.g., research organizations, news platforms)?
- **Impact on individuals:** How might the behavior described affect mental health or emotional well-being?
- **Wider social impact:** What are the consequences for online communities and society?

Share and Discuss:

Each group will share their analysis and reasoning. Wrap up the activity with a discussion on:

- How harmful behaviors like body-shaming spread online.
- Why such behaviors can escalate and cause long-term effects.
- What strategies can be used to prevent or address these situations**.**

Step 2. Understanding the Impact of Harmful Online Behavior (15 min)

Sample Headlines

1. "New Study Reveals Link Between Body-Shaming and Increased Anxiety Levels Among Teenagers"

- **Evaluation Tips:** Look for the credibility of the study. Is it from a well-known research institution? Check for supporting details like sample size and findings.
- **Impact Analysis:** Highlights the emotional and mental toll of body-shaming, particularly among youth.

2. "Social Media Platforms Face Criticism for Failing to Remove Body-Shaming Comments"

- **Evaluation Tips:** Assess whether the platform's response is well-documented. Are there examples of harmful comments being ignored?
- **Impact Analysis:** Discuss how platform responsibility affects user trust and well-being.

3. "Influencer Sparks Debate After Promoting "Body Positivity" While Sharing Edited Photos"

- **Evaluation Tips:** Consider the source and public reactions. Does the influencer's action promote unrealistic standards?
- **Impact Analysis:** Examine how conflicting messages can confuse audiences and undermine body positivity movements.

4."Research Highlights How Body-Shaming Online Leads to Poor Self-Esteem in Adolescents"

- **Evaluation Tips:** Look for evidence of the research's validity (e.g., surveys, peer-reviewed status).
- **Impact Analysis:** Discuss how body-shaming contributes to reduced confidence and social isolation.

5."TikTok Under Fire as Trends Promote Unrealistic Body Standards Among Young Users"

- **Evaluation Tips:** Identify whether examples of trends are cited and whether the concerns are widespread.
- **Impact Analysis:** Explore how viral trends influence body image perceptions and mental health.

6. "Survey Finds 70% of Teenagers Have Experienced Body-Shaming on Social Media"

- **Evaluation Tips:** Assess the credibility of the survey and the sample size.
- **Impact Analysis:** Highlight the prevalence of body-shaming and its role in creating toxic digital environments.

7. "New Initiative Encourages Schools to Tackle Body-Shaming and Promote Body Acceptance"

- **Evaluation Tips:** Evaluate the initiative's goals and actions. Is it backed by experts or organizations?
- **Impact Analysis:** Discuss how education and awareness programs can help foster a culture of acceptance.

Step 3: Group Activity – Ethical Dilemmas (15 min)

Scenario 1: Body-Shaming Comment
- A friend posts a photo from a recent event on social media. Under the post, someone comments: "Why would you wear that? It doesn't suit you at all!" The friend replies angrily, saying, "Who even asked for your opinion? Mind your own business!" This escalates, and others join in, taking sides.

Discussion Points:
- What made this situation escalate?
- How could the person receiving the comment respond constructively?
- What could the commenter have said instead to be more respectful?

Scenario 2: Misunderstood Text
- Two classmates are working on a group project. One sends a message in the group chat: "You never do any work; this is so annoying!" The other classmate replies defensively: "That's not true. I've done plenty! Stop blaming me for everything!" Both students become frustrated, and the group chat goes silent.

Discussion Points:
- How did tone and choice of words contribute to the conflict?
- How could this issue be resolved calmly without blame?
- What strategies could the group use to promote better teamwork and communication?

Step 3: Group Activity – Ethical Dilemmas (15 min)

Scenario 3: Opinion Disagreement Online
- Someone shares a post about a controversial topic. A friend comments: "I don't agree with this at all. People like you don't know what you're talking about!" The original poster replies: "Wow, rude! You think you're so smart?" The conversation turns into a heated argument.

Discussion Points:
- How can both parties express disagreement respectfully?
- What would be a better way to understand each other's perspectives?
- How can we promote constructive dialogue instead of attacking one another?

Step 3: Group Activity – Ethical Dilemmas (15 Min)

Scenario 4: Group Chat Exclusion

- A student notices that a few friends have created a new group chat without including them. They send a private message to one of the friends: "Why did you exclude me? Did I do something wrong?" The friend replies: "Relax, it's not a big deal. You're being too sensitive." This response upsets the student further.

Discussion Points:

- What is the emotional impact of exclusion in digital spaces?
- How could the friend respond more empathetically?
- What steps can both parties take to rebuild trust and clear up misunderstandings?

Scenario 5: Spreading Rumors

- A student shares a rumor about a classmate in an online group: "Did you hear? [Name] totally failed the exam. It's so embarrassing!" The classmate finds out and confronts the person online, writing: "Stop spreading lies about me. You don't know anything!" The situation gets more intense as others start commenting.

Discussion Points:

- How can spreading rumors online harm relationships and trust?
- What steps can the person spreading the rumor take to make amends?
- How can others in the group encourage kindness and avoid escalating the conflict?

Step 4: Reflection and Key Takeaways (5 minutes)

Group Sharing
Invite each group to briefly share their solutions to the online conflict scenarios discussed earlier. Ask them to reflect on what surprised them or stood out during their analysis, particularly regarding the emotional impact of harmful behaviors like body-shaming.

Reflection Questions
- What was the most challenging part of finding a solution to the online conflict?
- How has this activity changed the way you view harmful online behaviors, such as body-shaming or hurtful comments?
- What strategies can you use to promote respectful and empathetic communication in the future?

Key Takeaways
Summarize the main points by emphasizing the importance of:
- Identifying harmful behaviors like body-shaming and online conflicts.
- Responding calmly and thoughtfully to de-escalate conflicts.
- Using empathy, respectful language, and understanding perspectives to create a positive and inclusive digital environment.

Thank participants for their thoughtful contributions and active engagement. Remind them that by promoting kindness and respect in their online interactions, they can help foster a safer and more supportive digital community.

Follow-Up and At-Home Activities

Reflection on Social Media Behavior: Encourage participants to observe their own social media interactions for a week. Ask them to identify moments where they practiced or could have practiced positive online ethics, such as avoiding judgmental comments or showing empathy in discussions.

Discuss with Family or Friends: Invite participants to share what they've learned about online ethics and social media etiquette with family or friends. They can reflect on how respectful and responsible behavior creates healthier online environments.

Tips for Teachers:

- **Time Management:** Keep discussions and group activities focused and within the allotted time.
- **Encourage Participation:** Gently invite quieter participants to share their thoughts or examples.
- **Adaptability:** Be ready to use both digital and printed materials, ensuring flexibility based on available resources.
- **Model Respect:** Demonstrate respectful online behavior and positive communication throughout the session as a role model for students.

QUIZ

1.Why is body-shaming harmful in digital environments?
 A) It can negatively impact people's self-confidence and mental health.
 B) It helps people get more likes on social media.
 C) It is an effective method to resolve conflicts.
 D) It helps people express their opinions freely.

2. What is an important method for resolving conflicts in digital environments?
 A) Responding immediately and escalating the situation
 B) Showing empathy and understanding different perspectives
 C) Encouraging more people to join the argument
 D) Commenting without thinking

3. What is the impact of spreading false information about someone online?
 A) It strengthens the person's digital identity.
 B) It creates misunderstandings and distrust in society.
 C) It builds stronger connections between people.
 D) It starts a good discussion.

QUIZ

4. What are the long-term effects of body-shaming and online conflicts?
 A) They help people build stronger social networks.
 B) They can lead to social isolation, low life satisfaction, and poor mental health.
 C) They create respect and trust in digital environments.
 D) They make people less careful about their online behavior.

5. What should be done to make an online discussion more constructive?
 A) Make personal attacks
 B) Respond quickly to escalate the situation
 C) Show empathy and use respectful language
 D) Complicate the topic further

ANSWERS

Question 1: A

Question 2: B

Question 3: B

Question 4: B

Question 5: C

Tools

European Parliament

Published by the European Parliament, this study examines how social media affects women and girls, highlighting issues like negative body image and online harassment.

LINK

UNESCO

UNESCO promotes peace through international cooperation in education, arts, sciences, and culture. A new report highlights how digital technologies can aid learning but also pose risks like privacy invasion, distraction, and cyberbullying. It also warns that social media reinforces gender stereotypes, harming girls' well-being and career choices.

LINK

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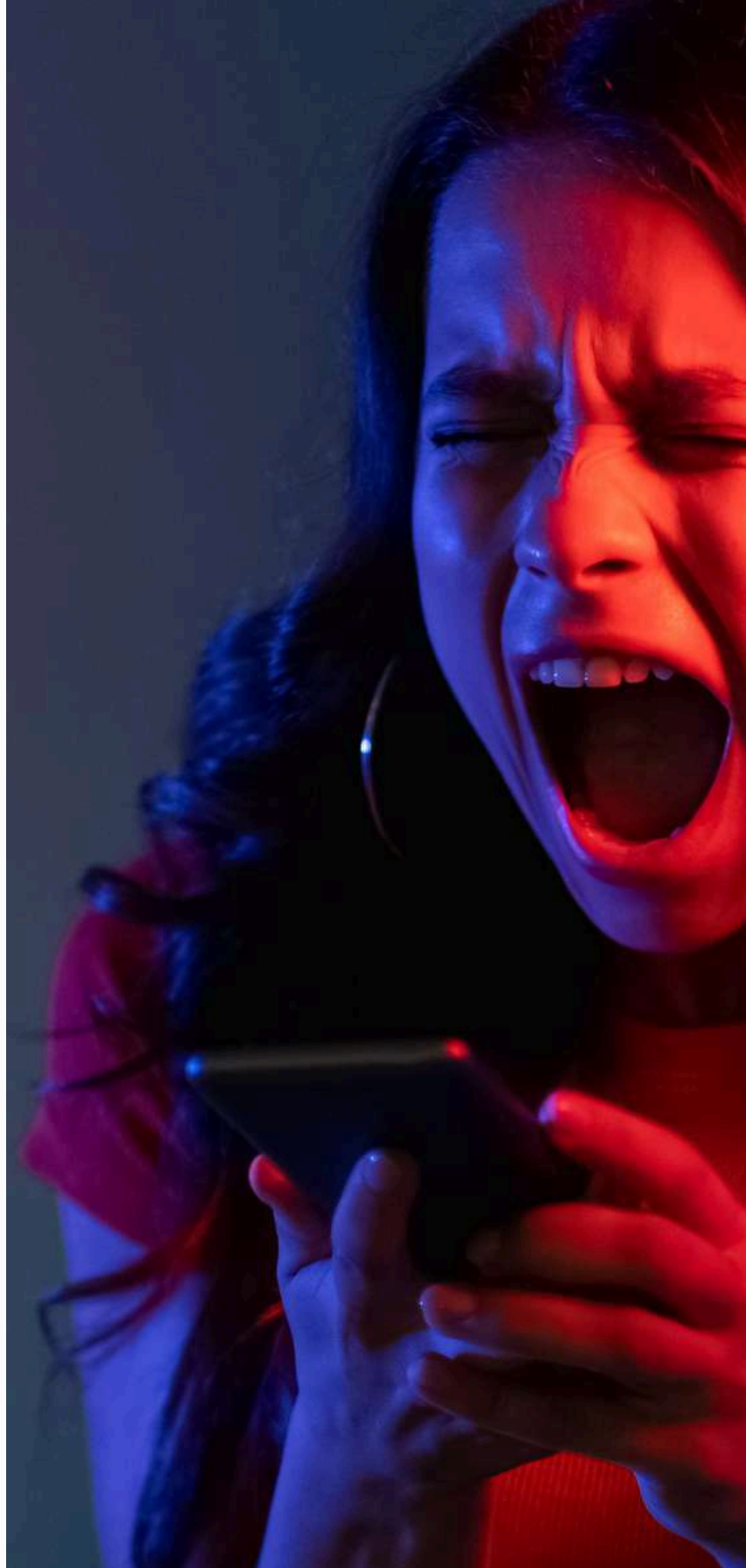Archivio della Memoria

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