

Addressing Online Hate



TRAINER RESOURCE

This document is a reference and preparation sheet for the trainer, and a companion to the lesson plan and sample script.

The Learning Objectives summarize the knowledge that learners should have gained by the time they reach the end of the module.

The Background and Detail for Trainer provides greater details on the content, and links to references. It will allow trainers to learn more about the topic so they can lead discussions or answer questions confidently without being limited to the classroom content. Each item in the Background supports a paragraph in the Lesson Script section.

The Lesson Script is a separate file containing a rough script for the trainer to use during class. It is provided as a guide; the trainer does not have to stick to it.

Learning objectives

- > Be able to recognize and identify forms of hate speech and discrimination, in one's own community and in broader society.
- > Understand and explain how online media is used to disseminate hate speech/discrimination.
- > Be able to create and participate in non-discriminatory dialogue online.



Background and Detail for Trainer

1 Awareness of Forms of Hate

1.1 In Brief

Messages that instill hate, promote hate or seek to exclude people based on their membership to a group are harmful and can be illegal. It is vital to be able to identify hate speech.

1.2 In Detail

- Equality is an important human right and each person has right to be free from discrimination.
 - There are many laws that guarantee this right:
 - The 1st and 2nd articles of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights¹
 - The 2nd and 15th articles of the Canadian Constitution²
 - The 3rd and 10th articles of the Quebec Constitution³
- Freedom can be threatened by expressions of hate online
- Hate speech is a crime in Canada.
 - Hate speech compromises the basic right to not face hostility, violence, or discrimination
 - It has a long-term detrimental effect on the affected
 - Hate crime can represent a source of terror for members of affected minority groups
 - To be prosecuted as a crime the speech must be public, deliberate, severe, targeted at an identifiable group, and hateful in its context.
 - The Criminal Code of Canada states that "Every one who, by communicating statements in any public place, incites hatred against any identifiable group where such incitement is likely to lead to a breach of the peace is guilty" of an indictable or punishable offence.⁴
 - Some forms of speech are excluded from this definition such as where:
 - the speech is to identify hateful material,
 - an opinion on a religious subject or based in a religious text,
 - true,

¹ See: <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/>

² See: <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-15.html>

³ See: <http://legisquebec.gouv.qc.ca/en/showdoc/cs/C-12>

⁴ See: <http://www.laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-46/page-73.html#h-93>



- in the public interest, or
- satirical.
- Prosecution of hate speech can only proceed with the approval of the Attorney General, which introduces an element of political accountability.
- Hate speech generally portrays a group of people as being somehow distinct, different from most people, and/or “not like us” .
 - Hate speech (in the form of text, images or sound) can be identified by the degrading or dehumanizing functions that it serves. That is, talking about a group of people as though they are not human but are something other and somehow lesser.⁵
 - Distinguishing between hate speech and free speech can be difficult
 - Ideas around free speech and freedom of expression are nuanced
 - It can be difficult to define free speech concretely.
 - In many ways, freedom of expression is “an essential human right”⁶
 - Absolutists of free speech “advocate complete freedom of expression without any restrictions whatsoever”.⁷
 - Others see value in placing limits on speech that would cause harm.⁸
 - In Canada, freedom of expression is not unlimited or absolute.
 - Under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, freedom of expression shall
 - “not be construed so as to abrogate or derogate from any aboriginal, treaty or other rights or freedoms”, or
 - “be construed as denying the existence of any other rights or freedoms that exist in Canada”⁹.
 - Consequently, it is important that citizens find non-judgmental spaces to openly discuss their opinions while also encouraging criticality, empathy and tolerance.
- Being able to identify a problem is often the first step in the process of solving a problem. So, it is important to be able to identify expressions of hate and hate speech.
 - Hate speech could appear in:

⁵ For videos and lessons discussing how hate speech after 9/11 affects those of Arab descent, middle easterners and Muslims see: <http://projectsomeone.ca/theonlineother>

⁶ For a discussion on free speech: Witherspoon, 2017, https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/free-speech-or-hate-speech-where-do-we-draw-the-line_us_5970df19e4bof68541cd6316 . The Canadian Human Rights Commission (2016) have a guide to help understand your rights http://www.cdcdj.qc.ca/Publications/Charte_simplifiee_EN.pdf

⁷ For more on absolutist views on free speech see: Ahmad, 2012, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/439935/freedom-of-expression-where-can-we-draw-the-line/>, and Meiklejohn, A. (1961). The First Amendment is an absolute. The Supreme Court Review, 1961, 245-266

⁸ To read a discussion on free speech issues, see: Barendt, E. (2005). Freedom of speech. Oxford University Press.

⁹ For the law see: <https://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-15.html>



- Racially motivated graffiti
- Pamphlets denying that the Holocaust occurred.
- Flyers condemning gay sex as immoral.
- Each of these examples defines and degrades a group such as by their race, religion or sexuality. It can be found in other more local context such as:
 - Receiving poor service or no service because of one's religion.
 - Being called offensive names because of one's sexuality.
 - Being told to “*** off back to your own country” referring to one's race.
 - Coming home to find “tranny” spray-painted on your fence.
 - Being laughed at or mimicked for having a physical disability¹⁰
 - Someone being abused because of their status on a social network.
- To prevent the harms of hate speech, it is important to recognize hate speech and marginalization of groups within our local and global communities.
- Awareness of wrongdoing and the law allows us to protect peoples' rights by:
 - making choices ourselves,
 - educating those around us and
 - in extreme cases talking to the police.

1.3 In Practice

DO recognize and identify different forms of marginalization against identifiable groups.

DO understand why it's a problem, and the consequences

DO recognize and identify different forms of marginalization in closer communities and more globally

2 How and Why Hate is disseminated Online

2.1 In Brief

Social media may be used to propagate hatred, discrimination and, violence toward certain groups. It is important to understand how different online media tools are used to spread hate speech and discrimination.

2.2 In Detail

- Hate speech online can be identified as messages on the Internet that

¹⁰ For more examples see: <https://spvm.qc.ca/en/Pages/Report-an-event/Hate-crimes-and-hate-incidents>



- incite hostility,
- promote hate, or
- seek to exclude people based on their group.
- The problems of hate speech online are a concern around the world.
 - The UN Human Rights Council Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues expressed her "concern over the spread of misinformation, hate speech and incitement to violence, discrimination and hostility in the media and on Internet, particularly targeted against Muslim community Communities"¹¹
- Hate speech is commonly found on online news sites, comments sections, or in other communications such as emails or text messages (SMS).
 - The Ethical Journalism Network has expressed concern about hate speech making its way into the news stories published by mainstream media.¹²
- Hate speech can appear anywhere that comments are able to be made online . Hate speech doesn't have to be at a grand scale or in the news to be harmful.
 - For example, gender-based hate speech can be seen in a shared post: "She broke my heart, I broke her nose." Although some might dismiss the danger of posts such as this, they can lead to tremendous harm.
- Hate speech can be transferred by any of the many means of communication that the Internet provides and may involve individual users or online communities.
- It is important to understand that anyone can publish anything on the Internet, which is made available to a public or semi-public audience.
 - Publishing can be done anonymously, using a pseudonym, or using one's real name, and it is difficult to know the difference.
- Social Media provides the ability for anyone to easily and quickly read, share and create content for their friends and others.
 - Social Media is very common.
 - o Nearly two-thirds of Canadians use Social Media. Some common Social Media platforms include Facebook, Twitter, Reddit, Instagram, and Snapchat.
 - Discriminatory groups online are not rare.
 - o SafeHome.org estimates that on Twitter, on average:
 - anti-immigrant groups have more than 17,500 followers;

¹¹ See: https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/regularsessions/session28/documents/a_hrc_28_64_eng.doc

¹² See: <http://europeanjournalists.org/blog/2015/01/19/mainstream-medias-shouldnt-spread-hate-speech-we-need-to-change-that-ejn/>



- an anti-Muslim group will have 14,500 followers,
 - an anti-LGBT group will have approximately 7,000 followers, and
 - an anti-Semitic group will have approximately 1,524 followers in the U.S.¹³
- How people talk on Social Media is becoming normal. It is concerning that the hate speech being spread online might also be seen as normal and acceptable.
 - Individuals and groups have made use of Social Media to propagate messages of hate
 - In some ways, online hate speech is more dangerous than hate speech in a confined context, such as a face-to-face conversation.
 - Online and virtual environments allow speech to be easily dispersed at great speed in a manner that can be difficult to track.

2.3 In Practice

DO identify online hate speech;

DO understand and explain how Social Media has augmented the extent of hatred and discrimination;

DO be aware of the different forms of Social Media involved in this form of online hate.

3 Participating in non-discriminatory dialogue and being resilient online

3.1 In Brief

It is important to think critically about the information found online, particularly in terms of how identifiable groups are represented, and to develop one's sense of resilience and empathy in the context of online hate. Use these skills to find positive, tolerant sites and contribute to creating to non-discriminatory online spaces in which to participate.

3.2 In Detail

- It is important to understand that a website or Social Media post can look official and legitimate without being either.
 - There is no official system to check that websites are providing information that is correct, or even safe.
- Identifying propaganda sites is not easy because
 - They can be created to look professional and like authentic news sites.
 - They can have an artificially large following on Social Media

¹³ See : <https://www.safehome.org/resources/hate-on-social-media/>



- Fake 'followers' can be purchased from illegal service providers
- 'Astroturfing' is the creation and management of automated virtual personas to contribute in Social Media for the purposes of creating the impression of a social movement.
- It may be tempting to believe that particular news outlets are trustworthy, thereby eclipsing the need for readers to assume a critical position.
 - However, even though some news sources are deemed more trustworthy than others, as shown by large-scale survey studies (e.g., The Economist and BBC over the Rush Limbaugh Show and BuzzFeed)¹⁴, all news and information on the Internet is inevitably biased and distorted and should be read critically.
 - Groups have been known to distribute misinformation online with the intention of misleading voters or to make money; these stories are sometimes redistributed by legitimate media sources.
 - Some news outlets are quite disciplined in publicly retracting false or manipulated stories, but others might just quietly edit or delete a story proven to be false, if they correct it at all.
 - Thinking critically about stories and sites can help to avoid forming opinions based on biased or false stories.
- In order to be able to identify what is trustworthy, people need to be able to think critically
 - Critical thinking skills empower Internet users to navigate the online world as informed, resilient, and empathetic citizens. Everyone can learn to think critically and, with practice, it becomes an essential habit.
 - Engaging in systematic questioning will help you recognize errors in reasoning or manipulation techniques in Social Media or news sources.
 - Critical thinking can be developed by questioning a site or story.
 - You can ask yourself:
 - What arguments are being made?
 - What evidence is being provided?
 - Who is making the argument?
 - What are the perspectives and assumptions that are present in this article?
 - Whose perspectives are missing?
- Countering hate speech involves developing one's own resilience and empathy online.

¹⁴ See: <http://assets.pewresearch.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/13/2014/10/Political-Polarization-and-Media-Habits-FINAL-REPORT-7-27-15.pdf>



- Most people will be exposed to hate speech online or in person, so it is important to also build resilience in yourself and those around you.
 - o Resilience refers to developing the skills necessary to fare well in the face of adversity.
 - o In addition to critical thinking skills, personal qualities that serve to provide protective powers or resilience in the face of adversity include a belief in one's abilities, self-esteem, and a strong sense of identity.
 - o If an individual is exposed to significant adversity online, resilience involves the "capacity of an individual to navigate his or her way to health-sustaining resources," which can be provided by one's family or community.
 - o Resilience in the face of hate speech begins with an understanding of one's self and "moves toward the development of a shared vision for an inclusive community".
- Empathy is an important tool for helping to create non-discriminatory online spaces .
 - o Empathy refers to the individual's capacity to understand and respond to the unique affective experiences of another person.
 - o It has been shown that both empathy and perspective are associated with less prejudice and stereotyping.
 - For example, "Visualizing Empathy" is a program that teaches youth about empathy and to apply this through their mobile technologies.
 - o Identifying and countering hate speech online can feel overwhelming at times, particularly when instances of hate are ambiguous.
- There are online tools that can help:
 - o "Roots of Empathy" teaches how to be socially competent citizens <http://www.rootsofempathy.org>
 - o "Who am I?" is a race awareness online game for children: <https://www.common-sense.org/education/app/who-am-i-race-awareness-game>
- It is important to feel that you can talk about these issues in an understanding space.
 - Offline conversations about online behaviours can happen in community courses, in classrooms, with friends, and with family.
- It is vital that you know your rights as an individual and the rights of others.
- You can report online hate through official channels.
 - You can report incidents to the platform administrators as well as to the police or law enforcement, your workplace management, or your school administration.
 - Most online publishing or hosting services include in their terms of service that illegal activity will not be permitted through the use of their service. Many have more recently



extended that to include language more specific to hate speech. Reporting hate speech to the company hosting the speech can result in the material being removed.

- You can find links to places where you can report hate speech on the webpage for this module.

3.3 In Practice

DO know your rights as an individual and the rights of others

DO actively question the credibility of what you read and watch online

DO have offline conversations about online behaviour