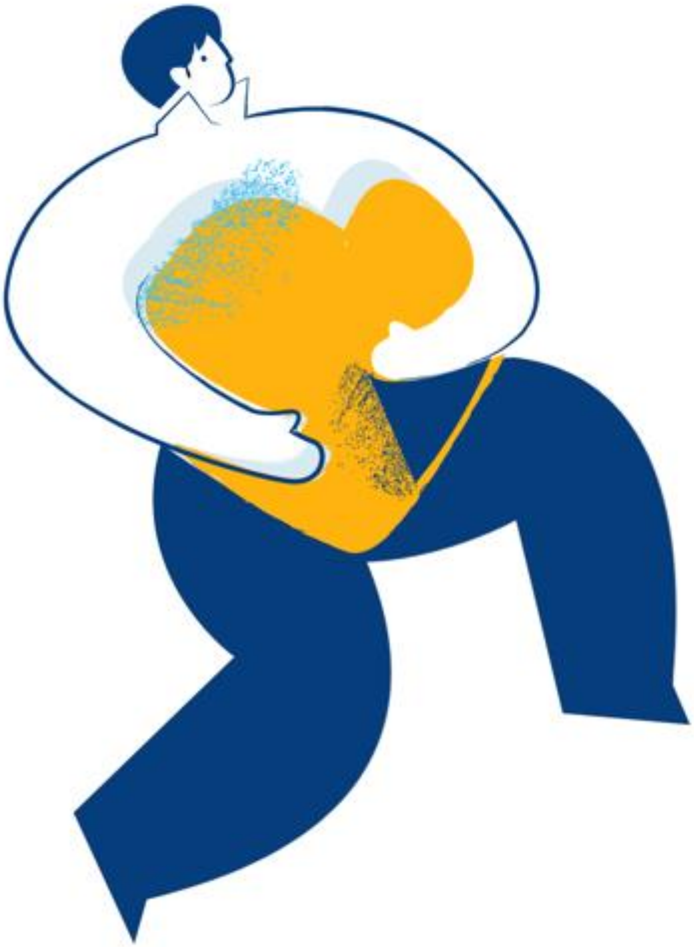
Courageous RI

COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS CURRICULUM

Resources and Lesson Plans to Build Common Ground through Media Literacy and Active Listening



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Foreword

When we first started Courageous Conversations in the spring of 2023, it was a time when levels of mistrust, fear, and suspicion were high. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security noted that white supremacists and other far right extremists have killed more people since September 11, 2001 than any other category of domestic extremism. Anti-government activists believe that by committing acts of violence, they can destabilize society by intensifying conflict between people and their government.

The mass shootings in El Paso, Pittsburgh, Buffalo, and many other cities made it clear that hateful ideologies were taking hold across the country. We watched as more and more teens and young adult men turned their energy towards heinous forms of domestic terrorism, planning their attacks in online communities of like-minded people and then livestreaming their gruesome and tragic actions. To address this issue, it has become obvious that law enforcement efforts alone are simply not sufficient. We need a whole-of-society approach to transform the cultural conflicts that are promoting fear and hate.

We had an audacious idea to help restore public trust through a series of dialogue and discussion programs that build media literacy and active listening competencies. As we gathered a diverse group of stakeholders at the Rhode Island State House to launch our program, our colleagues explicitly warned us: Don't get your hopes up. There was simply too much animosity between liberals and conservatives for meaningful dialogue to have much impact. You may remember that anger, hatred, and disrespect were rampant in our communities in the immediate aftermath of pandemic. Plus, the events of January 6th 2021 created deep divisions in every neighborhood and community in Rhode Island, around the country, and around the world.

But because people like to talk about media and technology, more than 700 people participated in one or more of our Courageous Conversations, taking time to learn, share, and reflect on the small actions we can take to dial down the hate. Research evidence from the program revealed that people experienced substantial knowledge gains and 75% of participants were able to apply what they learned to their everyday life in ways that had practical value to them. The success of this program reaffirmed our faith in people's desire to find common ground and prevent violence through active listening, media literacy, small acts of kindness and compassion, and community engagement.

Courageous Conversations can be a powerful method of teaching and learning. With support from talented educators and experts who participated in the program, we're proud to bring you the Courageous Conversations Curriculum. This book contains a collection of materials to help you bring media literacy and active listening into your middle school, high school or college classroom. You can use these activities in the workplace, faith community, or organization. Find common ground to prevent rising violence and extremism using the power of dialogue and discussion about media, technology, and society!

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Pam Steager is the Director of Community Engagement at the Media Education Lab. Pam was lead for the Courageous Conversation Program of COURAGEOUS RI, a media literacy initative that brought people together for both informational sessions and interactive, hands-on discussion that counters disinformation, enhances civic participation, and improves media literacy.

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enjamin Thevenin is an Associate Professor of Media Arts at Brigham Young University, where he teaches classes on film and media studies, emerging media, youth culture, and media literacy. His studies focus on the relationships between youth, media and politics. His book Making Media Matter: Critical Literacy, Popular Culture, and Creative Production is a FREE resource for media educators looking to prepare their students to become more thoughtful citizens, consumers and creators of media.

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Introduction

COURAGEOUS RI is a media literacy program developed to reduce the hate that leads to violence by building a coalition of empowered people who recognize, analyze, and resist harmful forms of expression and communication. The program is an initiative of the Media Education Lab, whose mission is to improve the practice of digital and media literacy education through scholarship and community service.

The Courageous Journey

COURAGEOUS RI is a three-part initiative delivered over two years, during which time we aim to reduce the hate that leads to violence by building a coalition of empowered people who recognize, analyze, and resist harmful forms of expression and communication. That coalition will be built through:

1. Courageous Conversations: Community dialogues that bring people together to advance media literacy and deep listening.

2. Professional Development Program: Lesson plans and a supportive online community for educators who help students apply media literacy competencies in civic education.

3. Youth Media Contest: A youth multimedia contest that offers prizes to high school and college students for their creative and inspiring media messages.

This book contains the complete Courageous Conversation curriculum and collection of materials to help you bring media literacy and active listening into your school, workplace, group, church, or organization. In this collection, you will find:

- **Lesson Plans and Slide Decks**
- **Videos**
- **Small Group Discussion Questions**
- **Readings to Share**
- **Creative Expression Activities**
- **Curated Resources for Educators**

Thinking critically about what we hear, read, and see is important for people of every background, across the political spectrum. It is an ongoing process of listening, learning, and reflecting that has the power to stop hate in our communities. With these resources, you can help people to ask the right questions and empower them to be more informed. Working together, we can reduce the fear and hate that lead to violence.

Program Overview

Topics & Discussion Questions

1. Why Media Literacy Matters

Confront the many forms of disinformation, hoaxes, and propaganda that are part of everyday life. Experience the practical power of strategies for critically analyzing media messages that shape public opinion about education. Consider the power of media literacy as a civic skill and examine how people of all ages learn to spot disinformation and hoaxes.

What is media literacy and how can it help people to respond to disinformation & hoaxes?

Learn about media literacy and why it is important. Then examine a TikTok video and discuss:
- What type or form of media is this? How do you know?
- What feelings does this article evoke in you?
- What are the main ideas?
- How might different people interpret this message differently?

2. Preventing Violent Extremism

Learn how to analyze media representations of mass shootings and build new knowledge about the growing problem of violent extremism. It's important to take a step back from us-vs-them frameworks that are common in media depictions of violence and to make use the power of small acts of unexpected kindness.

How is violent extremism affecting our society and what can we do about it?

Analyze a news story about the racially-motivated mass shooting in Buffalo, NY. For discussion:
- Who is the author and what is the purpose?
- What techniques are used to attract and hold your attention?
- What lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented?
- How might people interpret the message differently?
- What is omitted from the message?

3. High Conflict

In dialogue and discussion, conflict can be beneficial or harmful. But it's important to watch out for "fire starters" who accelerate conflict -- this can lead to violence. Learn about the skill of "looping for understanding," a listening practice that helps people feel understood. When people feel understood, they are more open to understanding others. By identifying conflict and listening well, we can take action in helping to dial down conflicts in our family, workplace, and social and civic life.

What is the difference between good conflict and high conflict?

Learn about different types of conflict and then discuss:

- Can you think of a time in your life when conflict was actually useful? When you learned something you didn't know—about yourself, the problem or the other person? What happened?
- Now think about a conflict you've experienced that was more harmful than helpful. It can be political or personal, big or small. What happened?

4. Conflict Entrepreneurs

Explore the economics of the attention economy, where conflict is a powerful strategy in attracting and holding attention. Examine the various tricks and techniques that are used to amp up social conflict as a means for gaining profit and power. Reflect on the addictive and yet corrosive influence of conflict entrepreneurs in business, entertainment, politics, and news.

What do people need to know about social media economics and the profit motives that underpin conflict?

- Learn about how people exploit conflict for profit. Then discuss:
- Working together, identify 3 or more examples of conflict entrepreneurs who use media to exploit conflict for pleasure, power, and profit.
- When and why do the messages of conflict entrepreneurs become most harmful?

5. Feelings and Facts

People are naturally drawn to stories with compelling heroes, villains, and victims and plenty of conflict, uncertainty, and suspense. When people encounter a type of story called a conspiracy theory, feelings may be more important than facts in making decisions about who and what to believe. In this session, we confront the limitations of reasoning and evidence in daily life and consider the power of stories and emotions to shape our thinking and decision-making.

Why do stories, characters, and conflict change minds?

Learn about why feelings are more important in persuading people than facts, and then discuss:

- What are some conspiracy theories that you have encountered recently?
- What are the different feelings that these stories evoke for you?
- Which of these conspiracy theories are harmless? Which ones are harmful and why?

6. The Influencers

We are living in a world where disinformation and propaganda are leading people to make new and different choices about who to trust. Learn why people trust influencers as thought leaders. People can persuade others by leveraging both their authority and their authenticity. Thought leaders and influencers can also inspire people to hate – and hate can lead to violence. We don't have to agree with the trust decisions that others make – but everyone wins when we're more reflective about who we choose to trust.

How do we decide who to trust?

Learn about why people trust influencers more than thought leaders and discuss:

- Who do you trust? Who influences you? Why?
- Who are the thought leaders and influencers you avoid? Why?
- Which influencers & thought leaders have high levels of authority and/or authenticity?
- OPTIONAL: Who do you influence? How do you do it? What makes you credible and trustworthy?

7. Free Speech, Hate Speech & Censorship

Consider the scope of rights granted to Americans by the First Amendment and examine both the benefits of free speech and the drawbacks of hate speech. Learn more about how digital technologies are reshaping people's ideas about the scope and limitations of freedom of expression by discussing the phenomenon of de-platforming, content moderation, and cancel culture.

How are digital technologies influencing people's understanding of free speech, hate speech and censorship?

- Learn about cancel culture, hate speech, and content moderation, and then discuss:
- How have you experienced the benefits of the First Amendment freedoms?
- How have you experienced the drawbacks, limitations, or even harms of the First Amendment freedoms?
- How should harmful forms of digital expression be regulated? By people themselves? By government? By digital platforms?

8. Targets of Propaganda

Learn how and why some people are specially targeted to receive propaganda. While disinformation and propaganda have become pervasive, some target audiences are perceived as vulnerable to certain messages. Campaigns may target audiences based on their age, racial, ethnic, religious or cultural identity, using practices like algorithmic profiling and micro-targeting. Propagandists may hijack search terms that are used by teens, new immigrants, racial minorities, and the elderly to deliver emotionally-resonant messages that tap into their deepest hopes, fears, and dreams.

Who is targeted to receive harmful propaganda and how does it affect them?

Learn how to recognize new forms of targeted propaganda and then discuss:

- Who is targeting you with propaganda?
- What are some examples of beneficial and harmful propaganda you have encountered recently?
- How do you recognize the difference between beneficial and harmful propaganda?
- How do you resist the allure of harmful propaganda that aligns with your existing beliefs?

9. Falling Down the Rabbit Hole

Discover how to intervene and support individuals drawn into networks of disinformation, propaganda, and hate. Learn to identify signs of radicalization and employ questioning and active listening strategies to disrupt the process. Be a guiding light towards a more positive pathway.

What can you do to support people in your life who may be moving towards radicalization?

Learn about the pathways to radicalization to violence, and then discuss:
- Have you or anyone you know experienced hate-based harassment?
- Do you know anyone who might be at risk for going down the rabbit hole?
- What do you think might draw them to these groups?
- What can you do to help them see and think more clearly?

10. The Ripple Effect

Be a "do-er" and exercise your leadership in media literacy for violence prevention by hosting a Courageous Conversation in your school, club, group, library, workplace, or community. Learn more about how your "ripple" can prevent violent extremism through active listening, media literacy, small acts of kindness, and community engagement.

How can you help to counteract violent extremism using the power of media literacy, active listening, and dialogue and discussion?

Learn about the power of whole-of-society approaches to social change and discuss:
- How can you use active listening to increase people’s feelings of belonging?
- How can you exercise your own media literacy skills while helping others?
- Who can you partner with for dialogue and discussion?
- What small acts of kindness can you do to help reduce fear and restore trust?

Discussion Guidelines

1. Speak for yourself and out of your own experiences while recognizing that your words have an impact. Be respectful.
2. Allow others to do the same.
3. Share the time - allow others to finish speaking, take turns. Consider waiting for others to contribute before speaking a second or third time.
4. Stay curious - ask honest questions when you need clarification.
5. Pause - take time for reflection. Allow for silence.
6. Practice active listening and listen for understanding - assume good intentions and notice what feelings arise in you when others are speaking.
7. When possible, please close any unnecessary programs, applications, and notifications and put your phone on silent so you can be fully present

Why Media Literacy Matters

Discussion Support Tools

1.1: Lesson Plan

Overview

In this lesson, students will learn practical strategies for critically analyzing media messages. They will consider the power of media literacy as a civic skill, and practice spotting disinformation and hoaxes. Participants will discuss media literacy competencies and why they're a fundamental component of civic engagement. The class will apply a tool of media literacy analysis called Media Literacy Smartphone, which contains five critical questions of media literacy. Students will acquire valuable skills for being an active participant in our communities and in society.

Standards

RL/RI.X.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn for text.

SL.X.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats.

W.X.8 Assess the credibility and accuracy of sources.

Materials and Media Texts

- Slide Deck
- Data projector with external sound
- Access to the Internet
- Worksheet 1.2 – one copy for each student
- Optional: One Media Literacy Smartphone card for each student

Time:

45 – 60 minutes

Learning Objectives

1. Explore how critical questions can help analyze different types of media texts.
2. Express ideas in small group discussion with guided reflection to analyze a media text.
3. Consider how media texts can inform, persuade, and entertain.

Activities

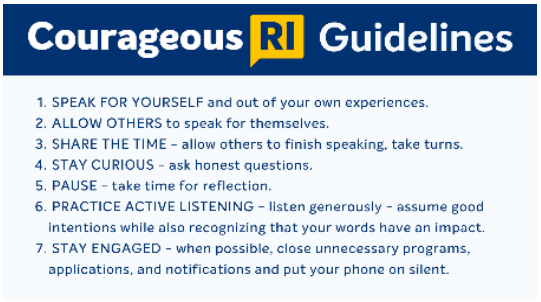
1. Instructor conveys new knowledge through reviewing ideas on content slides.
2. Instructor models the critical analysis of the Slow Down meme with the whole class using 5 critical questions.
3. Students watch a TikTok video and complete the worksheet. Then they work in small groups to analyze media text using 5 critical questions.
4. Each group presents 1-2 key ideas generated from the discussion.
5. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion.

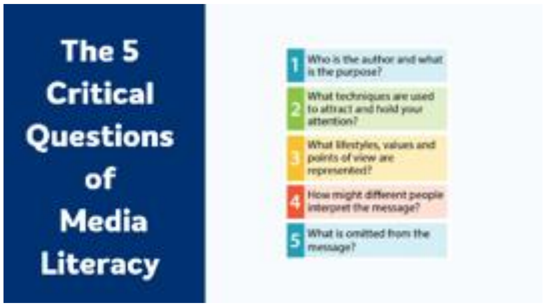
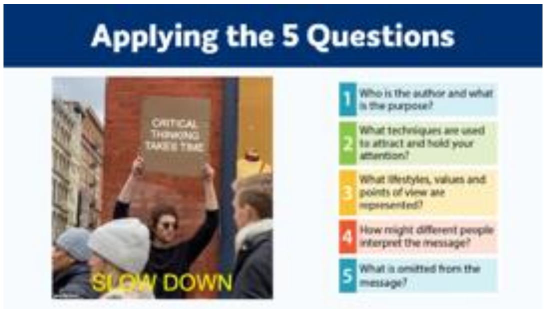
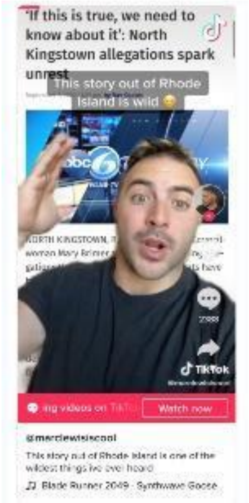
Notes about the Slide Deck

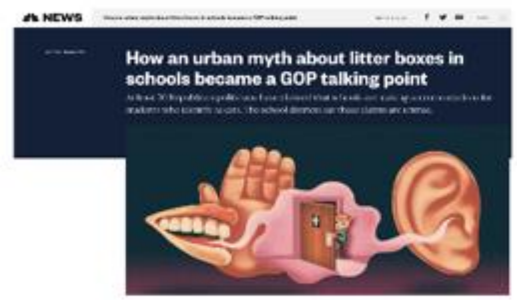
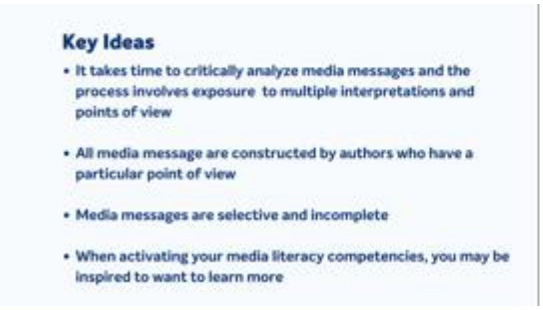
Access the Slide Deck Here (make a copy that you can customize as needed)
URL: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1sgFAdXt1JH_wVk0YxJ1ruk6rbLv083bO/copy

Access the COURAGEOUS RI Program Recording Here
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tSLFBQSsNho

 Courageous RI Learn and apply media literacy skills Find common ground Prevent violence and extremism	**Slide 1:** COURAGEOUS RI, with support from the Department of Homeland Security, works to prevent rising violence and extremism in Rhode Island with authentic and respectful conversation. You can find out more about it at courageousri.com.
 Community conversations to counter disinformation, enhance civic participation, and improve media literacy www.courageousri.com	**Slide 2:** We will learn about the skills of media literacy, which involves asking critical questions about the media we see, hear, watch, play, and use. We will also discuss the importance of having authentic conversations that help us better listen to each other and to find common ground.

 Courageous RI Why Media Literacy Matters Lesson Plan	**Slide 3:** In this lesson, we will learn why media literacy matters and how it relates to civic engagement and democracy. You will be introduced to five critical questions of media literacy.
 Today's Agenda Learn about Media Literacy & 5 Critical Questions Practice Applying the Questions to a Media Text Work in Small Groups to Analyze a Video Time for Reflection Courageous RI	**Slide 4:** We'll practice applying critical questions to online media, and then we'll practice applying these questions in a small group discussion to analyze a short TikTok video.
 Courageous RI Guidelines 1. SPEAK FOR YOURSELF and out of your own experiences. 2. ALLOW OTHERS to speak for themselves. 3. SHARE THE TIME - allow others to finish speaking, take turns. 4. STAY CURIOUS - ask honest questions. 5. PAUSE - take time for reflection. 6. PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING – listen generously - assume good intentions while also recognizing that your words have an impact. 7. STAY ENGAGED - when possible, close unnecessary programs, applications, and notifications and put your phone on silent.	**Slide 5:** Our goal is to build connections and to foster conversations that improve our understanding of one another. For this reason, we want to make sure that everyone gets a chance both to share and to learn from others in this conversation. To support those goals, we have some basic guidelines for our conversation.
 Media Literacy Asking critical questions about what you read, watch, see, hear, play, and use Courageous RI	**Slide 6:** This is the definition of media literacy. We will use a critical analysis tool called Media Literacy Smartphone. Optional: If you have Media Literacy Smartphones, give them to students.

 The 5 Critical Questions of Media Literacy 1 Who is the author and what is the purpose? 2 What techniques are used to attract and hold your attention? 3 What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented? 4 How might different people interpret the message? 5 What is omitted from the message?	**Slide 7:** We can use media literacy questions to promote dialogue and discussion. Now we are going to practice answering these questions to have a conversation about a media text. Optional: Ask students what kinds of media texts they know.
 Applying the 5 Questions CRITICAL THINKING TAKES TIME SLOW DOWN 1 Who is the author and what is the purpose? 2 What techniques are used to attract and hold your attention? 3 What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented? 4 How might different people interpret the message? 5 What is omitted from the message?	**Slide 8:** Now we are going to see how these questions can be used to analyze a media text. We are going to analyze this interesting online artifact together. Optional: Ask students what kind of media artifact it is, and how they know.
 'If this is true, we need to know about it': North Kingstown allegations spark unrest This story out of Rhode Island is wild 😂 TikTok Watch now @merclewisiscool This story out of Rhode Island is one of the wildest things ive ever heard ♫ Blade Runner 2049 - Synthwave Goose	**Slide 9:** Now you are going to work in small groups. First, we will watch this short TikTok video. NOTE: This video features a bit of adult language. Now you will work in small groups to analyze this video using the five critical questions of media literacy (each group uses one worksheet). After the discussion, each group presents 1-2 key ideas generated from the discussion. Optional: Have students use their Media Literacy Smartphones.
	Slide 10: **Play the Tik Tok video** and discuss critical questions of media literacy 1. Who is the author and what is the purpose? 2. What techniques are used to attract and hold attention? 3. What lifestyles, values, and points of view are represented? 4. How might different people interpret this message? 5. What is omitted?

 NEWS How an urban myth about litter boxes in schools became a GOP talking point	**Slide 11: [Access the Reading]** Now we are going to read and analyze a different media text. Access the reading and give people time to read it. Then use the same 5 critical questions to analyze it. Notice how this activity opens up your intellectual curiosity. Generate questions that you might want to further explore on your own.
 **Key Ideas** - It takes time to critically analyze media messages and the process involves exposure to multiple interpretations and points of view - All media message are constructed by authors who have a particular point of view - Media messages are selective and incomplete - When activating your media literacy competencies, you may be inspired to want to learn more	**Slide 12:** Review the key ideas.
Courageous RI www.courageousri.com	**Slide 13:** Thank you for your participation! To learn more about COURAGEOUS RI, visit the program's website courageousri.com.

Assessments

Students' performance in critically analyzing media is informally observed as they work in small groups and in their share-out presentations. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion. As part of this activity, students select 1 or more question for brief reflective writing:

1. Did all students in your small group participate in the discussion? Why or why not?
2. Which of the 5 critical questions was most interesting to you? Why?
3. In your small group, what were some signs that others were engaged in active listening?
4. What new knowledge or new ideas did you gain from learning about other people's interpretations?

Learn More

Visit the Rhode Island Civic Learning Week website
Learn about the many programs that encourage civic engagement as an essential part of self-governance in a democracy.

Learn more about COURAGEOUS RI and Media Literacy
Check out our podcasts and blogs where you can learn more about some of the issues that help people understand how media literacy helps reduce the fear, anger, and hate that lead to violence.

1.2: Reading and Discussion

Instructions: After reading the abridged article below, answer the questions.

Image: Robert Beatty for NBC News

Oct. 14, 2022, 7:30 AM CDT
By Tyler Kingkade, Ben Goggin, Ben Collins and Brandy Zadrozny

How an urban myth about litter boxes in schools became a GOP talking point

At least 20 Republican politicians have claimed that schools are making accommodations for students who identify as cats. The school districts say these claims are untrue.

At a luncheon for Republican women in Mesa County, Colorado, last week, Rep. Lauren Boebert, R-Colo., warned that educators "are putting litter boxes in schools for people who identify as cats."

To a person not steeped in the culture war battles over gender identity that have engulfed school districts nationwide, it's the kind of claim that would sound bizarre and confusing — and, from high-profile GOP members, authoritative.

The week before, on Sept. 29, Minnesota GOP gubernatorial nominee Scott Jensen asked during a campaign stop, "Why do we have litter boxes in some of the school districts so kids can pee in them, because they identify as a furry?"

And during a legislative hearing last month in Tennessee, two Republican state lawmakers discussed the “growing crisis” of public schools providing litter boxes for children who identify as cats, and claimed it’s happening across the state.
At least 20 conservative candidates and elected officials have claimed this year that K-12 schools are placing litter boxes on campus or making other accommodations for students who identify as cats, according to an NBC News review of public statements.

Every school district that has been named by those 20 politicians said either to NBC News or in public statements that these claims are untrue. There is no evidence that any school has deployed litter boxes for students to use because they identify as cats.

But the claim has taken on a life of its own among a growing number of Republicans, conservative influencers and political commentators.

There is a real subculture of people known as furries, a community of children and adults who roleplay as anthropomorphized animal characters. But the vast majority of them still identify as humans, while sometimes adopting an animal-like persona and engaging in short-term roleplay, according to furries and experts, one of whom noted that there are no litter boxes at furry conventions. Three school-age furries told NBC News they have at times dressed up at school, typically wearing just part of their full costume such as a mask or gloves that look like paws, but they’d never heard of any furry ever asking for a litter box.

That has not stopped such rumors from circulating on social media, where they have been repeated like a game of telephone, often with descriptions of friends of friends who supposedly saw such things firsthand. And it has not stopped some politicians from picking up these claims and using them to alarm people by saying that this is where protections for LGBTQ students will lead.
“What’s most provocative about this hoax is how it turns on two key wedge issues for conservatives: educational accommodations and gender nonconformity,” said Joan Donovan, research director of the Shorenstein Center on Media, Politics and Public Policy at Harvard University and co-author of “Meme Wars: The Untold Story of the Online Battles Upending Democracy in America.”
The rise of the litter box rumor shows the power of false claims that start on social media to shape political discourse. And it demonstrates how quickly some elements of truth can be twisted and mashed up with fully debunked assertions to create a viral narrative amplified by prominent politicians, as well as commentators with large audiences.

Access the Original Article Here
URL: https://www.nbcnews.com/tech/misinformation/urban-myth-litter-boxes-schools-became-gop-talking-point-rcna51439

Discussion Questions:

1. What type of text is this article? How do you know?
2. What are the main ideas of this article?
3. What feelings does this article evoke in you?

1.3: Learn More

Start with Yourself
Being media literate will help you better protect yourself from potential harm caused by mediated communication. Today it is essential to recognize how conspiracy theories and other kinds of misinformation may propel certain individuals to engage in acts of violence.

How Media Literacy is Being Taught in Schools
What do parents need to know about **how media literacy is being implemented in American schools?**

Media Literacy Smartphone
Learn more about the Media Education Lab's tool for helping people internalize critical questions of media literacy and download the free learning guide.

How School Rumors Go Viral
Learn more about **how rumors and hoaxes have become more political in recent years.**

Time to Focus on Unity
Are you ready to stop focusing on the painful divides in our country and to turn the dialogue back to our common humanity? This will require looking past the battle lines, asking lots of questions, really listening to the answers, and finding ways to make our voices heard by our elected leaders.

Rhode Island Civic Learning Week
Learn about the many programs that **encourage civic engagement** as an essential part of self-governance in a democracy.

For Educators

1.4: Additional Resources

Why Media Literacy Matters

A collection of additional resources for exploring the importance of media literacy with your students. Resources can be used before teaching the COURAGEOUS RI lesson plans to develop background knowledge or after to extend and enrich Lesson 1.1, 1.2, and 1.3 objectives.

If you have 15 min	If you have 30 min	If you have 60 min
What Is Media Literacy and Why Does It Matter? **Introduction to Media Literacy: Crash Course Media Literacy #1** A 10-minute video introduction to media literacy. It defines media literacy and its importance in today's world. After watching the video, students can discuss their one big takeaway.	**What Is Media Literacy and Why Does It Matter?** **Should Media Literacy Be a Required Course in School?** A New York Times Learning Network activity that pairs a student opinion piece with engaging reflection questions that ask students to evaluate the importance of media literacy.	**What Is Media Literacy and Why Does It Matter?** **Understanding Media & Information Literacy: An Orientation** A UNAOC unit that defines and explores the importance of media literacy. It includes a plethora of engaging learning activities and discussion prompts.
Critical Analysis **Media Literacy Tips** This 2.5-minute PBL Learning Media video provides tips for critically analyzing online news. After the video, ask students to find an online news article and evaluate it using the tips they just learned.	**Critical Analysis** **Media Literacy: Tobacco, Advertising, and Cancer** A series of 3 short videos that examine the power of media in influencing our beliefs and perceptions. Show the videos and then ask students to discuss current examples of how media is influencing the attitudes and habits of consumers.	**Critical Analysis** **Finding Credible News** This Common Sense Media lesson explores the reasons some people and organizations post fake news, presents criteria for spotting fake news, and allows students to practice evaluating the credibility of online media.
Online Hoaxes **Snopes.com** Introduce your students to Snopes.com, an engaging site that fact-checks internet hoaxes. Find a current internet hoax and challenge students to use Snopes to evaluate it.	**Online Hoaxes** **Worries Grow That TikTok Is New Home for Manipulated Video and Photos** Read this New York Times article with your students. Then discuss “What does fact-checking look like on a platform like this?” and "How do you think fact-checking will change with advances in AI?"	**Online Hoaxes** **Hoaxes and Fakes** This Common Sense Media lesson focuses on using the lateral reading strategy to identify online hoaxes. Students then practice using the strategy to evaluate videos.
Listening Matters **10 Ways to Have a Better Conversation** In this 10-minute TED Talk, journalist Celeste Headlee shares 10 tips on how to have a meaningful, interesting, and productive conversation. She emphasizes listening as the most essential conversation skill.	**Listening Matters** **Let's Talk! Facilitating Critical Conversations with Students** This educator resource from Learning for Justice is a must-read before engaging in courageous conversations with students about what they see in the media. The "Structure the Conversation" section (pp. 28-31) offers strategies for fostering active listening.	**Listening Matters** **The Power of Active Listening** This lesson plan developed by StoryCorps introduces the key elements of active listening and gives students opportunities to evaluate and practice active listening.

ACTIVITY and PROJECT 1

Why Media Literacy Matters

ACTIVITY: Conduct a Media Literacy Survey

Instructions:
Develop a 3-question survey that asks participants to share and reflect on personal experiences encountering disinformation or hoaxes in the media. The surveys can be shared via social media, asked in interview-format in person, or by other means. After receiving at least 20 responses, review the survey responses and look for patterns.
#asking #listening #evaluating

Discussion Questions:

1. What kind of disinformation are people encountering?
2. Where are they exposed to these messages?
3. How are they responding to them?

***This activity aligns with the following RI Social Studies Anchor Standards:**

H.HP.2: Explain the purpose, audience, and perspective of multiple types of sources (art, music, oral histories, pamphlets, film, texts, etc.) relating to a historical event or series of events, individual, or group of people, including indications of bias toward or against the subject portrayed.

H.HP.3: Analyze multiple types of sources, including art, music, oral histories, pamphlets, film, texts, etc., through a critical reflection of the creators' and students' intersectional identities and lived experiences.

PROJECT: Compose a Media Literacy Picture Book

Instructions:
Write and illustrate a children's picture book that tells the story of a child encountering disinformation and being led by trusted friends, parents, teachers, and mentors to develop their media literacy skills to thoughtfully respond to inaccurate, misleading or damaging media messages.

Discuss the intentions behind your story, the creative decisions you made in writing and illustrating the book, and how the picture book reflects your personal perspectives on media literacy in a 300 word statement.
#writing #illustrating #teaching

1.6: Listening Matters

Empathic Listening

Overview

In this lesson, students learn about effective listening, specifically the form of listening called “empathic” listening, and why it matters. Students learn a basic empathic listening formula and a more advanced technique of empathic listening, called “echoing”. By practicing empathic listening in a simulated situation, students learn how to listen and experience how it feels to be listened to with empathy and understanding.

Standards

SL.X.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, building on others’ ideas and expressing your own clearly.

Materials and Media Texts

- PPT Slide Deck for this lesson
- Projector
- Handout 1.1 - Reflection on Listening (all handouts one for each student)
- Handout 1.2 - Triad Worksheet
- Handout 1.3 - Empathic Listening Model and Echo cues
- Notebooks or journals for each student

Time:

90-120 minutes

Learning Objectives

1. Define the characteristics of a good listener.
2. Define the difference between empathy and sympathy.
3. Demonstrate empathic listening in a practice exercise.
4. Debrief exercises in small group discussion.

Activity

1. Instructor conveys new knowledge through reviewing ideas on content slides.
2. Instructor illustrates the difference between sympathy and empathy.
3. Students learn the Basic Empathic Listening Formula and the more advanced “echo.”
4. Students form triads to practice empathic listening.

5. Each group presents to the larger group 1-2 key ideas generated from the debrief in their triad.
6. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion.

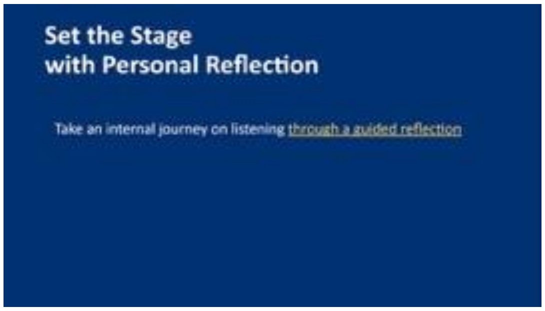
Assessments

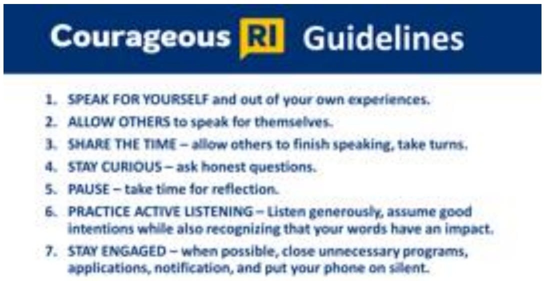
Students' performance in building reflective listening skills is informally observed as they work in triads and in their share-out presentations. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion. As part of this activity, students select 1 or more questions for brief reflective writing:

- Did all students in your triad fully participate in the three roles (Observer, Speaker, Listener)? Why or why not?
- Which role did you enjoy the most (Listener, Speaker, Observer)? Which role did you find most challenging? Why?
- Provide examples of how you might use these skills in your day-to-day life. In what situations in your life might empathic listening be most needed?
- What new knowledge or new ideas did you gain from learning about empathic listening?

Access the Slide Deck Here (make a copy that you can customize as needed)
URL: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Mo0dlmM0v79Px62k9z1wY0d02q7g6Eoo/copy

 Courageous RI Listening Matters	**Slide 1:** This is the first lesson of the 4-lesson Listening Matters curriculum. This lesson provides the foundation for the rest of the curriculum.
 Community conversations to counter disinformation, enhance civic participation, and improve media literacy www.courageousri.com	**Slide 2:** COURAGEOUS RI, with support from the Department of Homeland Security, works to prevent rising violence and extremism in Rhode Island with authentic and respectful conversation. You can find out more about it at courageousri.com.

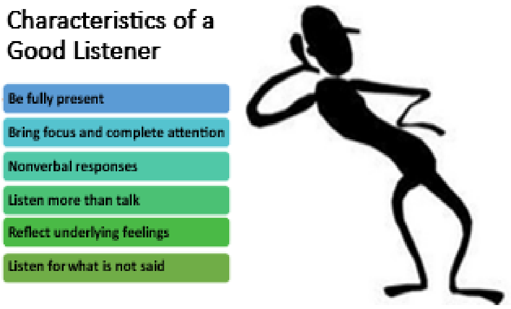
 Courageous RI Listening Matters Listen Empathically Understand across Differences Find Common Ground	**Slide 3:** Good listening skills are critical to having authentic conversations. We need to be able to engage in crucial conversations, to engage with each other even across significant differences, and find common ground.
 Listening Matters Lessons 1. Empathic Listening 2. Barriers to Listening 3. Looping for Understanding 4. 7 Types of Listening	**Slide 4:** In this first lesson, the focus is on a type of listening called "Empathic Listening."
 Set the Stage with Personal Reflection Take an internal journey on listening through a guided reflection	**Slide 5:** To set the stage, we're going to begin with an activity. In this activity, students are invited to write or compose written reflections to consider the role of listening in their lives. This can be done as a read aloud guided reflection with journaling, or students can read and journal in their own timing. Begin by reading aloud or asking students to read the **Reflection on Listening (Handout 1.1)** that sets the stage for this program on listening skills through a guided reflection.
 Unit 1: Empathic Listening Agenda 1. Characteristics of a good listener 2. Empathy vs Sympathy 3. Empathic Listening 4. Demonstrate empathic listening in a practice exercise 5. Debrief exercise in small group discussion Courageous RI	**Slide 6:** In this lesson we'll describe the characteristics of a good listener. We'll define the difference between sympathy and empathy and the importance of empathic listening. Finally, we'll work in small groups to practice empathic listening - a simple yet challenging form of listening that encourages the Speaker to delve more deeply into what they are sharing.



Courageous RI Guidelines

1. SPEAK FOR YOURSELF and out of your own experiences.
2. ALLOW OTHERS to speak for themselves.
3. SHARE THE TIME – allow others to finish speaking, take turns.
4. STAY CURIOUS – ask honest questions.
5. PAUSE – take time for reflection.
6. PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING – Listen generously, assume good intentions while also recognizing that your words have an impact.
7. STAY ENGAGED – when possible, close unnecessary programs, applications, notification, and put your phone on silent.

Slide 7: Our goal is to build connections and to foster conversations that improve our understanding of one another. For this reason, we want to make sure that everyone gets a chance both to share and to learn from others in this conversation. To support these goals, we have some basic guidelines for our conversation.



Characteristics of a Good Listener

- Be fully present
- Bring focus and complete attention
- Nonverbal responses
- Listen more than talk
- Reflect underlying feelings
- Listen for what is not said

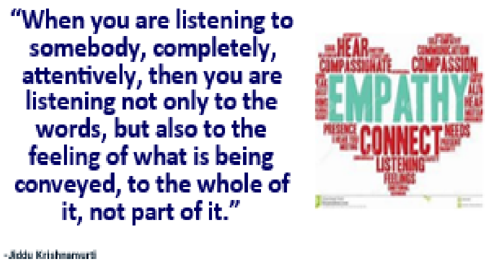
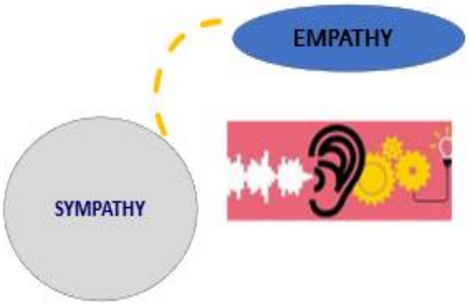
Slide 8: There are many characteristics of a good listener. Here are 6 of the most important ones. While the first 4 are important in and of themselves, they are not sufficient for the person talking to feel understood.

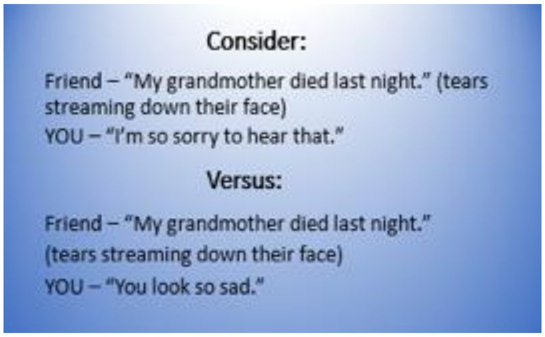
First, more than just being physically in the same space with the speaker, presence entails being focused fully on the conversation. To be present, it is important to minimize external distractions and refrain from planning your responses while the other person is talking.

Providing a Speaker with the appropriate nonverbal cues can help them feel more at ease and comfortable as you listen to them. Non-verbal communication indicates your attention without interrupting your speaker with words. This can include maintaining sufficient eye contact, sitting up straight, leaning forward, nodding, making eye contact, and offering sounds like “yeah,” and “hmm” to encourage the person speaking to continue talking.

A good listener is fairly quiet during a conversation and listens far more than speaking, using nonverbals and brief empathic comments to help the speaker share more deeply.

As we’ll explore later in this lesson, the focus of empathic listening is hearing the underlying feelings the speaker is communicating – which might not be explicitly mentioned by the speaker.

 "When you are listening to somebody, completely, attentively, then you are listening not only to the words, but also to the feeling of what is being conveyed, to the whole of it, not part of it." -Jiddu Krishnamurti HEAR COMPASSIONATE COMPASSION EMPATHY CONNECT LISTENING FEELINGS PRESENCE NEEDS	**Slide 9:** Most people think they are good listeners, but are they? Empathy is the ability to "feel oneself into" what someone else is feeling. Empathic listening allows us to **step inside** the speaker's story to feel their emotions. Empathic listening is about really understanding the person who's talking to you and creating emotional connections. It goes beyond active listening, as described in the previous slide - beyond the non-verbals such as nods, eye contact, and so forth. Listening with empathy goes a step further. Empathic listening requires feeling NOT the way you might in a similar situation but feeling **your way into the other's feelings** – that is, hearing what is being said and understanding what the other is trying to say. This is an important nuance: When we start imagining ourselves being in a similar situation, we are not really **feeling with** the other person; at that moment we are thinking about our own experience.
 	**Slide 10:** *Sympathy* is feeling compassion, sorrow, or pity for the hardships that another person encounters. *Sympathy* is largely used to convey commiseration, pity, or feelings of sorrow for someone else who is experiencing misfortune. You feel bad FOR them … but you don't know what it is like to be in their shoes. By contrast, *empathy* has come to refer to the capacity or ability to feel oneself into the situation of another, sensing the emotions that the other person is having. *Empathy* is putting yourself in the shoes of another, and having such a deep sense of what the other person is feeling, that you can reflect the emotion back accurately. Empathy is not sympathy. The essence of empathic listening is not that you agree with someone; it's that you fully, deeply, understand that person, emotionally as well as intellectually.



Consider:

Friend – "My grandmother died last night." (tears streaming down their face)

YOU – "I'm so sorry to hear that."

Versus:

Friend – "My grandmother died last night." (tears streaming down their face)

YOU – "You look so sad."

Slide 11: Let's assume that each of these responses are said with the same warmth and compassion. What might be the impact of each of these potential responses on the speaker? Do you think one is better than the other? (allow comments)

See if you can imagine yourself being the Speaker in this scenario. How might you feel hearing each of these two responses? (allow comments)

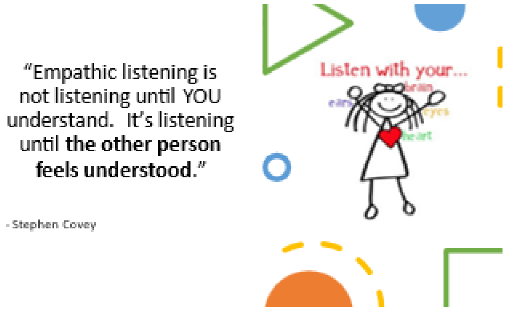
Notice how the sympathetic response reflects YOUR feelings As the Listener, while the empathic response reflects THEIR feelings. Neither response is better than the other, however, the impact is likely to be different. It is likely that the sympathetic response will get the person to respond with "thank you." The empathic response, by contrast, is more likely to cause the speaker to continue sharing their feelings. Both sympathy and empathy have their places in a conversation.

What are your thoughts about these two scenarios?

Video: Brene Brown's Perspective on Empathic Listening vs. Sympathetic Listening

Slide 12: Here is a 2.5 minute video by Brene Brown on Empathic vs. Sympathetic Listening. https://youtu.be/1Evwgu369Jw

What did you notice? What key ideas were meaningful to you?
OPTIONAL: What techniques were used to attract and hold your attention? What values were embedded in this video?

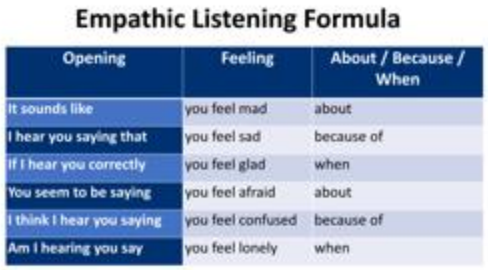


"Empathic listening is not listening until YOU understand. It's listening until the other person feels understood."

- Stephen Covey

Listen with your...
ears
brain
eyes
heart

Slide 13: When listening empathically, you listen with your ears, but you also, and more importantly, listen with your eyes and with your heart. You listen for feeling, for meaning. You listen for behavior. You use your right brain as well as your left. You sense, you intuit, you feel.

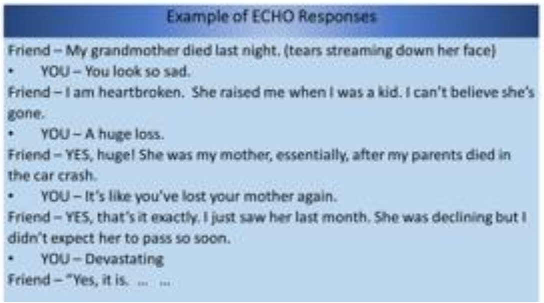


Empathic Listening Formula

Opening	Feeling	About / Because / When
It sounds like	you feel mad	about
I hear you saying that	you feel sad	because of
If I hear you correctly	you feel glad	when
You seem to be saying	you feel afraid	about
I think I hear you saying	you feel confused	because of
Am I hearing you say	you feel lonely	when

Slide 14: One way to think about empathic listening is with this basic formula. There are 3 parts: The opening, reflecting the feeling you are hearing, and the content connected to the Speaker's feeling.

The drawback of this model is that it uses a lot of words! And using a lot of words can interrupt the flow of the Speaker. While this empathic listening model can be very useful, when one gets good at empathic listening, one can simply reflect the underlying emotion – like a quiet echo. The result is that typically the speaker barely recognizes that the listener has spoken. The echo, when it catches the underlying emotion correctly, conveys understanding such that the speaker continues speaking, going deeper into the emotion. You can tell when the echo works, because often the speaker will say emphatically, "YES! AND…"



Example of ECHO Responses

Friend – My grandmother died last night. (tears streaming down her face)
- YOU – You look so sad.

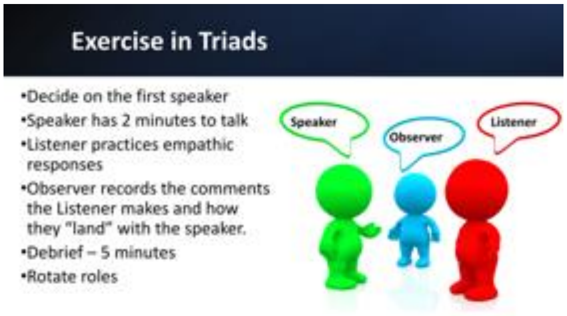
Friend – I am heartbroken. She raised me when I was a kid. I can't believe she's gone.
- YOU – A huge loss.

Friend – YES, huge! She was my mother, essentially, after my parents died in the car crash.
- YOU – It's like you've lost your mother again.

Friend – YES, that's it exactly. I just saw her last month. She was declining but I didn't expect her to pass so soon.
- YOU – Devastating

Friend – "Yes, it is. … …

Slide 15:. Here is an example of "echo" responses. Notice how few words the Listener uses in this example and that the focus of those words is hearing and reflecting the feelings of the speaker. The Listener's feelings, thoughts, or questions are not in the conversation at all.



Exercise in Triads

- Decide on the first speaker
- Speaker has 2 minutes to talk
- Listener practices empathic responses
- Observer records the comments the Listener makes and how they "land" with the speaker.
- Debrief – 5 minutes
- Rotate roles

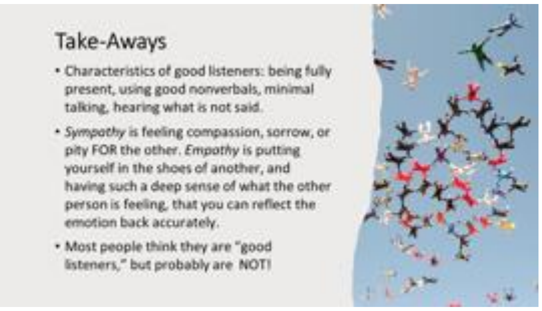
Speaker
Observer
Listener

Slide 16: (Time is adjustable) Form groups of 3.

Each group decides who will be the first Speaker, Listener, and Observer. Set the maximum time for the Speaker (e.g., 2 minutes) to talk about anything going on in their life. The Listener reflects underlying emotions. The Observer records (Worksheet) the comments the Listener makes and how it seemed to land with the Speaker. The Observer also serves as the Timekeeper to keep the group on track.

Debrief – 5 minutes

	• Observer reports what they observed in the interaction
	    1. Did the Listener seem to reflect accurately?
	    2. How did the Speaker respond?
	• Speaker comments on how the interaction felt to them
	    1. Did the Listener seem to reflect accurately?
	    2. Did the Speaker feel understood?
	• Listener comments on how it felt to them
	    1. Did they feel they understood both the content AND the underlying emotion of the Speaker.
	    2. How difficult or easy was it for them to feel with the Speaker?
	Rotate roles and repeat until everyone has had a chance to be in all roles.

 Whole Group DEBRIEF	**Slide 17**: Returning to the large group to debrief: What was it like for you to be the Speaker? Listener? Observer?
 Take-Aways • Characteristics of good listeners: being fully present, using good nonverbals, minimal talking, hearing what is not said. • *Sympathy* is feeling compassion, sorrow, or pity FOR the other. *Empathy* is putting yourself in the shoes of another, and having such a deep sense of what the other person is feeling, that you can reflect the emotion back accurately. • Most people think they are "good listeners," but probably are NOT!	**Slide 18:** Review key points.

Courageous RI	**Slide 19:** Thank you for your participation! To learn more about COURAGEOUS RI, visit the program's website courageousri.com.

Learn More

Azarchi, Lynne. (2020). ***The Empathy Advantage: Coaching Children to Be Kind, Respectful, and Successful.*** **Rowan and Littlefield.**
We live in a time when empathy is not only lacking but on the decline. Kids are bullied because of the color of their skin, religion, culture, a disability and more. Empathy may not be a cure-all, but just a little effort can transform a child into a more sensitive, caring human being. The good news is that empathy – the ability to "walk in someone else's shoes" – can be taught. This book is all about teaching adults to teach empathy to kids.

Harling, B. (2017). ***How to listen so people will talk: Build Stronger Communication and Deeper Connections.*** **Bethany House.**
The secret to stronger relationships isn't to become more charming or funny or to solve the world's problems or to just try harder. All you have to do is *listen*. Yet our noisy culture hasn't equipped us to do this. With warmth and a touch of humor, personal coach and expert communicator Becky Harling shares simple, practical listening tools.

Leal, B. C., III (2017). ***4 Essential Keys to Effective Communication in Love, Life, Work--Anywhere!*** **Author.**
This book is an excellent 'How-To Guide' teaching some of the key skills that will help you identify and overcome communication barriers and achieve relationship success with the important people in your life. Plus, there are Self-Review Questions and Action Items at the end of several of the chapters.

Preventing Violent Extremism

Discussion Support Tools

2.1: Lesson Plan

Overview

In this lesson, students learn about domestic extremism and targeted violence and consider the factors that lead to radicalization to violence. They examine how media messages can affect people's beliefs, attitudes, and values and practice using media literacy questions and concepts to analyze social media and mass media messages about violence. By critically analyzing media representations of mass shootings, students build new knowledge about the growing problem of violent extremism. They learn about the importance of stepping back from us-vs-them frameworks and the power of small acts of unexpected kindness.

Standards

RL/RI.X.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn for text.

SL.X.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats.

W.X.8 Assess the credibility and accuracy of sources.

Materials and Media Texts

- Slide Deck
- Data projector with external sound
- Access to the Internet
- Worksheet 2.2 – one copy for each student
- Optional: One Media Literacy Smartphone card for each student

Time:

45 – 60 minutes

Learning Objectives

1. Build new knowledge about the growing problem of violent extremism.
2. Consider how media texts can affect people's beliefs, attitudes, and values.
3. Explore how critical questions can help analyze different types of media texts.
4. Express ideas in small group discussion with guided reflection to analyze a media text.

Activities

1. Instructor conveys new knowledge through reviewing ideas on content slides.
2. Students learn about the 5 critical questions and how they help people analyze texts.
3. Instructor models the critical analysis of the Angry Feminist Instagram meme with the whole class using 5 critical questions.
4. Students watch a Today Show news clip and work in small groups to complete the worksheet using 5 critical questions.
5. Each group presents 1-2 key ideas generated from the discussion.
6. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion.

Assessments

Students' performance in critically analyzing media is informally observed as they work in small groups and in their share-out presentations. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion. As part of this activity, students select 1 or more question for brief reflective writing:

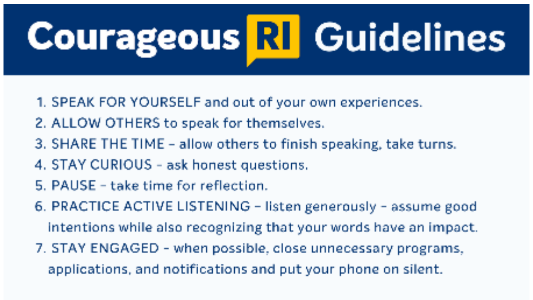
- Did all students in your small group participate in the discussion? Why or why not?
- Which of the 5 critical questions was most interesting to you? Why?
- In your small group, what were some signs that others were engaged in active listening?
- What new knowledge or new ideas did you gain from learning about other people's interpretations?

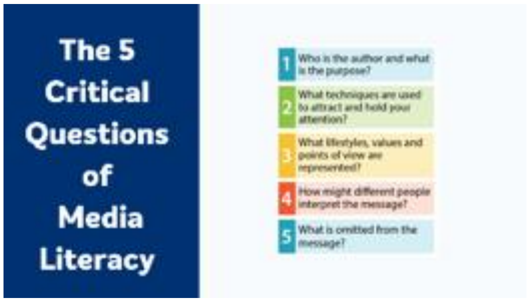
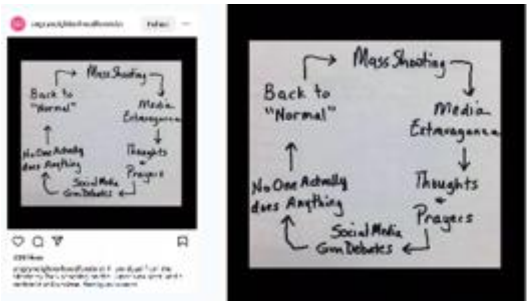
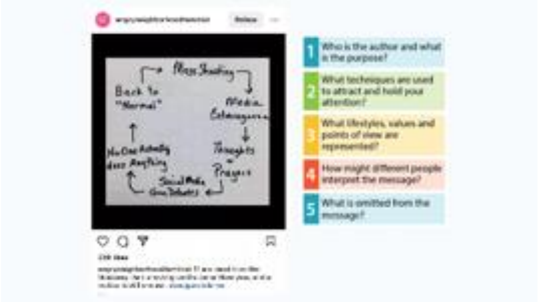
Notes about the Slide Deck

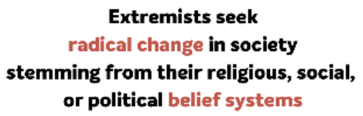
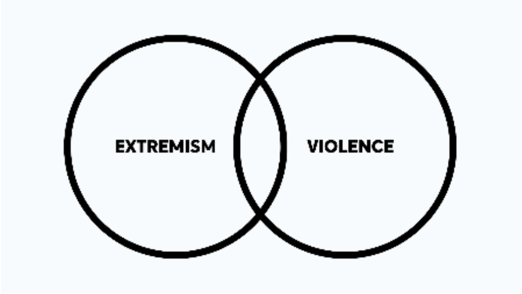
Access the Slide Deck Here (make a copy that you can customize as needed)
URL: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1oe4g5FLwlNxVHdWM1yU8PgqN_POFjJme/copy)

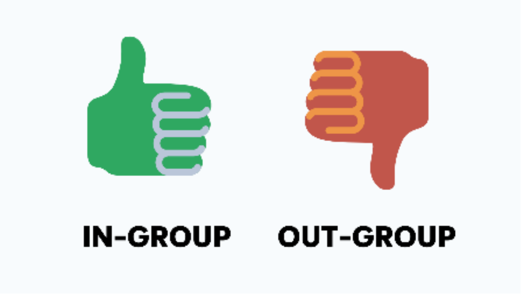
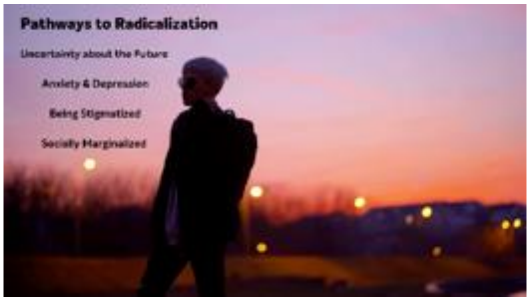
Access the Courageous Program RI Recording Here
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54Z-gOjjsDY

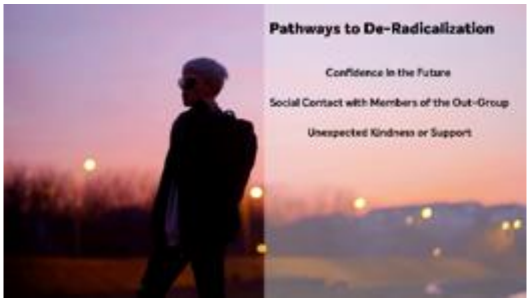
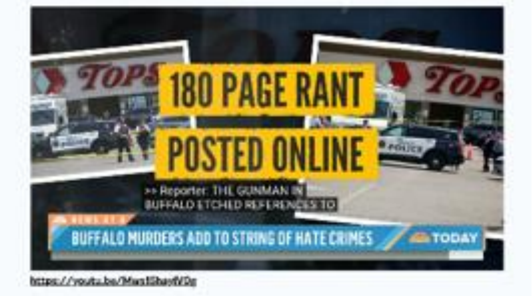
 Community conversations to counter disinformation, enhance civic participation, and improve media literacy www.courageousri.com	**Slide 1:** COURAGEOUS RI, with support from the Department of Homeland Security, works to prevent rising violence and extremism in Rhode Island with authentic and respectful conversation. You can find out more about it at courageousri.com.
 Courageous RI Preventing Violent Extremism Lesson Plan	**Slide 2:** In this lesson, we will talk about violent extremism: causes, examples, and ways to deal with it through media literacy and depolarization.

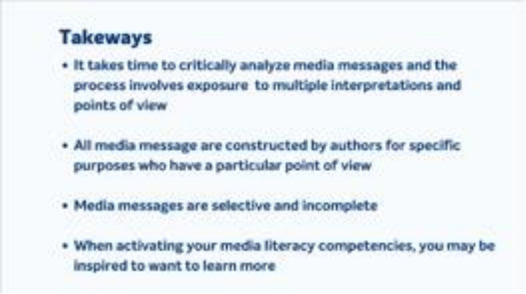
Courageous RI Learn and apply media literacy skills Find common ground Prevent violence and extremism	**Slide 3:** We will learn about the skills of media literacy, which involves asking critical questions about the media we see, hear, watch, play, and use. We will also discuss the importance of having authentic conversations that help us better listen to each other and to find common ground.
Today's Agenda Understanding Extremist Violence Analyzing Media Messages about Extremism Small Group Dialogue Time for Reflection & Next Steps Courageous RI	**Slide 4:** First, we'll talk about media literacy competencies and why they are a part of the solution in preventing violent extremism. We'll explore the concept of "extremism" together. Then you will work in small groups, viewing and discussing a news story about violent extremism. Finally, you will read a text about extremism and discuss it in small groups. This is a sensitive and important topic – and it can make people uncomfortable – so we need to be courageous in both our sharing and our listening. Remember the saying that we have two ears and one mouth so we can listen twice as much as we speak.
 Courageous RI Guidelines 1. SPEAK FOR YOURSELF and out of your own experiences. 2. ALLOW OTHERS to speak for themselves. 3. SHARE THE TIME – allow others to finish speaking, take turns. 4. STAY CURIOUS – ask honest questions. 5. PAUSE – take time for reflection. 6. PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING – listen generously – assume good intentions while also recognizing that your words have an impact. 7. STAY ENGAGED – when possible, close unnecessary programs, applications, and notifications and put your phone on silent.	**Slide 5:** Our goal is to build connections and to foster conversations that improve our understanding of one another. For this reason, we want to make sure that everyone gets a chance both to share and to learn from others in this conversation. To support those goals, we have some basic guidelines for our conversation.
Media Literacy Asking critical questions about what you read, watch, see, hear, play, and use Courageous RI	**Slide 6:** This is the definition of media literacy. We will use a critical analysis tool called Media Literacy Smartphone. Optional: If you have Media Literacy Smartphones, give them to students.

 The 5 Critical Questions of Media Literacy 1 Who is the author and what is the purpose? 2 What techniques are used to attract and hold your attention? 3 What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented? 4 How might different people interpret the message? 5 What is omitted from the message?	**Slide 7:** We can use media literacy questions to promote dialogue and discussion. Now we are going to practice answering these questions to have a conversation about a media text. Optional: Ask students what kinds of media texts they know.
 Mass Shooting Media Extravaganza Thoughts + Prayers Social Media Gun Debates No One Actually does Anything Back to "Normal"	**Slide 8:** We will start by applying the five questions to this meme. This is a media post recently seen on Instagram. Optional: How can we recognize that this is a meme? What do you know about memes? How do you feel about memes?
 Mass Shooting Media Extravaganza Thoughts + Prayers Social Media Gun Debates No One Actually does Anything Back to "Normal" 1 Who is the author and what is the purpose? 2 What techniques are used to attract and hold your attention? 3 What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented? 4 How might different people interpret the message? 5 What is omitted from the message?	**Slide 9:** First of all, who wants to share how this post made you feel?.. And now we can analyze the meme using the five critical questions. After the analysis: This message communicates a person's dissatisfaction with the status quo approach to dealing with extremist violence. But as we revealed, we don't all interpret this message the same exact way. Meaning is in people. That's why exchanging our interpretations with others can help us move beyond stereotypes and polarization.
	Slide 10: What do we see in this picture? You may not recognize it because you were not born when this happened. But for many of your teachers this is a very recognizable example of violent extremism: the September 11, 2001 attacks. Over the past 20-plus years, a lot of knowledge has been gained about this important topic.

 **Extremists seek** **radical change in society** **stemming from their religious, social, or political belief systems**	**Slide 11:** Extremism is a concept used to describe belief systems (often religious, social or political) that exist substantially outside of beliefs more broadly accepted in society. Extremists seek radical changes in government, religion or society.
Some extremists believe that success (or survival) can be accomplished through hostile action. Hostile action is behavior that is dangerous to human life or destructive of critical infrastructure or key resources. 	**Slide 12:** There is a relationship between extremism and violence. Some extremists believe that success (or survival) can only be accomplished through hostile action. Hostile actions can range from verbal attacks, discriminatory behavior, violence, and even genocide. Hostile action is behavior that is dangerous to human life or destructive of critical infrastructure or key resources. Extremists have indeed been effective in changing the world. Think about how the early Protestants used violence to reduce the power of the Catholic church. And consider how, during the American Revolution, colonial extremists right here in New England used violence to fight against the control of the British government. The civil rights movement was a mostly nonviolent social movement, but there were extremists who believed that racial equality needed to be won "by any means necessary". Recently we have seen anti-government activists who have attacked power plants and environmental extremists who attacked the building of a new police academy in Atlanta.
	**Slide 13:** How do you understand this slide? Guide students toward the idea that not all extremism is violent. Optional: Discuss Venn diagrams.

 IN-GROUP OUT-GROUP	**Slide 14:** Extremism relies on the construction of an in-group and an out-group. Feelings of belonging to an in-group create the bonds that lead people to feel protective of their group. Through media messages, in-group identity can be strengthened and made to seem noble and important. Through media and storytelling, an out-group can be positioned as a terrible villain who threatens the survival or success of the in-group. Using the power of communication and information, out-groups can be humiliated, embarrassed, shamed, shunned, or verbally abused. Conspiracy theories, propaganda, and disinformation can be used to justify violence. Note that seeing people as divided into in-group and out-group does not equal being a violent extremist. We all feel this way sometimes. Ask students to think of an example of their in-groups and out-groups.
I am a WHITE MAN	**Slide 15:** Consider this image of a white man– with words written on the face suggesting that he has all sorts of advantages he doesn't deserve. This might evoke complex feelings in white men. Simply put: No one likes being put in an "out-group." An individual may be radicalized and adopt an extremist ideology without engaging in any acts of violence or terrorism. But "Radicalization to violent extremism" occurs when individuals increasingly adopt a violent extremist or terrorist ideology.
 Pathways to Radicalization Uncertainty about the Future Anxiety & Depression Being Stigmatized Socially Marginalized	**Slide 16:** Experts in targeted violence and terrorism prevention tell us that there are signs that can be observed when a person is starting to move towards extremism and violent extremism. Many people experience uncertainty about the future – a condition which causes extremist movements to thrive. But when you add to this anxiety and depression, being stigmatized, and feeling socially marginalized, it can be volatile. They say that "Hurt people hurt people." Recognizing when people are hurting and their hurt is turning into anger and hatred and radicalization is where prevention comes in.

 Pathways to De-Radicalization Confidence in the Future Social Contact with Members of the Out-Group Unexpected Kindness or Support	**Slide 17:** We also know that there are some pathways to de-radicalization. When people have confidence in the future, they are not likely to become extremists. When they have social contact with people in the out-group, they realize that they're not villains to be feared or blamed. And when people show unexpected kindness or generosity to them, people's extremist beliefs can be dislodged.
 TOPS 180 PAGE RANT POSTED ONLINE >> Reporter: THE GUNMAN IN BUFFALO ETCHED REFERENCES TO BUFFALO MURDERS ADD TO STRING OF HATE CRIMES TODAY	**Slide 18:** Now let's consider some of these ideas in a small group discussion where you will view and discuss a news story about violent extremism.
	Slide 19: Watch the video (embedded in the slide).
180 PAGE RANT POSTED ONLINE	**Slide 20:** Now you will work in small groups to analyze this video using the five critical questions of media literacy (each group uses one worksheet). After the discussion, each group presents 1-2 key ideas generated from the discussion. Optional: Have students use their Media Literacy Smartphones.

 CSIS Pushed to Extremes: Domestic Terrorism amid Polarization and Protest	**Slide 21:** Now we are going to read and analyze a different media text.
 Takeways - It takes time to critically analyze media messages and the process involves exposure to multiple interpretations and points of view - All media message are constructed by authors for specific purposes who have a particular point of view - Media messages are selective and incomplete - When activating your media literacy competencies, you may be inspired to want to learn more	**Slide 22:** Review the key ideas.
 Courageous RI www.courageousri.com	**Slide 23:** Thank you for your participation! To learn more about COURAGEOUS RI, visit the program's website courageousri.com.

Learn More

Read the ADL Report on White Supremacist Propaganda in New England
White supremacist propaganda is designed to intimidate specific groups and to lure people to join in hateful activities. In 2022, there were 142 incidents, an increase of 74% from the previous year. Learn more about the scope of the problem in Rhode Island and across the nation.

Read Extremism by J.M. Berger
Learn from an expert on extremist movements about how us-vs-them framing is intensified by the conviction that the success of "us" is inseparable from hostile acts against "them." Learn about the evolution of identity movements, individual and group radicalization, and more. If we understand the causes of extremism, and the common elements of extremist movements, Berger says, we will be more effective in countering it.

Watch a Video about Military in Violent Extremism
U.S. active-duty military personnel and reservists have participated in a growing number of domestic terrorist plots and attacks, with 6.4% of all domestic terrorist incidents linked to active-duty and reserve personnel in 2020. A growing number of current and former law enforcement officers have been involved in domestic terrorism in recent years. But they are also the victims of violence by extremists from all sides of the ideological spectrum. Watch this video from the Center for Strategic and International Studies to learn more.

Listen to the Podcast on Depolarizing Education
In this podcast episode, our host Renee Hobbs talks with author and teacher Kent Lenci, who wrote the book Learning to Depolarize, which connects classroom learning to navigating a polarized society.

2.2: Reading and Discussion

Instructions: After reading the abridged article below, answer the questions.

Photo: Nathan Howard/Stringer/Getty Images

Brief by Catrina Doxsee, Seth G. Jones, Jared Thompson, Kateryna Halstead, and Grace Hwang
Published May 17, 2022

Pushed to Extremes: Domestic Terrorism amid Polarization and Protest

Introduction

On the evening of February 19, 2022, Benjamin Smith—who had become enraged at the Black Lives Matter movement, Covid-19 restrictions, and the local homeless population—opened fire on protesters that were demonstrating against police violence near Normandale Park in Portland, Oregon. One woman was killed, and four people were hospitalized with gunshot wounds. In August 2020, only four miles away from Normandale Park, Michael Reinoehl, an anti-fascist, shot and killed Aaron "Jay" Danielson, a member of the far-right group Patriot Prayer. These attacks unfolded against a backdrop of nearly two years of heightened protest activity in urban areas of the United States. Although most demonstrations have been peaceful, some have devolved into violence.

Other acts of terrorism have occurred amid growing political polarization and the mainstreaming of extremist beliefs. Most recently, on May 14, 2022, Peyton Gendron, motivated by the far-right "Great Replacement" conspiracy theory, opened fire in a grocery store in Buffalo, New York, killing 10 people and injuring 3. This conspiracy theory—which alleges that immigration is being weaponized to diminish the influence and existence of the white population—has been shared on mainstream platforms with increasing frequency. The Department of Justice (DOJ) is investigating the attack "as a hate crime and an act of racially-motivated violent extremism."

To better understand the trends in U.S. domestic terrorism, CSIS compiled a data set of 1,040 terrorist attacks and plots in the United States between January 1, 1994, and December 31, 2021. The 2021 data are new, and they yield several main findings.

First, there was a significant increase in the number and percentage of domestic terrorist incidents at demonstrations in cities in 2020 and 2021. In 2019, only 2 percent of all U.S. terrorist attacks and plots occurred at demonstrations, but this portion rose to 47 percent in 2020 and 53 percent in 2021. The result is that some metropolitan areas of the United States—such as Portland, Seattle, New York, Los Angeles, and Washington, D.C.—are becoming focal points of domestic terrorism, where extremists from opposing sides square off against each other and against law enforcement agencies. This development has created a "security dilemma" in metropolitan areas, where attempts by one side to improve its own security threatens the security of others, leading to further escalation.

Second, U.S. law enforcement agencies have increasingly become a target of domestic terrorists from all sides of the political spectrum. The government, military, and especially law enforcement were the primary targets of domestic terrorist attacks and plots in 2021, composing 43 percent of all attacks. They were most likely to be targeted regardless of perpetrator ideology: they were selected in 48 percent of violent far-left events, 37 percent of violent far-right events, and all Salafi-jihadist events in 2021. This development indicates that U.S. security agencies—particularly law enforcement—are increasingly at risk from domestic terrorism.

Third, there was an increase in the percentage of attacks and plots by anarchists, anti-fascists, and other likeminded extremists in 2021. While white supremacists, anti-government militias, and likeminded extremists conducted the most attacks and plots in 2021 (49 percent), the percentage of attacks and plots by anarchists, anti-fascists, and likeminded extremists grew from 23 percent in 2020 to 40 percent in 2021. This rise has occurred alongside an increase in violence at demonstrations. However, although there was a historically high level of both far-right and far-left terrorist attacks in 2021, violent far-right incidents were significantly more likely to be lethal, both in terms of weapon choice and number of resulting fatalities.

The remainder of this brief is divided into four sections. The first provides an overview of terrorism and outlines the data set used in this analysis. The second examines trends in terrorist events in the United States that are related to public demonstrations. The third describes additional findings from the data set. The final section provides brief policy implications.

Access the Original Article Here

URL: https://www.csis.org/analysis/pushed-extremes-domestic-terrorism-amid-polarization-and-protest

Discussion Questions:

1. What type of text is this article? How do you know?
2. What are the main ideas of this article?
3. What feelings does this article evoke in you?

2.3: Learn More

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White supremacist propaganda is designed to intimidate specific groups and to lure people to join in hateful activities. In 2022, there were 142 incidents, an increase of 74% from the previous year. **Learn more about the scope of the problem in Rhode Island and across the nation.**

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Listen to the Podcast on Depolarizing Education
In **this podcast episode,** our host Renee Hobbs talks with author and teacher Kent Lenci, who wrote the book Learning to Depolarize, which connects classroom learning to navigating a polarized society.

For Educators

2.4: Additional Resources

Preventing Violent Extremism

A collection of resources for supporting educators looking to explore additional ways to teach about the intersection of violent extremism, media literacy, and kindness. Resources can be used before teaching the COURAGEOUS RI lesson plan to develop background knowledge or after to extend and enrich Lesson 2.1 objectives.

If you have 15 min	If you have 30 min	If you have 60 min
Radicalization & Violent Extremism **More Than A Dot on The Board: Alt-Right Radicalization and Media Education in Schools** Use this article written by a Kentucky teen to start a conversation with your students about how effective and relevant media literacy education should look when polarization and radicalization are happening via social media memes. **What Is an Echo Chamber?** Echo chambers limit access to a variety of perspectives and opinions which can contribute to radicalization. Use this video to help students understand how to avoid echo chambers. **The Miseducation of Dylan Roof** This video explores how Google algorithms contributed to Dylan Roof's radicalization and deadly hate crime. Use it to introduce the connection between algorithms and online hate.	**Radicalization & Violent Extremism** **Extreme Measures Toolkit** An Anti-Defamation League publication that provides tips for educators on how to support students in resisting extremist recruitment including a section on how to resist online hate. **Educate Against Hate Early Stories** A collection of three 5-minute videos with accompanying PPTs and lesson plans. Each video is based on real-life stories of young people whose lives have been affected by radicalization. **My Descent into America's Neo-Nazi Movement— and How I Got Out** In this 20-minute TED Talk, Christian Picciolini explains how he was radicalized by Neo-Nazis at 14 and how connecting with others was key to his de-radicalization. This TED Ed resource includes discussion questions for facilitating a conversation in your class.	**Radicalization & Violent Extremism** **A Teacher's Guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism** This UNESCO publication includes both an introduction to violent extremism and its intersection with media and suggestions for how to facilitate conversations with students about this topic. **Extremism in America** This two-part Retro Report lesson asks students to engage in the inquiry process as they ask questions about extremism, deepen their knowledge of extremism in the United States, and evaluate the effectiveness of different approaches to reducing violent extremism. **Learning for Justice Webinars** Check out these 60-minute on-demand webinars on Combating Youth Radicalization and Media Literacy & Other Tools for Combating Extremism
Responding with Kindness **Kindness Boomerang Video** A 5-minute video that can be used to illustrate the power of kindness. **Random Acts of Kindness Foundation Minilessons** Use this resource to establish or reinforce a culture of kindness in your classroom. The mini-lessons can be used to infuse kindness practices and reflections into your class on a regular basis.	**Responding with Kindness** **Empathy Is Not an Endorsement** Use this video that explores how a digital creator responds to online hate with empathy and kindness as a class conversation starter. **Kindness: A Lesson Plan** This Edutopia article includes a variety of activities that can be adapted for any grade level and incorporated into your classroom practice to build a culture of kindness.	**Responding with Kindness** **Random Acts of Kindness Foundation Curriculum** These High School and Middle School curriculums include units on respect, caring, inclusiveness, integrity, responsibility, and courage. You can teach the entire curriculum or pick and choose the lessons that work best for your class.

Preventing Violent Extremism

ACTIVITY: Evaluate Media Messages about Extremism

Instructions:
Conduct some research and locate 3 op-eds or persuasive essays that relate to violent extremism. Evaluate each piece, identifying their primary argument, evidence used to support their argument, credibility of sources, and viability of solutions they propose. Organize these evaluations into a chart, and look for patterns.
#researching #evaluating

Discussion Questions:

1. Where is violent extremism taking place? What forms does it take?
2. What arguments are being made about violent extremism? Which arguments do you find most compelling? Why?
3. Which arguments do you disagree with? Why?

***This activity aligns with the following RI Social Studies Anchor Standards:**

CG.P.1: Identify what political power is and who has political power in a society.
CG.RL.2: Explain why rules and laws exist, and how they are implemented by and for individuals and communities based on their intersectional identities and lived experiences.

PROJECT: Argue Against Extremism

Instructions:
Write an op-ed or persuasive essay that discusses the impact of violent extremism on society and proposes actionable solutions, using a particular case study that matters to you. The piece should also emphasize at least one potential approach to addressing violent extremism, and end with a “call to action.”
#researching #persuasive writing

Barriers to Empathic Listening

Overview

In this lesson, students learn about the 12 barriers to empathic listening. Oftentimes people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply. As such, it is important that people learn what blocks good conversation. Students will become more aware of their tendencies as a listener in conversation and how they inadvertently use barriers rather than empathy.

Standards

SL.X.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, building on others' ideas and expressing your own clearly.

Materials and Media Texts	Learning Objectives
- PPT Slide Deck for this lesson - Projector - Handout 2.1 - 12 Barriers to Listening (all handouts one for each student) - Handout 2.2 - Triad Worksheet - Handout 2.3 - Empathic Listening Model and Echo Cues **Time:** 45-60 minutes	1. Define 5 levels of listening. 2. Understand 12 ways that listeners can interrupt conversations. 3. Demonstrate barriers to empathic listening in a practice exercise. 4. Compare barriers to empathic listening with empathic listening for understanding. 5. Debrief exercise in small group discussion and full group debrief.

Activity

1. Instructor conveys new knowledge through reviewing ideas on content slides.
2. Students learn 12 ways that listeners can interrupt the flow of the Speaker and create barriers to empathic listening.
3. Students form triads to practice mixing empathic responses with barrier responses. Triads debrief the exercise.
4. Each group presents to the larger group 1-2 key ideas generated from the debrief in their triad.
5. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion.

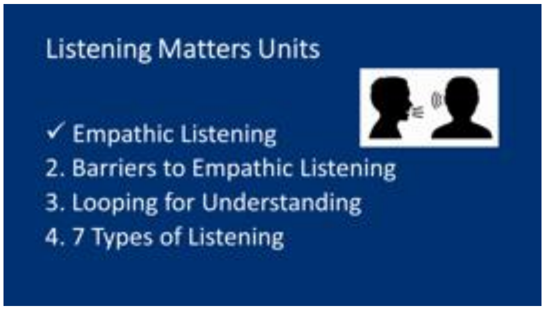
Assessments

Students' performance in building reflective listening skills is informally observed as they work in triads and in their share-out presentations. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion. As part of this activity, students select 1 or more questions for brief reflective writing:

- Did all students in your triad fully participate in the three roles (Observer, Speaker, Listener)? Why or why not?
- Which role did you enjoy the most (Listener, Speaker, Observer)? Which role did you find most challenging? Why?
- Which elements of looping were used in your group? Which elements were difficult to apply?
- Provide examples of how you might use looping in your day-to-day life. In what situations in your life might looping be most useful?
- What new knowledge or new ideas did you gain from learning about other people's experiences?

Access the Slide Deck Here (make a copy that you can customize as needed)
URL: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Bbd7ZY5U603_LrNWunlnOQr7HqLSM37O/copy

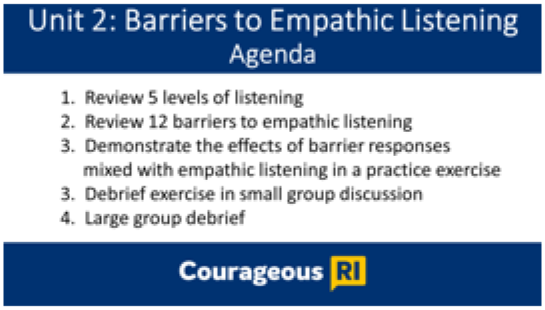
 Courageous RI Listening Matters	**Slide 1:** This is lesson 2 of the curriculum Listening Matters.
 Community conversations to counter disinformation, enhance civic participation, and improve media literacy www.courageousri.com	**Slide 2:** COURAGEOUS RI, with support from the Department of Homeland Security, works to prevent rising violence and extremism in Rhode Island with authentic and respectful conversation. You can find out more about it at courageousri.com.



Listening Matters Units

✓ Empathic Listening
2. Barriers to Empathic Listening
3. Looping for Understanding
4. 7 Types of Listening

Slide 3: In Lesson 1 we focused on empathic listening, the differences between sympathy and empathy, and how to listen empathically. Today's lesson focuses on the many barriers to empathic listening. These are the roadblocks that we all inadvertently use; the barriers that prevent us from finding common ground with another.

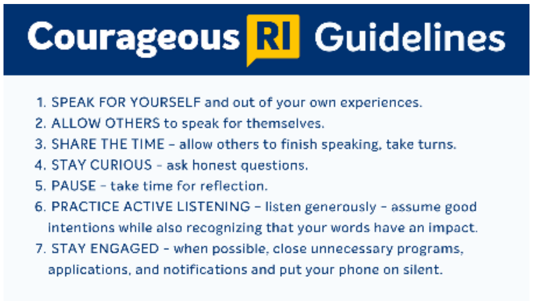


Unit 2: Barriers to Empathic Listening
Agenda

1. Review 5 levels of listening
2. Review 12 barriers to empathic listening
3. Demonstrate the effects of barrier responses mixed with empathic listening in a practice exercise
3. Debrief exercise in small group discussion
4. Large group debrief

Courageous RI

Slide 4: This is the agenda for today. We'll review 5 levels of listening followed by 12 barriers to empathic listening and demonstrate the effects of these barriers in another triad exercise.



Courageous RI Guidelines

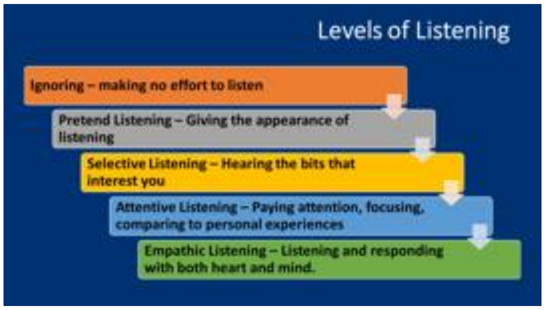
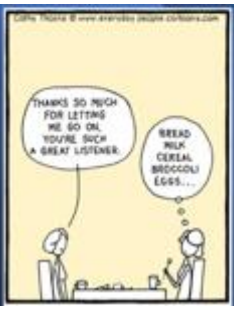
1. SPEAK FOR YOURSELF and out of your own experiences.
2. ALLOW OTHERS to speak for themselves.
3. SHARE THE TIME – allow others to finish speaking, take turns.
4. STAY CURIOUS – ask honest questions.
5. PAUSE – take time for reflection.
6. PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING – listen generously – assume good intentions while also recognizing that your words have an impact.
7. STAY ENGAGED – when possible, close unnecessary programs, applications, and notifications and put your phone on silent.

Slide 5: Our goal is to build connections and to foster conversations that improve our understanding of one another. For this reason, we want to make sure that everyone gets a chance both to share and to learn from others in this conversation. To support these goals, we have some basic guidelines for our conversation.

"Most people do not listen with the intent to understand; they listen with the intent to reply."

Stephen Covey

Slide 6: When one is distracted by thinking about how to respond and what one might say in a conversation, one is no longer listening. As we learned in Lesson 1, empathic listening requires the Listener to be fully present, fully focused, and listening to deeply feel their way INTO the Speaker's comments.

 Levels of Listening Ignoring – making no effort to listen Pretend Listening – Giving the appearance of listening Selective Listening – Hearing the bits that interest you Attentive Listening – Paying attention, focusing, comparing to personal experiences Empathic Listening – Listening and responding with both heart and mind.	**Slide 7:** In addition to the barriers to listening we'll discuss shortly, there is also a number of what might be called "levels of listening" that we all do. You'll see that the first 3 of these might be considered essentially the opposite of listening for understanding! As we review these, see if you identify with any of them. With a show of hands, how many of you sometimes do the following: • Ignore the speaker? • Pretend to listen? • Have selective listening? • Pretty much stay attentive? • Listen and respond with empathy, as we learned in Lesson 1?
Which level of listening is this?  THANKS SO MUCH FOR LETTING ME GO ON. YOU'RE SUCH A GREAT LISTENER. BREAD MILK CEREAL BROCCOLI EGGS...	**Slide 8:** Which level of listening is this? Can anyone give an example of doing this type of (not) listening? Did the Speaker notice?
 12 Barriers to Empathic Listening 1. Directing 2. Interrupting 3. Advising 4. Warning 5. Persuading 6. Judging	**Slide 9:** These 12 types of responses, rather than helping the Speaker deepen their communication, typically block further sharing. Sometimes they leave the speaker feeling annoyed and frustrated. Here are the first 6: 1. Directing involves telling someone what to do, giving orders or commands, as in: "You've got to figure this out sooner than later!" Even a comment like "Tell me More" is directive, as you take control away from the Speaker. 2. Interrupting: As your partner is speaking or thinking, cutting them off to present your line of thinking is not empathic, as it can convey a lack of respect for your partner's point of view and stops the flow of their sharing. 3. Advising involves making suggestions and providing solutions, usually with the objective of offering help, for example:

- “If I were in your shoes, here’s what I would do…”
- “One thing you could try is…”
- “What if you do it this way?…”

While giving advice might be helpful at a later point in the conversation, it is not an empathic response and doesn’t encourage the speaker to delve deeper into their thoughts and feelings.

4. Warning is an act which involves pointing out the risks or dangers of what someone is doing. For example:

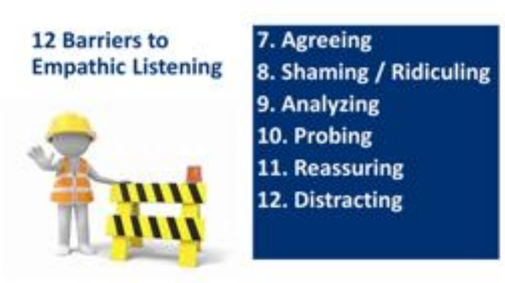
- “You’ll be sorry if you do that.”
- “Don’t you see the implication in all this?”
- “You’d better control your emotions.”

5. Persuading is similar to lecturing, arguing, giving reasons, or trying to convince with logic. Examples:

- “If you think about it you’ll realize that…”
- “Yes, but don’t you see that…”
- “Now let’s think this through. The facts are…”
- “This is the right thing to do, and here’s why…”

6. Judging takes the form of blaming, criticizing, or simply disagreeing.

- “I can’t believe you let things get so out of control!”
- “You’re still asleep at ten o’clock in the morning?”
- “Well, what did you expect?”



12 Barriers to Empathic Listening

7. Agreeing
8. Shaming / Ridiculing
9. Analyzing
10. Probing
11. Reassuring
12. Distracting

Slide 10:

Here are the last 6 barriers:

7. Agreeing usually sounds like taking sides with the person, perhaps approving or praising, as follows:

- “Yes, you’re absolutely right.”
- “Good for you!”
- “That’s what I would do, too.”

While agreeing might make the Speaker feel good, it isn’t empathic in that it typically stops the flow of conversation rather than encouraging the Speaker to share more deeply.

Similarly, disagreeing has a similarly negative effect on a conversation. Consider a response like, “I think you are wrong and you are making a big mistake.” Not only might this type of comment interrupt the flow of the Speaker’s thoughts, but it is likely to frustrate the Speaker as well.

8. Shaming or ridiculing is when the Listener attaches a judgment to what the other person is saying or doing or makes fun of the Speaker.

- “That’s really stupid!”
- “How could you do such a thing?”
- “You really ought to be ashamed of yourself.”
- “You’re being so selfish!”

9. Analyzing offers a reinterpretation or explanation of what the person is saying or doing.

- “What are the pros and cons of…?”
- “Do you know what your real problem is?”
- “I think what’s actually going on here is…”

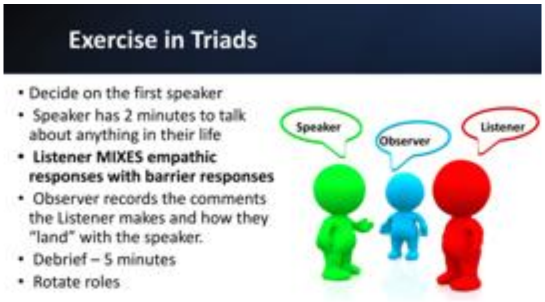
10. Probing is when questions are asked to gather facts or press for more information. Probing puts the Listener in charge of the conversation rather than the Speaker.

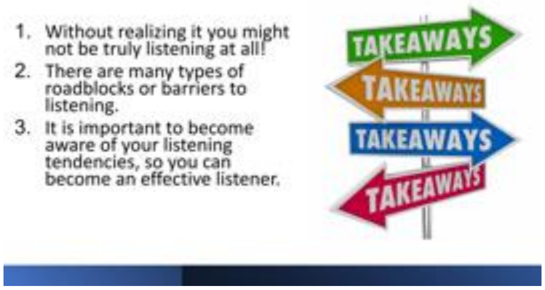
- “When did you first realize that?”
- “What makes you feel that way?”
- “Where was the last place you saw it?”

Probing might be useful for a different type of conversation, especially if the Speaker is engaging you to help them problem-solve, but it is not an empathic response.

11. Reassuring someone isn’t the same as listening. It often sounds like sympathizing or consoling:

- “Oh, you poor thing. I’m so sorry for you.”
- “I’m sure this will all work out.”
- “Things aren’t really so bad.”
- “You’ll probably look back on this in a year and laugh.”

	12. Distracting is an attempt to draw the Speaker away from what they are experiencing by humoring, changing the subject, or withdrawing. It might be as simple as changing the topic: • “Let’s discuss something else.”
 Speaker Observer Listener Exercise in Triads • Decide on the first speaker • Speaker has 2 minutes to talk about anything in their life • **Listener MIXES empathic responses with barrier responses** • Observer records the comments the Listener makes and how they "land" with the speaker. • Debrief – 5 minutes • Rotate roles	**Slide 11:** (Time is adjustable) Form groups of 3. We’re going to replay the exercise from Lesson 1, but this time the Listener will mix empathic responses with barrier comments. Your handout has the 12 barriers and some cues about empathic listening as a reminder. Compare how the interaction feels compared with the earlier exercise only using empathic responses. Each group decides who will be the first Speaker, Listener, and Observer. The Speaker has 2 minutes (max) to talk about anything going on in their life. The Listener reflects underlying emotions. The Observer records (Worksheet) the comments the Listener makes and how it seemed to land with the Speaker. The Observer also serves as the Timekeeper to keep the group on track. Debrief – 5 minutes • Observer reports what they observed in the interaction 1. Did the Listener seem to reflect accurately when making empathic responses? 2. What type of barrier responses did the Listener make? • Speaker comments on how the interaction felt to them 1. Did the Listener seem to reflect accurately when making empathic responses? 2. What type of barrier responses did you notice from the Listener? • Listener comments on how it felt to them: 1. How did it feel to make barrier types of responses?

	2. Was that familiar to you - i.e., did you recognize a typical listening pattern in your responses? 3. How easy or difficult was it to reflect back (echo) the Speaker's underlying emotions? Rotate roles and repeat until everyone has had a chance to be in all roles.
Whole Group DEBRIEF	**Slide 12**: Returning to the large group to debrief: What was it like for you to be the Speaker? Listener? Observer? What was it like to make barrier comments in comparison to the empathic comments?
 1. Without realizing it you might not be truly listening at all! 2. There are many types of roadblocks or barriers to listening. 3. It is important to become aware of your listening tendencies, so you can become an effective listener. TAKEAWAYS TAKEAWAYS TAKEAWAYS TAKEAWAYS	**Slide 13:** Here are key takeaways from today's lesson. Effective listening is a critical skill for people seeking to understand others. By overcoming barriers to listening and becoming a more effective listener, you can improve your communication skills, build better relationships, listen across differences, and find common ground.
Courageous RI	**Slide 14:** Thank you for your participation! To learn more about COURAGEOUS RI, visit the program's website **courageousri.com.**

Learn More

10 Barriers To Listening: Overcome Them With Confidence. (2023)

Listening is a critical skill all people need to have. On average, people spend 45% of their communication time listening. Listening allows us to understand the perspectives of others, build relationships, and make better decisions. However, listening is not always easy. There are many barriers that can prevent us from listening effectively. In this blog post, we will discuss ten common barriers to listening and how to overcome them. We will also provide tips for becoming a more effective listener.

12 Barriers To Effective Listening & How To Overcome Them. (2019).

This simple guide reviews 12 barriers to effective listening, and teaches strategies to overcome them in order to improve your communication skills.

What Are Some Common Barriers to Effective Listening? (2022).

According to a study from the University of Minnesota, people only remember about half of what was said immediately after listening to someone else talk. This information is quite concerning considering how essential communication is for success and growth in the business world. Whether you feel like your own listening skills could be improved or that your business is suffering due to ineffective listening, understanding the common barriers to effective listening can help you make the necessary changes to improve communication.

High Conflict

Discussion Support Tools

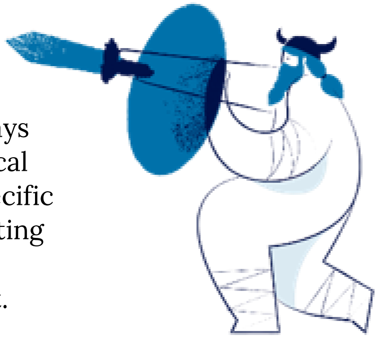
3.1: Lesson Plan

Overview

In this lesson, students discover that conflict can be beneficial or harmful. They learn about "fire starters" that accelerate conflict and lead to violence. Students practice "looping for understanding," a listening practice that helps people feel understood. When people feel understood, they are more open to understanding others. Students consider how this technique can help them dial down conflicts in the family and workplace, as well as in social and civic life in general.

Standards

RL/RI.X.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn for text.



SL.X.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats.

W.X.8 Assess the credibility and accuracy of sources.

Materials and Media Texts

- Slide Deck
- Data projector with external sound
- Access to the Internet
- Worksheet 3.2 – one copy for each student

Time:

45 – 60 minutes

Learning Objectives

1. Recognize the difference between good conflict vs. high conflict.
2. Participate in a small group discussion with guided reflection.
3. Learn about and practice a reflective listening technique called “looping.”
4. Develop informal public speaking skills.

Activities

1. Instructor conveys new knowledge through reviewing ideas on content slides.
2. Students discuss the difference between good conflict vs. high conflict.
3. They learn about a reflective listening technique called “looping.”
4. They work in groups or pairs to share stories and practice looping.
5. During the small-group discussion, they fill out a worksheet.
6. Each group presents 1-2 key ideas generated by the discussion.
7. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion.

Assessments

Students' performance is informally observed as they work in small groups and in their share-out presentations. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion. As part of this activity, students select 1 or more question for brief reflective writing:

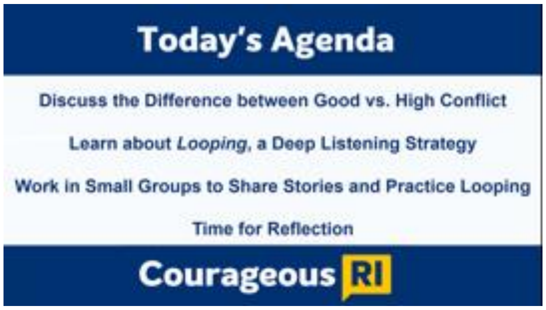
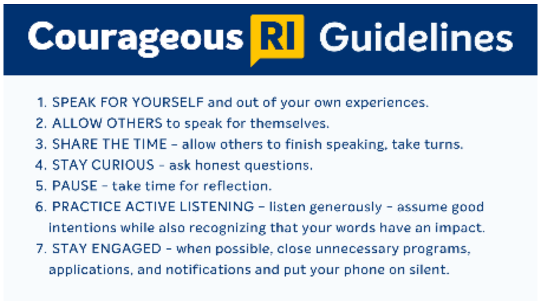
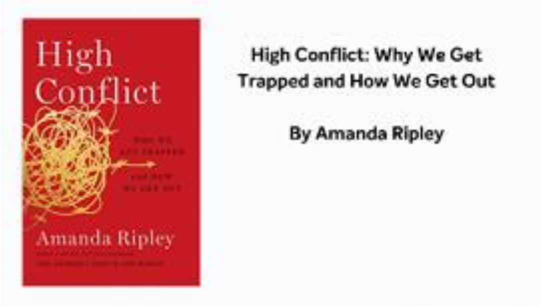
1. Did all students in your small group participate in the discussion? Why or why not?
2. Which elements of looping were used in your group? Which elements were difficult to apply?
3. What were some signs that participants were engaged in active listening?
4. What new knowledge or new ideas did you gain from learning about other people's experiences?

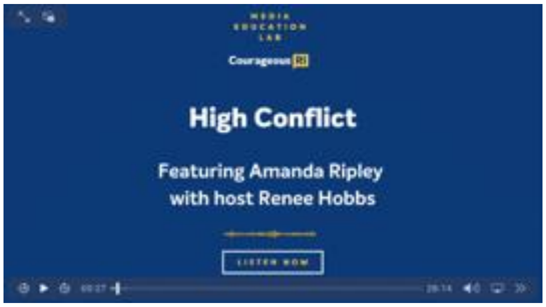
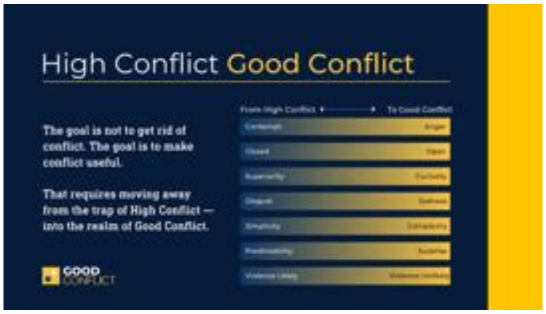
Notes about the Slide Deck

Access the Slide Deck Here (make a copy that you can customize as needed)
URL:https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1LW2qid8yR1Cr_61LD3QX88c0tBkKcKV0P3OPuBS7SEA/copy

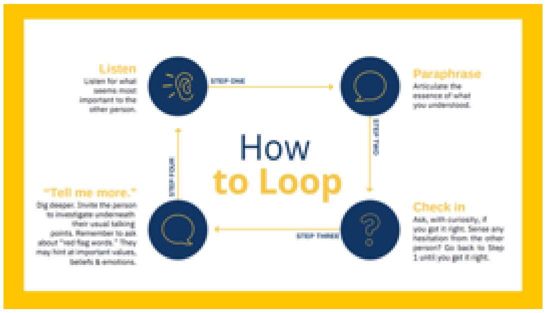
Access the COURAGEOUS RI Program Recording Here
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=THspOA8442E

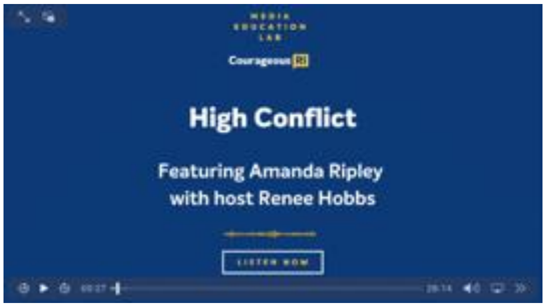
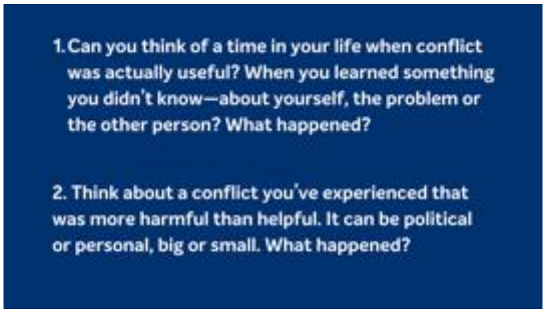
Courageous RI Learn and apply media literacy skills Find common ground Prevent violence and extremism	**Slide 1:** COURAGEOUS RI, with support from the Department of Homeland Security, works to prevent rising violence and extremism in Rhode Island with authentic and respectful conversation. You can find out more about it at courageousri.com.
Community conversations to counter disinformation, enhance civic participation, and improve media literacy www.courageousri.com	**Slide 2:** We will learn about the skills of media literacy, which involves asking critical questions about the media we see, hear, watch, play, and use. We will also discuss the importance of having authentic conversations that help us better listen to each other and to find common ground.

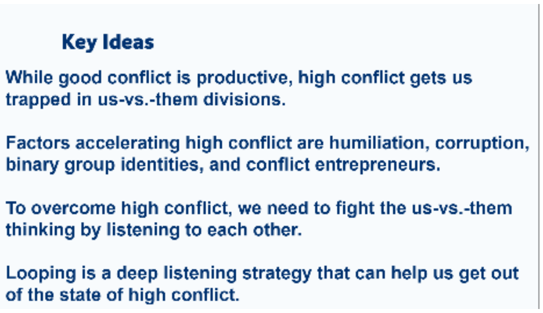
 Courageous RI High Conflict Lesson Plan	**Slide 3:** In this lesson, we'll define the difference between good conflict and high conflict.
 Today's Agenda Discuss the Difference between Good vs. High Conflict Learn about *Looping*, a Deep Listening Strategy Work in Small Groups to Share Stories and Practice Looping Time for Reflection Courageous RI	**Slide 4:** We will work in small groups to practice "looping for understanding," a listening technique that helps reduce conflict. This is a sensitive and important topic – and it can make people uncomfortable – so we need to be courageous in both our sharing and our listening.
 Courageous RI Guidelines 1. SPEAK FOR YOURSELF and out of your own experiences. 2. ALLOW OTHERS to speak for themselves. 3. SHARE THE TIME – allow others to finish speaking, take turns. 4. STAY CURIOUS - ask honest questions. 5. PAUSE – take time for reflection. 6. PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING – listen generously – assume good intentions while also recognizing that your words have an impact. 7. STAY ENGAGED – when possible, close unnecessary programs, applications, and notifications and put your phone on silent.	**Slide 5:** Our goal is to build connections and to foster conversations that improve our understanding of one another. For this reason, we want to make sure that everyone gets a chance both to share and to learn from others in this conversation. To support those goals, we have some basic guidelines for our conversation.
 High Conflict: Why We Get Trapped and How We Get Out By Amanda Ripley	**Slide 6:** Amanda Ripley is a journalist who hated how she got stuck in the noise and chaos of conflict, over and over again. In this book, she tells stories about people who discovered how to transform harmful conflict into productive dialogue and discussion. She now offers training programs to journalists and others who want to understand conflicts in our society – not just argue about them. This approach can help us better understand ourselves and one another in our complex world.

 MEDIA EDUCATION LAB Courageous RI High Conflict Featuring Amanda Ripley with host Renee Hobbs 	**Slide 7:** In this podcast for COURAGEOUS RI, Amanda Ripley talks about her efforts to reduce harmful conflict and replace it with productive conflict that builds people's understanding of our complex world.
Let's play a short clip from the podcast.	**Slide 8:** Let's play a short clip. Play from 1:36 ("so those are some of the differences") to 3:46.
 High Conflict Good Conflict The goal is not to get rid of conflict. The goal is to make conflict useful. That requires moving away from the trap of High Conflict — into the realm of Good Conflict. GOOD CONFLICT	**Slide 9:** So, the first step in the process involves recognizing your own emotions when you experience conflict. This takes practice – because when we're feeling strong feelings, we don't generally take the time to name them. Look at this slide. We see a lot of different emotion words. And we can see here some of the "traps" of high conflict. For example, in high conflict, we may feel "contempt" for others when their ideas are repugnant to us. But an alternative to contempt is "anger" (Note: It is more productive to be angry about a particular problem than about a person who we blame for this problem.) In high conflict, we can become "closed" to ideas – whereas in good conflict, we are "open" to them. In high conflict, we may "simplify" ideas, whereas in good conflict, we embrace "complexity." We can shift from the feeling of "predictability" to the possibility of "surprise." Simply put, high conflict can lead to violence – while good conflict can lead to learning.

	These ideas are both personal and political. The framers of the U.S. Constitution knew all about the power of good conflict to help people make better decisions. It's an essential part of the democratic process of self-governance.
 Fire **Starters** Accelerants that lead conflict to explode, including group identities, conflict entrepreneurs, humiliation, and corruption. Humiliation A forced and public loss of dignity, pride, or status Corruption When institutions cannot be trusted Binary Group Identities Us vs. them, Republicans vs. Democrat, Black vs. White Conflict Entrepreneurs People who exploit conflict for their own ends GOOD CONFLICT	**Slide 10:** To recognize high conflict, we need to pay attention to "Fire Starters," four accelerants that make conflict truly dangerous. **Humiliation** is a big one. Everyone has experienced it at one time or the other. It happens when someone says or does something to lower your status in ways that are public and painful. Politicians and scholars have discovered that the experience of humiliation is a powerful pain point. Nelson Mandela once said, "There is no one more dangerous than one who has been humiliated." Such experiences are awful – and unforgettable. They can shape people's behavior for a lifetime. Humiliation can intensify the desire for revenge. "Hurt people hurt people." **Corruption** is another one. We count on leaders to be fair. When people feel their leaders cannot be trusted, this activates conflict. When leaders exploit their power for personal gain, we may feel a deep need to share our grievance with others. Aristotle explained that anger over corruption can be a driving force that pushes people to take action. **Binary Group Identities** are a fire starter that we discussed in our previous session. People like the feeling of being a member of an in-group but this positive sense of belonging can be harnessed to hate when people who are not within the in-group become targets of stereotyping and often quite overt discrimination. For example, you are likely to have inaccurate stereotypes of people in your out-group – whether those people are new immigrants, Republicans, Democrats, or even people who don't live in your state. **Conflict Entrepreneurs** in the last fire-starter on our list. These are the people (or institutions) who exploit conflict for power, pleasure, and profit. You

	can immediately recognize how people in media and politics do this, because likes and shares are part of the attention economy. In fact, conflict entrepreneurs are everywhere – we all know someone who finds ways to get in between people who are in conflict – and make the problem worse. One important thing to acknowledge: conflict can be fun – and fire starters can become addictive.
 How to Loop Listen STEP ONE Paraphrase STEP TWO Check in STEP THREE "Tell me more." STEP FOUR	**Slide 11:** For some time now, many schools have been teaching kids to be "upstanders" instead of bystanders to bullying. We should all learn prevention and ally skills. One of the best ways to detach from the allure of conflict is to practice active listening that transforms conflict into an opportunity for learning. Amanda Ripley talks about one listening technique she calls "looping." Looping is a communication technique that transforms how we listen and connect with others. This technique is used by conflict mediators and psychologists, and helps us to prove that we are trying to really understand one another. Looping builds trust. **Step 1** is Listen "Tell me more." Listen for what seems most important to the other person. **Step 2** is Paraphrase. Articulate the essence of what you understood. **Step 3** is Check in. Ask, with honest curiosity, if you got it right. Sense any hesitation from the other person? Go back to Step 1 until you get it right. **Step 4** is Tell Me More. Dig deeper. Invite the person to investigate underneath their usual talking points. Remember to ask about "red flag words." They may hint at important values, beliefs & emotions.

 MEDIA EDUCATION LAB Courageous RI High Conflict Featuring Amanda Ripley with host Renee Hobbs LISTEN NOW	**Slide 12:** Now let's listen to a part of the podcast where Amanda Ripley describes "looping for understanding" as a kind of deep listening.
[Let's play a short clip from the podcast.]()	**Slide 13:** Play the podcast from 17:45 to 20:32.
 1. Can you think of a time in your life when conflict was actually useful? When you learned something you didn't know—about yourself, the problem or the other person? What happened? 2. Think about a conflict you've experienced that was more harmful than helpful. It can be political or personal, big or small. What happened?	**Slide 14:** Now we are going to apply these ideas in small group conversations. In your group, you'll tell a story – and your group members will practice looping for understanding. Optional: Before students break into small groups, the instructor tells their own story to answer one of the two questions on the slide.
 How to Resolve a Conflict When You Hate Your Opponent's Guts	**Slide 15:** Now we are going to read and analyze a different media text.

 **Key Ideas** While good conflict is productive, high conflict gets us trapped in us-vs.-them divisions. Factors accelerating high conflict are humiliation, corruption, binary group identities, and conflict entrepreneurs. To overcome high conflict, we need to fight the us-vs.-them thinking by listening to each other. Looping is a deep listening strategy that can help us get out of the state of high conflict.	**Slide 16:** Review the key ideas.
 Courageous RI www.courageousri.com	**Slide 17:** Thank you for your participation! To learn more about COURAGEOUS RI, visit the program's website courageousri.com.

Learn More

Learn More About High Conflict
Watch the COURAGEOUS RI podcast with Amanda Ripley and Renee Hobbs (episode 4) to learn even more about how journalists and media professionals can learn new ways to tell stories without intensifying high conflict.

Learn more about COURAGEOUS RI and Media Literacy
Check out our podcasts and blogs where you can learn more about some of the issues that help people understand how media literacy helps reduce the fear, anger, and hate that lead to violence.

Insights on Transforming Conflict into Curiosity
Watch a video interview with Mónica Guzmán on political conflict in the family and how we can activate curiosity and build bridges in dangerously divided times.

3.2: Reading and Discussion

Instructions: After reading the article below, answer the questions.

Image credit: Jesse Reed

By Yascha Mounk
April 9, 2021

How to Resolve a Conflict When You Hate Your Opponent's Guts

HIGH CONFLICT

Why We Get Trapped and How We Get Out

By Amanda Ripley

In the late 1970s, Jay and Lorna walked into the legal offices of Gary Friedman. After years of marriage, they had decided to call it quits. But instead of going through an adversarial process, they wanted somebody to help them disentangle their lives with as little belligerence as possible. That someone, they hoped, would be Friedman.

Friedman declined. It seemed improper for one lawyer to represent two parties to the same conflict. He had never heard of such a thing. Apologetically, he told his old friends that each of them would have to hire separate counsel. But Jay and Lorna insisted. And since Friedman had long disliked the fierce antagonism of the courtrooms in which he had shone as a young trial lawyer, he decided to give the unusual suggestion a try.

Over the next decades, the idea of mediation quickly caught on. Friedman helped hundreds of couples finalize their divorces. He also worked to resolve other cases of entrenched conflict, including a high-profile labor dispute at the San Francisco Symphony. So when the meetings of the local community board in Muir Beach, the idyllic hilltop town where Friedman had lived for decades, started to turn acrimonious, he seemed like the perfect person to reconcile its 250 inhabitants. In 2015, Friedman ran for political office for the first time in his life, and was resoundingly elected.

It took only a few months for one of the world's most respected mediators to get hopelessly stuck in a bitter feud with many of his own neighbors. Friedman started to see himself as a representative of the "New Guard" that, for the good of the community, desperately needed to win a decisive victory over the "Old Guard." He imputed the worst possible motives to the other side. At some point, he now admits, arguments over seemingly banal subjects like the optimal rate for water charges took on an existential dimension: "It felt like we were at war."

How can one of the most skilled mediators in the country be so deeply drawn into such a petty conflict? And what does that tell us about the power that such feuds can exercise over our imagination? This is the topic of an insightful and enthralling new book by the journalist Amanda Ripley.

In "High Conflict: Why We Get Trapped and How We Get Out," Ripley tells the harrowing tales of people who got drawn into fights that consume their lives and make them capable of committing terrible injustices, from a gang leader on the South Side of Chicago to a guerrilla fighter in the Colombian jungle. But with a scrupulous eye for scientific evidence that is rare in a book this entertaining, Ripley also explains how it is possible for hardened combatants to leave behind the conflicts that once defined the core of their identity.

Conflict, Ripley argues, can be productive. It is often good for people who disagree to state their differences and advocate for their own interests. In many situations, this allows adversaries to understand each other more fully and strike a compromise with which both sides are reasonably content.

But "high conflict," the subject of her book, is very different. Once they get drawn into high conflict, people become certain of their own righteousness, make negative assumptions about those who have a different position and come to believe that the only acceptable solution is total victory. Like Friedman, they become willing to go to war over trivial disputes.

That kind of conflict, Ripley warns, is an alluring trap. "Once we enter, we find we can't get out. … More and more of us get pulled into the muck, without even realizing how much worse we are making our own lives." This helps to explain the persistence of zero-sum conflicts in all aspects of social and political life, from messy divorces to decades-long civil wars.

Nobody is altogether invulnerable to this trap. But even conflicts that appear intractable, Ripley points out, often attenuate over time. Individuals, sometimes even whole societies, can reach a breaking point. As the costs of conflict mount, so does the desire to overcome endless fights.

In her search for solutions, Ripley shows that the process of escaping these situations usually involves five steps. Participants in the conflict, she suggests, need to "investigate the understory" that made them so invested in the first place. They should "reduce the binary," recognizing that they may share more values and interests with their adversaries than they realize. They must “marginalize the fire starters,” ceasing to listen to those who seem to get a thrill out of the fight. They should “buy time and make space,” stopping themselves from escalating when they feel triggered. Most important, they need to “complicate the narrative,” recognizing that any story in which one side consists of pure heroes and the other of cartoonish villains is unlikely to be altogether accurate.

Ripley’s book is not overtly political. Though she discusses the deep divisions now tearing apart the United States, her main motivation is to show that the dynamics pushing us into high conflict — as well as the techniques that can help to pull us out again — are universal. Whether she describes private clashes or political battles, the same themes emerge.

This universal approach only further reinforces the book’s implicit upshot. In most deep conflicts, the hope of winning a definitive victory over your opponent turns out to be a dangerous chimera. The only way out if you’re stuck in the trap is to recognize that you will have to find a way to work together despite your differences. For those of us who despair of our fellow citizens, giving up hope that we might achieve the kind of country to which we aspire without vanquishing them, that is an important lesson.

In his own small way, Gary Friedman has started on the path out of high conflict. A few years after he was first elected, he finally recognized the heavy cost he was paying for falling into the trap. The community that once felt like a magic retreat from the world was losing its charms. Even his relationship with his wife and children was suffering.

So Friedman started to heed the advice he had so often given others. He examined his own story of the world critically. He took the time to understand how those he disagreed with on the community board saw the world. He swallowed his pride and reached out to them.

Even today, all is not well in Muir Beach. Years of battle have taken their toll. Some neighbors still hate each other. But, step by step, the town is leaving high conflict behind. And if Ripley’s book is to be believed, other towns and families and countries can, too.

Access the Original Article Here
(URL: https://www.nytimes.com/2021/04/09/books/review/high-conflict-amanda-ripley.html)

Discussion Questions:

1. What type of text is this article? How do you know?
2. What are the main ideas of this article?
3. What feelings does this article evoke in you?

3.3: Learn More

Learn More About High Conflict

Watch the COURAGEOUS RI with Amanda Ripley and Renee Hobbs (episode 4) to learn even more about how journalists and media professionals can learn new ways to tell stories without intensifying high conflict.

Insights on Transforming Conflict into Curiosity

Watch a **video interview** with Mónica Guzmán on political conflict in the family and how we can activate curiosity and build bridges in dangerously divided times.

For Educators

3.4: Additional Resources

High Conflict

A collection of additional resources for exploring topics related to High Conflict with your students. Resources can be used before teaching the COURAGEOUS RI lesson plan to develop background knowledge or after to extend and enrich Lesson 3.1 objectives.

High Conflict in Education

The resources in this section explore high-impact conflict in schools. These informational articles are recommended for faculty reading and reflection. They are not student-facing resources.

Masks. Vaccines. Anti-Racism. Expert Advice for Schools Caught Up in Conflict
In this Education Week opinion piece, Amanda Ripley reflects on how her research on high conflict applies to schools. She succinctly suggests how to avoid fire starters, investigate the understory, and build rapport in order to avoid high conflict and set the stage for the good conflict that leads to growth.

High Conflict in Education: Chaos, Attrition, and Fear with Guest Sandra Just
This 36-minute episode of the "It's All Your Fault" podcast explores high conflict between parents, teachers, school boards, and unions associated with topics like mask mandates, vaccinations, gender issues, parent rights, and more. It offers suggestions for supporting educators as they navigate high conflict situations and relationship

Conflict Resolution

These lesson plans can be used to give students additional practice with conflict resolution in a variety of settings - in school, at home, and online.

Overcoming Obstacles
Overcoming Obstacles is an award-winning online life skills curriculum for K-12 students. The elementary, middle, and high school curriculums each include units on conflict resolution. All lessons progress from skill introduction to explanation to practice to reflection. The Middle School Conflict Resolution Unit includes lessons on understanding conflicts, identifying emotions, controlling emotions, using communication skills effectively, creating win-win situations, and resolving conflicts. The High School unit introduces conflict resolution and explores how to manage anger during conflict.

Kid's Health in the Classroom: Conflict Resolution
This lesson plan is part of the Personal Health Series. In addition to providing an introductory lesson about managing emotions and navigating disagreements, it lists a variety of links to Kid's Health articles related to conflict for teens.

Looping / Active Listening

Productively navigating conflict requires us to truly listen which is not always easy. These resources give students additional practice with critical listening skills.

Peace Building Toolkit
The United States Institute of Peace Peacebuilding Toolkit for Educators supports teachers working to introduce students to global conflict and strategies for promoting peace. It includes High School and Middle School versions in English, Spanish, French, and Arabic. Lessons on Active Listening are included in both the High School and Middle School toolkits.

StoryCorps Lesson: The Power of Active Listening
StoryCorps believes in the transformative power of conversation and storytelling. They understand that in order to truly connect with others we must listen to what they say. This lesson introduces students to the power of listening as they practice active listening skills and reflect on what it feels like when someone really listens to what you are saying.

3.5: Classroom Activities and Creative Expression Ideas

High Conflict

ACTIVITY: Identify Different Types of Conflict

Instructions:
Choose a place within society where you observe conflict. These places might include online comments sections, the US-Mexico border, interactions between police and communities of color, at school, in the family, or somewhere else. Using your new understanding of conflict, imagine and brainstorm different examples within your chosen place that could illustrate "good" conflict and "high" conflict.
#brainstorming #connectingclassroomtoculture

Discussion Questions:

1. In your chosen place, what forms of conflict might be productive? Unproductive?

***This activity aligns with the following RI Social Studies Anchor Standards:**

CG.P.1: Identify what political power is and who has political power in a society.

PROJECT: Illustrate Conflict

Instructions:
Create an image or graphic design that visually represents the differences between types of conflict–including "good conflict" and “high conflict”–within a specific context like race relations, American politics, etc. The image should have a deliberate aesthetic that is visually appealing while also clearly communicating information about the impact of different types of conflict on society.

Discuss the intentions behind your image or graphic design. What were some of the creative decisions you made? How does the image reflect your personal perspectives on conflict? Compose a 300-word artist statement to accompany your creative expression.
#visualcommunication #connectingclassroomtoculture

3.6: Listening Matters

Looping for Understanding

Overview

In this lesson, students learn about a listening technique called "Looping for Understanding" and discuss when the technique is most effective. Students will learn the 4 steps of Looping by practicing it in a simulated situation. Students experience this listening skill and recognize how its purpose is different from the goal of empathic listening.

Standards

SL.X.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, building on others' ideas and expressing your own clearly.

Materials and Media Texts	Learning Objectives
- PPT Slide Deck for this lesson - Projector - Handout 3.1 - 4 Steps to Looping (all handouts one for each student) - Handout 3.2 - Triad Worksheet **Time:** 60 minutes	1. Define Looping. 2. Recognize when it is best to use Looping as a listening tool. 3. List the 4 steps of Looping. 4. Demonstrate listening through Looping in a practice exercise. 5. Debrief exercises in small group discussion.

Activity

1. Instructor conveys new knowledge through reviewing ideas on content slides.
2. Students learn a 4-step listening technique called "Looping for Understanding" and discuss how looping is different from "empathic listening."
3. Students form triads to practice Looping.
4. Each group presents to the larger group 1-2 key ideas generated from the debrief in their triad.
5. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion.

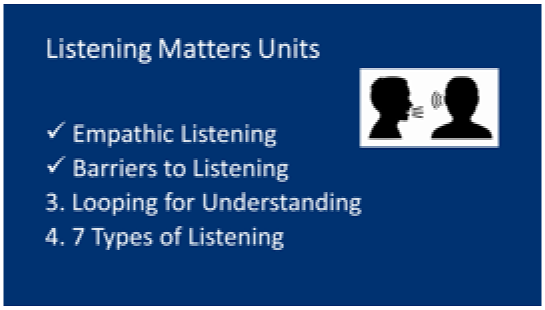
Assessments

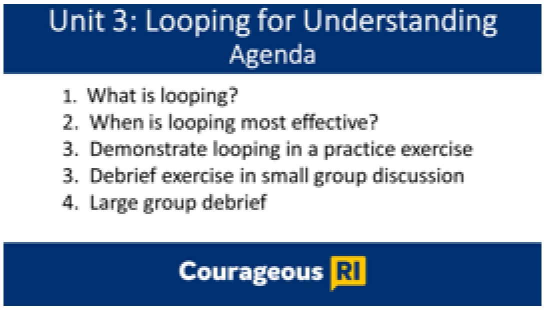
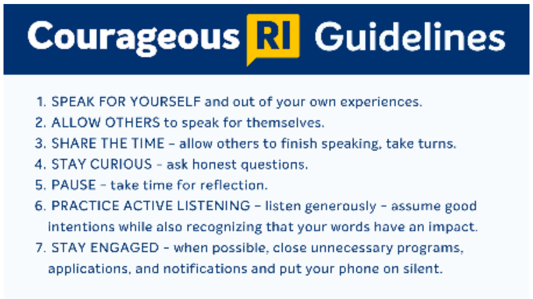
Students' performance in building reflective listening skills is informally observed as they work in triads and in their share-out presentations. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion. As part of this activity, students select 1 or more questions for brief reflective writing:

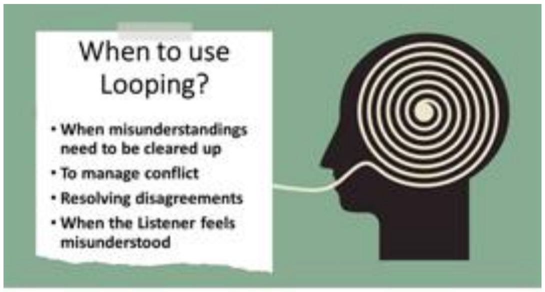
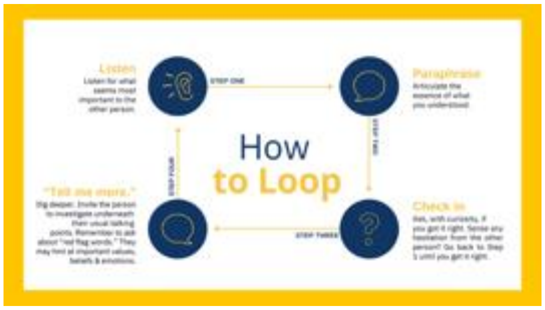
- Did all students in your triad fully participate in the three roles (Observer, Speaker, Listener)? Why or why not?
- Which role did you enjoy the most (Listener, Speaker, Observer)? Which role did you find most challenging? Why?
- Which steps of Looping were used in your group? Which steps were difficult to apply?
- Provide examples of how you might use looping in your day-to-day life. In what situations in your life might Looping be most useful?

Access the Slide Deck Here (make a copy that you can customize as needed)

URL: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1oQTOTgUFCLqe83E3kj1n9PXDwhm9_JoT/copy

 Courageous RI Listening Matters	**Slide 1:** This is lesson 3 of the curriculum Listening Matters. Good listening skills are crucial for having authentic conversations that help us better engage with each other and find common ground.
 Community conversations to counter disinformation, enhance civic participation, and improve media literacy www.courageousri.com	**Slide 2:** COURAGEOUS RI, with support from the Department of Homeland Security, works to prevent rising violence and extremism in Rhode Island with authentic and respectful conversation.
 Listening Matters Units ✓ Empathic Listening ✓ Barriers to Listening 3. Looping for Understanding 4. 7 Types of Listening	**Slide 3:** In Lesson 1 we focused on understanding and practicing the skills of empathic listening. Lesson 2 focused on the many barriers to empathic listening. Today's lesson focuses on another form of reflective or active listening called "Looping for Understanding".

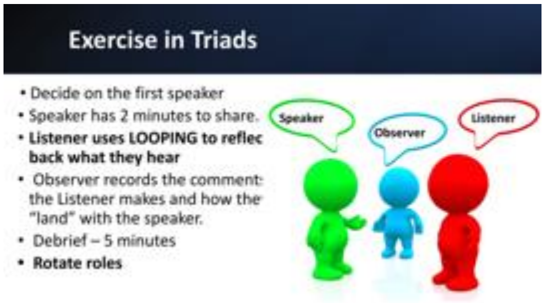
 Unit 3: Looping for Understanding Agenda 1. What is looping? 2. When is looping most effective? 3. Demonstrate looping in a practice exercise 3. Debrief exercise in small group discussion 4. Large group debrief Courageous RI	**Slide 4:** Today we'll talk about what Looping is and in what situations is it effective. We'll practice Looping in another triad exercise and debrief in the small groups and in the large group.
 Courageous RI Guidelines 1. SPEAK FOR YOURSELF and out of your own experiences. 2. ALLOW OTHERS to speak for themselves. 3. SHARE THE TIME - allow others to finish speaking, take turns. 4. STAY CURIOUS - ask honest questions. 5. PAUSE - take time for reflection. 6. PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING - listen generously - assume good intentions while also recognizing that your words have an impact. 7. STAY ENGAGED - when possible, close unnecessary programs, applications, and notifications and put your phone on silent.	**Slide 5:** Our goal is to build connections and to foster conversations that improve our understanding of one another. For this reason, we want to make sure that everyone gets a chance both to share and to learn from others in this conversation. To support these goals, we have some basic guidelines for our conversation.
 What is Looping?	**Slide 6:** We've all been there: Locked in a heated argument, blood pressure rising, fixated on our next point rather than actually listening to what the other person has to say. Even after it ends, it doesn't really end—we keep ruminating on it for hours, days, weeks. Amanda Ripley, in her book *High Conflict: Why We Get Trapped and How We Get Out* talks about a listening technique she calls "Looping." To use Looping means to really listen to the person and try to distill what they're saying into a paraphrase. You don't need to repeat it verbatim, but you're trying to get the crux of what's important to them, not to you. The Looping technique is used by conflict mediators and psychologists and helps us to show that we are trying to really understand one another.

 When to use Looping? • When misunderstandings need to be cleared up • To manage conflict • Resolving disagreements • When the Listener feels misunderstood	**Slide 7:** Looping helps in situations that need to be depolarized. The technique is most essential when it is apparent that there is either a lack of understanding or a misunderstanding that needs to be cleared up. Or when the Listener senses that the other person needs the kind of affirmation that comes from the demonstration of understanding. It is particularly important when people disagree to be sure that there is understanding of the difference between the parties' views. Looping is a very effective way to clarify the disagreement. In addition, when someone repeats something several times, particularly if it's with feeling, it can be very important to fully "Loop" what that person is saying as well as the feeling that accompanies it.
 Let's play a short clip from the podcast. MEDIA EDUCATION LAB Courageous RI High Conflict Featuring Amanda Ripley with host Renee Hobbs LISTEN NOW	**Slide 8:** Now let's listen to a part of the podcast where Amanda Ripley describes "Looping for Understanding" as a kind of deep listening. [Let's play a short clip from the podcast.] **Play the podcast from 17:45 to 20:32.**
 How to Loop Listen Listen for what seems most important to the other person. STEP ONE Paraphrase Articulate the essence of what you understood. STEP TWO Check in Ask, with curiosity, if you got it right. Sense any hesitation from the other person? Go back to Step 1 until you get it right. STEP THREE "Tell me more." Dig deeper. Invite the person to investigate underneath their usual talking points. Remember to ask about "red flag words." They may hint at important values, beliefs & emotions. STEP FOUR	**Slide 9:** The 4 steps of Looping are described in this slide. **Step 1** is to **Listen** with full attention to what seems most important to the other person. **Step 2** is to **Paraphrase** by articulating the essence of what you understood. **Step 3** is particularly important - to **Check in**. You have to check if you've heard correctly. "**So it sounds like you feel that your teacher isn't treating you fairly. Is that right**?" Ask, with honest curiosity. Curiosity has to be genuine because the Speaker will know the difference. If you get it wrong, the Speaker will correct you and explain further. You might notice the Speaker's whole expression and posture change, even if it's not that emotional of a conversation. Often, particularly in conflictual situations, the Speaker is grateful that you're trying

to understand them. This detail is striking because it reveals how rarely Looping actually happens. If you sense any hesitation from the Speaker, go back to Step 1 until they feel that you truly understand them.

Finally, **Step 4** is **Tell Me More**. This allows the Speaker to share more deeply and to go beyond their usual talking points.

A lot of research shows that, as soon as people feel heard, they open up and share more nuanced ideas that are less exaggerated and extreme. When this happens, the Speaker is more likely to consider information they previously didn't want to hear. At that point, empathic responses (from the first lesson) that echo the Speaker's feelings might become useful.



Exercise in Triads

- Decide on the first speaker
- Speaker has 2 minutes to share.
- **Listener uses LOOPING to reflec back what they hear**
- Observer records the comment the Listener makes and how the "land" with the speaker.
- Debrief – 5 minutes
- **Rotate roles**

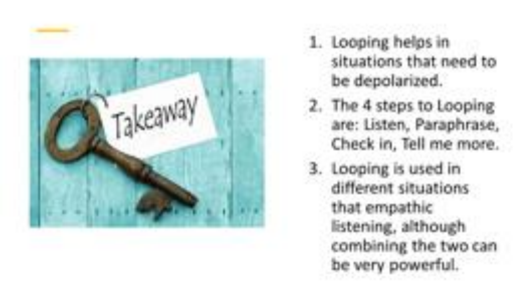
Speaker
Observer
Listener

Slide 10: (Time is adjustable) Form groups of 3

Each group decides who will be the first Speaker, Listener, and Observer. Set the maximum time for the Speaker (e.g., 2 minutes) to talk about anything going on in their life. The Listener reflects underlying emotions. The Observer records (Worksheet) the comments the Listener makes and how it seemed to land with the Speaker. The Observer also serves as the Timekeeper to keep the group on track.

Debrief – 5 minutes

- Observer reports what they observed in the interaction:
    1. Did the Listener use all 4 steps of Looping?
    2. How did the Speaker respond?
- Speaker comments on how the interaction felt to them:
    1. How did it feel to hear the steps of Looping?
    2. Did the Listener seem to "get it"?
    3. Did you feel understood?
- Listener comments on how it felt to them:

	1. How did Looping feel to do? Was it easy, difficult? 2. What did you notice about the Speaker's responses? Rotate roles and repeat until everyone has had a chance to be in all roles.
 Whole Group DEBRIEF	**Slide 11**: Returning to the large group to debrief: What was it like for you to be the Speaker? Listener? Observer? How did the Steps of Looping feel in comparison to the empathic comments, which you learned in the first lesson?
 1. Looping helps in situations that need to be depolarized. 2. The 4 steps to Looping are: Listen, Paraphrase, Check in, Tell me more. 3. Looping is used in different situations that empathic listening, although combining the two can be very powerful.	**Slide 12:** The 3rd lesson in the series, Listening Matters focused on the listening technique called Looping for Understanding. Review the key points.
Courageous RI	**Slide 13:** Thank you for your participation! To learn more about COURAGEOUS RI, visit the program's website: **courageousri.com.**

Learn More

Friedman, G.. Himmelstein, J. (2009). *Challenging Conflict*: Mediation Through Understanding. Chicago: American Bar Association.

Looping is a technique that helps focus the dialogue and develop understanding throughout a mediation. Although the approach is similar to and borrows much from what others refer to as *active* or *reflective listening*, looping captures a fuller sense of the challenge. This book shows how through mediation parties can escape the trap of conflict rather than remain trapped within its grasp at enormous cost to themselves and others. The authors demonstrate how mediators, and others, can support parties to work together effectively in ways that deeply respect their humanity.

Ripley, Amanda. (2021) *High Conflict: Why We Get Trapped and How We Get Out*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Author and journalist Amanda Ripley investigates how good people get captured by high conflict—and how they break free.One method of communicating she recommends for anyone who has to deal conflict and is seeking to resolve it is called looping—a seemingly simple idea where after someone tells you something, you repeat what they said in the most eloquent wording you can use, and then ask that person if what was repeated was correct. While this can take some practice for those new to the concept, the payoff can be well worth it.

Conflict Entrepreneurs

Discussion Support Tools

4.1: Lesson Plan

Overview

In this lesson, students dig into the economics of the attention economy, where conflict is a powerful strategy in attracting and holding attention. Students examine the tricks and techniques used to amp up social conflict as a means for gaining profit and power. They reflect on the addictive and corrosive influence of conflict entrepreneurs in business, entertainment, politics, and news, and as well as in their families and communities.

Standards

RL/RI.X.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn for text.

SL.X.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats.

W.X.8 Assess the credibility and accuracy of sources.

Materials and Media Texts

- Slide Deck
- Data projector with external sound
- Access to the Internet
- Worksheet 4.2 – one copy for each student
- Optional: Media Literacy Smartphone

Time:

45 – 60 minutes

Learning Objectives

1. Recognize factors that can make conflict harmful.
2. Learn about techniques of exploiting media to create conflict.
3. Learn to identify harmful conflict entrepreneurs.
4. Develop informal public speaking skills.

Activities

1. Instructor conveys new knowledge through reviewing ideas on content slides.
2. Students discuss how media business models can be used to create conflict for power, pleasure, or profit.
3. They work in groups or pairs to share examples of conflict entrepreneurs.
4. During the small-group discussion, they fill out a worksheet.
5. Each group presents 1-2 key ideas generated by the discussion.
6. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion.

Assessments

Students' performance is informally observed as they work in small groups and in their share-out presentations. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion. As part of this activity, students select 1 or more question for brief reflective writing:

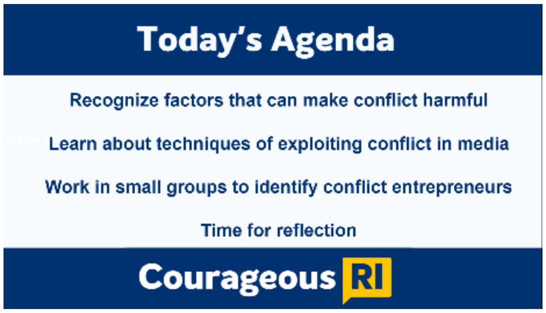
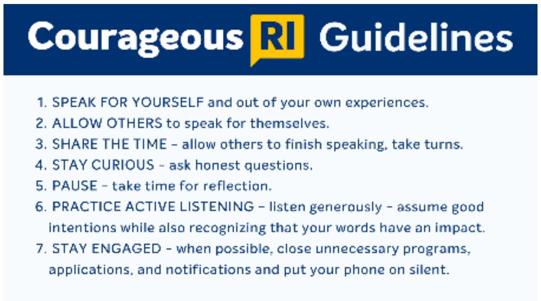
1. Did all students in your small group participate in the discussion? Why or why not?
2. What conflict entrepreneurs were discussed in your group?
3. What were some signs that participants were engaged in active listening?
4. What new knowledge or new ideas did you gain from learning about other people's experiences?

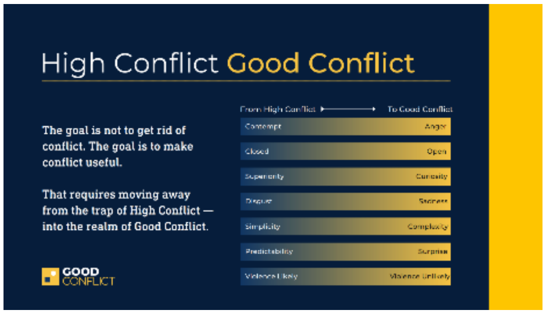
Notes about the Slide Deck

Access the Slide Deck Here (make a copy that you can customize as needed)
URL: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1-eg-pQWYtzQUz7x3SrCAC5pK7GM6fMhXmgxZN0NQWAs/copy

Access the COURAGEOUS RI Program Recording Here
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yVksQskzwtY

Courageous RI Learn and apply media literacy skills Find common ground Prevent violence and extremism	**Slide 1:** COURAGEOUS RI, with support from the Department of Homeland Security, works to prevent rising violence and extremism in Rhode Island with authentic and respectful conversation. You can find out more about it at courageousri.com.

 Community conversations to counter disinformation, enhance civic participation, and improve media literacy www.courageousri.com	**Slide 2:** We will learn about the skills of media literacy, which involves asking critical questions about the media we see, hear, watch, play, and use. We will also discuss the importance of having authentic conversations that help us better listen to each other and to find common ground.
 Courageous RI Conflict Entrepreneurs Lesson Plan	**Slide 3:** In this lesson, you will learn about the role of so-called conflict entrepreneurs in harmful conflict that can hurt individuals, families, communities, and whole nations.
 Today's Agenda Recognize factors that can make conflict harmful Learn about techniques of exploiting conflict in media Work in small groups to identify conflict entrepreneurs Time for reflection Courageous RI	**Slide 4:** We will review factors behind harmful conflict, learn how this kind of conflict can be exploited in the media, and discuss our personal experiences with people who benefit from harmful conflict.
 Courageous RI Guidelines 1. SPEAK FOR YOURSELF and out of your own experiences. 2. ALLOW OTHERS to speak for themselves. 3. SHARE THE TIME - allow others to finish speaking, take turns. 4. STAY CURIOUS - ask honest questions. 5. PAUSE - take time for reflection. 6. PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING - listen generously - assume good intentions while also recognizing that your words have an impact. 7. STAY ENGAGED - when possible, close unnecessary programs, applications, and notifications and put your phone on silent.	**Slide 5:** Our goal is to build connections and to foster conversations that improve our understanding of one another. For this reason, we want to make sure that everyone gets a chance both to share and to learn from others in this conversation. To support those goals, we have some basic guidelines for our conversation.



High Conflict Good Conflict

The goal is not to get rid of conflict. The goal is to make conflict useful.

That requires moving away from the trap of High Conflict — into the realm of Good Conflict.

From High Conflict →	To Good Conflict
Contempt	Anger
Closed	Open
Superiority	Curiosity
Disgust	Sadness
Simplicity	Complexity
Predictability	Surprise
Violence Likely	Violence Unlikely

GOOD CONFLICT

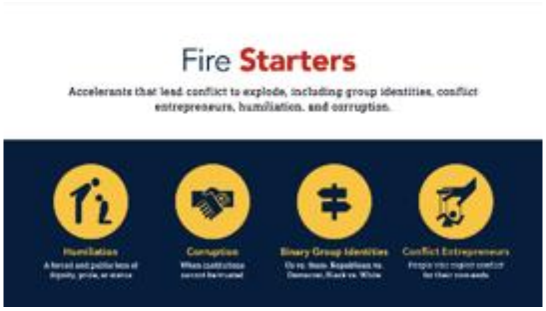
Slide 6: Amanda Ripley is a journalist who studies conflict. She describes the difference between good productive conflict and bad conflict – she calls it “high conflict”.

Look at this slide. We see a lot of different emotion words. And we can see here some of the “traps” of high conflict. For example, in high conflict, we may feel “contempt” for others when their ideas are repugnant to us. But an alternative to contempt is “anger” (Note: It is more productive to be angry about a particular problem than about a person who we blame for this problem.)

In high conflict, we can become “closed” to ideas – whereas in good conflict, we are “open” to them. In high conflict, we may “simplify” ideas, whereas in good conflict, we embrace “complexity.” We can shift from the feeling of “predictability” to the possibility of “surprise.”

Simply put, high conflict can lead to violence – while good conflict can lead to learning.

These ideas are both personal and political. The framers of the U.S. Constitution knew all about the power of good conflict to help people make better decisions. It’s an essential part of the democratic process of self-governance.



Fire Starters

Accelerants that lead conflict to explode, including group identities, conflict entrepreneurs, humiliation, and corruption.

Humiliation

Corruption

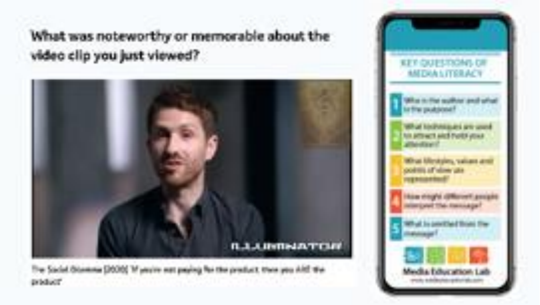
Binary Group Identities

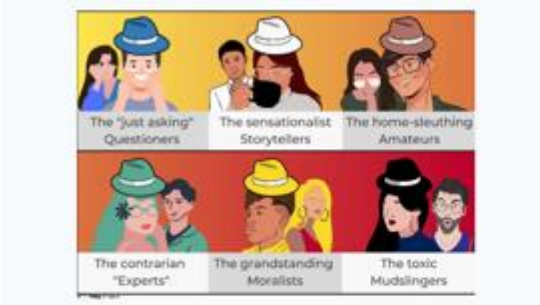
Conflict Entrepreneurs

Slide 7: To recognize high conflict, we need to pay attention to “Fire Starters,” four accelerants that make conflict truly dangerous.

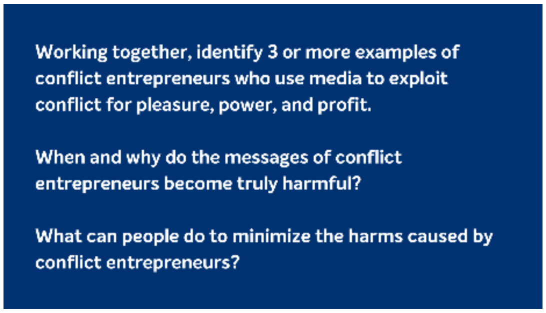
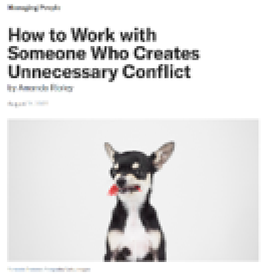
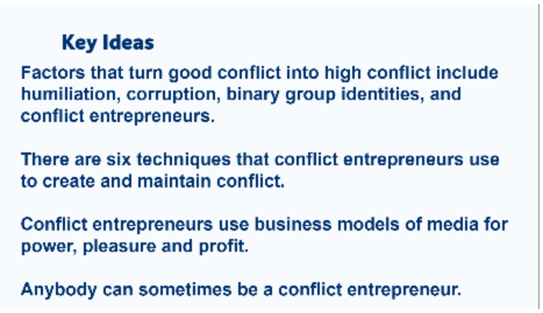
Humiliation is a big one. Everyone has experienced it at one time or the other. It happens when someone says or does something to lower your status in ways that are public and painful. Politicians and scholars have discovered that the experience of humiliation is a powerful pain point. Nelson Mandela once said, “There is no one more dangerous than one who has been humiliated.” Such experiences are awful – and unforgettable. They can shape people’s behavior for a lifetime. Humiliation can intensify the desire for revenge. “Hurt people hurt people.”

	Corruption is another one. We count on leaders to be fair. When people feel their leaders cannot be trusted, this activates conflict. When leaders exploit their power for personal gain, we may feel a deep need to share our grievance with others. Aristotle explained that anger over corruption can be a driving force that pushes people to take action. **Binary Group Identities** are a fire starter that we discussed in our previous session. People like the feeling of being a member of an in-group but this positive sense of belonging can be harnessed to hate when people who are not within the in-group become targets of stereotyping and often quite overt discrimination. For example, you are likely to have inaccurate stereotypes of people in your out-group – whether those people are new immigrants, Republicans, Democrats, or even people who don't live in your state. Last but not least: **Conflict Entrepreneurs**. These are the people (or institutions) who exploit conflict for power, pleasure, and profit. You can immediately recognize how people in media and politics do this, because likes and shares are part of the attention economy. In fact, conflict entrepreneurs are everywhere – we all know someone who finds ways to get in between people who are in conflict – and make the problem worse.
Understand the business model of media	**Slide 8:** You might be familiar with the phrase "When it bleeds, it leads." It's the idea that conflict and controversy are what make headline news. It's a concept that's been around for well over 100 years. It is important to understand that conflict and controversy are very profitable for journalism – and for all forms of media because they "capture eyeballs," as they say in the trade.

 The Social Dilemma (2020) "If you're not paying for the product, then you ARE the product"	**Slide 9:** To understand the economic structure of media, let's watch a short video clip from The Social Dilemma, a documentary created in 2020 by Jeff Orlowsky. Media companies depend on attracting human attention. It's essentially the product they sell – our attention is their product. After we watch the video, we'll talk about what we noticed
 If you're not paying for the product, then you are the product.	**Slide 10:** Watch the embedded video clip.
 What was noteworthy or memorable about the video clip you just viewed? The Social Dilemma (2020) "If you're not paying for the product, then you ARE the product" KEY QUESTIONS OF MEDIA LITERACY 1 Who is the author and what is the purpose? 2 What techniques are used to attract and hold your attention? 3 What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented? 4 How might different people interpret the message? 5 What is omitted from the message? Media Education Lab	**Slide 11:** Let's talk about the clip. With any kind of media, it is very important to share and discuss our interpretations. Exposure to differing interpretations helps build media literacy competencies. What was noteworthy or memorable about the video clip you just viewed? It can be helpful to analyze this video using the critical questions of media literacy that you can see on the screen. (Try not to repeat an idea shared by someone else.) Optional: Give Media Literacy Smartphones to students.

Conflict entrepreneurs use 6 specific strategies to exploit the business model of media for pleasure, power, and profit.	**Slide 12:** To really understand conflict entrepreneurship, we have to consider its function within the context of the economic system of mass media and social media. So here's how we define conflict entrepreneurs: Conflict entrepreneurs use 6 specific strategies to exploit the business model of media for pleasure, power, and profit. Conflict entrepreneurs are very visible in our world today – and we're not shaming or blaming them. They are a product of the economic rewards systems of modern media. In the competition for eyeballs, they may stir up our feelings by appealing to our sense of righteous indignation and it can also feel good to be aligned with them. We may feel a sense of belonging – and we can even see them as "our kind of people." Think about your favorite media personalities who use different types of conflict to grab your attention.
 The "just asking" Questioners The sensationalist Storytellers The home-sleuthing Amateurs The contrarian "Experts" The grandstanding Moralists The toxic Mudslingers	**Slide 13:** During the recent global pandemic, science communication expert Phillipp Markolin found six strategies used to monetize conflict. He came up with catchy labels including Just Asking Questioners, Compelling Storytellers, Home Sleuthing Amateurs, Contrarian Experts, Grandstanding Moralists, and Toxic Mudslingers. He also organized these types from least to most potentially dangerous. Let's look at each one a bit more closely.
Just-Asking Questioners Shape a conversation by asking bad-faith questions that activate doubt or intensify either-or thinking. **Compelling Storytellers** Use sensational, intriguing, emotional, or outrageous stories to shape conversations, even when they are baseless, speculative, or plainly false. **Home-Sleuthing Amateurs** Attract audience attention by finding and promoting unexplained phenomena or coincidences that seem at odds with official narratives	**Slide 14: Just Asking Questioners** shape a conversation by asking bad-faith questions that activate doubt or intensify either/or thinking. **Compelling Storytellers** use sensational, intriguing, emotional, or outrageous stories to shape conversations, even when they are baseless, speculative, or plainly false.

	Home-Sleuthing Amateurs attract audience attention by finding and promoting unexplained phenomena or coincidences that seem at odds with official narratives. Someone in the national news media who comes to mind is Tucker Carlson, who's been called out as a Just Asking Questioner by late night hosts, and his style and false claims are, according to some sources, are what prompted professional journalists like Shep Shepard and Chris Wallace to leave Fox News.
Contrarian "Experts" Increase visibility and status by exploiting journalistic norms of balance and neutrality to present a controversy that counters widely-accepted beliefs **Grandstanding Moralists** Express outrage to amplify the emotional power of a message and intensify conflict through polarization **Toxic Mudslinging** Use character assassination, scapegoating and blame to discredit opponents	**Slide 15:** Here are 3 more types of conflict entrepreneurs. **Contrarian "Experts"** are people who increase visibility and status by exploiting journalistic norms of balance and neutrality to present a controversy that counters widely-accepted beliefs. **Grandstanding Moralists** express outrage to amplify the emotional power of a message and intensify conflict through polarization. **Toxic Mudslingers** use character assassination, scapegoating and blame to discredit opponents. For example, there's a guy named Kent Heckenlively, an attorney who has written many "contrarian" books – especially about autism and vaccines. He calls himself the "world's number one anti-vaxxer," and his activities are so extreme that he was banned from entering Australia. It is important to underline the point that the media's economic system is what inspires people to become conflict entrepreneurs. Through conflict and controversy, you can sell books. It's important to resist falling into the trap of blaming and shaming these people. Recognizing these different types of conflict entrepreneurs is the first step in resisting exposure to them. Amanda Ripley says that recognizing and avoiding conflict entrepreneurs is a good strategy to reduce high conflict.

 Working together, identify 3 or more examples of conflict entrepreneurs who use media to exploit conflict for pleasure, power, and profit. When and why do the messages of conflict entrepreneurs become truly harmful? What can people do to minimize the harms caused by conflict entrepreneurs?	**Slide 16:** We're going to break into small groups for a discussion now.
 How to Work with Someone Who Creates Unnecessary Conflict	**Slide 17:** Now we are going to read and analyze a media text that contains more information about conflict entrepreneurs.
 **Key Ideas** Factors that turn good conflict into high conflict include humiliation, corruption, binary group identities, and conflict entrepreneurs. There are six techniques that conflict entrepreneurs use to create and maintain conflict. Conflict entrepreneurs use business models of media for power, pleasure and profit. Anybody can sometimes be a conflict entrepreneur.	**Slide 18:** Review the key ideas.
 Courageous RI www.courageousri.com	**Slide 19:** Thank you for your participation! To learn more about COURAGEOUS RI, visit the program's website courageousri.com.

Learn More

Learn More About Conflict Entrepreneurs
Read the essay by Philipp Markolin called "Denounce, Deny, Deceive" where he describes the 6 types of conflict entrepreneurs that he observed during the COVID-19 crisis.

Explore How Communication Technology Shapes Us
Watch the video Time, Truth and Technology, a Braver Angels podcast conversation with Tristan Harris. He talks about how technology conditions people's expectations and styles of communication and how social media distorts our information landscape.

Examine the History of Fox News
Learn about how news organizations have long monetized conflict for profit by learning more about the business strategy of Rupert Murdoch. Read "How Fox Chased Its Audience Down a Rabbit Hole" by Jim Rutenberg of the *New York Times.*

Learn more about COURAGEOUS RI and Media Literacy
Check out our podcasts and blogs where you can learn more about some of the issues that help people understand how media literacy helps reduce the fear, anger, and hate that lead to violence.

4.2: Reading and Discussion

Instructions: After reading the abridged article below, answer the questions.

Image credit: Fernando Trabanco Fotografía/Getty Images

by Amanda Ripley
August 17, 2021

How to Work with Someone Who Creates Unnecessary Conflict

Conflict at work comes in many forms. Good conflict, the kind that is healthy, pushes us to be better as people and communities. Most organizations need more good conflict, not less. But sometimes, conflict can become malignant. It hijacks precious time, trust, and energy, turning allies against each other and distorting reality. This is what's known as "high conflict," the kind that takes on a life of its own, and eventually, leaves almost everyone worse off.

What causes high conflict? I spent four years investigating this question, following people who were stuck in all kinds of miserable feuds, personal and professional. One pattern, common to every instance I've seen, is the presence of conflict entrepreneurs. These are people who inflame conflict for their own ends. Sometimes they do this for profit, but more often for attention or power. They don't exist in every organization, but, according to my research, they seem to be more common in certain workplaces, such as hospitals, universities, and political or advocacy organizations.

One obvious response is to distance yourself from the conflict entrepreneurs in your office (or on your Facebook feed). Keep a safe distance from people who use all-or-nothing language or who delight in each new plot twist of a feud.

But what if you can't distance yourself from a conflict entrepreneur? What if you must work with this person because you're on a team with them, you manage them, or they're your boss? In these cases, ignoring the person doesn't work.

Calling a conflict entrepreneur out is equally unwise. "It will make things worse," says Bill Eddy, a lawyer and mediator who specializes in dealing with high-conflict people. "It doesn't motivate change; it escalates conflict."

So what then? People who deal with high-conflict personalities all over the world, including attorneys, therapists, and conflict mediators, suggest taking a handful of specific, counterintuitive actions — the opposite of your instincts. And taking them with great care.

Identify conflict entrepreneurs — quickly

First, learn to identify conflict entrepreneurs. Remember that people can criticize, disagree, go to HR, file complaints, lead a union organizing drive, and circulate a petition without being a conflict entrepreneur. The mark of a conflict entrepreneur is more about the way people engage in conflict over time — it's about a recurring pattern of dysfunction, extreme behavior, and perpetual blame. They're often quick to accuse, eager to validate every lament and articulate new wrongs that no one else has thought of. They broker in rumors and conspiracy theories, dividing the world cleanly (usually, too cleanly) into good versus evil.

Once you've identified a possible conflict entrepreneur, resist the urge to demonize them to others (or even in your own mind); it's tempting, but that's the same us-versus-them thinking that causes high conflict.

Keep in mind that conflict entrepreneurs may have unresolved trauma in their background, including experiences of neglect, abuse, and violence. Try to cultivate compassion, however hard it may be. Remember that we are all capable of acting like conflict entrepreneurs.

Spend more time with them

"If they're 90% conflict entrepreneur, speak to the 10%," says mediator and lawyer Gary Friedman. Listen and try to understand — not forever, but long enough to make a connection. "This person may have lots of opinions I don't agree with, but first and foremost, people want to be heard, and somewhere in there, there's an opportunity," says one turnaround specialist who works with underperforming organizations.

Redirect their energy

In companies, this might mean channeling the energy of a conflict entrepreneur toward something productive that you both care about. Give them a choice, rather than a mandate. Often, professional coaching is a good option, according to Eddy, the mediator who works with high-conflict personalities. “Focus on the future,” he advises.

Build guardrails

The best defense is a culture of good conflict — where questions get asked, honest disagreement is encouraged, and everyone behaves with a baseline level of decency.
But good conflict doesn’t happen naturally. It requires rituals and boundaries, ways to lean into the tension, not avoid it (or get consumed by it). This means creating, alongside employees, rules of engagement that everyone can agree to.

The goal is not no conflict; it’s good conflict.

Access the Original Article Here
URL: https://hbr.org/2021/08/how-to-work-with-someone-who-creates-unnecessary-conflict

Discussion Questions:

1. What type of text is this article? How do you know?
2. What are the main ideas of this article?
3. What feelings does this article evoke in you?

4.3: Learn More

Learn More About Conflict Entrepreneurs
Read the essay by Philipp Markolin called **“Denounce, Deny, Deceive”** where he describes the 6 types of conflict entrepreneurs that he observed during the COVID-19 crisis.

Explore How Communication Technology Shapes Us
Watch the video **Time, Truth and Technology, a Braver Angels podcast conversation with Tristan Harris.** He talks about how technology conditions people’s expectations and styles of communication and how social media distorts our information landscape.

Examine the History of Fox News
Learn about how news organizations have long monetized conflict for profit by learning more about the business strategy of Rupert Murdoch. Read "**How Fox Chased Its Audience Down a Rabbit Hole**" by Jim Rutenberg of the *New York Times.*

For Educators

4.4: Additional Resources

Conflict Entrepreneurs

A collection of resources for building background knowledge before teaching the Conflict Entrepreneurs lesson plan. A basic understanding of the attention economy and social media algorithms will help students contextualize the concepts explored in Lesson 4.1.

Social Media Algorithms

The resources in this section introduce students to how algorithms are used to keep users on the platforms and limit access to a variety of perspectives and opinions.

Crash Course: Navigating Digital Information #10
The final episode of the Crash Course Navigating Digital Information video focuses on how social media influences thoughts and shapes behaviors. A portion of the video looks at how algorithms determine what information we see on social media platforms.

iCivics: Minilesson - Algorithms and You
This lesson is a succinct introduction to algorithms and how they impact what users encounter on social media. It examines the intentional and unintentional outcomes of algorithms on those who engage with social media.

Common Sense Media: Do Algorithms Influence Our Lives and Our Democracy?
Choose from 3 lessons that examine the interplay of algorithms and democracy: How Much Do Social Media Algorithms Control You, Understanding Algorithms, and Engineering Algorithms.

PBS Learning Media: How Social Media Algorithms Create Echo Chambers
This 5-minute video dives into the connection between algorithms and echo chambers. Following the video, students can discuss or examine their social media feeds and reflect on whether or not they experience echo chambers in their social media ecosystem.

The Attention Economy

The resources in this section introduce the concept of the attention economy and ask students to consider the implications of their attention being a commodity for media companies and others.

RSA Video: Is Our Attention for Sale?
This brief video is an excellent introduction to the attention economy. Share with students and have them debate whether the consolidation of the attention economy to a small number of companies requires action on the part of media consumers.

Learning for Justice Lesson Plan: You Are the Product
In this lesson, students delve into the economics of social media, the power dynamics behind going viral and how social media companies consider users as products.

ICivics Minllesson: Monetization
This minilesson explores the attention economy in the world of news media. Students consider how the relationship between news and profit impacts the information the public receives and how it is presented.

Video: Advertising is Destroying Everything
In this engaging 17-minute TEDx Talk, a former social media strategist asks viewers to consider the costs of the attention economy.

Conflict Entrepreneurs

The resources in this section can be used to supplement the discussions about conflict entrepreneurship in Lesson 4.1.

CNN Video: Author Explains How We Are All Capable of Being Conflict Entrepreneurs
This video provides a non-partisan reflection on conflict entrepreneurship by considering how everyone has the potential to engage in and promote high conflict.

The Tennessean: Social Media Makes a Killing Selling Conflict
After reading this opinion piece, students can debate whether or not they agree with the author's argument that social media incentivizes power, greed, and corruption while reducing freedom of choice.

4.5: Classroom Activities and Creative Expression Ideas

Conflict Entrepreneurs

ACTIVITY: Scrolling for Conflict

Instructions:

Review your social media feed (including TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, etc.) and identify 10 posts that reference, represent, comment on, create or contribute to some sort of conflict. Look for patterns among the 10 posts.
#research#analysis #self-reflection

Discussion Questions:

1. What types of conflict are being represented?
2. How do the posts engage with this conflict?
3. How do the view/like counts on the posts that represent conflict compare to other posts' counts?
4. What kinds of meaning or value do you make of these posts?

*This activity aligns with the following RI Social Studies Anchor Standards:

E.PC.1: Identify the individuals and communities involved in the production of any good or service, the materials needed for producing them, where and how the materials are obtained, and the various interrelationships among all of these elements.
E.PC.4: Argue whether the costs and benefits of an aspect of the means of production equitably serve all individuals and communities.
E.SA.2: Explain how scarcity affects the cost and availability of desired goods and services, and who has the power to influence the factors related to cost and availability and why.
E.SA.3: Analyze how decisions affecting access to goods and services are influenced by systems of power and cultural norms including how these effects of decisions create more equitable or inequitable outcomes.

PROJECT: Exposing Conflict Entrepreneurs

Instructions:

Create a 1-3 minute video that introduces the concept of "conflict entrepreneurs" and uses journalistic/documentary storytelling techniques to explore some impacts of this phenomena. Videos can take the form of news reports, short documentary films, informational videos, or even memes/remixes.

Discuss the intentions behind your video, the creative decisions you made, and how the video reflects your personal perspectives on conflict entrepreneurs in a 300 word artist statement.

#videoproduction #storytelling #journalism #documentary

4.6: Listening Matters

7 Types of Listening

Overview

There are several different types of listening, the earliest of which develops in infancy. Each form of listening is suited to different types of situations. Some forms of listening may be limited in scope and others, such as Biased Listening, may not be helpful at all. In this lesson, students become familiar with 7 types of listening and the situations in which they might be effectively used.

Standards

SL.X.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions, building on others' ideas and expressing your own clearly.

Materials and Media Texts

- PPT Slide Deck for this Session
- Projector
- Handout 4.1 - 7 Types of Listening
  (one for each student)

Time:

45-60 minutes

Learning Objectives

1. Describe 7 types of listening.
2. Describe the bonus 2 forms of listening.
3. Participate in a small group discussion. reflecting on the types of listening.
4. Debrief discussion in the large group.

Activity

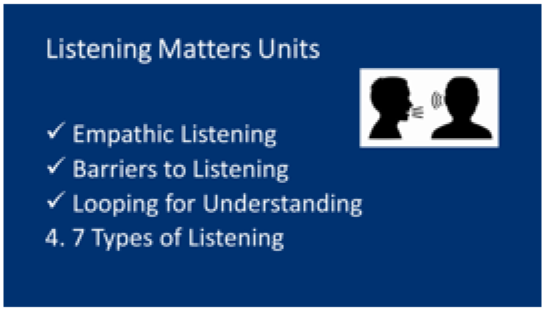
1. Instructor conveys new knowledge through reviewing ideas on content slides.
2. Students learn 7 types of listening and recognize when each might be most effective (or not).
3. Students form small groups to discuss, with prompt questions to guide them.
4. Each group presents to the larger group 1-2 key ideas generated from the small group.
5. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion.

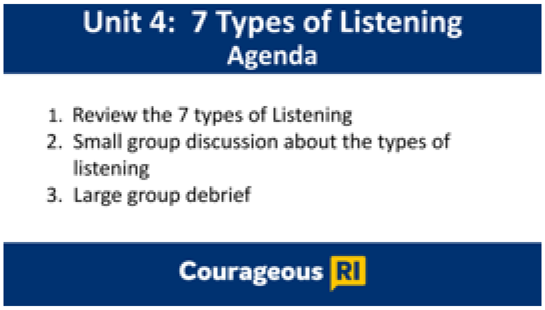
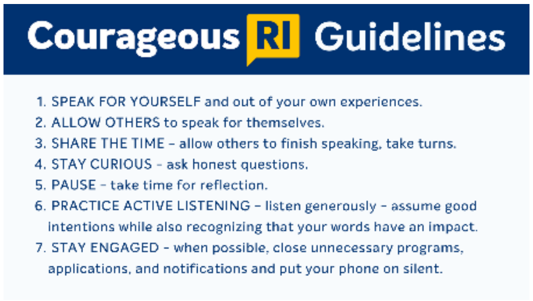
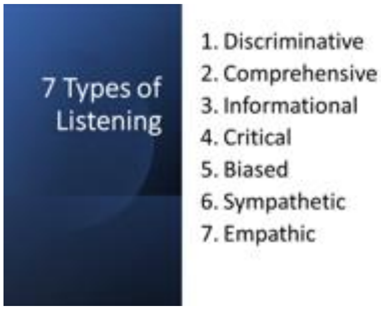
Assessments

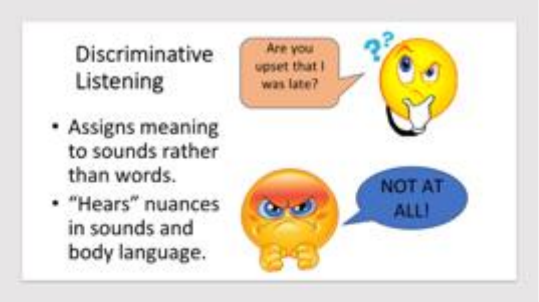
Students' performance in building reflective listening skills is informally observed as they work in triads and in their share-out presentations. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion. As part of this activity, students select 1 or more questions from the questions discussed in the small group for brief reflective writing:

- Is there a specific form of listening that you recognize as your "go to" style?
- Which form is easiest for you to use? Which is most difficult? Why?
- Give an example of when you've used one of these forms of listening – in what circumstance did you use it? With what impact?

Access the Slide Deck Here (make a copy that you can customize as needed)
URL: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1W3UlajCwrSIRMMWUSwgDFq7BvSqYSurm/copy

 Courageous RI Listening Matters	**Slide 1:** This is lesson 4 of the curriculum Listening Matters. Good listening skills are critical in having authentic conversations that help us better engage with each other and find common ground.
 Community conversations to counter disinformation, enhance civic participation, and improve media literacy www.courageousri.com	**Slide 2:** COURAGEOUS RI, with support from the Department of Homeland Security, works to prevent rising violence and extremism in Rhode Island with authentic and respectful conversation. You can find out more about it at courageousri.com.
 Listening Matters Units ✓ Empathic Listening ✓ Barriers to Listening ✓ Looping for Understanding 4. 7 Types of Listening	**Slide 3:** Thus far in the previous 3 lessons in the Listening Matters unit we're learned the skills of empathic listening and looping for understanding. Each is used in different situations, and each is essential in becoming a good listener. Today's lesson focuses on other types of listening that are important to understand to complete your repertoire of listening across differences in order to find common ground in any situation.

 **Unit 4: 7 Types of Listening** **Agenda** 1. Review the 7 types of Listening 2. Small group discussion about the types of listening 3. Large group debrief Courageous RI	**Slide 4:** Review the agenda.
 **Courageous RI Guidelines** 1. SPEAK FOR YOURSELF and out of your own experiences. 2. ALLOW OTHERS to speak for themselves. 3. SHARE THE TIME - allow others to finish speaking, take turns. 4. STAY CURIOUS - ask honest questions. 5. PAUSE - take time for reflection. 6. PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING - listen generously - assume good intentions while also recognizing that your words have an impact. 7. STAY ENGAGED - when possible, close unnecessary programs, applications, and notifications and put your phone on silent.	**Slide 5:** Our goal is to build connections and to foster conversations that improve our understanding of one another. For this reason, we want to make sure that everyone gets a chance both to share and to learn from others in this conversation. To support these goals, we have some basic guidelines for our conversation.
 7 Types of Listening 1. Discriminative 2. Comprehensive 3. Informational 4. Critical 5. Biased 6. Sympathetic 7. Empathic	**Slide 6:** There are several different methods of effective listening, and each one is suited to specific circumstances. One type of listening isn't better than the others. Each circumstance will likely require a different type of listening, but it's important to be aware of what type you're using. These 7 types of listening work together to help you better understand the messages you receive and how to respond in a way that will deepen the level of understanding and the relationship between you and the Speaker. On the following slides, you will see descriptions of 7 types of listening and the scenarios in which you would be likely to use them. As you'll see, some of these types of listening build on the others and are in the order of when they are developed from birth onward.



Discriminative Listening

- Assigns meaning to sounds rather than words.
- "Hears" nuances in sounds and body language.

Are you upset that I was late?
NOT AT ALL!

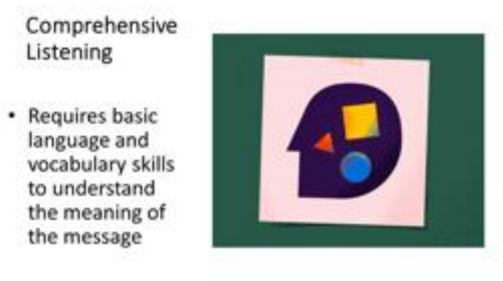
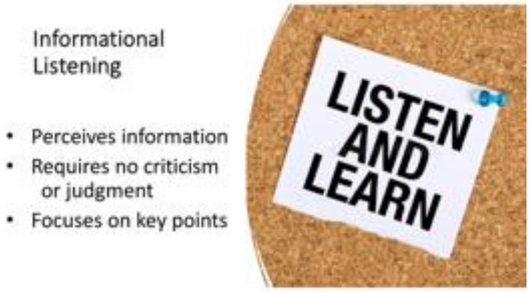
Slide 7: Discriminative listening is the first form of listening humans develop as babies. This basic type of listening precedes the understanding of words and relies on tone of voice and other nuances of sound and subtleties of body language to understand meaning and intention. Babies don't understand words, but they rely on their discriminative listening to understand who is speaking and what mood is being communicated. Early on, the child begins to recognize different voices, for example those of the mother and the father. Research has also shown that the child reacts differently to these voices.

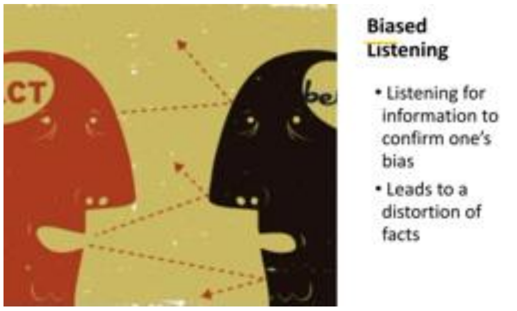
Discriminative listening is a type of listening in which the listener assigns meaning to **sounds** rather than **words**. It is therefore mainly about hearing nuances and differences in sounds and body language.

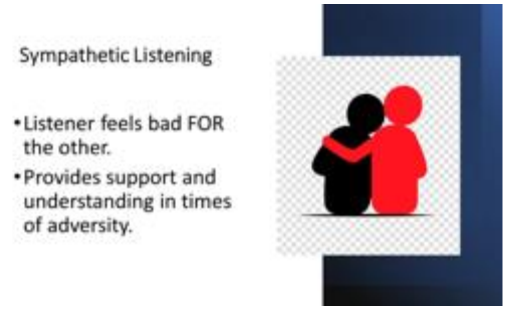
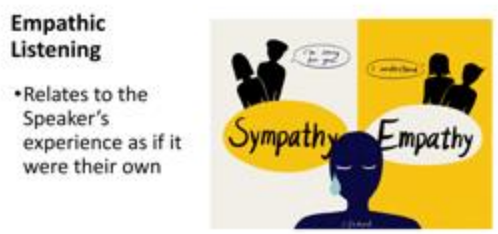
We use discriminative listening throughout our lives. The slide provides one example: "Are you upset that I was late?" - "Not at all" (said with no eye contact, hands in fists, and a tight voice). With discriminative listening, the Listener will tend to pick up that the Speaker's nonverbal signals convey what they really feel in spite of their words that say the opposite. Even babies respond to nonverbal signals by tensing or relaxing their bodies even though they do not understand the words spoken.

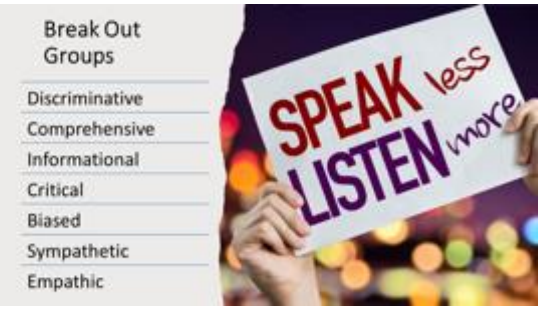
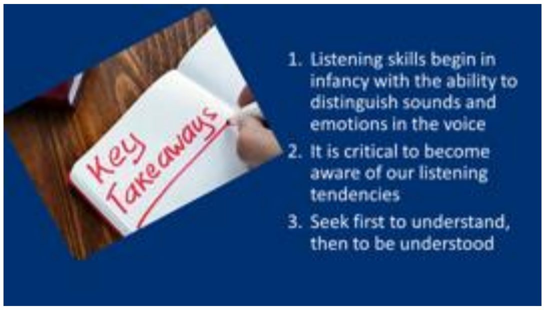
Tone of voice and body language convey a lot of information even when you can't understand the words. However, like other forms of listening, different Listeners might interpret the Speaker's nonverbals differently.

What is an example when you've used discriminative listening?

 Comprehensive Listening • Requires basic language and vocabulary skills to understand the meaning of the message	**Slide 8:** Comprehensive listening is the next level of critical listening skills that humans usually develop in early childhood. Comprehensive listening requires basic language and vocabulary to understand what is being communicated through the speaker's words. Comprehensive listening means understanding the meaning of the message rather than interpreting only the sound and nonverbals of the message. It is an active process of seeking the meaning of the message. Comprehensive listening is complicated by the fact that two different people listening to the same thing may understand the message in different ways. This problem can be multiplied in a group setting, like a classroom or business meeting, where numerous different meanings can be derived from what has been said. Discriminative and comprehensive listening are prerequisites for all of the other listening types.
 Informational Listening • Perceives information • Requires no criticism or judgment • Focuses on key points LISTEN AND LEARN	**Slide 9:** Informational listening is the type of listening people use when they are trying to learn. Informational listening builds upon basic comprehensive listening and requires a high level of concentration and engagement to understand new concepts and comprehend technical jargon. This is the form of listening where the Listener takes in the information, focusing on key points, where learning information is the primary purpose. For example, listening to a lecture, or when you are in a doctor's office, are common examples of informational listening. Listening to understand today's lesson is a form of informational listening – assuming you are paying attention!

 Critical Listening • Examine the information • Compare with values, beliefs, data • Conclude • Take action	**Slide 10:** Critical listening is the style of listening people use when they are trying to analyze, evaluate, and judge complex information that is being communicated to them. You might use critical listening if you're analyzing the causes of an airplane crash, for example. Another example might be if there is an upcoming election and you need to decide who to vote for, you probably use some form of critical listening when you watch a televised debate. You listen, AND you evaluate. Unlike informational listening, critical listening is when you make judgments based on what the other person says and determine the truthfulness or validity of the statements you hear. You may also judge what the Speaker says compared to what your personal values are and decide if what the Speaker is saying makes sense to you or not. Some of the steps involved in critical listening are examining the information, comparing the information with other information or your values/beliefs, using this analysis to come to a conclusion, and then taking action. In critical listening the Listener evaluates what is being said and how it is being said. Listening critically is used every day. The key is to try to understand the other person first before one evaluates. When have you used critical listening skills?
 Biased Listening • Listening for information to confirm one's bias • Leads to a distortion of facts	**Slide 11**: Biased listening is selective listening demonstrated when someone is just listening for information that **they want to hear**. Biased listening is different from critical listening because the Listener is not honestly evaluating the validity of the Speaker's opinions, but rather is looking to confirm their own previously held beliefs. This type of listening process can lead to a distortion of facts because the Listener isn't fully hearing what the Speaker wishes to communicate. Instead, they are hearing what they want to hear.

 Sympathetic Listening • Listener feels bad FOR the other. • Provides support and understanding in times of adversity.	**Slide 12:** As we reviewed in Lesson 1, sympathetic listening is an emotionally driven type of relationship listening, wherein a Listener processes the feelings and emotions of a Speaker and tries to provide support and understanding. Sympathetic listening is an important type of listening to use when trying to establish a deep connection with another person, especially when that person is experiencing adversity. Sympathy is feeling bad FOR another person. What is an example when you've sympathized with another person? What are common responses you use to indicate sympathy?
 Sympathy Empathy **Empathic Listening** • Relates to the Speaker's experience as if it were their own	**Slide 13:** Finally, empathic listening is a listening process where a Listener tries to understand the point of view of a Speaker and imagines themselves directly in the Speaker's position. Empathic listening goes a step further than sympathetic listening in that an empathic Listener will relate to the Speaker's experience as if it were their own (feeling WITH the Speaker).
 BONUS! Two additional types of listening: • Appreciative • Rapport	**Slide 14:** Here are 2 bonus types of listening for very specific situations: appreciative listening (listening for enjoyment) and listening for rapport. A good example of appreciative listening is listening to music, especially as a way to relax. When trying to build rapport with others, we can engage in a type of listening that encourages the other person to trust and like us. A salesman, for example, may make an effort to listen carefully to what you are saying as a way to promote trust and potentially make a sale. This type of listening is common in situations of negotiation. This type of listening takes place in situations where you pay full attention to what the Speaker is saying and tailor your response with caution. The motive of rapport listening is to establish more understanding about and to strengthen the relationship with the person.

 Break Out Groups Discriminative Comprehensive Informational Critical Biased Sympathetic Empathic SPEAK less LISTEN more	**Slide 15:** In your small groups, think about each of these 7 forms of listening. Some questions to consider: 1. Is there a specific form of listening that you recognize as your "go to" style? 2. Which form is easiest for you to use? Which is most difficult? Why? 3. Give an example of when you've used one of these forms of listening – in what circumstance did you use it? With what impact?
 Whole Group DEBRIEF	**Slide 16:** Would someone from each group share 1 or 2 key ideas that came out of your small group discussion?
 Key Takeaways 1. Listening skills begin in infancy with the ability to distinguish sounds and emotions in the voice 2. It is critical to become aware of our listening tendencies 3. Seek first to understand, then to be understood	**Slide 17:** This has been the 4th and final lesson in the series Listening Matters. Review the key points. Conclusion: You might be a good speaker, even a good orator. However, listening skills are equally important in order to be successful in both your personal and your professional life. The ability to listen carefully is essential for any relationship – especially when seeking to find common ground amid differences. Listening to the other person's thoughts and ideas with full undivided attention and making an effort to understand isn't easy. It requires a fair amount of patience and putting one's own opinions and perspectives aside, in order to understand the other person deeply and with empathy. As American educator, author, businessman, and speaker, Stephen Covey, wrote in his well-known book "7 Habits of Highly Successful People: "Seek first to understand, then to be understood." Seeking to understand the other person in any relationship and situation will go a

	long way toward building trust and finding common ground across differences.
Courageous RI	**Slide 18:** Thank you for your participation! To learn more about COURAGEOUS RI, visit the program's website: **courageousri.com.**

Learn More

Covey, S. R. (2020). *The 7 habits of highly effective people*. Simon & Schuster.

The updated edition of this age-old classic presents a principle-centered approach for solving both personal and professional problems. In particular, Habit 5: "Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood" is particularly relevant to this curriculum. Covey offers a step-by-step approach to living with fairness, integrity, honesty, and human dignity - principles that give us the confidence to adapt to change and weather the turmoil that life can present.

Rosenberg, M.B. (2015). *Nonviolent Communication, a language of life: Life-changing tools for healthy relationships*. PuddleDancer Press.

If "violent" communication means acting in ways that result in hurt or harm, then much of how we communicate—judging others, bullying, having racial bias, blaming, finger pointing, discriminating, speaking without listening, criticizing others, name-calling, reacting when angry, using political rhetoric, being defensive or judging who's "good/bad" or what's "right/wrong" with people—could indeed be called "violent communication. Nonviolent Communication serves our desire to increase our ability to live with choice, meaning, and connection and connect empathically with self and others to have more satisfying relationships.

Listening Reflection

The purpose of this exercise is to guide students on an internal journey to build self-awareness as "listeners" in the world.

Recommendation: Students might benefit from keeping a journal to record their thoughts as they reflect on these questions individually and discuss in small groups.

1. Am I a good listener?

Think about a time recently when you were listening to a friend, family member, co-worker, colleague…. How did it feel when you were listening? Were you comfortable? Anxious? Rushed? Distracted? Focused? Wanting to leave?

Did you have a "goal" when you were listening? For example, were you trying to help them? Fix them? Advise them? Comfort them? If you're not sure, try to figure out what you were feeling while you were listening? What were you focused on? Did anything catch your attention, in particular?

Think about the relative proportion of how much you listened vs. how much you spoke. Draw a pie chart in your journal illustrating the difference.

What was the rhythm of the conversation? Did you listen and quickly ask a question about what they were saying? Did you listen and have a reply ready to go? Did you listen and then try to solve or fix the issue being talked about? Did you listen without a goal or reply in mind, fully attending to what the person was sharing? Did you leave a pause between their words and your reply?

Reflect on this for a minute and document your reflections in your journal in some way. This can be through jotting down notes, writing or drawing. Document your reflection in any way you find meaningful.

2. Think about when you feel heard and understood

Think about a time recently when you needed or wanted to talk to someone. Who did you choose? Why did you choose that person? Were they just there at the time? Did you seek them out? While you were sharing with this person, did you feel heard and understood? If so, what did the Listener do that caused you to feel that way? What did the person say? Were non-verbal cues used? If so, how and to what effect? What else stands out about your talking with that person that was positive? How did you feel at the end of your sharing?

If that conversation was one in which you did NOT feel heard and understood, what did the Listener do that caused you to feel that way? What did the person say? Were non-verbal cues used? If so, how and to what effect? What else stands out about your talking with that person that was negative? How did you feel at the end of your sharing?

Whether you had a positive or negative experience in that conversation, think of a time when you shared with someone when you had the opposite experience. Ask yourself the same questions.

Reflect on this for a minute and document your reflections in your journal in some way. This can be through jotting down notes, writing or drawing. Document your reflection in any way you find meaningful.

3. Explore what it feels like when you truly hear another person, when you deeply feel them

Listening deeply is essential for us to truly understand one another. Showing that we are listening is important, too. Note: this is incredibly challenging to do in our lives for a variety of reasons. For example, when somebody is sharing their emotions with us, we can be overwhelmed by our own emotions. When this happens, it can be very difficult to be fully present and empathic.

A) Imagine someone is sharing something important with you. Now imagine that before the person finishes sharing, you are already thinking about the words you will share in response. Think about this: if we are already thinking of what to say before the other person finishes sharing, are we really listening?

B) Imagine someone is sharing something important with you. Now imagine that as the person finishes sharing an experience or story or situation, you share your thoughts on what the person shared. Think about this: if we hear someone and respond with our thoughts, advice, or a solution before seeking to further understand them, how will we know if what we are sharing is relevant to the other person?

C) Imagine someone is sharing something important with you. Now imagine that as the person finishes sharing, you pause and reflect. You take a moment of pause to really absorb what the person has shared, and you reflect back the essence of what the person shared. You feel their feelings with them and then say, "*How sad*", "*Sounds tough*", "*Very frustrating*" or another statement that tries to capture the experience of the person sharing. And then you wait. Maybe the person has more to share. Maybe you can simply say "*Tell me more*" to encourage further sharing and to move closer to understanding.

D) Think about this: if we hear someone and pause and acknowledge what the other person is saying, how might this feel to the other person? If you share with someone and the person takes the time to acknowledge what you have shared, how might you feel?

E) Now think about this: might we listen in different ways with different people in our lives? Might we listen in different ways based on our own mindset at the time? Based on the situation? Why might this be? How can we remind ourselves to be present and to listen for understanding when we are striving to listen deeply to others?

Reflect on this for a minute and document your reflections in your journal in some way. This can be through jotting down notes, writing or drawing. Document your reflection in any way you find meaningful.

Adapted from: Listening For Understanding Lesson Plan | Better World Ed

Feelings and Facts

Discussion Support Tools

5.1: Lesson Plan

Overview

In this lesson, students will discuss key characteristics of a conspiracy theory, and will learn to recognize the role of feelings and facts in persuasion. People are naturally drawn to stories with compelling heroes, villains, and victims, as well as with plenty of conflict, uncertainty, and suspense. Students will learn that, when people encounter a type of story called a conspiracy theory, feelings may be more important than facts in making decisions about who and what to believe. Students will confront the limitations of reasoning and evidence in daily life; they will consider the power of stories and emotions to shape their thinking and decision-making.

Standards

RL/RI.X.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn for text.

SL.X.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats.

W.X.8 Assess the credibility and accuracy of sources.

Materials and Media Texts

- Slide Deck
- Data projector with external sound
- Access to the Internet
- Worksheet 5.2 – one copy for each student
- Optional: Media Literacy Smartphone

Time:

45 – 60 minutes

Learning Objectives

1. Recognize characteristics of a conspiracy theory.
2. Learn about the role of story-telling in persuasion.
3. Learn to recognize how feelings shape our reactions to stories we encounter.
4. Develop informal public speaking skills.

Activities

1. Instructor conveys new knowledge through reviewing ideas on content slides.
2. Students watch and critically analyze the video “Why Facts Don’t Convince People.”
3. They work in groups or pairs to share their experiences with conspiracy theories.
4. During the small-group discussion, they fill out a worksheet.
5. Each group presents 1-2 key ideas generated by the discussion.
6. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion.

Assessments

Students’ performance is informally observed as they work in small groups and in their share-out presentations. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion. As part of this activity, students select 1 or more question for brief reflective writing:

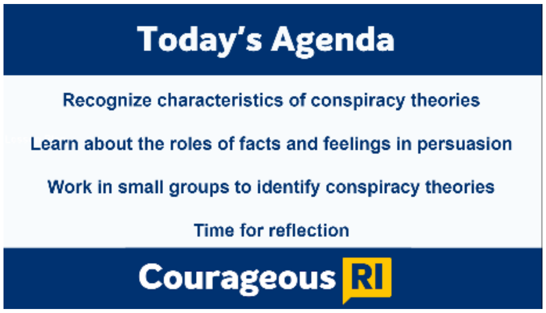
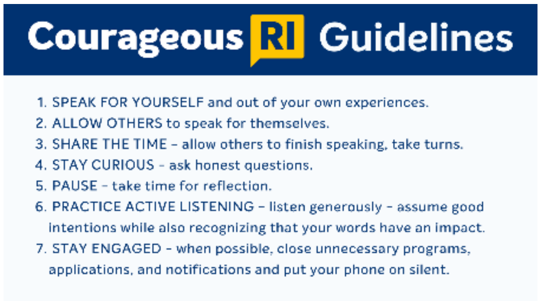
1. Did all students in your small group participate in the discussion? Why or why not?
2. What conspiracy theories were discussed in your group?
3. What were some signs that participants were engaged in active listening?
4. What new knowledge or new ideas did you gain from learning about other people's experiences?

Notes about the Slide Deck

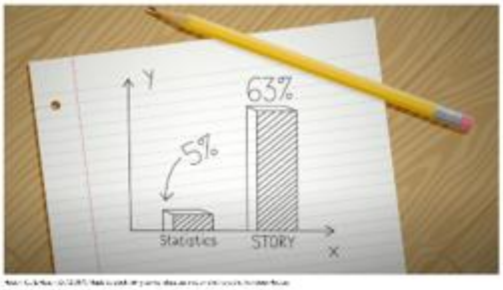
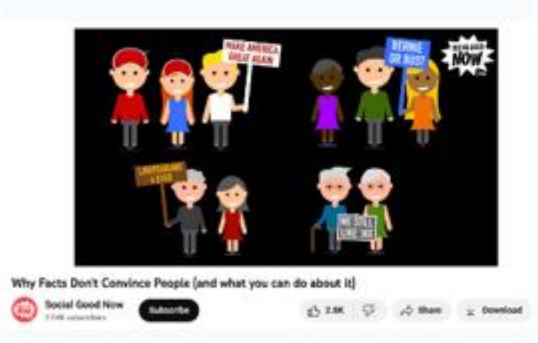
Access the Slide Deck Here (make a copy that you can customize as needed)
URL: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1fI_kP7jZw_ty0aL9oFsKzqykyvEVTeKwIXQ8kIl7mDk/copy

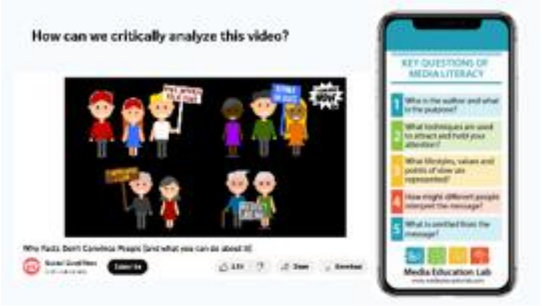
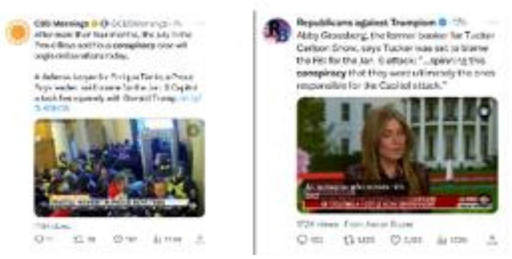
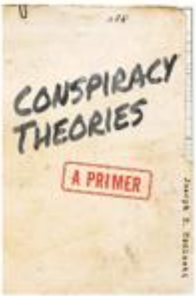
Access the COURAGEOUS RI Program Recording Here:
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Io5yVDfdGG4

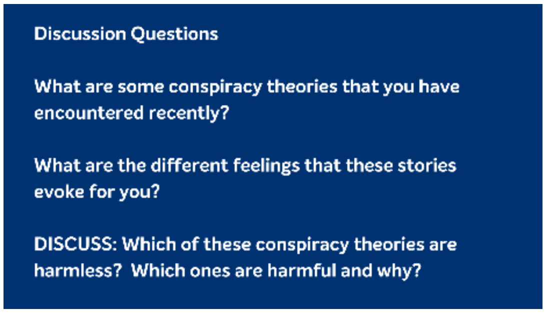
Courageous RI Learn and apply media literacy skills Find common ground Prevent violence and extremism	**Slide 1:** COURAGEOUS RI, with support from the Department of Homeland Security, works to prevent rising violence and extremism in Rhode Island with authentic and respectful conversation. You can find out more about it at courageousri.com.

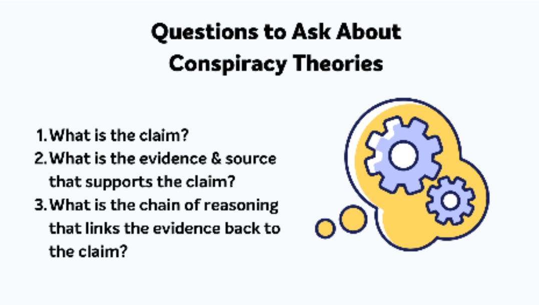
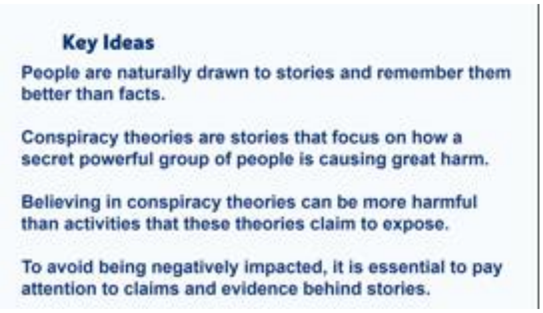
 Community conversations to counter disinformation, enhance civic participation, and improve media literacy www.courageousri.com	**Slide 2:** We will learn about the skills of media literacy, which involves asking critical questions about the media we see, hear, watch, play, and use. We will also discuss the importance of having authentic conversations that help us better listen to each other and to find common ground.
 Courageous RI Feelings and Facts Lesson Plan	**Slide 3:** In this lesson, we are going to take a deep dive into conspiracy theories.
 Today's Agenda Recognize characteristics of conspiracy theories Learn about the roles of facts and feelings in persuasion Work in small groups to identify conspiracy theories Time for reflection Courageous RI	**Slide 4:** You will share your experiences with conspiracy theories with your classmates. We will also discuss the role of feelings and facts in persuasion.
 Courageous RI Guidelines 1. SPEAK FOR YOURSELF and out of your own experiences. 2. ALLOW OTHERS to speak for themselves. 3. SHARE THE TIME - allow others to finish speaking, take turns. 4. STAY CURIOUS - ask honest questions. 5. PAUSE - take time for reflection. 6. PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING - listen generously - assume good intentions while also recognizing that your words have an impact. 7. STAY ENGAGED - when possible, close unnecessary programs, applications, and notifications and put your phone on silent.	**Slide 5:** Our goal is to build connections and to foster conversations that improve our understanding of one another. For this reason, we want to make sure that everyone gets a chance both to share and to learn from others in this conversation. To support those goals, we have some basic guidelines for our conversation.

 Why are stories and feelings more persuasive than facts? NARRATIVE PERSUASION	**Slide 6:** Have you ever heard the phrase, "A lie can get halfway around the world before the truth can even get its boots on?" That's a Mark Twain quote. It's true that urban legends, conspiracy theories, and bogus public-health scares seem to circulate effortlessly. Yet people with important ideas often struggle to make their ideas "stick." Why is that? To understand why, we have to talk about how we decide what to believe. More than facts, it turns out that stories - and the feelings they elicit– are a very important component of deciding what to believe. Cognitive scientists have documented over and over that emotion has a particularly strong influence when it comes to perception, attention, learning, memory, reasoning, and problem solving. Feelings are a prime driver for motivating action and behavior. It is essential to understand how stories can activate people's emotions, curiosity and even their sense of mystery. Stories can also be very persuasive – and very profitable.
 The Key Ingredients of a Story Hero Villain Victim CONFLICT	**Slide 7:** Why are stories so powerful? First, they are simply more memorable than facts. We naturally identify with the heroes, villains, and victims that are present in stories – and all good stories have some kind of conflict.
	Slide 8: This little experiment was conducted by the authors of a great book about learning called *Make it Stick* by Peter C. Brown. They divided students into two groups. Then they asked students to prepare a one-minute speech on whether violent crime is a serious problem in the U.S, making half argue in the affirmative and half in the negative. In one study where this procedure was used, students used 2.5 statistics in their short speeches but only 1 in 10 told a story. Ten minutes later, the teacher

	gave them a blank sheet of paper and asked them to write down all the ideas they could remember.
	**Slide 9:** Only 5% of students remembered any statistics, but 63% of them remembered the stories.
 MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN BERNIE OR BUST NOW Why Facts Don't Convince People (and what you can do about it) Social Good Now Subscribe 2.5K Share Download	**Slide 10:** Let's watch a short video that presents some other reasons why facts don't convince people. As you watch, think about the arguments, evidence and reasoning used. Then we'll talk about the video's main ideas – and we'll critically analyze it as well.
NEW IDEA NEW IDEA NEW IDEA NOW	**Slide 11:** Watch the video: Why Facts Don't Convince People. https://youtu.be/S74C-XF9kYY
What were some key ideas expressed in this video?	**Slide 12:** According to the video, why don't facts convince people? Share your interpretations. Exposure to differing interpretations helps build media literacy competencies as well as a better understanding of others.

 How can we critically analyze this video? KEY QUESTIONS OF MEDIA LITERACY 1 Who is the author and what is the purpose? 2 What techniques are used to attract and hold your attention? 3 What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented? 4 How might different people interpret the message? 5 What is omitted from the message? Media Education Lab	**Slide 13:** Now let's use the critical questions of media literacy to analyze it. When you critically analyze this video, what do you notice? Optional: Give to students the Media Literacy Smartphone.
Conspiracy Conspiracy Theory 	**Slide 14:** We're going to talk about conspiracy theories – and right now, there are a lot of them floating about. A **conspiracy** is when a group of individuals gather to plan and execute an illegal action. There's a trial underway now about a group of people who planned the January 6th insurrection. But **conspiracy theories** are a special type of story – usually quite memorable - and they have been around for thousands of years. This one features a conspiracy theory that the FBI was responsible for the January 6th insurrection. Like all stories, conspiracy theories feature heroes, villains, victims and conflict.
A story that focuses on a mysterious, secret, and powerful group of people who take coordinated actions that cause great harm. Lack of evidence about their actions can be explained by the great power and secrecy of the villains.  CONSPIRACY THEORIES A PRIMER Joseph E. Uscinski	**Slide 15:** Conspiracy theories have some unique features as well: they are often stories that focus on the actions of a mysterious, secret, and powerful group of people (conspiracists) who take action that causes great harm. The lack of evidence about their actions is explained by their extreme secrecy and great power. What is the appeal of conspiracy theories? Two things: 1. Hanging out with a small group of people who have a special shared belief gives people a feeling of belonging. 2. It can feel good to hate a clear villain — or a group of bad guys – and blame them for society's problems. In a world where you might feel powerless and alienated, it can feel empowering to have an enemy that you can name and blame.

	Plus, stories that have a conspiracy angle are perceived as more interesting than other stories. So there's the entertainment value to consider.
 Discussion Questions What are some conspiracy theories that you have encountered recently? What are the different feelings that these stories evoke for you? DISCUSS: Which of these conspiracy theories are harmless? Which ones are harmful and why?	**Slide 16:** We're going to discuss conspiracy theories in small groups by answering the following questions: • What are some conspiracy theories that you have encountered recently? • What are the different feelings that these stories evoke for you? • Which of these conspiracy theories are harmless? Which ones are harmful and why? Some conspiracy theories may be harmless – but others can have effects on people's health, finances, and other decisions. Let's try to identify and reflect on some of the general qualities that make a conspiracy theory harmful (or harmless).
Are Republicans and Conservatives More Likely to Believe Conspiracy Theories? 	**Slide 17:** Now we are going to read and analyze a media text about conspiracy theories.
THE CONSPIRACY CHART 2021 DETACHED FROM REALITY GROUNDED IN REALITY https://conspiracychart.com/	**Slide 18:** We want to invite you to explore and evaluate conspiracy theories that you encounter in daily life. Take a look at this Conspiracy Chart, which offers examples of current conspiracy theories with links to news sources. The chart offers evaluation of the relative harmfulness and truth value of various topics.

 **Questions to Ask About Conspiracy Theories** 1. What is the claim? 2. What is the evidence & source that supports the claim? 3. What is the chain of reasoning that links the evidence back to the claim?	**Slide 19:** It is essential for people to make their own judgments about the truth value of conspiracy theories. You can use these three questions when examining conspiracy theories: ● What is the claim? ● What is the evidence source for the claim? ● What is the chain of reasoning that links the evidence back to the claim? Critical thinking about conspiracy theories takes time – but it's time well spent!
 **Key Ideas** People are naturally drawn to stories and remember them better than facts. Conspiracy theories are stories that focus on how a secret powerful group of people is causing great harm. Believing in conspiracy theories can be more harmful than activities that these theories claim to expose. To avoid being negatively impacted, it is essential to pay attention to claims and evidence behind stories.	**Slide 20:** Review the key ideas.
 Courageous RI www.courageousri.com	**Slide 21:** Thank you for your participation! To learn more about COURAGEOUS RI, visit the program's website courageousri.com.

Learn More

Understand the limitations of logical arguments
Read "Why Facts Don't Change Our Minds" by Elizabeth Kolbert (New Yorker, February 19, 2017) to learn how new discoveries of the human mind reveal the limitations of reason.

Evaluate Conspiracy Theories with the Conspiracy Chart
Review the Conspiracy Chart which lets you explore recent conspiracy theories and consider their level of harmfulness. See how the chart rates harmfulness – read the news stories about these topics and see if you agree or disagree with their rating on the chart. Use the three critical questions to evaluate the truth value of conspiracy theories:

- What is the claim?
- What is the evidence source for the claim?
- What is the chain of reasoning that links the evidence back to the claim?

When Anger Overwhelms
Since anger is the feeling that can lead to rage that can lead to violence, understanding and managing anger is important. If you have children in your life, watch the video "Just Breathe" with them and have a courageous conversation about anger, or make a glitter jar with them to use when anger overwhelms them or they need a time out.

Teaching the Conspiracies
Retro Report created a lesson on Conspiracy Theories: From the JFK Assassination to Today, an event which was a catalyst for the decline of public trust in government. Consider this: In 1964, when the Warren Report was released, 77% of Americans said they trusted the government to do what's right. Today, that number has plummeted to under 12%.

Learn more about COURAGEOUS RI and Media Literacy
Check out our podcasts and blogs where you can learn more about some of the issues that help people understand how media literacy helps reduce the fear, anger, and hate that lead to violence.

5.2: Reading and Discussion

Instructions: After reading the abridged article below, answer the questions.

Political Behavior
https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-022-09812-3

ORIGINAL PAPER

Check for updates

Are Republicans and Conservatives More Likely to Believe Conspiracy Theories?

Adam Enders[1] · Christina Farhart[2] · Joanne Miller[3] · Joseph Uscinski[4] · Kyle Saunders[5] · Hugo Drochon[6]

Accepted: 11 July 2022

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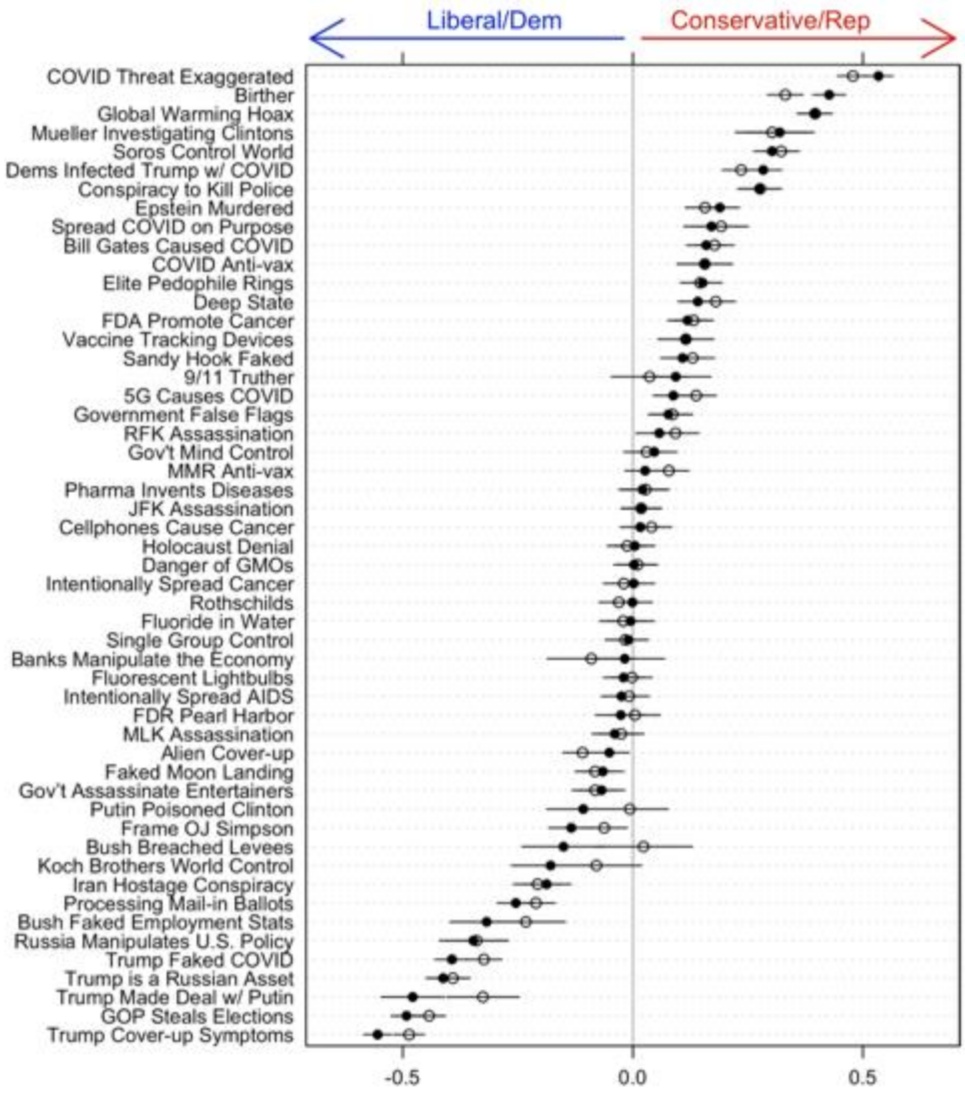


Discussion and Conclusion

Are those on the political right (Republicans/conservatives) more prone to conspiracy theorizing than those on the left (Democrats/liberals)? The smattering of evidence across the literature provides conflicting answers to this question. Given the imperative of better understanding conspiracy theories and the people who believe them, we compiled a robust body of evidence for testing the asymmetry thesis. Across multiple surveys and measurement strategies, we found more evidence for partisan and ideological symmetry in conspiricism, however operationalized, than for asymmetry.

First, we found that the relationship between political orientations and beliefs in specific conspiracy theories varied considerably across 52 specific conspiracy theories. Conspiracy theories containing partisan/ideological content or that have been endorsed by prominent partisan/ideological elites will find more support among those in one political camp or the other, while theories without such content or endorsements tend to be unrelated to partisanship and ideology in the U.S. <...> We found that both Democrats/liberals and Republicans/conservatives engage in motivated conspiracy endorsement at similar rates, with Democrats/liberals occasionally exhibiting stronger motivations than Republicans/conservatives. Finally, we observed only inconsistent evidence for an asymmetric relationship between conspiracy thinking and either partisanship, symbolic ideology, or operational ideology across 18 polls administered between 2012 and 2021. Even though the average correlations across studies were positive, indicating a relationship with conservatism/ Republicanism (owing mostly to data collected in 2016), they were negligible in magnitude and individual correlations varied in sign and statistical significance over time.

Equally important as our substantive conclusions is an exploration of why we reached them, which can shed light on existing inconsistencies in the literature. Take, for example, the study conducted by van der Linden and colleagues (2021). They infer from a strong, positive correlation between beliefs that “climate change is a hoax” and conservatism that conservatives are inherently more conspiratorial than liberals. However, we demonstrate that such conclusions cannot be made using beliefs in a single conspiracy theory. [C]limate change conspiracy theories show one of the highest levels of asymmetry; therefore, exclusive examination of almost any other conspiracy theory would lead to a result less supportive of the asymmetry argument.

Van der Linden et al. (2021) also find a positive, albeit weak, correlation between conservatism and generalized conspiracy thinking. While this relationship is statistically significant, liberals still exhibit high levels of conspiricism. Indeed, even strong liberals score above the 50-point midpoint on their 101-point measure (between 60 and 65, on average), whereas strong conservatives typically score about 10 points higher (see Figs. 1b and 3b). In other words, liberals, like conservatives, are more conspiratorial than not.

Despite the magnitude of data we employ, our study is not without limitations, and we wish to emphasize that ours should not be the final word on this topic. Although our data spans a decade, it was collected over the course of only three U.S. presidential administrations. As political culture changes so, too, might the relationship between political orientations and conspiracy theories.

In a similar vein, conspiracy theories differ not only in who believes them, where, and when, but in their consequences and dangers. As such, it may be useful for researchers to consider categorizing conspiracy beliefs by various attributes, such as their consequences, just as they do for political attitudes (e.g., issue attitudes, affective versus ideological attitudes, etc.)––perhaps the asymmetry thesis finds stronger evidence among certain "classes" of conspiracy theories. Recent events in American politics are suggestive of this possibility. Donald Trump and his allies in government and media fostered election fraud conspiracy theory beliefs to the point of the violent intimidation of elected representatives attempting to certify the 2020 election. In this way, election fraud conspiracy theories––at least under the particular circumstances that Trump and colleagues nurtured––are of more consequence than, for example, conspiracy theories regarding the moon landing or lizard people. While forecasting which conspiracy theories will result in tangible consequences and when is surely difficult, we nevertheless note that symmetry of tendency to believe in conspiracy theories need not equal symmetry in consequence of conspiracy theories, along political lines or otherwise.

Finally, we believe it is critical that work on beliefs, like that presented here, be reconciled with related research examining political asymmetries in the tendency to interact with or "spread" conspiracy theories on social media. Related work by Guess, Nagler and Tucker (2019), Garrett and Bond (2021), and Grinberg et al. (2019), for example, finds evidence for minor asymmetries in the extent to which Democrats/liberals and Republicans/conservatives share misinformation or distinguish between fake and true news stories online. By fusing social media data with survey data researchers can gain greater leverage over questions about the conditions under which online behaviors are reflective of, or even impact, beliefs and offline behaviors. For now, we simply note that findings of asymmetries online may not generalize to the broader population, as politically active social media users are not representative of average Americans when it comes to various political and psychological characteristics (Lawson & Kakkar, 2021).

The last five years have witnessed Republican elites in government and media (most notably Donald Trump) utilizing conspiracy theories in a way unprecedented in the last half century of American politics, and with severe, deleterious consequences for democratic institutions. This alone has encouraged renewed conjecture about an asymmetry in conspiracy theory beliefs. However, elites are an imperfect reflection of the public––they have different goals, incentives, and knowledge about politics. Moreover, elite rhetoric rarely changes predispositions, such as conspiracy thinking, so much as it activates predispositions and connects them to salient political choices (Leeper & Slothuus, 2014). In other words, while Republican elites may have recently activated conspiratorial predispositions among supporters in the mass public––where they exist––in a way that Democratic elites did not, they are unlikely to be able to cause once non-conspiratorial supporters to become highly conspiratorial.

That we find little difference in conspiracy theorizing between the right and left among the mass public does not indicate that there are no differences between partisan elites on this score, nor does it imply that there will not be asymmetries in beliefs in specific conspiracy theories at any given point in time. Specific conspiracy theories can find more support among one partisan/ideological side than the other even though partisan/ideological motivated reasoning and conspiratorial predispositions operate, on balance, in a symmetric fashion. Likewise, the content of those theories and the way they are deployed, particularly by elites, can result in asymmetrical consequences, such as political violence and the undermining of democratic institutions. We encourage future work to integrate the conspiratorial rhetoric of elites with studies of mass beliefs and investigate elite conspiratorial rhetoric from actors including and beyond Donald Trump.

Access the Original Article Here
URL: https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11109-022-09812-3

Discussion Questions:

1. What type of text is this article? How do you know?
2. What are the main ideas of this article?
3. What feelings does this article evoke in you?

5.3: Learn More

Learn More

Read **"Why Facts Don't Change Our Minds" by Elizabeth Kolbert (New Yorker, February 19, 2017)** to learn how new discoveries of the human mind reveal the limitations of reason.

Evaluate Conspiracy Theories with the Conspiracy Chart

Review the Conspiracy Chart which lets you explore recent conspiracy theories and consider their level of harmfulness. See how the chart rates harmfulness – read the news stories about these topics and see if you agree or disagree with their rating on the chart. Use the three critical questions to evaluate the truth value of conspiracy theories:

- What is the claim?
- What is the evidence source for the claim?
- What is the chain of reasoning that links the evidence back to the claim?

When Anger Overwhelms

Since anger is the feeling that can lead to rage that can lead to violence, understanding and managing anger is important. If you have children in your life, watch the video "Just Breathe" with them and have a courageous conversation about anger, or make a glitter jar with them to use when anger overwhelms them or they need a time out.

Teaching the Conspiracies

Retro Report created a lesson on Conspiracy Theories: From the JFK Assassination to Today, an event which was a catalyst for the decline of public trust in government. Consider this: In 1964, when the Warren Report was released, 77% of Americans said they trusted the government to do what's right. Today, that number has plummeted to under 12%.

For Educators

5.4: Additional Resources

Feelings and Facts

A collection of supplemental resources for Lesson 5.1. Conspiracy theory teacher resources offer guidance for how to address conspiracy theories that students bring up in class and lesson plans provide options for extending the exploration of conspiracy theories. Fact-checking lesson plans and links to fact-checking sites support students as they become more critical of the information and conspiracy theories they encounter online and in the media.

Conspiracy Theory Lesson Plans

Common Sense Media: Why Are Conspiracy Theories So Appealing?
A 3-part lesson series that includes a video exploring the popularity of conspiracy theories, a meme-based activity, and a debunking conspiracy theories project.

Checkology: Conspiratorial Thinking
This advanced lesson offers a deeper dive into the cognitive biases involved in conspiratorial thinking and the human needs that conspiracy theories meet.

PBS: Debunking Denver Airport Conspiracy Theories
This lesson plan requires students to practice debunking a widespread conspiracy theory.

Conspiracy Theories: From JFK's Assassination to Today
A 12-minute video that examines conspiracy theories across the years. Use the included questions to guide a class discussion on the connection between conspiracy theories and the erosion of trust in government.

PBS: Lesson Plan - An Experiment in Misinformation
This engaging lesson introduces students to the concept of "post-truth" as they examine a satirical conspiracy theory.

Thinking Is Power: Designing and Defending Your Own Conspiracy Theory
This activity puts students in the driver's seat as they create and defend a conspiracy theory.

Conspiracy Theory Teacher Resources

Addressing Conspiracy Theories: What Teachers Need to Know
In addition to providing a wealth of information on why people believe conspiracy theories, the damage done by conspiracy theories, and how to identify conspiracy theories, this UNESCO resource gives educators tips on how to address conspiracy theories when they arise in classroom discussions.

Conspiracy Theories in the Classroom: How to Deal with These Issues as a Teacher
This resource created by the Anne Frank House offers practical guidance for teachers who work with teens. The tips in this publication combine conspiracy theory research with best practices for working with adolescents. Each section includes suggested classroom activities.

KQED: A Conspiracy Video Teaches Kids a Lesson About Fake News
This KQED article explores how an investigative journalist used a conspiracy theory video that he created to teach students across France about how to identify online disinformation.

Fact Checking Lesson Plans

News Literacy Project: Fact Check It
This lesson teaches four digital verification skills: critical observation, reverse image search, geolocation, and lateral reading.

Facing History and Ourselves: How to Read the News Like a Fact Checker
This lesson focuses on using the lateral reading strategy to verify online information.

PBS: Lesson Plan - How to Fact-Check the "Fact" Pages on Instagram
In this lesson, students learn how to evaluate popular Insta posts that feature the word "FACT" followed by a claim.

Crash Course: The Facts About Fact Checking
This entertaining 14-minute video teaches students to fact check like the pros.

Fact Checking Sites

Fact Check
This non-partisan site monitors the accuracy of political claims in speeches, debates, advertisements, and press releases.

Truth or Fiction
A non-partisan site with information about hoaxes, conspiracy theories, misinformation, and disinformation. Its design allows users to easily check the accuracy of the most widely spread stories on social media.

Snopes
A popular fact-checking site that links to sources so users can use their own critical thinking skills to decide what they choose to believe.

Checkology: Check Center
The Check Center tool allows users to check the credibility of images, videos, and texts.

5.5: Classroom Activities and Creative Expression Ideas

Feelings and Facts

ACTIVITY: Picking Favorites

Instructions:

List 5 works of media (including news stories, social media posts, web videos, movies, TV, popular music, video games, books, advertisements, etc.) that have impacted the way you understand or experience the world. For each work of media, write (1) what meaning you 'made' from it, (2) what aspects of the work of media you find most compelling, and (3) what changes in your attitudes or behaviors were informed by the work.
#self-reflection

***This activity aligns with the following RI Social Studies Anchor Standards:**

H.HP.1: Identify key people, central ideas, and the mechanisms by which stories are told and retold regarding an event or series of events, centering the voices of historical actors and groups engaged in resistance and change.
H.HP.2: Explain the purpose, audience, and perspective of multiple types of sources (art, music, oral histories, pamphlets, film, texts, etc.) relating to a historical event or series of events, individual, or group of people, including indications of bias toward or against the subject portrayed.
H.HP.3: Analyze multiple types of sources, including art, music, oral histories, pamphlets, film, texts, etc., through a critical reflection of the creators' and students' intersectional identities and lived experiences.

PROJECT: The Power of Story

Instructions:

Create a 1-3 minute audio piece that explores the power of storytelling to influence attitudes and behaviors. Your approach can include scripted drama, documentary storytelling, poetry, song, interviews, narration, sound design, etc. Pieces should be engaging while also communicating (explicitly or implicitly) your perspective on the "power of story."

Discuss the intentions behind your audio piece, the creative decisions you made, and how the piece reflects your personal perspectives on storytelling's power to influence attitudes and behaviors in a 300 word artist statement.
#storytelling, #mediaproduction

The Influencers

Discussion Support Tools

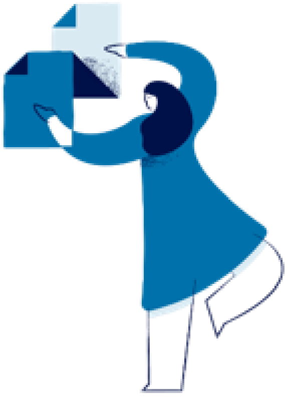
6.1: Lesson Plan

Overview

We are living in a world where disinformation and propaganda are leading people to make new and different choices about who to trust. In this lesson, students explore why people trust influencers as thought leaders. Students examine how people can persuade by leveraging their authority and their authenticity. Thought leaders and influencers can inspire people to hate – and hate can lead to violence. We don't have to agree with the trust decisions that others make – but everyone wins when we're more reflective about why and how we choose to trust.

Standards

RL/RI.X.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn for text.



SL.X.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats.

W.X.8 Assess the credibility and accuracy of sources.

Materials and Media Texts

- Slide Deck
- Data projector with external sound
- Access to the Internet
- Worksheet 6.2 – one copy for each student
- Optional: Media Literacy Smartphone

Time:

45 – 60 minutes

Learning Objectives

1. Learn how persuasion works.
2. Recognize how persuasion can lead to hate and violence.
3. Notice the role of influencers in our lives.
4. Develop informal public speaking skills.

Activities

1. Instructor conveys new knowledge through reviewing ideas on content slides.
2. Students watch and critically analyze a TikTok video.
3. They work in groups or pairs to share their experiences with influencers.
4. During the small-group discussion, they fill out a worksheet.
5. Each group presents 1-2 key ideas generated by the discussion.
6. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion.

Assessments

Students' performance is informally observed as they work in small groups and in their share-out presentations. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion. As part of this activity, students select 1 or more question for brief reflective writing:

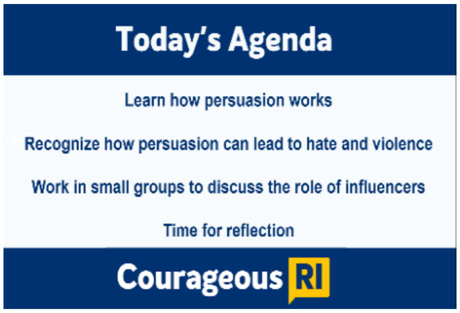
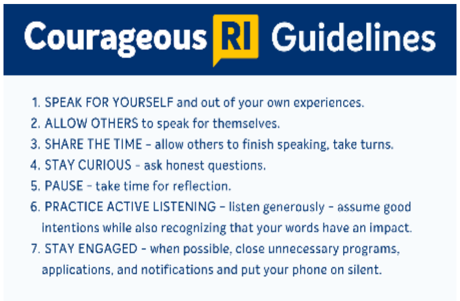
1. Did all students in your small group participate in the discussion? Why or why not?
2. What influencers were discussed in your group?
3. What were some signs that participants were engaged in active listening?
4. What new knowledge or new ideas did you gain from learning about other people's experiences?

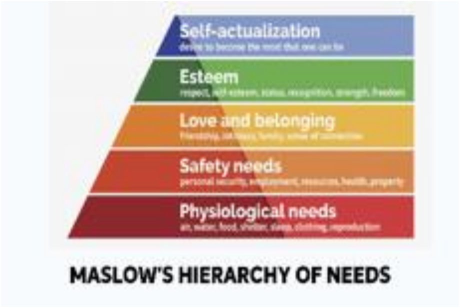
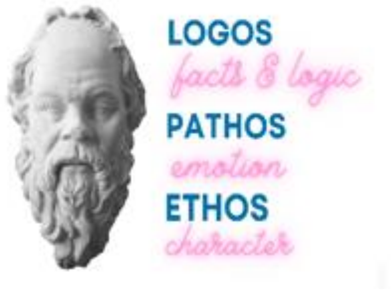
Notes about the Slide Deck

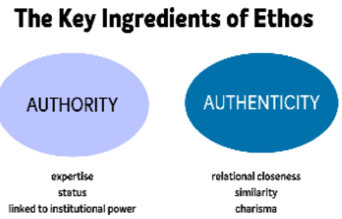
Access the Slide Deck Here (make a copy that you can customize as needed)
URL: https://docs.google.com/document/d/17Pz0ZqL7HdmQII9sliliYLoauZ4bhAyl/copy

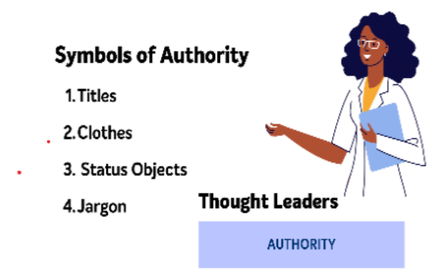
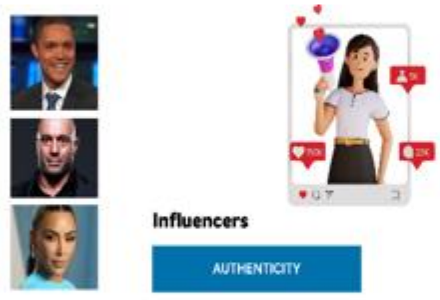
Access the COURAGEOUS RI Program Recording Here:
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IdxJkxC8PLc

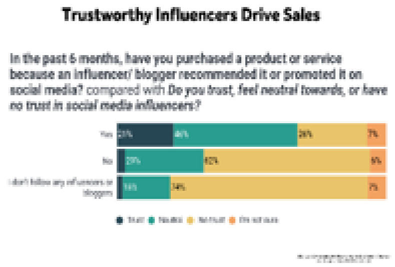
Courageous RI Learn and apply media literacy skills Find common ground Prevent violence and extremism	**Slide 1:** COURAGEOUS RI, with support from the Department of Homeland Security, works to prevent rising violence and extremism in Rhode Island with authentic and respectful conversation. You can find out more about it at courageousri.com.

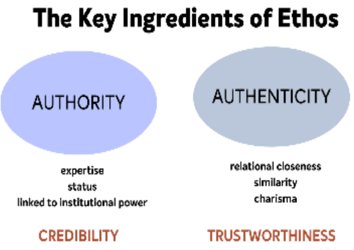
 Community conversations to counter disinformation, enhance civic participation, and improve media literacy www.courageousri.com	**Slide 2:** We will learn about the skills of media literacy, which involves asking critical questions about the media we see, hear, watch, play, and use. We will also discuss the importance of having authentic conversations that help us better listen to each other and to find common ground.
 Courageous RI The Influencers Lesson Plan	**Slide 3:** In this lesson, our topic is the influencers – and we're going to take a deep dive into the role of thought leaders in our lives.
 Today's Agenda Learn how persuasion works Recognize how persuasion can lead to hate and violence Work in small groups to discuss the role of influencers Time for reflection Courageous RI	**Slide 4:** We will learn how persuasion works, and discuss how it can lead to violence.
 Courageous RI Guidelines 1. SPEAK FOR YOURSELF and out of your own experiences. 2. ALLOW OTHERS to speak for themselves. 3. SHARE THE TIME – allow others to finish speaking, take turns. 4. STAY CURIOUS - ask honest questions. 5. PAUSE - take time for reflection. 6. PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING – listen generously - assume good intentions while also recognizing that your words have an impact. 7. STAY ENGAGED – when possible, close unnecessary programs, applications, and notifications and put your phone on silent.	**Slide 5:** Our goal is to build connections and to foster conversations that improve our understanding of one another. For this reason, we want to make sure that everyone gets a chance both to share and to learn from others in this conversation. To support those goals, we have some basic guidelines for our conversation.

 How do you decide who to trust? INFLUENCE & PERSUASION	**Slide 6:** How do you decide who to trust? There is an area of scholarship called "influence and persuasion" that aims to answer this question. This topic has a very long history. From an evolutionary point of view, the ability to influence your tribe and get them to take coordinated action was key to human survival. People who were good at influencing (and being influenced) had a distinct advantage over those who were not good at this. At the most basic level, people rely on thought leaders and influencers because they provide safety and security.
 Self-actualization Esteem Love and belonging Safety needs Physiological needs MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS	**Slide 7:** People need to trust others because social trust is needed for our most basic human needs. Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a motivational theory in psychology – it suggests that human needs can be depicted as hierarchical levels within a pyramid. From the bottom of the hierarchy upwards, the needs are: physiological (food and clothing), safety (job security), love and belonging needs (friendship), esteem (status or recognition) and self-actualization - the desire to be the best you can be.
 Trust Happens when we place our reliance in the integrity or truthfulness of someone or something	**Slide 8:** It's true that social trust is needed at all of these levels. Trust happens whenever we rely on the integrity or truthfulness of someone or something. There's a certain vulnerability involved. When thought leaders and influencers are credible and trustworthy, we can trust their interpretations of reality.
 LOGOS facts & logic PATHOS emotion ETHOS character	**Slide 9:** In fact, the study of influence goes all the way back to Aristotle who used three concepts to explain how people influence others: *Logos* is the use of facts, evidence and reasoning. *Pathos* involves the use of stories that activate strong emotions. And *ethos* is the form of influence that occurs through the force of one's character and personality. You might have been told that logos is better than pathos or ethos – but that's not what Aristotle believed. Actually, belief in the superiority of logos is itself a problem. Stories that activate emotion are more memorable than facts and statistics. Aristotle actually said that all three of these

	approaches to influence work together. Each makes a contribution to establish a relationship – a bond – between a speaker and listener.
 The Key Ingredients of Ethos AUTHORITY AUTHENTICITY expertise status linked to institutional power relational closeness similarity charisma	**Slide 10:** Many people now believe that social media is reshaping people's decisions about who and what to trust. We can explore this issue by using the concept of ethos – and drilling down some of its components: Authority and Authenticity. Authority is the display of character that emphasizes expertise, status, and connections to institutional power. For example, many people would trust a scholar who went to Harvard. Long-term involvement in an area or a field also creates trust as it is associated with expertise. But there's another quality of ethos to consider. Authenticity is the display of character that emphasizes relational closeness, similarity, and charisma. We often feel that we can trust a person who looks us right in the eyes when they talk to us and nod their head in agreement with us when we're speaking. We also trust people when we feel that we have so much in common with them. That's another form of relational closeness. Emphasizing what you have in common with people can lead people to trust you more.
 Thought Leaders AUTHORITY	**Slide 11:** We're talking about authority and authenticity because one of the biggest decisions that people have to make these days is deciding who to trust. Who are some examples of thought leaders who have influenced you? Some people have been influenced by Greta Thunberg, a young climate activist who seems to have a lot of knowledge about the topic – and a lot of ideas about what needs to change for us to fix the problem. Others have been influenced by Thomas Friedman, who writes columns about globalization, international politics, and the economy. We trust experts' perspective on issues that are important to us – but where we lack knowledge.

 Symbols of Authority 1.Titles 2.Clothes 3. Status Objects 4.Jargon Thought Leaders AUTHORITY	**Slide 12:** But today, anyone can present themself as an authority. How many times have you seen an ad for some supplement or diet product that features a white man in a white medical jacket, looking like a doctor? People may not be aware of how titles, clothes, and other trappings (like cars, jewelry, expensive sneakers, handbags, and other objects of status) affect how we trust others. Symbols of authority lead people to accept someone's ideas at face value. There's a phenomenon called the fake expert strategy – and it has its origins in the 1950s, when the tobacco industry developed a marketing strategy they called "white coats," where they got doctors to say that smoking was safe. The problem of fake experts is exploding now online – and it's an important reason why people need to critically analyze and reflect on how we decide who and what to trust.
 Influencers AUTHENTICITY	**Slide 13:** The sharp decline in people's trust in institutions is why people distrust experts. It's why many people have turned to influencers. We seek out people who don't have formal expertise, but we feel close to them. Some people trust comedians like Jon Stewart and Trevor Noah, who offer a humorous and unique view on current events. People may trust these two comedians because both promote humanitarian causes, and that they left the sought-after role of late night host to explore other paths or interests. Some other well-known influencers include Oprah, Ellen DeGeneres, and Joe Rogan, a former comedian who has the most popular podcast on Spotify. Kim Kardashian has around 300 million followers on social media so obviously the lifestyles of the rich, famous, and beautiful are also a big draw. We all have our own reasons for paying attention to influencers and it's a good media literacy practice to ask ourselves questions and reflect on why we make these choices.

 Symbols of Authenticity 1. Attractiveness 2. Self-disclosure 3. Displays of emotion 4. Making mistakes **Influencers** AUTHENTICITY	**Slide 14:** Influencers also use symbols to convey their authenticity. Many of them attract our interest by being attractive or distinctive in some way – they definitely stand out from the crowd. They use self-disclosure by sharing personal stories and life experiences— this makes us feel like we really know them as human beings. They often express themselves emotionally and sometimes their weaknesses and mistakes are visible – this creates a kind of vulnerability that increases our perception that they are trustworthy– because we can see similarities between them and us.
 **Trustworthy Influencers Drive Sales** **In the past 6 months, have you purchased a product or service because an influencer/ blogger recommended it or promoted it on social media?** compared with ***Do you trust, feel neutral towards, or have no trust in social media influencers?***	**Slide 15:** Trustworthy influencers have become an important marketing tool to drive sales. This chart shows that 21% of Americans say they have purchased a product or service because an influencer or blogger recommended it. Notice that this chart also shows that people who don't trust influencers don't buy products and services recommended by influencers. Trustworthiness is the secret ingredient in marketing here. This type of sales strategy – it's called influencer marketing – is growing by leaps and bounds, and in the U.S. it is expected to reach $4.6 billion in 2023, double where it was just five years ago. Two-thirds of all brands are increasing their spending on influencer marketing.
 Influencers Who Sell Hate	**Slide 16:** Watch out for influencers who use insults that appeal to feelings of contempt and revulsion. When combined with anger, the result is a potent form of hatred that increases the likelihood of violence. Have you heard about the whole subculture on the internet called the manosphere? It's a collection of people who run websites, blogs and online forums and they promote masculinity, misogyny, and opposition to feminism. For example, in England, teachers are now noticing how Andrew Tate is radicalizing boys and young men to advocate for violence against women. He's teaching boys how to be sexist. He's teaching boys what they can say to demean women. To teen boys, his approach to hate may seem funny or edgy or interesting. But it's truly dangerous. When thought leaders and influencers weaponize disgust to fuel violence, it can affect us deeply.



The Key Ingredients of Ethos

AUTHORITY

expertise
status
linked to institutional power

CREDIBILITY

AUTHENTICITY

relational closeness
similarity
charisma

TRUSTWORTHINESS

Slide 17: Deciding who to trust is not an either-or thing. We have degrees of trust– it's really a lot like a sliding scale. People make judgments about credibility and trustworthiness –but we often make these judgments without much conscious awareness. That's where media literacy comes in to help.

Each one of you has your own area of authority and expertise. It may be baking lemon drizzle cake or fixing the dishwasher, playing an instrument, or telling jokes. You are also an influencer – at the very least, to the people you are close to, the people who care about and trust you.

Slide 18: Let's apply our media literacy skills to consider the concepts of authenticity and authority as they relate to media and politics. We'll view and discuss a TikTok video created recently by U.S. Representative Jeff Jackson of North Carolina: - https://www.tiktok.com/@jeffjacksonnc/video/7223000065722387755

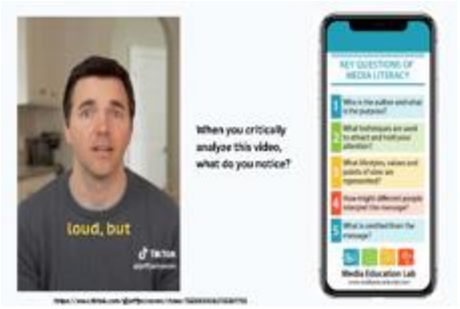
Note that the video cannot be currently embedded because it comes from TikTok.

What are some key ideas expressed in this video?

loud, but
TikTok

Slide 19: After watching the video, let's share our interpretations. Exposure to differing interpretations helps build media literacy competencies as well as a better understanding of others.

What were some key ideas expressed in this video?



When you critically analyze this video, what do you notice?

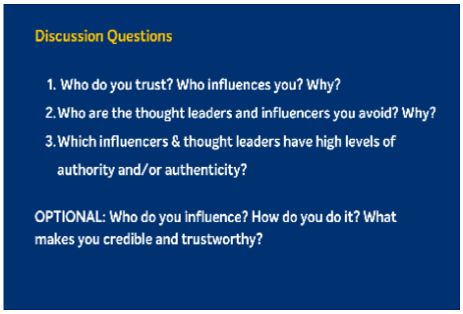
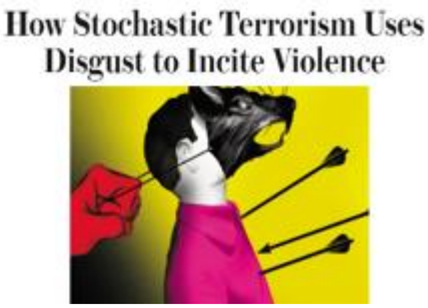
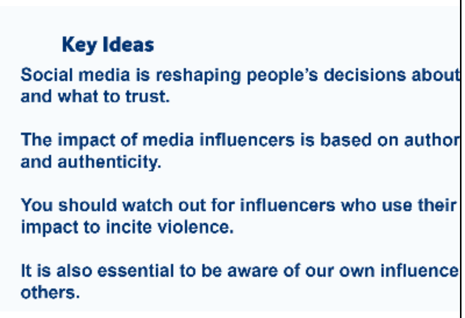
KEY QUESTIONS OF MEDIA LITERACY

1 Who is the author and what is the purpose?
2 What techniques are used to attract and hold your attention?
3 What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented?
4 How might different people interpret this message?
5 What is omitted from the message?

Media Education Lab

Slide 20: Now let's use the critical questions of media literacy to analyze it. When you critically analyze this video, what do you notice?

Optional: Give Media Literacy Smartphones to students.

 Discussion Questions 1. Who do you trust? Who influences you? Why? 2. Who are the thought leaders and influencers you avoid? Why? 3. Which influencers & thought leaders have high levels of authority and/or authenticity? OPTIONAL: Who do you influence? How do you do it? What makes you credible and trustworthy?	**Slide 21:** Now we'll break into small groups to consider these issues more deeply. In your discussion, you can choose to respond to any or all of these questions: ● Who do you trust? Who influences you? Why? ● Who are the thought leaders and influencers you avoid? Why? ● Which influencers & thought leaders have high levels of authority and/or authenticity? Optional: Who do you influence? How do you do it? What makes you credible and trustworthy?
 How Stochastic Terrorism Uses Disgust to Incite Violence	**Slide 22:** Now we are going to analyze another media text about influencers.
 Key Ideas Social media is reshaping people's decisions about and what to trust. The impact of media influencers is based on author and authenticity. You should watch out for influencers who use their impact to incite violence. It is also essential to be aware of our own influence others.	**Slide 23:** Review the key ideas.
 Courageous RI www.courageousri.com	**Slide 24:** Thank you for your participation! To learn more about COURAGEOUS RI, visit the program's website courageousri.com.

Learn More

Resources for Learning and Teaching
Access the Jeff Jackson TikTok video we discussed and analyzed.

Understand Who Influenced You
The Keller Institute has a cool exercise that encourages you to create a list where you reflect on your whole life, in 5 or 10-year increments, on who influenced you. It is important to reflect previous influences and influencers as they play a role in shaping our behaviors, attitudes, perspectives and even our life decisions. Without knowing these, we can develop blind spots that keep us from reaching our potential.

How Fake Experts are Used to Mislead
John Cook's video traces the history of the rise of fake experts from the 1950s to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Brainwashing a Generation": British Schools Combat Andrew Tate's Views
This article from the New York Times explores how teachers are addressing the popularity of anti-feminist influencer Andrew Tate, who was recently arrested in Romania on charges of rape and human trafficking.

Learn more about COURAGEOUS RI and Media Literacy
Check out our podcasts and blogs where you can learn more about some of the issues that help people understand how media literacy helps reduce the fear, anger, and hate that lead to violence.

6.2: Reading and Discussion

Instructions: After reading the abridged article below, answer the questions.

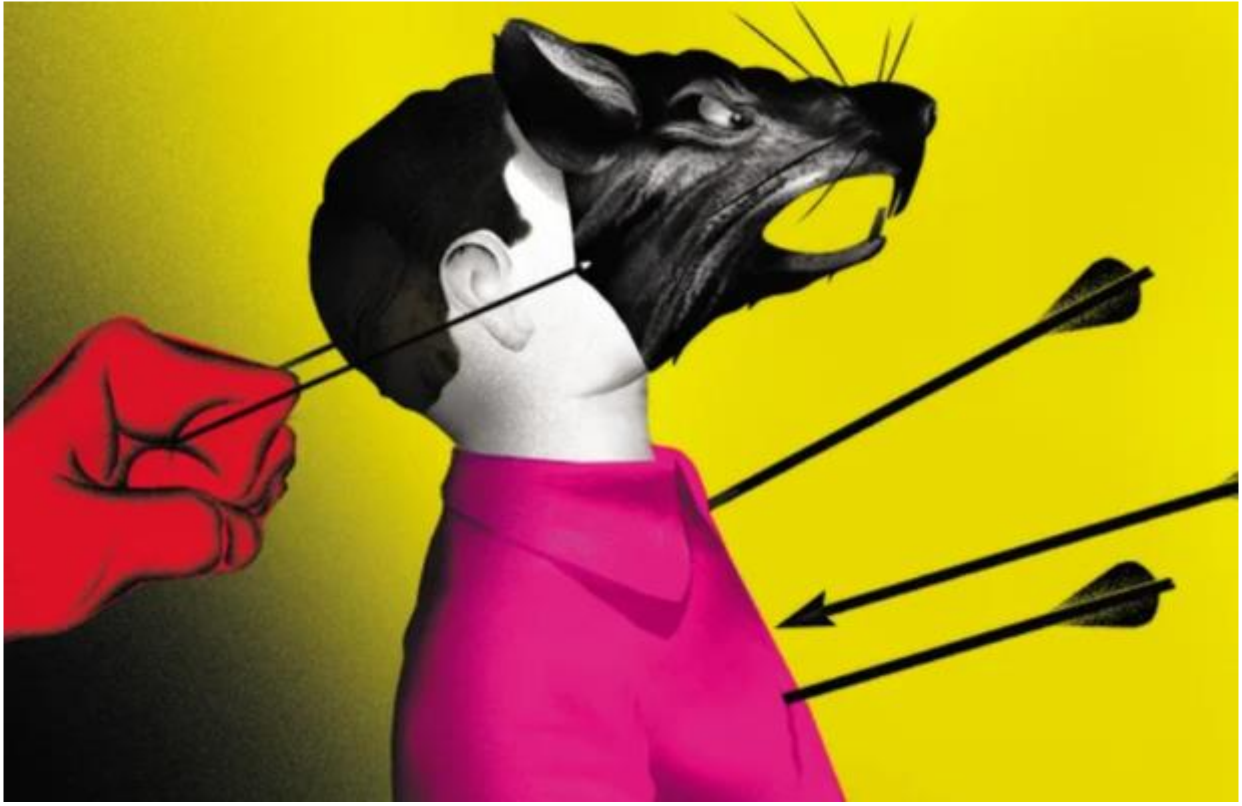


Image credit: Brian Stauffer

By Bryn Nelson on November 5, 2022

How Stochastic Terrorism Uses Disgust to Incite Violence

Pundits are weaponizing disgust to fuel violence, and it's affecting our humanity

A week and a half before the midterm elections, a man broke into Speaker Nancy Pelosi's house, screaming "Where's Nancy?" and attacked her husband with a hammer. David DePape, charged in the attack, had posted a slew of rants that included references to a sprawling conspiracy theory known as QAnon, which claims that Democratic, Satan-worshipping pedophiles are trying to control the world's politics and media.

Several hours before, Fox News's Tucker Carlson interviewed right-wing activist Christopher Rufo, who claimed drag queens participating in book readings were trying to "sexualize children." The people who support these events, he said, want to create "a sexual connection between adult and child, which has of course long been the kind of final taboo of the sexual revolution."

With the support of former President Donald Trump, the pedophile conspiracy theory has contributed to a widening spiral of threats and violence, including the deadly January 6 Capitol insurrection. A revival of the “groomer” smear against the LGBTQ community (a reference to a pedophile) has ramped up the aggression. Right-wing media personalities and activists have created or amplified conspiracy theories about Pelosi, Hillary Clinton, Bill Gates and others.

Dehumanizing and vilifying a person or group of people can provoke what scholars and law enforcement officials call stochastic terrorism, in which ideologically driven hate speech increases the likelihood that people will violently and unpredictably attack the targets of vicious claims.

At its core, stochastic terrorism exploits one of our strongest and most complicated emotions: disgust.

In my new book *Flush*, I describe how psychologists have come to view disgust as a kind of behavioral immune system that helps us avoid harm. Whether in response to feces or rats, disgust triggers an aversion to things that can make us physically sick. The emotion has a darker side, however: in excess, it can be weaponized against people.

Propagandists have fomented disgust to dehumanize Jewish people as vermin; Black people as subhuman apes; Indigenous people as “savages”; immigrants as “animals” unworthy of protection; and members of the LGBTQ community as sexual deviants and “predators” who prey upon children.

That horrifying history is now repeating itself, as political extremists create dangerous new strains of contempt and hatred. During the COVID pandemic, there has been a surge of racism and xenophobia, as well as violence against foreigners who are baselessly blamed for importing disease and crime.

Even when disgust doesn’t incite outright violence, it can still cause harm. Clinical psychologist Steven Taylor, author of *The Psychology of Pandemics*, told me that the ongoing monkeypox outbreak has further amplified bigotry. The disease’s mode of transmission through close physical contact and its symptoms of pus-filled sores, he says, make it a perfect vehicle for eliciting disgust. Its name and origins in Africa have stoked racist misinformation about how it spreads, and its link to men who have sex with men has fueled stigma and homophobia as well.

People who are trying to outlaw gender-affirming care for transgender kids and purge pro-gay books from library shelves have stirred up disgust by invoking the specter of sexual “grooming”; others have made the same accusations against those speaking out against such legislative efforts, and some have used the idea to fuel disinformation about the cause of scattered pediatric monkeypox cases. The manufactured grooming mythology has spurred another round of moral disgust and outrage.

In response to Rufo’s diatribe, Carlson—who has an average of over three million viewers—explicitly linked drag queens to pedophiles: “Why would any parent allow their child to be sexualized by an adult man with a fetish for kids?” Rufo then suggested that parents should push back and “arm themselves with the literature” supposedly laying out the child sexualization agenda. Carlson replied, “Yeah, people should definitely arm themselves.”

Some people have. Researchers have estimated that transgender people are more than fourfold more likely to be the victims of violent crime than their cisgender counterparts, and while not a direct link to violence, other scientists have linked disgust sensitivity and authoritarianism to a higher opposition to transgender rights. Over the past few months, assailants repeating the groomer slur have threatened to kill drag queens and LGBTQ people, as well as educators, school officials, librarians, parents and lawmakers who have come to their defense.

In the lead-up to the midterm elections, a blitz of far-right radio ads targeting Black and Hispanic stations in swing states has repeated falsehoods about transgender people and a QAnon warning that the Biden administration will make it easier for children "to remove breasts and genitals"—an attempt to evoke disgust. Other ads aimed at white audiences claim minorities are the true aggressors and destroyers of social norms. One decries "anti-white bigotry." Another warns ominously, "Stop the woke war on our children."

The cynical appeal to protecting children by attacking minorities has exposed a bitter irony: disgust is an emotion that evolved to keep us out of danger, but people have long misused it to inflict cruelty and catastrophic harm.

Access the Original Article Here
URL: https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-stochastic-terrorism-uses-disgust-to-incite-violence

Discussion Questions:

1. What type of text is this article? How do you know?
2. What are the main ideas of this article?
3. What feelings does this article evoke in you?

6.3: Learn More

Understand Who Influenced You
The **Keller Institute has a cool exercise** that encourages you to create a list where you reflect on your whole life, in 5 or 10-year increments, on who influenced you. It is important to reflect previous influences and influencers as they play a role in shaping our behaviors, attitudes, perspectives and even our life decisions. Without knowing these, we can develop blind spots that keep us from reaching our potential.

How Fake Experts are Used to Mislead
John Cook's video traces the history of the rise of fake experts from the 1950s to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Brainwashing a Generation": British Schools Combat Andrew Tate's Views
This article from the New York Times explores how teachers are addressing the popularity of anti-feminist influencer Andrew Tate, who was recently arrested in Romania on charges of rape and human trafficking.

Stochastic Terrorism Uses Disgust to Activate Hate
Thought leaders and influencers are weaponizing disgust to fuel violence, and it's affecting our humanity. **Learn more in this article from Scientific American.**

For Educators

6.4: Additional Resources

The Influencers

A collection of resources to supplement the information provided in Lesson 6.1. These resources provide additional information on rhetoric, social media influencers, and the dissemination of hateful rhetoric online.

Rhetoric

Use these resources to take a deeper dive into how rhetoric works and the power of persuasion online.

A Zombie Apocalypse: An Introduction to Rhetoric
Use this lesson plan before teaching COURAGEOUS RI Lesson 6.1 if your students are new to rhetorical analysis. The lesson uses the engaging and entertaining scenario of a zombie apocalypse to introduce rhetorical strategies.

GCF Global: Digital Media Literacy - Recognizing Persuasive Language
This 3-minute video illustrates how persuasive language aims to win trust and influence thought through strategies such as storytelling, presenting evidence, attacking opponents, flattery, and inclusive language.

USA Today: Media Literacy Student Guide
The first lesson in this guide, "The Power of Persuasion," teaches students how to identify persuasive language and differentiate between positive and negative rhetoric. To make the activities more relevant to students, we recommend using social media feeds rather than newspapers for Activities 2 and 3.

PBS Western Reserve: Change My Mind
A collection of 5 short videos that teach students how to identify and use common persuasive techniques. The videos address the following strategies: appeal to emotion, appeal to logic, appeal to authority, loaded language, and bandwagon.

Influencers

Influencers are everywhere on social media. Use these resources to learn more about who they are and how they use their power.

Fun and Interactive Social Media Influencers Class Activity
Introduce students to the power of social media influencers using this activity created by Dr. Matthew J. Kushin, author of *Teach Social Media: A Plan for Creating a Course Your Students Will Love*.

KQED: Colorways, Hypebeasts, and Influencers: Bay Area Teens Talk Sneakerhead Culture
Before looking at the darker side of social media influencers, consider listening to this podcast with students. After listening to the podcast, lead a class discussion on the power of social media influencers.

Above the Noise: Can You Trust Influencers on YouTube?
While this 10-minute video focuses on influencers promoting products on social media, it does a good job illustrating how an influencer's power lies in their authenticity and authority.

Influence and Hate

While not all influencers spread hate, it is important to be aware of how some influencers use social media platforms to disseminate hateful messages which can lead to violence.

Influence, Celebrity, and the Dangers of Online Hate
This Facing History and Ourselves lesson includes 3 activities that engage students in considering what gives influencers power, who is responsible for opposing online hate, and how they can stand up to online hate.

Media Smarts: Impact of Online Hate
This article concisely explains how online hate propagated by influencers can harm, radicalize, and create hostile online environments.

How Andrew Tate Gains Influence Through His Media Literacy
This article provides an interesting analysis of how Andrew Tate uses his media literacy skills to establish his brand and spread his messages to a wide audience. Teachers can use it to develop their own understanding of influencer power or as a prompt for class discussions.

The Influencers

ACTIVITY: Influencer War

Instructions:
List 20 people whom you trust to provide you with accurate information and valid perspectives on the world. They can be people you know personally or public figures. Put the name of each of these "influencers" on a note card.

Partner with another student, and using your deck of influencer cards, play the classic card game "War" (in which both players simultaneously reveal the top card from their deck). The goal of the game is to engage both players in dialogue about why the name on their card is trustworthy (in relation to the name on their partner's card).

Through their conversations, partnerships may (or may not) determine that one influencer is "more trustworthy" than the other, but that's not really the point. Rather, the objective of the game is to spark conversation and reflection about how we decide who to trust.
#playing #sharing #listening #reflecting

***This activity aligns with the following RI Social Studies Anchor Standards:**

> **CG.P.1:** Identify what political power is and who has political power in a society.
> **H.HP.1:** Identify key people, central ideas, and the mechanisms by which stories are told and retold regarding an event or series of events, centering the voices of historical actors and groups engaged in resistance and change.

PROJECT: The Trust Compass

Instructions:
Design an engaging graphic that visually illustrates the key elements people consider when deciding whom to trust. The image could feature indicators such as credibility, integrity, expertise, emotional response, social status or relationship, transparency, etc. with the purpose of guiding viewers to critically assess the trustworthiness of influencers.

Discuss the intentions behind your graphic, the creative decisions you made, and how the image reflects your personal perspectives on trusting opinion-leaders in a 300 word artist statement.
#visualcommunication #criticalthinking

Free Speech, Hate Speech & Censorship

Discussion Support Tools

7.1: Lesson Plan

Overview

In this lesson, students review the scope of rights granted to Americans by the First Amendment and consider the benefits of free speech and the drawbacks of hate speech. Students reflect on how digital technologies are reshaping people's ideas about the scope and limitations of freedom of expression by discussing the phenomenon of de-platforming, content moderation, and cancel culture.

Standards

RL/RI.X.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn for text.

SL.X.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats.

W.X.8 Assess the credibility and accuracy of sources.

Materials and Media Texts

- Slide Deck
- Data projector with external sound
- Access to the Internet
- Worksheet 7.2 – one copy for each student
- Optional: Media Literacy Smartphone

Time:

45 – 60 minutes

Learning Objectives

1. Understand the difference between hate speech and free speech.
2. Learn about the role of digital technologies in reshaping free speech.
3. Recognize features of de-platforming, content moderation, and cancel culture.
4. Develop informal public speaking skills.

Activities

1. Instructor conveys new knowledge through reviewing ideas on content slides.
2. Students critically analyze a meme.
3. They work in groups or pairs to share their experiences with benefits and drawbacks of the First Amendment.
4. During the small-group discussion, they fill out a worksheet.
5. Each group presents 1-2 key ideas generated by the discussion.
6. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion.

Assessments

Students' performance is informally observed as they work in small groups and in their share-out presentations. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion. As part of this activity, students select 1 or more question for brief reflective writing:

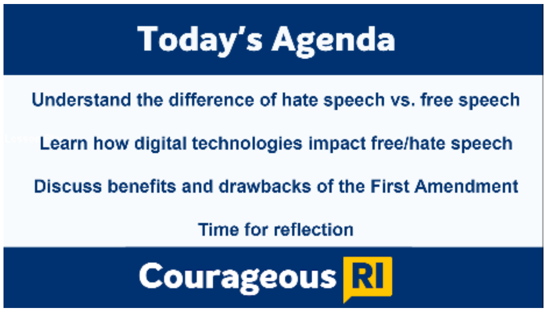
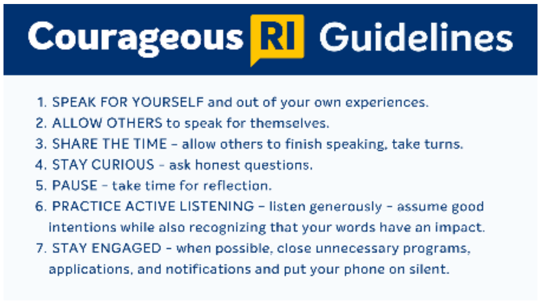
1. Did all students in your small group participate in the discussion? Why or why not?
2. What drawbacks and benefits of the First Amendment were discussed in your group?
3. What were some signs that participants were engaged in active listening?
4. What new knowledge or new ideas did you gain from learning about other people's experiences?

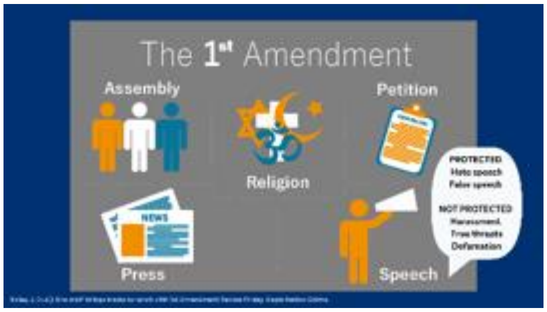
Notes about the Slide Deck

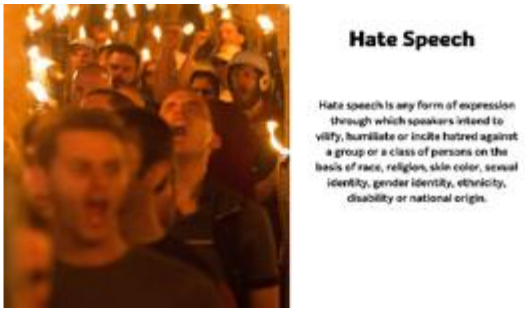
Access the Slide Deck Here (make a copy that you can customize as needed) (URL: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1LptljOpnUTtFhT0RO93dObhg5n5z_dDLabSi-T8-61Y/copy)

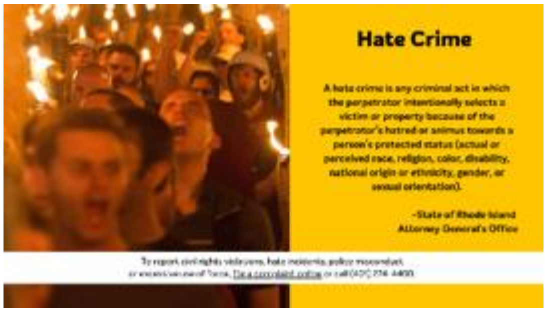
Access the COURAGEOUS RI Program Recording Here:
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5fHonpNFFGU

Courageous RI Learn and apply media literacy skills Find common ground Prevent violence and extremism	**Slide 1:** COURAGEOUS RI, with support from the Department of Homeland Security, works to prevent rising violence and extremism in Rhode Island with authentic and respectful conversation. You can find out more about it at courageousri.com.

 Community conversations to counter disinformation, enhance civic participation, and improve media literacy www.courageousri.com	**Slide 2:** We will learn about the skills of media literacy, which involves asking critical questions about the media we see, hear, watch, play, and use. We will also discuss the importance of having authentic conversations that help us better listen to each other and to find common ground.
 Courageous RI Free Speech, Hate Speech & Censorship Lesson Plan	**Slide 3:** In this lesson, we're going to take a deep dive into the First Amendment, content moderation, cancel culture, and censorship.
 Today's Agenda Understand the difference of hate speech vs. free speech Learn how digital technologies impact free/hate speech Discuss benefits and drawbacks of the First Amendment Time for reflection Courageous RI	**Slide 4:** Here is today's agenda.
 Courageous RI Guidelines 1. SPEAK FOR YOURSELF and out of your own experiences. 2. ALLOW OTHERS to speak for themselves. 3. SHARE THE TIME - allow others to finish speaking, take turns. 4. STAY CURIOUS - ask honest questions. 5. PAUSE - take time for reflection. 6. PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING - listen generously - assume good intentions while also recognizing that your words have an impact. 7. STAY ENGAGED - when possible, close unnecessary programs, applications, and notifications and put your phone on silent.	**Slide 5:** Our goal is to build connections and to foster conversations that improve our understanding of one another. For this reason, we want to make sure that everyone gets a chance both to share and to learn from others in this conversation. To support those goals, we have some basic guidelines for our conversation.

 How are digital technologies influencing people's understanding of free speech, hate speech and censorship?	**Slide 6:** We will explore the question: How are digital technologies influencing people's understanding of free speech, hate speech, and censorship? We're going to talk about the balance between freedom of expression and social responsibility. This topic is important because today, some people are confused about what free speech really means. Today, it can seem like much of public discourse takes the form of an attack or a threat. This only increases polarization, furthers political divides, and makes us unable to understand one another, particularly when we disagree. The Department of Homeland Security has recognized that this polarization can lead to hate and radicalization, which can lead to violence.
 Agenda ① The First Amendment & Hate Speech ② Censorship vs. Content Moderation ③ Censorship vs. Cancel Culture	**Slide 7:** The agenda for this lesson will include the First Amendment, hate speech, censorship, content moderation, and cancel culture.
 The 1st Amendment PROTECTED Hate speech False speech NOT PROTECTED Harassment True threats Defamation	**Slide 8:** Let's talk about the First Amendment. You probably know that it's also called the Bill of Rights because it ensures that people have the right to assemble, the right to practice their religion, the right to express themselves freely, and the right to protest – or "petition the government for a redress of grievances." The First Amendment also protects freedom of the press. But the First Amendment has limits. There is a lot of nuance involved, which is where it's easy to get confused. Disinformation is protected under the First Amendment – as well as hate speech. The people who wrote the Constitution and Bill of Rights believed that protection of unpopular speech was necessary in order for self-governance to work. Although false speech and hate speech may not add

	much value to the marketplace of ideas, there was concern that prohibiting false speech could “chill” more valuable speech, meaning it would cause people to self-censor out of fear of violating the law. Now, there are some specific laws that do limit the content of speech – including perjury, defamation, and fraud. Those are specific types of false or harmful speech. Other federal laws address misrepresentations in political advertising or in broadcast media. So the First Amendment is not an unlimited right. Harassment, true threats, and defamation can be prosecuted in cases where speech causes personal injury. Perhaps you’ve attended a protest or a rally for something you care about – in doing so, you’re exercising your First Amendment rights. But if you threaten someone at the protest, your speech can turn into harassment or threats, and now your freedom of expression can become a crime. What this means is that while each of us has the right to protest, our right to protest does not override anyone else’s right to safety.
 **Hate Speech** Hate speech is any form of expression through which speakers intend to vilify, humiliate or incite hatred against a group or a class of persons on the basis of race, religion, skin color, sexual identity, gender identity, ethnicity, disability or national origin.	**Slide 9:** Courageous Rhode Island’s goal is to reduce the hate that leads to violence – so we think it’s very important to understand the relationship between hate speech and hate crime. **Hate crimes** create widespread fear and anxiety for a whole group of people. **Hate speech** is any form of expression through which speakers intend to vilify, humiliate or incite hatred against a group or a class of persons on the basis of race, religion, skin color, sexual identity, gender identity, ethnicity, disability, or national origin.



Hate Crime

A hate crime is any criminal act in which the perpetrator intentionally selects a victim or property because of the perpetrator's hatred or animus towards a person's protected status (actual or perceived race, religion, color, disability, national origin or ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation).

-State of Rhode Island Attorney General's Office

To report civil rights violations, hate incidents, police misconduct, or excessive use of force, file a complaint online or call (401) 274-4400.

Slide 10: While it can be reprehensible, hate speech is legal unless it is a true threat, incitement to imminent lawless action, discriminatory harassment, or defamation — then it can be punished. There is an important legal spectrum that distinguishes **hate speech** (which is protected by the First Amendment) and **hate incidents** (which may or may not be criminal) and **hate crimes** (which can get people sent to jail).

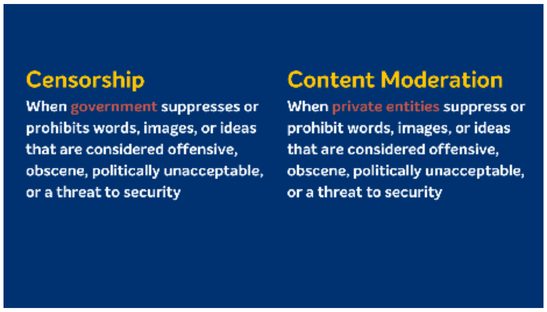
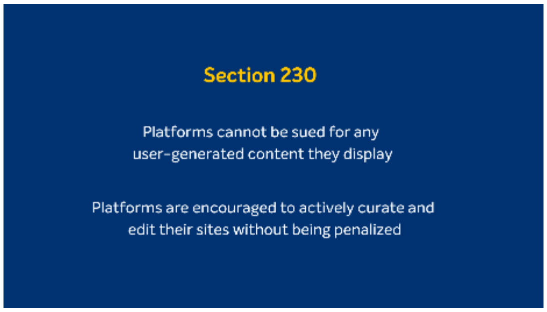
If you live in Rhode Island, you can report civil rights violations, hate incidents, police misconduct, or excessive use of force by filing a complaint online or by calling the Rhode Island Attorney General's office at (401) 274-4400.

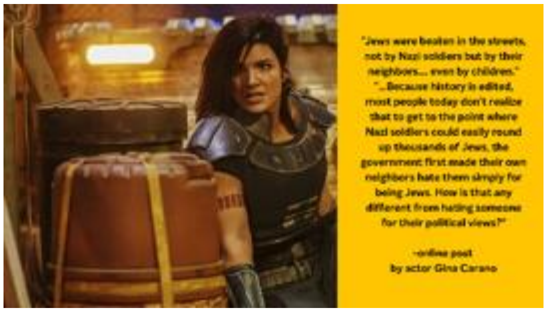
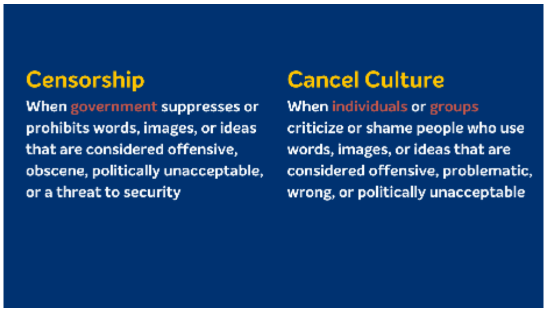
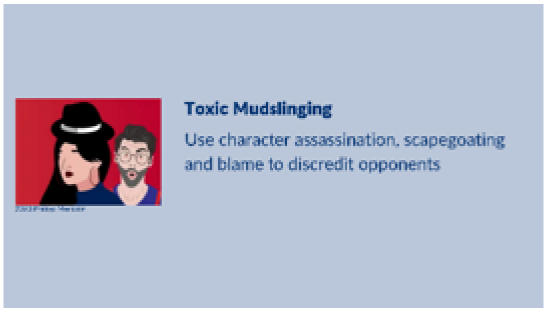
Is deplatforming a form of censorship?

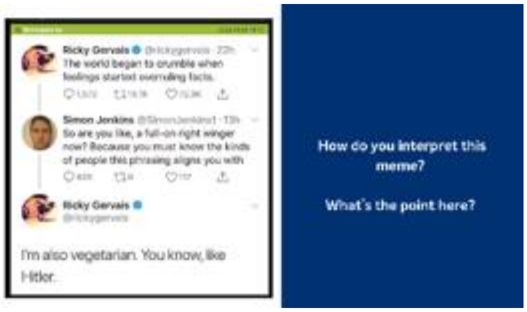
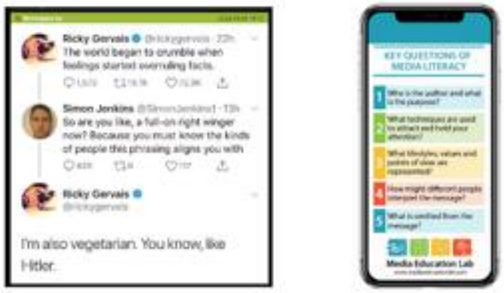
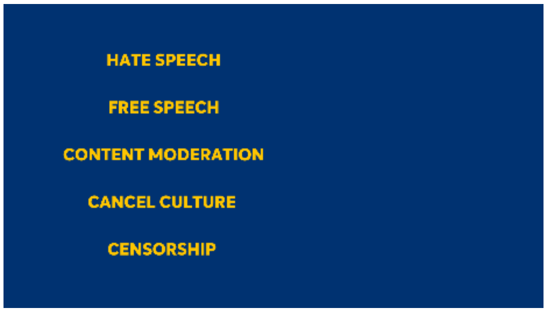
Slide 11: Now let's talk about deplatforming. These days, we have been hearing about people who were "kicked off Facebook." Some of you may even have experienced this – or know someone who has. Is deplatforming a form of censorship?

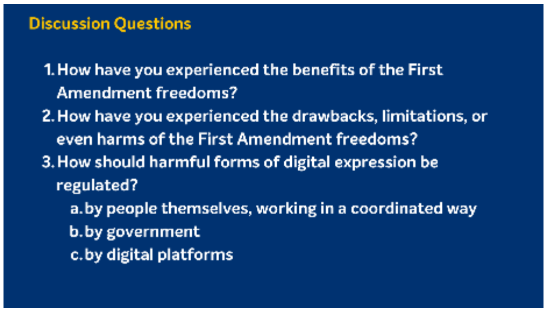
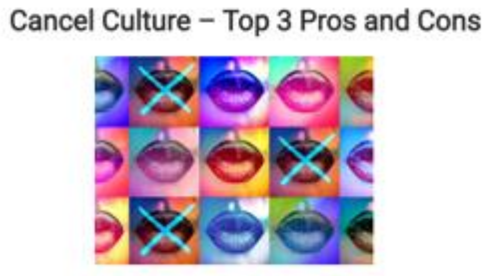
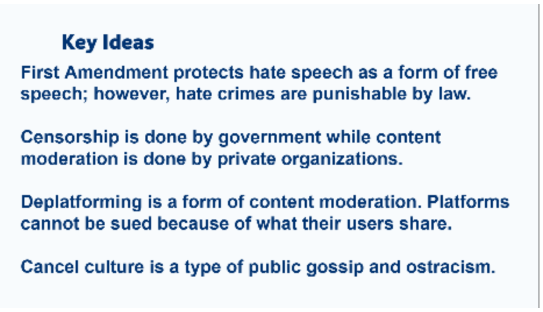
In 2018, there was a noticeable shift in the way social media companies handled user-generated content. Facebook and Google wanted to stem the rise of online hate speech coming from bigots, conspiracy theorists, and Nazis. So they removed users for violating the terms of service agreement that allows you to use the platform. You may remember when Alex Jones was kicked off YouTube in 2018. Jones had repeatedly called the Sandy Hook shooting — in which 20 children were killed — a hoax. His followers had been harassing the families of victims for years. First, Apple removed his podcasts from iTunes. Then Facebook, YouTube, Spotify, Mailchimp, Stitcher, and Pinterest followed suit. Twitter and PayPal also eventually dropped Alex Jones.

Getting deplatformed means that the rule-breaker can no longer use that platform to share their thoughts or feelings with the world.

 **Censorship** When government suppresses or prohibits words, images, or ideas that are considered offensive, obscene, politically unacceptable, or a threat to security **Content Moderation** When private entities suppress or prohibit words, images, or ideas that are considered offensive, obscene, politically unacceptable, or a threat to security	**Slide 12:** Is deplatforming a form of censorship? The answer is no. Here's an important distinction between censorship and content moderation: When the government suppresses or prohibits words, images, or ideas that are considered offensive, obscene, politically unacceptable, or a threat to security, we call that censorship. But when private entities do it, it's called content moderation – and it's their First Amendment right to pick and choose what to display.
 **Section 230** Platforms cannot be sued for any user-generated content they display Platforms are encouraged to actively curate and edit their sites without being penalized	**Slide 13:** On digital platforms, content moderation is protected by Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act. This law says that platforms cannot be sued for any user-generated content they display. It's important to note: If you create and share harmful or illegal content on these platforms, you can be sued – but not the platform companies. Supporters of Section 230 say that if the law did not exist, platform companies would have to check every single thing people posted to avoid the risk of lawsuits. Critics of Section 230 argue that it gives platform companies too much protection – and lets powerful companies ignore real harm that users can experience. The second part of Section 230 says that platforms may remove or moderate content if they act in good faith. If you host a website, and a user on it is obscene, excessively violent, harassing, or even just politically incorrect, you can edit or delete their posts. But some people believe that Section 230 needs to be updated or even eliminated. They think that platform companies are acting like government censors even though they are not the government.

 "Jews were beaten in the streets, not by Nazi soldiers but by their neighbors... even by children." "...Because history is edited, most people today don't realize that to get to the point where Nazi soldiers could easily round up thousands of Jews, the government first made their own neighbors hate them simply for being Jews. How is that any different from hating someone for their political views?" -online post by actor Gina Carano	**Slide 14:** Now let's talk about cancel culture. Back in 2021, the actress Gina Carano was making a film called The Mandalorian – it was part of the Star Wars franchise and being produced by Disney. She posted this on her Instagram: "Jews were beaten in the streets, not by Nazi soldiers but by their neighbors.... even by children." "...Because history is edited, most people today don't realize that to get to the point where Nazi soldiers could easily round up thousands of Jews, the government first made their own neighbors hate them simply for being Jews. How is that any different from hating someone for their political views?" Now, as a private company, Disney had every right to fire her – and, as it turns out, she had a long history of making really creepy antisemitic comments on her social media. And for Rhode Islanders, there's a local connection. After she posted this antisemitic remark on her Instagram, Hasbro (the global toy company located in Pawtucket RI) canceled her toy action figure, too!
 **Censorship** When government suppresses or prohibits words, images, or ideas that are considered offensive, obscene, politically unacceptable, or a threat to security **Cancel Culture** When individuals or groups criticize or shame people who use words, images, or ideas that are considered offensive, problematic, wrong, or politically unacceptable	**Slide 15:** So how is cancel culture different from censorship? Cancel culture is the term used when individuals or groups punish, criticize or shame people who use words, images, or ideas that are considered offensive, problematic, wrong, or politically unacceptable. When people use shame and blame to influence how others are seen by the public, it's not censorship. It's a type of public gossip. As long as it is not false information that damages reputation, it's legal.
 **Toxic Mudslinging** Use character assassination, scapegoating and blame to discredit opponents	**Slide 16:** Although it wasn't always called cancel culture, public shaming has been around for a long time. They did it in Ancient Greece with ostracism. And back in the 90s, Monica Lewinsky was as good as canceled after her secret relationship with President Clinton was revealed. Her career was ruined. Cancel culture takes many forms, including people who feel incredibly righteous in their beliefs and become toxic mudslingers, attempting to

	humiliate and harass those who represent opposing viewpoints in the name of their cause. For many, though, cancel culture feels new, and it feels like censorship. When celebrities or public figures are criticized to the point of being “canceled” or ostracized – this may feel like a personal attack. Although Fox News had every right to part ways with Tucker Carlson, to many of his followers, it seems to feel like he’s been “silenced” or “censored”.
 Ricky Gervais @rickygervais · 22h The world began to crumble when feelings started overruling facts. Simon Jenkins @SimonJenkins1 · 13h So are you like, a full-on right winger now? Because you must know the kinds of people this phrasing aligns you with Ricky Gervais @rickygervais I'm also vegetarian. You know, like Hitler. How do you interpret this meme? What’s the point here?	**Slide 17:** Let’s apply our media literacy skills to consider this meme. A few first thoughts? takeaways?
 Ricky Gervais @rickygervais · 22h The world began to crumble when feelings started overruling facts. Simon Jenkins @SimonJenkins1 · 13h So are you like, a full-on right winger now? Because you must know the kinds of people this phrasing aligns you with Ricky Gervais @rickygervais I'm also vegetarian. You know, like Hitler. KEY QUESTIONS OF MEDIA LITERACY 1 Who is the author and what is the purpose? 2 What techniques are used to attract and hold your attention? 3 What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented? 4 How might different people interpret the message? 5 What is omitted from the message? Media Education Lab	**Slide 18:** Now let’s use the critical questions of media literacy to analyze this meme. Optional: Give the Media Literacy Smartphone to students.
 HATE SPEECH FREE SPEECH CONTENT MODERATION CANCEL CULTURE CENSORSHIP	**Slide 19:** Here are all the interrelated concepts that we have discussed. These are topics that are rich and complex – and there’s a lot to talk about.

 Discussion Questions 1. How have you experienced the benefits of the First Amendment freedoms? 2. How have you experienced the drawbacks, limitations, or even harms of the First Amendment freedoms? 3. How should harmful forms of digital expression be regulated? a. by people themselves, working in a coordinated way b. by government c. by digital platforms	**Slide 20:** You will continue this conversation in small groups/pairs using these questions.
 Cancel Culture – Top 3 Pros and Cons	**Slide 21:** Now we are going to analyze a media text about cancel culture.
 Key Ideas First Amendment protects hate speech as a form of free speech; however, hate crimes are punishable by law. Censorship is done by government while content moderation is done by private organizations. Deplatforming is a form of content moderation. Platforms cannot be sued because of what their users share. Cancel culture is a type of public gossip and ostracism.	**Slide 22:** Review the key ideas.
 Courageous RI www.courageousri.com	**Slide 23:** Thank you for your participation! To learn more about COURAGEOUS RI, visit the program's website courageousri.com.

Learn More

The Law of De-Platforming
What rights do people have to access social media platforms? Watch this video to learn more about the law of de-platforming with Professor Eric Goldman, a professor at Santa Clara University School of Law.

Censorship and Hate Speech
Should social media platforms censor hate speech? In this short video, Nadine Strossen explores why censorship is counterproductive to address the problem of hate speech.

Section 230 - The Law that Created the Internet
Learn about why Section 230 is called the "law that created the Internet" by watching this terrific video from Hank Green on Section 230.

15 Minutes of Shame
View and discuss the documentary "15 Minutes of Shame," from executive producers Monica Lewinsky and Max Joseph. This film takes an in-depth look at the public shaming epidemic in our culture and explores our collective need to destroy one another.

Cancel Culture is Free Speech
Freedom Forum Fellow Lata Nott defines cancel culture and explores what it means for the First Amendment in this short video from the Freedom Forum about cancel culture as a form of free speech.

A Congressman's Perspective on Media & Democracy
Check out our latest podcast episode where Pam Steager talks with Rhode Island Congressman David Cicilline, who offers an important perspective on media and democracy.

Learn more about COURAGEOUS RI and Media Literacy
Check out our podcasts and blogs where you can learn more about some of the issues that help people understand how media literacy helps reduce the fear, anger, and hate that lead to violence.

7.2: Reading and Discussion

Instructions: After reading the abridged article below, answer the questions.

Source: wildpixel-iStock/Getty Images

Author: ProCon.org
Last updated on: 1/20/2022

Cancel Culture – Top 3 Pros and Cons

Cancel culture, also known as callout culture, is the removal ("canceling") of support for individuals and their work due to an opinion or action on their part deemed objectionable to the parties "calling" them out.

The individuals are typically first called out on social media to magnify the public knowledge of their perceived offense, whereupon the campaign to cancel ensues. The canceling can take several forms, including the exerting of pressure on organizations to cancel the individual's public appearances or speaking engagements and, in the case of businesses deemed offensive, organizing boycotts of their products.

Anyone who remembers reading Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter knows cancel culture is not new. What is new, however, is social media's ability to boost the speed, scope, and impact of a "cancel" and the influence this has had on traditional bastions of free speech.

<table>
<tr><th colspan="2">Is Cancel Culture Good for Society?</th></tr>
<tr><td>Pro 1
Cancel culture allows marginalized people to seek accountability where the justice system fails.
The #metoo movement gave innumerable women (and some men) the ability to call out and maybe cancel their countless abusers in a forum where the accusations might be heard and matter.
"For the powerful, criminal convictions are rare, in part because these people have better tools to work the justice system and rarely fit the stereotype of a convict. So the court of public opinion ends up being where accusations–and just as often, accusers–are tried."
Black Lives Matter has repeatedly called out the killing of black men in particular by police officers. The result was perhaps the biggest global civil rights movement in history when 15 to 26 million people marched globally for black rights in June 2020.</td><td>Con 1
Cancel culture amounts to online bullying, and can incite violence and threats even worse than the original offense being called out.
Asam Ahmad, author and community organizer, notes that canceling an everyday person without compassion for the complexities of that person's life amounts to bullying: "For instance, most call-outs I have witnessed immediately render anyone who has committed a perceived wrong as an outsider to the community. One action becomes a reason to pass judgment on someone's entire being, as if there is no difference between a community member or friend and a random stranger walking down the street (who is of course also someone's friend). Call-out culture can end up mirroring what the prison industrial complex teaches us about crime and punishment: to banish and dispose of individuals rather than to engage with them as people with complicated stories and histories."</td></tr>
<tr><td>Pro 2
Cancel culture gives a voice to disenfranchised or less powerful people.
Osita Nwanevu, MPP, Staff Writer at The New Republic, states, "The critics of cancel culture are plainly threatened not by a new and uniquely powerful kind of public criticism but by a new set of critics: young progressives, including many minorities and women who, largely through social media, have obtained a seat at the table where matters of justice and etiquette are</td><td>Con 2
Cancel culture is not productive and does not bring about social change.
President Barack Obama, JD, stated, "Like, if I tweet or hashtag about how you didn't do something right or used the wrong verb, then I can sit back and feel pretty good about myself, cause, 'Man, you see how woke I was, I called you out…' That's not activism. That's not bringing about change. If all you're doing is</td></tr>
</table>

debated and are banging it loudly to make up for lost time.”	casting stones, you’re probably not going to get that far. That’s easy to do.”
Pro 3 **Cancel culture is simply a new form of boycott, a cherished tactic in the civil rights movement, to bring about social change.** Hudley, states simply, “If you don’t have the ability to stop something through political means, what you can do is refuse to participate.” [18] Boycotts have long been associated with civil rights movements with the most famous, perhaps, being the Montgomery Bus boycott began in 1955 after Rosa Parks refused to sit in the back of an Alabama bus.	**Con 3** **Cancel culture is a slippery slope and leads to intolerance in democratic societies as people systematically exclude anyone who disagrees with their views.** “Some members of the canceling group join in for fear of being canceled themselves. People should be able to speak out or remain silent on the issues without fear of retribution.” [Steven Mintz] continues by calling for more tolerance and “willingness to allow the existence of opinions or behavior that one does not necessarily agree with and not seek to harm the offender.”

Access the Original Article Here

URL: https://www.procon.org/headlines/is-cancel-culture-or-callout-culture-good-for-society

Discussion Questions:

1. What type of text is this article? How do you know?
2. What are the main ideas of this article?
3. What feelings does this article evoke in you?

7.3: Learn More

The Law of De-Platforming

What rights do people have to access social media platforms? Watch this video to learn more about **the law of de-platforming** with Professor Eric Goldman, a professor at Santa Clara University School of Law.

Censorship and Hate Speech

Should social media platforms censor hate speech? In this short video, Nadine Strossen explores **why censorship is counterproductive to address the problem of hate speech.**

Section 230 - The Law that Created the Internet

Learn about why Section 230 is called the "law that created the Internet" by watching **this terrific video from Hank Green on Section 230.**

15 Minutes of Shame

View and discuss the documentary **"15 Minutes of Shame,"** from executive producers Monica Lewinsky and Max Joseph. This film takes an in-depth look at the public shaming epidemic in our culture and explores our collective need to destroy one another.

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A Congressman's Perspective on Media & Democracy

Check out our **latest podcast episode** where Pam Steager talks with Rhode Island Congressman David Cicilline, who offers an important perspective on media and democracy.

For Educators

7.4: Additional Resources

Free Speech, Hate Speech & Censorship

A collection of additional resources for exploring free speech, hate speech, and censorship with your students. Resources can be used before teaching the COURAGEOUS RI lesson plan to develop background knowledge or after to extend and enrich Lesson 7.1 objectives.

If you have 15 min	If you have 30 min	If you have 60 min
Free Speech **Defining Free Speech: Why It Matters** This short video from PBS Learning Media explores the history of free speech and its impact on our world today. It suggests that balancing free speech with community building is the challenge facing this generation.	**Free Speech** **Freedom of Speech: Crash Course Government and Politics #25** This short video explains the basics of our First Amendment Right to Free Speech. The video also addresses what is and is not protected by free speech and examines the contentious topic of hate speech.	**Free Speech** **Freedom of Speech? A Lesson on Understanding the Protections and Limitations of the First Amendment** This lesson plan created by The National Constitution Center and the New York Times asks students to consider their own beliefs about free speech and explore currently accepted Constitutional speech rights.
Hate Speech **Online Hate and Free Speech** This informational resource from Media Smarts examines the worldview of online hate speech and free speech. Additionally, it explores the tension between freedom of speech and freedom from discrimination in the classroom. A brief **video** featuring Richard Weissbourd from Making Caring Common offers suggestions for how teachers can help students navigate challenging conversations while respecting both freedoms. **Supreme Court narrowly protects student free speech online** This blog post from the National Constitution Center summarizes a 2021 ruling that "a public school student's off-campus Snapchat rant was protected free speech." The post works well as a prompt for class discussion or debate.	**Hate Speech** **Understanding Hate Speech** This collection of articles and videos published by the United Nations includes: "What Is Hate Speech?", "Hate Speech vs Freedom of Speech", and "Hate Speech and Real Harm." **When Online Hate Speech Has Real World Consequences** In a series of 3-short activities by Facing History and Ourselves, students examine the interplay of online hate speech and celebrity influence. **Countering Online Hate Speech** This short video and **these accompanying reflection questions** can be used to guide students through the options they have when they encounter hate speech online. The proposed class activity gives students the opportunity to practice the strategies taught in the video.	**Hate Speech** **Responding to Online Hate Speech** This Common Sense Education lesson plan asks students to identify feelings activated by online hate speech and practice responding to hate speech using a variety of strategies. **Countering Hate Speech Online** This Common Sense Education lesson plan investigates the relationship between hate speech and xenophobia. Students also examine the role of the internet in spreading and combatting hate speech. **Hate Culture, the Internet, and What Can We Do?** In this Project Look Sharp lesson, students use critical thinking skills to analyze social media's impact on hate ideology and discuss how they can respond to hate speech.
Censorship **Americans and 'Cancel Culture': Where Some See Calls for Accountability, Others See Censorship, Punishment** This Pew Research Center article provides a data-based overview of how Americans define cancel culture and how they feel about it.	**Censorship** **"What Students Are Saying about Cancel Culture, Friendly Celebrity Battles and Finding Escape"** This article from the New York Times provides insight into how some teens feel about cancel culture. Reflections could be used as discussion prompts for a conversation on cancel culture.	**Censorship** **What Is Cancel Culture, and Does It Change Things for the Better?** This set of lesson plans from Common Sense Education engages students in critical thinking about the impacts of cancel culture and explores strategies for navigating conflict including "calling in."

7.5: Classroom Activities and Creative Expression Ideas

Free Speech, Hate Speech and Censorship

ACTIVITY: Map the Free Speech Players

Instructions:
Conduct some research and identify 5 recent news stories (from reputable publications) that reference keywords such as "free speech," "hate speech," "censorship," "digital," and "technology." Select one current issue related to these concepts and identify the key players (including governmental entities, corporations, lobbyists, community organizations, activist groups, private citizens, and so on).

Create a visual map of the flows of power and voice between these different players. The goal of the visual map is to identify the key players in issues of free speech, each player's perspectives, and the relative power of each of these player's voice in the conversation.
#researching #analyzing #visualizing

***This activity aligns with the following RI Social Studies Anchor Standards:**

CG.P.1: Identify what political power is and who has political power in a society.
CG.RR.1: Identify what rights and responsibilities individuals and communities have in a society and who can take advantage of them.
CG.RR.2: Explain different ways communities and individuals inform themselves, exercise their rights and responsibilities, and engage formally and/or informally in political processes.

PROJECT: Create a Public Service Message

Instructions:
Create a PSA (in the form of a short video, audio piece, or billboard design) that raises awareness about an issue related to digital technology and free speech. The PSA may ask a key question, expose an urgent concern, or propose a solution to a problem, but it should be engaging, clear, and concise.

Discuss the intentions behind your PSA, the creative decisions you made, and how the PSA reflects your personal perspectives on free speech and digital technology in a 300 word artist statement.
#persuasivecommunication #criticalthinking

Targets of Propaganda

Discussion Support Tools

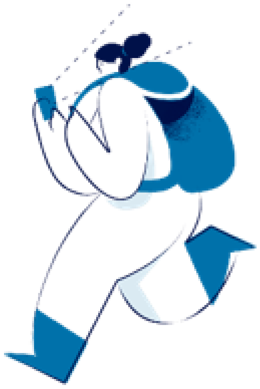
8.1: Lesson Plan

Overview

In this lesson, students learn how and why some people are specially targeted to receive propaganda. While disinformation and propaganda have become pervasive, some target audiences are perceived as vulnerable to certain messages. Campaigns may target audiences based on their age, racial, ethnic, religious or cultural identity, using practices like algorithmic profiling and micro-targeting. Propagandists may hijack search terms that are used by teens, new immigrants, racial minorities, and the elderly to deliver emotionally-resonant messages that tap into their deepest hopes, fears, and dreams.

Standards

RL/RI.X.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn for text.



SL.X.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats.

W.X.8 Assess the credibility and accuracy of sources.

Materials and Media Texts

- Slide Deck
- Access to the Internet
- Worksheet 8.2 – one copy for each student
- Optional: Media Literacy Smartphone

Time:

45 – 60 minutes

Learning Objectives

1. Learn about various forms of propaganda.
2. Recognize propaganda techniques.
3. Understand the difference between beneficial and harmful propaganda.
4. Develop informal public speaking skills.

Activities

1. Instructor conveys new knowledge through reviewing ideas on content slides.
2. Students critically analyze a meme.
3. They work in groups or pairs to share their experiences with beneficial and harmful propaganda.

4. During the small-group discussion, they fill out a worksheet.
5. Each group presents 1-2 key ideas generated by the discussion.
6. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion.

Assessments

Students' performance is informally observed as they work in small groups and in their share-out presentations. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion. As part of this activity, students select 1 or more question for brief reflective writing:

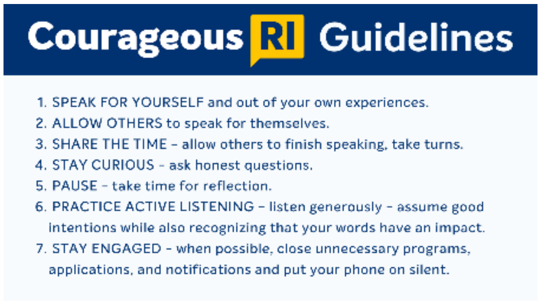
1. Did all students in your small group participate in the discussion? Why or why not?
2. What examples of beneficial and harmful propaganda were discussed in your group?
3. What were some signs that participants were engaged in active listening?
4. What new knowledge or new ideas did you gain from learning about other people's experiences?

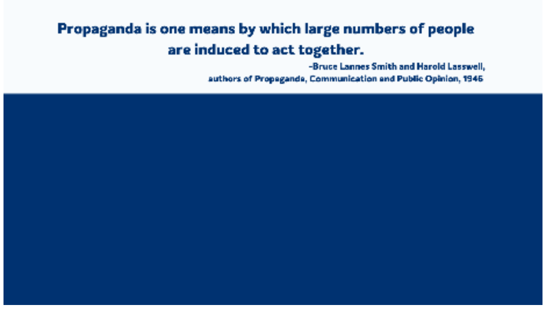
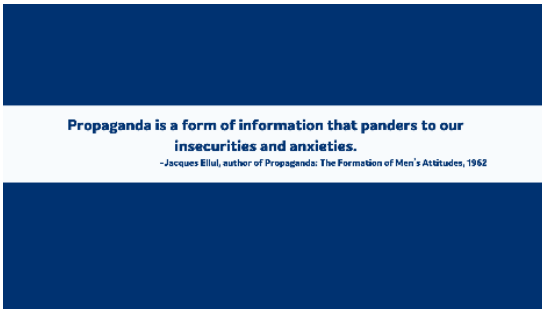
Notes about the Slide Deck

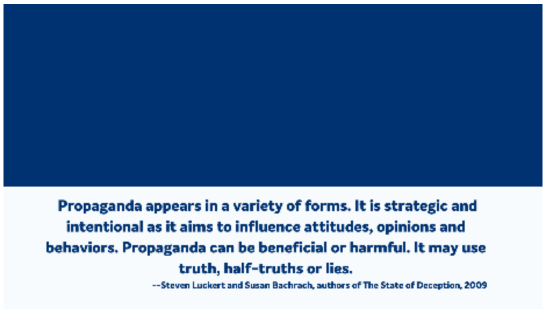
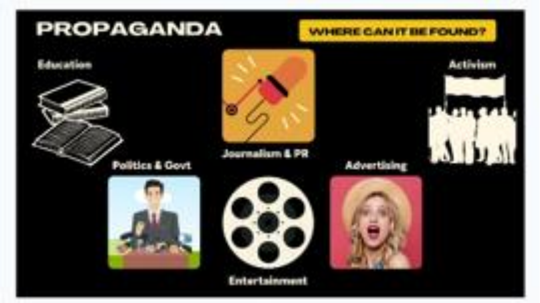
Access the Slide Deck Here (make a copy that you can customize as needed)
URL: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1oADuDH-mtyOY-22cJ7hCaD13WKiVVybH39jtc9lMDrU/copy

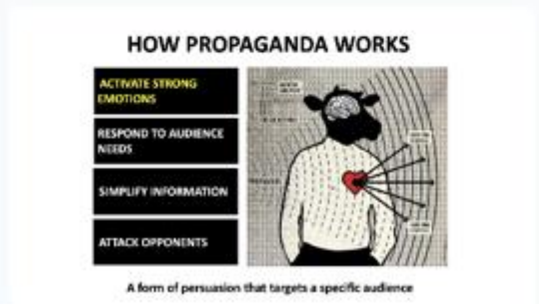
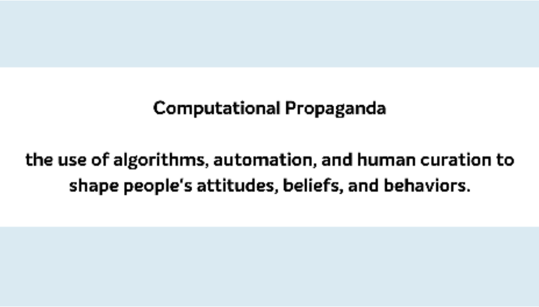
Access the COURAGEOUS RI Program Recording Here:
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5fHonpNFFGU&t=7s

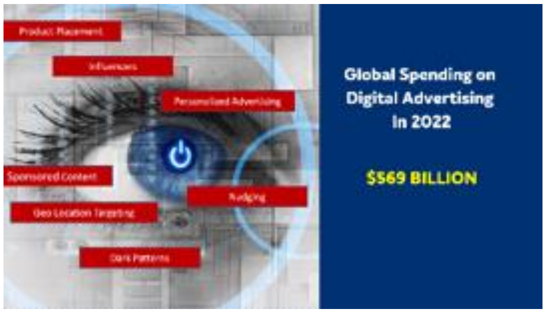
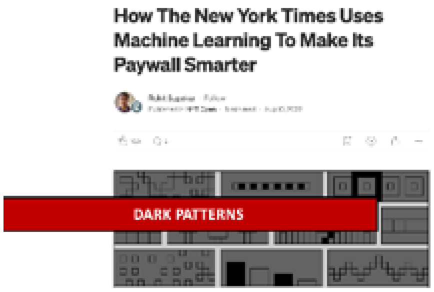
Courageous RI Learn and apply media literacy skills Find common ground Prevent violence and extremism	**Slide 1:** COURAGEOUS RI, with support from the Department of Homeland Security, works to prevent rising violence and extremism in Rhode Island with authentic and respectful conversation. You can find out more about it at courageousri.com.
Community conversations to counter disinformation, enhance civic participation, and improve media literacy www.courageousri.com	**Slide 2:** We will learn about the skills of media literacy, which involves asking critical questions about the media we see, hear, watch, play, and use. We will also discuss the importance of having authentic conversations that help us better listen to each other and to find common ground.

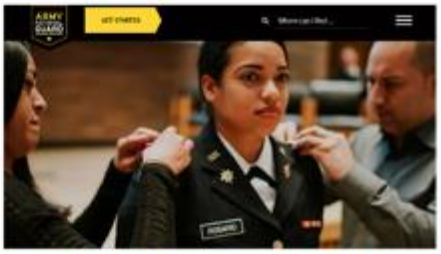
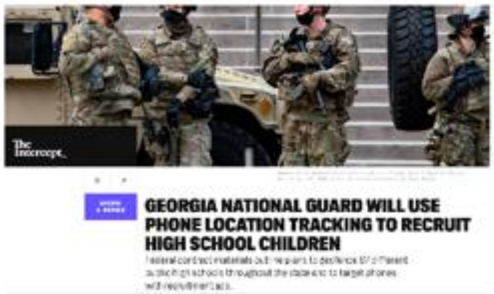
 Courageous RI Targets of Propaganda Lesson Plan	**Slide 3:** In this lesson, we will learn how propaganda works and how it can affect each one of us.
 Today's Agenda Practice recognizing propaganda techniques Learn about differences of harmful vs. beneficial propaganda Discuss your experiences with propaganda Time for reflection Courageous RI	**Slide 4:** Here is today's agenda.
 Courageous RI Guidelines 1. SPEAK FOR YOURSELF and out of your own experiences. 2. ALLOW OTHERS to speak for themselves. 3. SHARE THE TIME - allow others to finish speaking, take turns. 4. STAY CURIOUS - ask honest questions. 5. PAUSE - take time for reflection. 6. PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING - listen generously - assume good intentions while also recognizing that your words have an impact. 7. STAY ENGAGED - when possible, close unnecessary programs, applications, and notifications and put your phone on silent.	**Slide 5:** Our goal is to build connections and to foster conversations that improve our understanding of one another. For this reason, we want to make sure that everyone gets a chance both to share and to learn from others in this conversation. To support those goals, we have some basic guidelines for our conversation.
 What is targeted propaganda and why is it so effective?	**Slide 6:** Propaganda is a very big topic, and it concerns each one of us. Today we will focus on this question: "What is targeted propaganda and why is it so effective?"

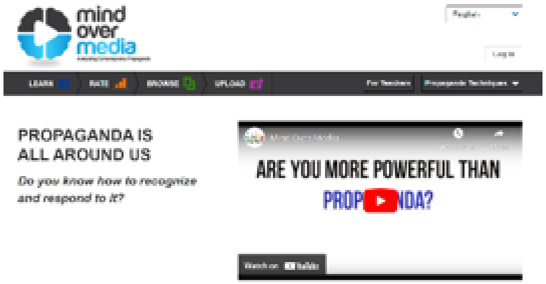
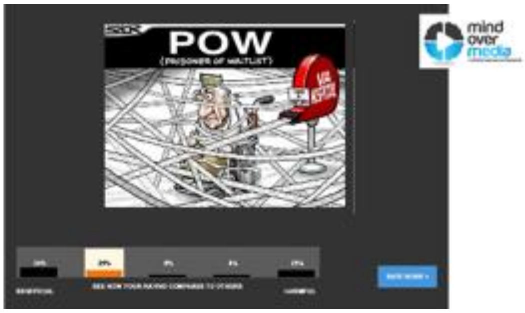
 Propaganda is one means by which large numbers of people are induced to act together. -Bruce Lannes Smith and Harold Lasswell, authors of Propaganda, Communication and Public Opinion, 1946	**Slide 7:** When people hear the word propaganda now, they often think about the past — especially Nazi Germany. But the word "propaganda" has conveyed different meanings over time, depending on the culture and society. Way back in the time of the Protestant Reformation, "propaganda" was a synonym for "spreading the good news of the gospel." But in the 20th century, the term was used to explain the power of mass media. For example, immediately after World War II, propaganda was defined this way: "Propaganda is one means by which large numbers of people are induced to act together" (Bruce Lannes Smith and Harold Lasswell, authors of *Propaganda, Communication and Public Opinion*, 1946).
 Propaganda is a form of information that panders to our insecurities and anxieties. -Jacques Ellul, author of Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes, 1962	**Slide 8:** During the years immediately after WWII, people recognized how government propaganda served a valuable purpose in helping unify the country to support the war. But by the 1960s, propaganda was being defined like this: "Propaganda is a form of information that panders to our insecurities and anxieties" (Jacques Ellul, author of *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*, 1962). During the 1960s, people could readily see how commercial propaganda was becoming better at making people feel the need to buy things. This was the time when people were into "keeping up with the Joneses," and the culture of advertising was promoting cultural ideals for how women and men should behave and act. Additional source: 1996 documentary *The Ad & The Ego* that addressed advertising's role in a consumer culture.

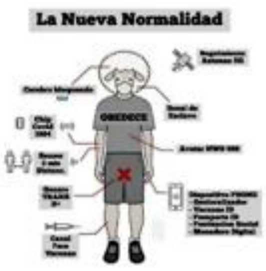
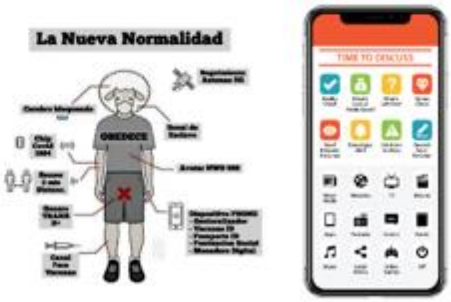
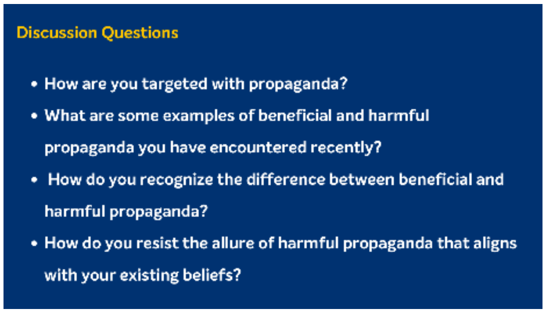
 Propaganda appears in a variety of forms. It is strategic and intentional as it aims to influence attitudes, opinions and behaviors. Propaganda can be beneficial or harmful. It may use truth, half-truths or lies. --Steven Luckert and Susan Bachrach, authors of The State of Deception, 2009	**Slide 9:** By the 2000s, the definition changed again: “Propaganda appears in a variety of forms. It is strategic and intentional as it aims to influence attitudes, opinions and behaviors. Propaganda can be beneficial or harmful. It may use truth, half-truths or lies” (Steven Luckert and Susan Bachrach, authors of *The State of Deception*, 2009). This definition has a lot in it. Propaganda can be beneficial or harmful. It can use truth, half-truth, or lies. In the 21st century, American political culture had changed, as corporations targeted members of Congress with sophisticated lobbying and PR efforts. Politicians spent millions on getting elected, and media companies profited from the spectacle of the political horse race. So we see that propaganda changes over time in response to changes in technology, culture, and society. How people think about propaganda in Brazil or Eastern Europe is different than how it is understood in the United States. It is important to remember that there is no single definition of propaganda Optional activity: Have students compare different definitions of propaganda and write their own definition – one that makes sense to them.
 PROPAGANDA WHERE CAN IT BE FOUND? Education Activism Journalism & PR Politics & Govt Advertising Entertainment	**Slide 10:** Definitions like these make us reflect on where we may find propaganda in our daily lives. Here is where you can look for propaganda: **In Education:** Textbooks can function as propaganda when they are explicitly designed to lead people to accept a particular worldview. Education can be a form of indoctrination when certain ideas, information, values and beliefs are not questioned. Did you know that in Illinois, a state law mandates that schools promote a positive image for coal mining? **In Politics and Government:** The government uses propaganda during wartime to shape public opinion – they define battles as conflicts between good and

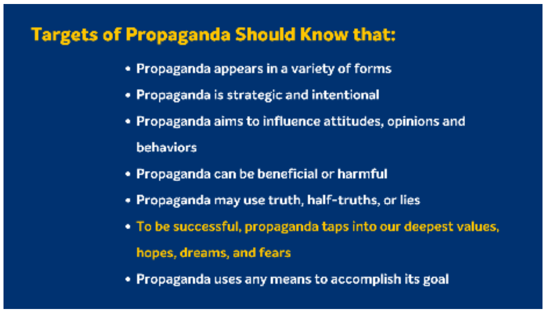
	evil. But propaganda is also used to help improve public health. You may be familiar with PSAs that aim to alter your behavior - to get you to wear a mask or get a colonoscopy. That's propaganda, too. **In Journalism and Public Relations:** Public relations professionals feed journalists news stories based on their own agenda, combining facts with positive opinions about a company or organization. **In Entertainment:** In many American movies and video games, violence is often depicted as justified and morally courageous. We are invited to root for the person who is being violent. Many stories function as propaganda even when they are designed as entertainment. **In Advertising:** Advertisers spend money using a variety of forms of mass media and digital media to persuade readers, viewers, users or listeners to buy products and services. **In Activism:** People who are trying to improve society or create social change use propaganda to influence public opinion. That's why activists use rallies and public events that attract attention.
 HOW PROPAGANDA WORKS ACTIVATE STRONG EMOTIONS RESPOND TO AUDIENCE NEEDS SIMPLIFY INFORMATION ATTACK OPPONENTS A form of persuasion that targets a specific audience	**Slide 11:** We should learn to recognize some of the most fundamental techniques of propaganda, like activating strong emotions, responding to audience needs, simplifying information, and attacking opponents. The very earliest form of media literacy education – back in the 1930s— involved teaching students to recognize these important techniques of persuasion.
 Computational Propaganda the use of algorithms, automation, and human curation to shape people's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors.	**Slide 12:** If you pay closer attention to advertising, you will see that it is selling more than products – it is selling identities and lifestyles and values for people to conform or aspire to. Today, the definition of propaganda is changing again. The term "computational propaganda" refers to the use of algorithms, automation, and human curation to purposefully distribute misleading information over social media networks. These activities are now

	affecting democratic processes and political decision-making. Remember back in 2016, when we learned that bots, trolls, and other forms of propaganda were used by foreign governments as a form of election interference?
 Product Placement Influencers Personalized Advertising Sponsored Content Nudging Geo Location Targeting Dark Patterns Global Spending on Digital Advertising in 2022 $569 BILLION	**Slide 13:** And innovation in advertising is at the heart of it all. With global spending on digital advertising at $569 billion in 2022, there are all kinds of tricks and techniques used to shape your attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. Then there's nudging, a term developed by Cass Sunstein, who described it as a form of choice architecture – where you alter people's behavior and control them by the design of choices you present. A similar term is dark patterns – that's the special way that websites and other digital platforms are designed to get you to do what they want you to do. Optional: Ask students if they are familiar with product placement and sponsored content.
 How The New York Times Uses Machine Learning To Make Its Paywall Smarter DARK PATTERNS	**Slide 14:** Ever wonder why it can sometimes be so hard to find the "unsubscribe" button? How does it seem purposely hidden behind layers of menus? I first heard about this term in *The New York Times* – but as it turns out, *The New York Times* itself uses dark patterns. You may wonder, "How many free articles can I read before I have to pay?" Guess what? There is no one answer to that question. *The New York Times* uses a very sophisticated set of algorithms to determine how many free articles you can see before you have to pay. Each person may get a different number of free articles based on what they know about you. *The New York Times* uses machine learning to make its paywall smarter. This is one form of computational propaganda. So algorithms are used to target people for propaganda.

	**Slide 15:** Different people might even see different messages when they visit the same website. The website of the National Guard uses this technique as well. Here is one image that its users might see. Can you tell who it's targeted to? You see a young woman whose parents are pinning on her insignia? You might be thinking, "Awwww....they must be so proud." This image activates strong emotions. That's how propaganda bypasses your critical thinking.
 The Intercept GEORGIA NATIONAL GUARD WILL USE PHONE LOCATION TRACKING TO RECRUIT HIGH SCHOOL CHILDREN	**Slide 16:** But how will you feel if you know that in Georgia, the National Guard is using geo-fencing at 67 high schools across the state to reach teens with ads urging them to enlist. They're using location tracking and monitoring individual students' phone activity to deliver ads within a one-mile radius of each public high school. Kids will see the ads while using Instagram, Snapchat, music apps, and TV streaming sites. Students are the target, but the Georgia National Guard is also interested in reaching school counselors and parents — who could presumably help sway teens in their decision making processes. It's not just the government doing this. Geolocation targeting is used by many companies. Walmart and IHOP and other companies can ensure that churchgoers will see their ad on their cell phone every Sunday morning when they design special ads that pop up on your cell phone if you're within 500 feet of a church on Sunday morning. It's an efficient and cost-effective way to reach people with a message – but most of us don't know that it's happening to us. Personal injury lawyers use geofencing around hospitals to recruit new clients. And anti-abortion groups even spam people inside Planned Parenthood clinics with personalized ads using geofencing.

 mind over media LEARN RATE BROWSE UPLOAD For Teachers Propaganda Techniques Watch on YouTube PROPAGANDA IS ALL AROUND US *Do you know how to recognize and respond to it?* ARE YOU MORE POWERFUL THAN PROPAGANDA?	**Slide 17:** Identifying beneficial and harmful propaganda is a judgment call – there's no right or wrong answer. We can say that propaganda is in the eye of the beholder. One person might see a tweet or a meme and think – that's propaganda: "They're trying to influence my opinion. That's propaganda." But another person might see the same meme or tweet and think, "It's just funny." [Click the link embedded in the slide: https://propaganda.mediaeducationlab.com/node/1] You can visit Mind Over Media Propaganda Gallery, which contains 3,500 examples of contemporary propaganda. At the website, anyone can upload an example of propaganda and make a ratings judgment by answering the question, "Is this beneficial or harmful propaganda?"
	**Slide 18:** Take a look at this one. As you can see, this political cartoon was rated by one person as somewhat beneficial because it raises awareness of a real social problem. You can also think of people who would find it harmful. For example, a veteran hospital employee who is giving their best to help veterans might see this as harmful. How do you interpret it? Is it beneficial or harmful? How would you rate it? We all really benefit from seeing multiple perspectives here. Accessing multiple perspectives is essential to promote media literacy competencies. That's why dialogue and discussion is so important.

	**Slide 19:** Let's take a look at another meme – this one's in Spanish. [Ask if there are any Spanish-speaking students in your class who could explain this meme. If nobody can translate it: La Nueva Normalidad: The New Normal Obedece: Obey Cerebro bloqueado: Blocked brain Seguimiento antenas 5G: Tracking antennas 5G Canal para vacunas: Vaccine channel Bozal de esclavo: Slave muzzle Geolocalizador: Geolocator Vacunas ID: Vaccine ID Pasaporte ID: Passport ID Puntuacion social: Social score Monedero digital: Digital wallet NWO = New World Order]
 La Nueva Normalidad OBEDECE TIME TO DISCUSS	**Slide 20:** Let's use critical questions of media literacy to analyze this meme. Optional: Give Media Literacy Smartphones to students.
**Discussion Questions** • How are you targeted with propaganda? • What are some examples of beneficial and harmful propaganda you have encountered recently? • How do you recognize the difference between beneficial and harmful propaganda? • How do you resist the allure of harmful propaganda that aligns with your existing beliefs?	**Slide 21:** You will continue this conversation in small groups/pairs using these questions.

  NO TO THE WHITE REPUBLIC Positive Propaganda: A Double-Edged Necessary Tool	**Slide 22:** Now we are going to analyze a media text about propaganda.
 **Targets of Propaganda Should Know that:** - Propaganda appears in a variety of forms - Propaganda is strategic and intentional - Propaganda aims to influence attitudes, opinions and behaviors - Propaganda can be beneficial or harmful - Propaganda may use truth, half-truths, or lies - To be successful, propaganda taps into our deepest values, hopes, dreams, and fears - Propaganda uses any means to accomplish its goal	**Slide 23:** Review the key ideas.
 Courageous RI www.courageousri.com	**Slide 24:** Thank you for your participation! To learn more about COURAGEOUS RI, visit the program's website courageousri.com.

Learn More

Misinformation in the Latino Community
This 30-minute video from Meet the Press Reports offers a comprehensive look at the problem of targeted propaganda.

How Propaganda is Destroying Democracy
This video from Vice News explores the propaganda of grievance, which is cultivated through populism, extremism, conspiracy theories, and the evolution of propaganda over time.

These Authors are Trying to Convert You
When do fantasy novels function as propaganda? This video essay explores how fantasy authors throughout time have been perceived as a form of religious propaganda.

Learn more about COURAGEOUS RI and Media Literacy
Check out our podcasts and blogs where you can learn more about some of the issues that help people understand how media literacy helps reduce the fear, anger, and hate that lead to violence.

8.2: Reading and Discussion

Instructions: After reading the abridged article below, answer the questions.

We Can Do It!
HOPE

Examples of propaganda posters. Image courtesy of Canva.

by Ontlotlile Seemela

Positive Propaganda: A Double-Edged Necessary Tool

Propaganda is a concept that is deeply misunderstood. This concept has been painted with a negative paint brush. However, in its essence, the word propaganda is neither bad nor good; what is imperative is how it is practiced by the perpetrator. The concept can be negative or positive depending on the motive of the person, institution or government that is orchestrating the message. The art world and media can be powerful tools to convey, and successfully indoctrinate the public by means of propaganda.

Propaganda can be defined as “statements or ideas that are often exaggerated or false, and are spread in order to help a leader, cause, a government, etc.” Simply, propaganda is when overly biased and often misleading information is continuously and persistently fed to a carefully selected audience. Such actions can lead to misinformation and disinformation which can be an effective tool when consumed by the targeted audience. Propaganda is forced upon us daily without us being aware, and if it is done with noble intentions, it has the potential to positively change the world. Positive propaganda is often used by the government and other organizations to promote positive messages and lifestyles.

Propaganda has been used over centuries, even Napoleon relied heavily on propaganda to win his wars. However, it was perfected during the First World War by the American government. During World War I, propaganda was employed on a global scale. Unlike previous wars, this war changed how propaganda was employed, and it was used on a massive scale from this war onwards. This was also utilized during the Biafran war in Nigeria and the war to end apartheid in South Africa.

Regardless of which side of the political spectrum one belongs to, impartiality of information is imperative in order for the public to create an informed political opinion. Unfortunately, media outlets are in the business of giving a platform to news that sell and those that suit the agenda of those that have the biggest purse. Positive propaganda is heavily enforced by the media, if it will sell their publications.

Positive propaganda is utilized to stir up those feel-good, positive emotions. Advertisers use general statements and images in a positive sense. Propaganda can also be used to promote unity, solidarity and harmony among people during conflicts. Thus, propaganda can be positive, if it is used to help people and promote positive change in the society. Positive propaganda can be utilized to stir up strong feelings of patriotism, as well as mobilize people to collectively support a good cause, such as the fall of apartheid which was strongly supported globally through this very method.

Biafran propaganda played a pivotal role in the political and diplomatic conduct of the Nigerian civil war. Their propaganda campaign portrayed the war as the only possible response to a genocidal campaign against them. This war implemented various media outlets to spread their propaganda. The Biafran government engaged Radio Biafra as a propaganda tool to propagate the war as genocide. Biafra's propaganda was designed to create a coherent message and intended to elicit sympathy from world public opinion and to instill a survival ethos in its population at home despite very limited communication resources.

The antiapartheid activists decisively won that war, particularly in the international media. The apartheid was a system of institutionalized racial oppression that existed in South Africa from the time Europeans first occupied South Africa in the 17th century, but was officially legalized in 1948. The Palestine-Israeli war first occurred in 1947 and it is still ongoing yet, however, apartheid and other wars that took place after it, received more media attention. This phenomenon is unfair but it still benefits people who are affected by these atrocities.

Apartheid Divestment Campaigns were the most effective forms of media attention. This war, like many others, was started, implemented and supported by students. This movement was a protest of US company investment in the South African Apartheid government. The most successful nation-wide campaign for divestment occurred in the 1970s and 1980s when student organizations all across the country started protesting. Students were at the forefront of Anti-Apartheid Movement campaigns.

There were other political protests that followed the disinvestment movement, but none were more prominent than the highly media covered June 1976 student protest in Soweto. This uprising was a protest against the apartheid government that started in Soweto. <...>
Through the promotion of positive propaganda, peace can be achieved. Although there is a thin line between indoctrination and positive propaganda, this needs to be closely monitored. According to

Martin Luther King, the deciding factor in whether propaganda is good or bad is the merit of the cause being urged. It is important that people who have access to public platforms use their voice for good, and positive propaganda is a necessary tool, but should only be left in the hands of those who want to uplift humanity.

Access the Original Article Here
URL: https://www.artshelp.com/positive-propaganda

Discussion Questions:

1. What type of text is this article? How do you know?
2. What are the main ideas of this article?
3. What feelings does this article evoke in you?

8.3: Learn More

Propaganda Education for a Digital Age
The **companion website for the book** by Renee Hobbs offers a gigantic Propaganda Gallery with over 3,500 examples of contemporary propaganda. Also check out the **many free online learning modules** created by Renee Hobbs.

Misinformation in the Latino Community
This **30-minute video from Meet the Press Reports** offers a comprehensive look at the problem of targeted propaganda.

How Propaganda is Destroying Democracy
This **video from Vice News** explores the propaganda of grievance, which is cultivated through populism, extremism, conspiracy theories, and the evolution of propaganda over time.

These Authors are Trying to Convert You
When do fantasy novels function as propaganda? **This video essay** explores how fantasy authors throughout time have been perceived as a form of religious propaganda.

For Educators

8.4: Additional Resources

Targets of Propaganda

A collection of additional resources for exploring propaganda with your students. Resources can be used before teaching the COURAGEOUS RI lesson plan to develop background knowledge or after to extend and enrich Lesson 8.1 objectives.

If you have 15 min	If you have 30 min	If you have 60 min
What Is Propaganda? **Here's Your Handy Dandy Propaganda Detector** While this Poynter article was published in 2008, it provides a succinct definition of propaganda and descriptions of 7 propaganda devices that stand the test of time. Teachers can read the article for a quick refresher and excellent examples of how propaganda is used in politics or share it with students to prompt a discussion about propaganda in politics.	**What Is Propaganda?** **How Propaganda Works** Disinformation Nation created this resource which includes a creative 1-minute video that introduces propaganda techniques. The webpage also includes short passages that address high-interest questions like "Is propaganda good or evil?" and "Is propaganda illegal?" All information is presented in a highly engaging way. There is even a quiz students can take to see which propaganda technique they are most likely to fall for.	**What Is Propaganda?** **Propaganda: What's the Message** This lesson plan from iCivics explores the 7 forms of propaganda and engages students in critical thinking as they participate in a gallery walk to analyze the effectiveness of different propaganda techniques. Teachers can opt to update the images used in the gallery walk to reflect current politics and pop culture.
Why Propaganda Matters **The Darker Side of Media: Crash Course Media Literacy #10** This 10-minute Crash Course video differentiates between propaganda, disinformation, and misinformation. It explores how media-literate citizens can be on the lookout for all three in order to slow or stop the spread of dis- and mis-information. After watching the video with students, have a discussion about the similarities and differences between propaganda, misinformation, and disinformation and the consequences of all three.	**Why Propaganda Matters** **Why Propaganda Matters** The second section of the highly-engaging Disinformation Nation propaganda resource includes a 1-minute video along with several short passages that ask students to consider how propaganda impacts decision-making and has financial, political, and public health consequences. After students review the video and passages, ask them to discuss times in their lives that propaganda has had either a positive or a negative consequence.	**Why Propaganda Matters** **How to Fight Truth Decay Through Media Literacy** This PBS News Hour lesson plan asks students to critically examine Russian propaganda used during the 2022 invasion of Ukraine. It provides a contemporary example of the power of propaganda to influence outcomes. The lesson also includes an optional activity that teaches students how to use geolocation to verify the information they encounter online.
What You Can Do **7 Ways to Avoid Becoming a Misinformtaion Superspreader** This brief TedED article offers 7 tips for how students can avoid contributing to the spread of misinformation online. Consider pairing this article with an example of online propaganda rooted in misinformation and ask students to discuss which of the 7 tips they would find most helpful when trying to decide whether or not to share the post.	**What You Can Do** **How You Can Combat Propaganda** The final section of the Disinformation Nation propaganda resource introduces three strategies students can use to respond to propaganda. Give students time to complete the "Find Your 5" activity so that they will have a list of trusted resources at their fingertips at all times.	**What You Can Do** **Mind Over Media: Talking Back to Propaganda** Students synthesize their knowledge of propaganda techniques, current events, and critical literacy in this multimedia activity. After selecting an example of propaganda, students analyze it and produce a short video commentary that demonstrates their ability to effectvely respond to propaganda.

8.5: Classroom Activities and Creative Expression Ideas

Targets of Propaganda

ACTIVITY: Propaganda Then and Now

Instructions:
Select two pieces of propaganda–one from World War II era and one that is relatively recent. Conduct a comparative analysis of the two pieces, looking for similarities and differences in the messages being communicated, the persuasive techniques being employed, the messages' sources, and their potential (or actual) impacts on culture and society.

Make a table in which you write down these similarities and differences.
#visualanalysis #historicalresearch #connectingclassroomtoculture

***This activity aligns with the following RI Social Studies Anchor Standards:**

> **H.HP.2:** Explain the purpose, audience, and perspective of multiple types of sources (art, music, oral histories, pamphlets, film, texts, etc.) relating to a historical event or series of events, individual, or group of people, including indications of bias toward or against the subject portrayed.
> **H.HP.3:** Analyze multiple types of sources, including art, music, oral histories, pamphlets, film, texts, etc., through a critical reflection of the creators' and students' intersectional identities and lived experiences.

PROJECT: Create Targeted Propaganda

Instructions:
Design a work of visual art (photography, illustration, graphic design, etc.) that portrays the communities targeted and tactics used by harmful propaganda. The image should have a deliberate aesthetic that is visually appealing while also clearly communicating information about intentions behind and impact of harmful propaganda.

Discuss the intentions behind your image, the creative decisions you made, and how the image reflects your personal perspectives on propaganda in a 300 word artist statement.
#visualcommunication #connectingclassroomtoculture

Falling Down the Rabbit Hole

Discussion Support Tools

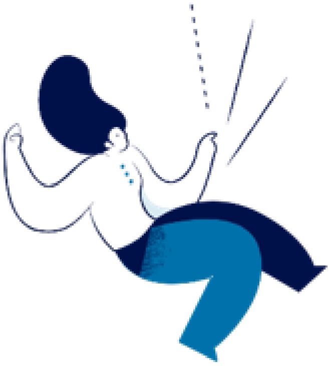
9.1: Lesson Plan

Overview

In this lesson, students will discover how to intervene and support individuals drawn into networks of disinformation, propaganda, and hate. Students will learn to identify signs of radicalization and employ questioning and active listening strategies to disrupt the process. Each one of us can be a guiding light towards a more positive pathway.

Standards

RL/RI.X.1 Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn for text.



SL.X.2 Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats.

W.X.8 Assess the credibility and accuracy of sources.

Materials and Media Texts

- Slide Deck
- Access to the Internet
- Worksheet 9.2 – one copy for each student
- Optional: Media Literacy Smartphone

Time:

45 – 60 minutes

Learning Objectives

1. Recognize various paths of radicalization to violence.
2. Understand how hate-based harassment is connected to radicalization.
3. Learn how you can help people moving toward radicalization.
4. Develop informal public speaking skills.

Activities

1. Instructor conveys new knowledge through reviewing ideas on content slides.
2. Students critically analyze a video.
3. They work in groups or pairs to share their thoughts about and experiences with hate-based harassment.
4. During the small-group discussion, they fill out a worksheet.
5. Each group presents 1-2 key ideas generated by the discussion.
6. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion.

Assessments

Students' performance is informally observed as they work in small groups and in their share-out presentations. Students complete a brief reflective writing activity after the discussion. As part of this activity, students select 1 or more question for brief reflective writing:

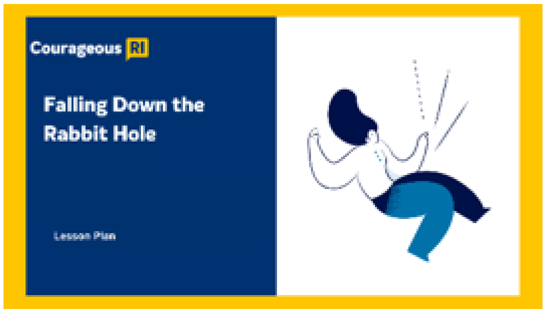
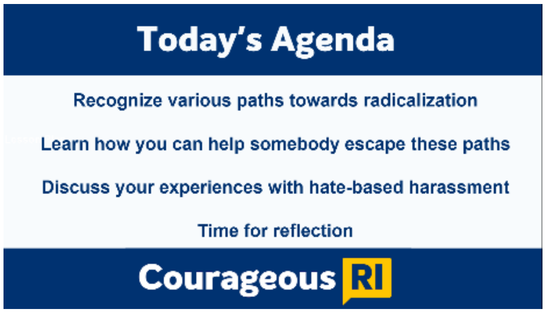
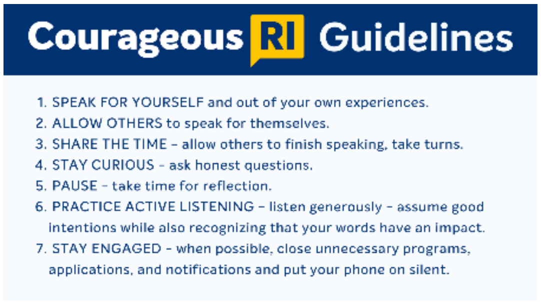
1. Did all students in your small group participate in the discussion? Why or why not?
2. What examples of hate-based harassment were discussed in your group?
3. What were some signs that participants were engaged in active listening?
4. What new knowledge or new ideas did you gain from learning about other people's experiences?

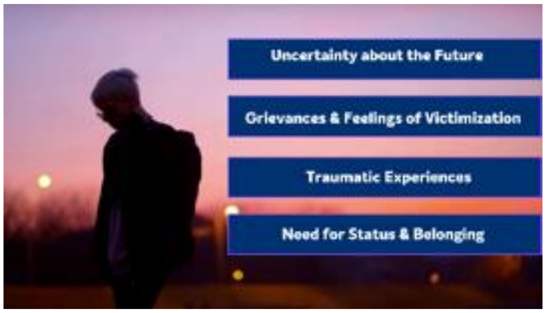
Notes about the Slide Deck

Access the Slide Deck Here (make a copy that you can customize as needed)
URL: https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1jk8b9_rBgN7gJZj8u9f4iTCJfKRG5GdE_MNFCXtSV3w/copy

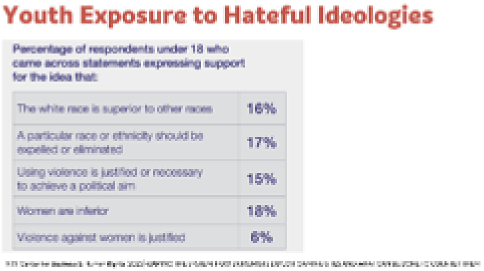
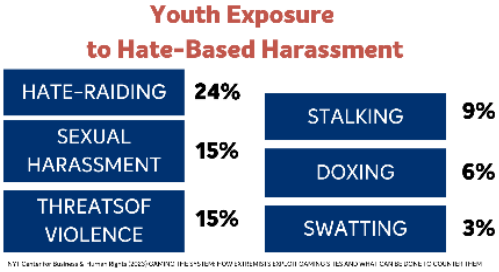
Access the COURAGEOUS RI Program Recording Here
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zn5vo5af9zo

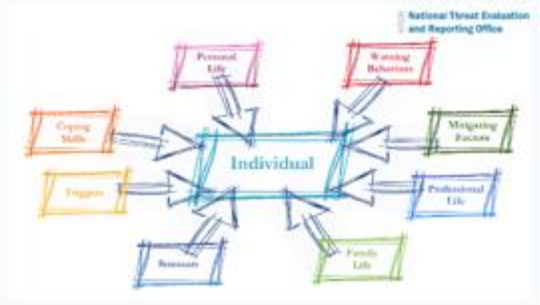
 Courageous RI Learn and apply media literacy skills Find common ground Prevent violence and extremism	**Slide 1:** COURAGEOUS RI, with support from the Department of Homeland Security, works to prevent rising violence and extremism in Rhode Island with authentic and respectful conversation. You can find out more about it at courageousri.com.
 Community conversations to counter disinformation, enhance civic participation, and improve media literacy www.courageousri.com	**Slide 2:** We will learn about the skills of media literacy, which involves asking critical questions about the media we see, hear, watch, play, and use. We will also discuss the importance of having authentic conversations that help us better listen to each other and to find common ground.

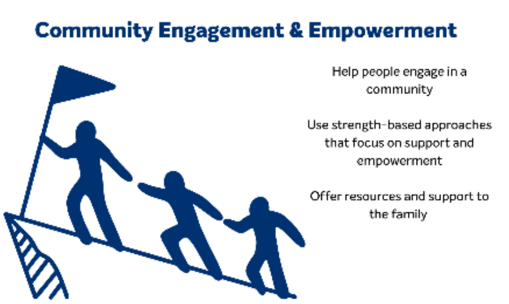
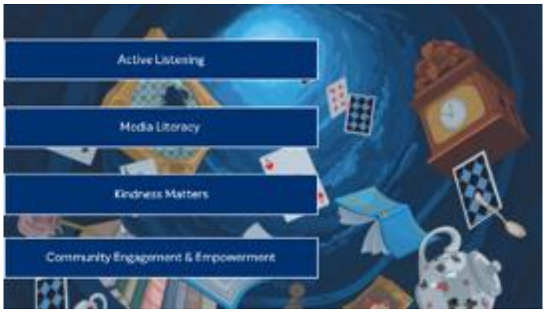
 Courageous RI **Falling Down the Rabbit Hole** Lesson Plan	**Slide 3:** In this lesson, you will discover how to intervene and support individuals drawn into networks of disinformation, propaganda, and hate. You will learn to identify signs of radicalization and employ questioning and active listening strategies to disrupt the process.
 **Today's Agenda** Recognize various paths towards radicalization Learn how you can help somebody escape these paths Discuss your experiences with hate-based harassment Time for reflection Courageous RI	**Slide 4:** Here is today's agenda.
 **Courageous RI Guidelines** 1. SPEAK FOR YOURSELF and out of your own experiences. 2. ALLOW OTHERS to speak for themselves. 3. SHARE THE TIME - allow others to finish speaking, take turns. 4. STAY CURIOUS - ask honest questions. 5. PAUSE - take time for reflection. 6. PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING - listen generously - assume good intentions while also recognizing that your words have an impact. 7. STAY ENGAGED - when possible, close unnecessary programs, applications, and notifications and put your phone on silent.	**Slide 5:** Our goal is to build connections and to foster conversations that improve our understanding of one another. For this reason, we want to make sure that everyone gets a chance both to share and to learn from others in this conversation. To support those goals, we have some basic guidelines for our conversation.
 What can you do to support people who may be moving towards radicalization?	**Slide 6:** Here is the question we will explore today.

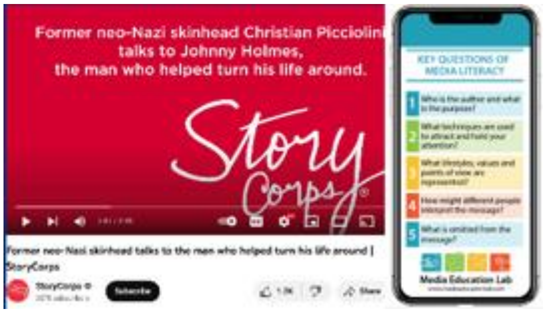
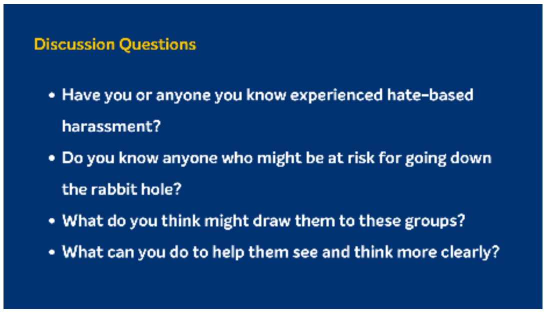
	Slide 7: One of the not-surprising things about the idea of “falling down the rabbit hole” is the fact that most of us have experienced the phenomenon to some extent. You know what I’m talking about – when one click leads to another, and suddenly, I’m reading articles about survivalism and getting pop-up ads about the best solar generator to buy for the coming Apocalypse. It's like accidentally discovering a group of people that you never knew about before, and then suddenly, you’re lurking there, watching the party happen. It can be unpredictable – and exciting – and addictive. Today, online radicalization can occur in many different ways. In this lesson, we’re focused on extremists who believe that violent conflict is needed to change society. This kind of extremism frequently leads to anti-democratic beliefs, such as a desire for dictatorship, civil war, or an end to the rule of law.
 Uncertainty about the Future Grievances & Feelings of Victimization Traumatic Experiences Need for Status & Belonging	**Slide 8:** Researchers who study radicalization to violence note that it is a complex process, involving both personal and external influences. Often, people who are feeling confused and uncertain about the future can take comfort in the simple, false solutions to complex problems offered by extremists. People who feel betrayed or discriminated against can harbor grievances, and some people have experienced trauma that leads them to want to scapegoat or retaliate against another group. Adolescents can feel a sense of status and belonging by participating in delinquent activities – it’s a way that can make a young person feel powerful. So whether the grievances are the fear of “replacement” felt by white supremacists or the concerns about racism, sexism, homophobia, the environment, or animal rights that drives some leftist extreme action, you can see how the drives might be similar.

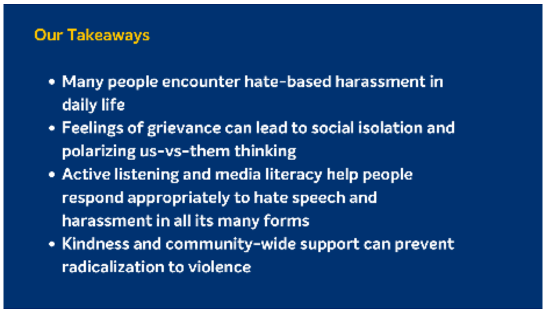
	Slide 9: Radicalization involves both personal and external factors. Did you know extremist recruiting even happens in the world of online gaming – and that the global video game industry is considerably more profitable than both the music and movie industries combined? Today, more than 215 million Americans are active video game players – that's about two-thirds of the whole country. For many people, online games are harmless fun. But during the pandemic, extremists took advantage of the fact that young men were home alone, looking for excitement and yearning for peer connection and a sense of belonging. We know that the young men who committed those horrific acts of mass violence in Buffalo, New York, and Highland Park, Illinois were active on gaming sites. These killers even live-streamed their acts of violence, remember, Pam? We saw clips of this stuff on the nightly news – and their video footage even looked like a videogame. Of course, their gruesome crimes were copied by other killers who were also part of these online networks.
 Radicalization Funnels	**Slide 10:** Extremists are now using gaming sites to create a radicalization funnel to recruit young people into extremist social networks. For some, the radicalization funnel can work like it did in Germany, where authorities discovered that children under the age of 14 were being radicalized in online video games. In one case, a young boy established a friendship with a 16-year old gamer while playing on Roblox. After meeting on Roblox several times, the older boy invited the younger boy to a server on Discord, which is a private online space. The Discord service has the stated aim to "liberate the country of all Jews and fags." When joining the Discord server, the younger boy was given the status of "recruit" and placed within a hierarchy consisting of "SS" and "SA" subgroups– 2 notorious Nazi paramilitary organizations.

	On the Discord platform, the boys did not play games – they discussed extreme-right politics. But in order to rise in status, the boy had to express an oath of allegiance to Hitler. He was instructed to perform offline behaviors to prove his loyalty, such as shouting "Heil Hitler!" in school or at home– which he did.
 **Youth Exposure to Hateful Ideologies** Percentage of respondents under 18 who came across statements expressing support for the idea that: The white race is superior to other races 16% A particular race or ethnicity should be expelled or eliminated 17% Using violence is justified or necessary to achieve a political aim 15% Women are inferior 18% Violence against women is justified 6%	**Slide 11:** To be clear, it's not the Discord platform or the video game that turned this boy toward violent radicalization. It was the extremist recruiter and his gang. Digital platforms and online games are like a shopping mall that enables recruiters to find new recruits. And there's a lot of recruiting going on. A recent survey of gamers in 5 countries found that 17% of people under the age of 18 came across statements of support for ideas like "a particular race or ethnicity should be expelled or eliminated" and 15% encountered messages like "using violence is justified or necessary to achieve a political aim."
 **Youth Exposure to Hate-Based Harassment** HATE-RAIDING 24% SEXUAL HARASSMENT 15% THREATSOF VIOLENCE 15% STALKING 9% DOXING 6% SWATTING 3% NYU Center for Business & Human Rights (2023) GAMING THE SYSTEM HOW EXTREMISTS EXPLOIT GAMING SITES AND WHAT CAN BE DONE TO COUNTER THEM	**Slide 12:** In that same study, researchers found that many gamers had themselves experienced severe hate-based harassment, defined as the infliction of verbal or other abuse based on another player's actual or perceived identity. Here are some forms it takes online. ● Hate-raiding/mobbing happens when someone is attacked in a coordinated fashion to overwhelm them with insults and threats. 24% of gamers under the age of 18 have experienced this. ● Sexual harassment happens when people make unwelcome and inappropriate sexual remarks or advances. 15% of gamers under 18 have experienced this. ● Threats of violence occur when there are credible threats of physical violence made toward an individual or their loved ones 15% of gamers under 18 have experienced this. ● Stalking occurs when someone's personal information is monitored for the purposes of intimidation.

	● Doxxing happens when someone's address or other personal information is disclosed as a form of intimidation ● And we talked about swatting in a previous session - when people make prank calls to law enforcement to dispatch armed officers to an address. Some of you may have experienced these painful forms of hate-based harassment. Too many people are hurt by these forms of violence, most of which are considered crimes.
 National Threat Evaluation and Reporting Office Personal Life Warning Behaviors Coping Skills Mitigating Factors Individual Triggers Professional Life Stressors Family Life	**Slide 13:** Many factors lead to radicalization. One thing we learned from the Department of Homeland Security is that punitive interventions by law enforcement in de-radicalization efforts do not help – in fact, they can actually lead to increased extremism. That's why a whole-of-society prevention approach is important. We must address the problem of radicalization at the community level.
 Active Listening Media Literacy Kindness Matters Community Engagement & Empowerment	**Slide 14:** To help people who have fallen down the rabbit hole of radicalization, we must focus on these 4 practices: Active Listening, Media Literacy, Kindness Matters, and Community Engagement and Support.
 Active Listening I CARE FOR YOU	**Slide 15:** First, we start with **active listening**. It's listening with an open heart. The kind of listening that's not motivated by a need to persuade someone, but to understand them.

 What Do Former Extremists and Their Families Say About Radicalization and Deradicalization in America? Media literacy and open access to diverse sources of information appear critical for deradicalization.	**Slide 16:** Second, **media literacy** is a key competency that helps prevent extremism. That's because media literacy emphasizes asking critical questions about media and the importance of getting exposure to a variety of different points of view.
  PAY IT FORWARD!	**Slide 17:** Third, it's important to exploit the power of **random acts of kindness** - the "pay it forward" mentality of being generous to people you don't know. Research has demonstrated that when extremists encounter people outside their group who exhibit kindness and generosity to them, it destabilizes their hate – because it's hard to hate someone who has been gracious, kind or generous to you.
 Community Engagement & Empowerment Help people engage in a community Use strength-based approaches that focus on support and empowerment Offer resources and support to the family	**Slide 18:** Finally, and most importantly, ensure that **community-based education and empowerment** opportunities are available to people who are stigmatized, marginalized, and socially isolated. Everyone needs opportunities to engage in a community.
 Active Listening Media Literacy Kindness Matters Community Engagement & Empowerment	**Slide 19:** Here are the four practical ways that you can help someone who may be falling down the rabbit hole.

 Former neo-Nazi skinhead talks to the man who helped turn his life around | StoryCorps I put you through hell. You were rough. I mean there were fights, there were words that we h Listen Honor Share	**Slide 20:** So let's use a video to reflect on radicalization and deradicalization. We'll discuss our reactions and then will analyze this video using media literacy's critical questions. In this video, we meet Johnny Holmes, who was head of security at a high school in Blue Island, Illinois, located just outside of Chicago. That's where he met Christian Picciolini, a teenage student who was the leader of a local neo-Nazi group. Christian renounced the movement's racist principles after eight years of involvement. Today, he devotes himself to helping others leave hate groups. Just a note: in this video clip, a racial slur is used. Let's look at it: https://youtu.be/fDn9X4bKQ3g [Click on the slide to open the video.]
 Former neo-Nazi skinhead Christian Picciolini talks to Johnny Holmes, the man who helped turn his life around. Former neo-Nazi skinhead talks to the man who helped turn his life around | StoryCorps KEY QUESTIONS OF MEDIA LITERACY 1 Who is the author and what is the purpose? 2 What techniques are used to attract and hold your attention? 3 What lifestyles, values and points of view are represented? 4 How might different people interpret the message? 5 What is omitted from the message? Media Education Lab 	**Slide 21:** Let's discuss. How did this video make you feel? What adjectives come to mind? What was a noteworthy moment you encountered? Now, let's analyze this video using critical questions of media literacy. Optional: Give Media Literacy Smartphones to students.
 Discussion Questions - Have you or anyone you know experienced hate-based harassment? - Do you know anyone who might be at risk for going down the rabbit hole? - What do you think might draw them to these groups? - What can you do to help them see and think more clearly?	**Slide 22:** We'll break into small groups to consider these issues more deeply. In your discussion, you can choose to respond to any or all of these questions.

 THE SCIENCE OF KINDNESS: IT'S NOT EASY BEING NICE	**Slide 23:** Now we are going to read and analyze a media text related to today's class discussion.
 Our Takeaways • Many people encounter hate-based harassment in daily life • Feelings of grievance can lead to social isolation and polarizing us-vs-them thinking • Active listening and media literacy help people respond appropriately to hate speech and harassment in all its many forms • Kindness and community-wide support can prevent radicalization to violence	**Slide 24:** Review the key ideas.
 Courageous RI www.courageousri.com	**Slide 25:** Thank you for your participation! To learn more about COURAGEOUS RI, visit the program's website courageousri.com.

Learn More

Extremism Finds Fertile Ground in Chat Rooms for Gamers
A New York Times story by Steven Lee Myers reports that half the people who played online multiplayer games in the world's major gaming markets encountered extremist statements. The people spreading hate speech or extreme views have a far-reaching effect even though they are far from the majority of users. Users recruit new members with comparatively little of the public pressure that social media giants like Facebook and Twitter have faced.

How to Radicalize a Normie
From video essayist Ian Danskin, this powerful video tells the story of Gabe, a boy who falls down the rabbit hole and into the thrall of neo-Nazi and white supremacy culture. Read the viewer comments to learn how this video resonates with people who have themselves been recruited into hate communities.

Feels Good Man
This documentary traces the history of Pepe the Frog, the cartoon created by Matt Furie. Learn more about the power of online imagery and the fascinating spin cycle of memes in a culture where ownership and meaning can be wrested away from creators.

Recognize the Warning Signs
This short news segment from PBS News Hour explains how young white boys can be lured into white supremacy networks. It features Cynthia Miller-Idriss who explains what parents and educators can do to address the problem of radicalization to violence.

The Journey out of Radicalization
Learn more about Chris Piccioloni's journey into and out of radicalization in his amazing Ted Talk.

Preventing Youth Radicalization: What You Can Do
From the Southern Poverty Law Center, this comprehensive guide includes practical strategies for parents, educators, coaches, and mental health professionals and offers community - and victim-centered strategies to address the threat of extremism through early prevention.

Learn more about COURAGEOUS RI and Media Literacy
Check out our podcasts and blogs where you can learn more about some of the issues that help people understand how media literacy helps reduce the fear, anger, and hate that lead to violence.

9.2: Reading and Discussion

Instructions: After reading the abridged article below, answer the questions.

August 27, 2020 by Independent Lens in Beyond the Films and Josh Kurz

THE SCIENCE OF KINDNESS: IT'S NOT EASY BEING NICE

I'd like to offer some thoughts on why kindness and empathy are a truer reflection of what makes us human than pillaging, in a scientific way. And why Fred Rogers' mantra of having the courage to be kind —as demonstrated so poignantly in Won't You Be My Neighbor—is so appropriate, especially now. Mr. Rogers often spoke of people who were brave simply by helping others.
I think we can all agree that whatever it is, human nature originates in our brains. We're not humans because of our feet (even though they are evolutionarily important); we're humans because of our minds.

Our brains are products of evolution. Being a product of evolution means going through a lot of additions and/or deletions—or as psychology Professor Emeritus at NYU Gary Marcus explains, "evolution tends to work with what is already in place making modifications rather than starting from scratch." There are no completely new organism "designs" that just pop up one day—all organisms are the result of changes and adjustments to previous versions.

What you end up with is a cobbled-together patchwork of new additions on top of old designs . "The human midbrain, for example, exists literally on top of the ancient hindbrain and the forebrain is built on top of both," he writes, and now all these parts have to work together.

Marcus explains how this has consequences on how our brains actually do "brain stuff," like remembering things, having emotions, believing things, using language, and experiencing pleasure.

There's a power struggle between the "older" parts of the brain—like the limbic system that produces fear, aggression, hunger, fatigue, and hormones—and the newest evolutionary additions (the neocortex cortex) with its higher reasoning, complex language comprehension, mathematics, and imagination.
This is the thinking part of the brain that also houses your personality and your sense of self-awareness. It's the part that likes to think it's in control of the human steering wheel. Sometimes it is.

But other times the brain makes excuses for why it lets the older part drive.

In his book *Sapiens*, Yuval Noah Harari argues that the series of mutations that gave humans the singular advantage over every other animal on the planet, including dolphins, is the ability to think about things that don't exist (stories), tools haven't been made yet, and cooperation agreements—like plans on how to kill a mammoth.

Through science, we've discovered that empathy and compassion are keys to this ability to cooperate.

And that empathy is a skill that can be honed, especially at an early age when our brains are still forming.

There's also plenty of scientific evidence that kindness begets kindness, that kindness makes you feel better when someone else feels better.

While we can't escape the older parts of our brains because the brain is all connected—we need them even though they can be problematic—arguably the most human part is our ability to resist those problems. We can not only choose between kindness and cruelty, selfishness and generosity, but also can reason why kindness and empathy are rationally speaking better for humans in the long run.

It sounds simple but it's hard. Because you're resisting millions of years of evolution. You can even be studying empathy and still have problems with empathy.

In the end, it's human nature to defy our evolutionary lot. Should we embrace it and choose the hard path?

Have the courage to reason around your limbic system, and use your learning and thinking skills to break down your implicit bias, practice empathy so you can be compassionate.

To channel Mr. Rogers again, it takes courage to be kind—especially in our current climate of internet trolling, tribalism, and self-indulgence. Instead of blaming the human condition on the mistakes we've made, we should credit our humanity for getting this far this fast. You know why we're landing another robot on Mars? Because it's human nature.

Access the Original Article Here
(URL: https://www.pbs.org/independentlens/blog/the-science-of-kindness-its-not-easy-being-nice)

Discussion Questions:

1. What type of text is this article? How do you know?
2. What are the main ideas of this article?
3. What feelings does this article evoke in you?

9.3: Learn More

Extremism Finds Fertile Ground in Chat Rooms for Gamers
A **New York Times story by Steven Lee Myers** reports that half the people who played online multiplayer games in the world's major gaming markets encountered extremist statements.The people spreading hate speech or extreme views have a far-reaching effect even though they are far from the majority of users. Users recruit new members with comparatively little of the public pressure that social media giants like Facebook and Twitter have faced.

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The Journey out of Radicalization
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The Science of Kindness: It's Not Easy Being Nice
It takes courage to help others. **Learn why kindness and empathy are a true reflection of what makes us human.**

Preventing Youth Radicalization: What You Can Do
From the Southern Poverty Law Center, this comprehensive guide includes practical strategies for parents, educators, coaches, and mental health professionals and offers community- and victim-centered strategies to address the threat of extremism through early prevention.

For Educators

9.4: Additional Resources

Falling Down the Rabbit Hole

These educator resources supplement Lesson 9, which helps students understand how people get trapped in networks of disinformation, propaganda, and hate. Learn how you can disrupt the process and be a guiding light towards a more positive pathway.

ACTIVE LISTENING

StoryCorps: The Power of Active Listening
In this lesson, students observe and analyze active listening in action and have the opportunity to engage in several active listening exercises.

Active Listening: Using Times Videos, Podcasts, and Articles to Practice a Key Skill
Students practice active listening as they listen to "The Daily" podcast, watch a New York Times YouTube Channel video, and listen to their teacher read a Times essay.

United States Institute of Peace: What Is Active Listening?
In this lesson, students develop an understanding of how active listening is an effective strategy for diffusing conflict.

Overcoming Obstacles: Lesson 2 - Listening
Special attention is given to verbal and non-verbal active listening signals in this activity-filled lesson plan.

KINDNESS MATTERS

The Kindness Factory Kindness Curriculum
This free, online curriculum includes a plethora of activities for students of all ages. Lessons are designed to get students talking about kindness and taking action to make their school a kinder place. All lessons are aligned with the CASEL competencies.

Kindness in the Classroom Curriculum
The Random Acts of Kindness Foundation developed this free, online curriculum with the goal of making kindness the norm. It includes lessons for students in all grades and free training materials.

Choose Love for Schools
Choose Love for Schools is a Social Emotional Learning curriculum that focuses on 4 key elements: courage, forgiveness, gratitude, and compassion in action. Free, online lessons for all grade levels engage students in developmentally appropriate discussions and activities.

MEDIA LITERACY

Common Sense Media Digital Citizenship Curriculum
This K-12 curriculum includes lessons on media balance, privacy, digital identity, communication, cyberbullying, and news & media literacy.

NewseumED
NewseumED.org lessons and resources focus on helping to develop the media literacy skills essential to civic life.

PBS Learning News & Media Literacy Collection
A collection of lessons, videos, articles, and documents on fake news, fact-checking, and navigating the web.

Media Education Lab
The Media Education Lab website includes links to media literacy-related publications, teaching resources, and events.

Crash Course Navigating Digital Information
A 10-video series designed to help teens navigate and evaluate online information.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & SUPPORT

Edutopia: 10 Powerful Community-Building Ideas
This article lists activities (some that take as little as 5 minutes) that can be done with K-12 students to create a sense of belonging.

ASCD: Creating a School Community
This article makes an argument for building a strong sense of community in schools and provides several different approaches for community building.

CASEL: Community Building
The Collaboration for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning created this document that describes the 4 key components of a caring classroom and offers suggestions for fostering community.

Facing History and Ourselves: Back to School: Building Community for Connection and Learning
Looking for ways to build community at the start of the year or semester? This toolkit includes professional learning articles, classroom routines, and activities.

9.5: Classroom Activities and Creative Expression Ideas

Falling Down the Rabbit Hole

ACTIVITY: Recovering Radicals

Instructions:
Conduct some research and find an interview (video or written) or essay that details someone's recovery from some sort of radicalization. Read/watch carefully and make note of the subject's comments on (1) what led to their radicalization and (2) what caused them to recover from their radicalization.
#research #analysis

***This activity aligns with the following RI Social Studies Anchor Standards:**

CG.P.4: Argue how power can be distributed and used to create a more equitable society for communities and individuals based on their intersectional identities and lived experiences.
CG.RR.3: Analyze how individuals and communities have been included or excluded from the political process based on their intersectional identities and lived experiences and the impact these actions have had on their rights, responsibilities, and the functioning of a democratic society.

PROJECT: Create Targeted Propaganda

Instructions:
Write a piece of poetry that depicts or reflects on the dangers of radicalization and necessity to support the rehabilitation of those impacted by extremism. The poetry can be representational or abstract, using whatever rhyme, meter, voice, etc.

Discuss the intentions behind your poem, the creative decisions you made, and how your piece of poetry might be used to support people who are moving towards radicalization in a 300 word artist statement.

The Ripple Effect: Planning Guide

Thank you for your interest in the COURAGEOUS RI Ripple Effect Program. Our goal is to keep the conversations going by bringing Courageous Conversations to local communities - city or town, school, faith community, workplace, fraternal or social clubs, etc. Using the program content and format of Courageous Conversations, educators, librarians, and other community members will offer local residents the opportunity to participate in a structured discussion or series of discussions in either in-person or online sessions.

We're all in this together – with the goal of using a whole-of-society approach to preventing violent extremism using active listening, media literacy, acts of kindness, and education and empowerment.

In this discussion program, you will offer participants an opportunity to:

- Gain knowledge about the role of media and technology as it affects the rise of targeted violence and terrorism and the ways that our values, hopes, and emotions can be used to cultivate the fear and hate that can lead to violence.
- Participate in a small-group discussion program where people of all ages can listen to and learn from each other, and practice media literacy and active listening skills.
- Learn how to make responsible choices in the media we use for information and entertainment.
- Get resources for further exploration and valuable information and skills to help heal relationships damaged by polarization.

Please review the Program Overview to learn more about the financial incentives offered to support your leadership. To receive a gift card, you must provide attendance records and collect some information from participants.

All the materials you need to offer a program are available at the Courageous Rhode Island website. **This guide offers you a 10-step plan that will ensure that your Courageous Conversation program will be the best it can be!**

Step 1: Find Partners

The Media Education Lab has experienced great success with what we call The Power of Two, so consider working with a partner to maximize your success! You may meet potential partners at our webinar events – and we may be able to provide some matchmaking help. More likely, you will find a partner in your community. Start talking about your program early and often to find someone who would like to help out in some way. You may also find that a team approach works best for you.

As you search for helpers, identify the people who can help out on the day of the event. For face-to-face events, someone should be assigned to greet and provide a press release to the media, if they are expected; to greet and seat members of the audience; to distribute materials; to record comments and questions from the audience; and to manage equipment set-up or to handle any other important logistical matters. If you're holding an online event, you will need a helper to manage the tech needs and chat and perhaps someone to take responsibility for assigning people into breakout groups. It's helpful to have discussion facilitators for both in-person and online events. We suggest one facilitator for every 6-8 participants.

These roles are great volunteer opportunities and encourage civic engagement, which is another goal of the COURAGEOUS RI program. Friends and family are great resources, but also consider asking local high schools and colleges about student community service possibilities. Ensure that all volunteers know their roles, feel prepared to carry out their responsibilities, and know who to go to for assistance on the day of the event.

Step 2: Decide on your Target Audience

One of your first decisions is your target audience. Who will you try to enroll in participating in a Courageous Conversation? Is it colleagues from your workplace? Members of your faith community? Youth in your school or in an after-school program? Library patrons? The community at large? When you have a clear picture of your target audience, you can make other decisions about the appropriate location and program content. Since part of the value of the Courageous Conversation program is the interaction and discussion among diverse participants with different perspectives and lived experience, we recommend aiming for a minimum of 6-8 participants. Consider how you can bring together diverse groups for the most robust conversations.

Step 3: Select the Session Content

From the list of topics below, select the topics of most importance and interest for your participants. We encourage all program series to begin with *Why Media Literacy Matters* and Preventing Violent Extremism as these topics provide the foundation for the rest of the program. Each topic is hyperlinked to the Courageous Rhode Island website. These materials are essential for your Courageous Conversation and are available on the COURAGEOUS RI website:

- **Video overview** of the program content, about 10-12 minutes in length narrated by Pam Steager and Renee Hobbs. This content sets the stage for the discussion.

- **Slides with notes and discussion questions** to use in your presentation.

Courageous Conversation Session Topics:

1 Why Media Literacy Matters
What is media literacy and how can it help people to respond to disinformation & hoaxes?

2 Preventing Violent Extremism
How is violent extremism affecting our society and what can we do about it?

3 High Conflict
What is the difference between good conflict and high conflict?

4 Conflict Entrepreneurs
What do people need to know about social media economics and the profit motives that underpin conflict?

5 Feelings and Facts
Why do stories, characters, and conflict change minds?

6 The Influencers
How do people decide who to trust?

7 Free Speech, Hate Speech and Censorship
How are digital technologies influencing people's understanding of free speech, hate speech and censorship?

8 Targets of Propaganda
Who is targeted to receive harmful propaganda and how does it affect them?

9 Falling Down the Rabbit Hole
What can be done to support people who are moving towards radicalization?

Ripple means replicate. You must choose one of these topics for your event to qualify as a Ripple. In addition, here’s what else you must include to have your event qualify as a Ripple:

Active listening. Small group discussion with guidelines is essential for a Ripple. Here’s a complete list of discussion questions corresponding to each session – and we hope you use these. But for some audiences, you may need to modify them – that’s OK.
Media literacy. The critical analysis of a media message using the 5 Critical Questions of media literacy is a core feature of a Ripple. It introduces the idea of being curious about media and encourages the sharing of diverse perspectives.

Random acts of kindness. This component of a Ripple is linked to active listening and looping for understanding. When you seek to understand (not to be heard), you are listening with an open heart and mind.

Education and empowerment. Every Courageous Conversation includes both information and an invitation to learn more. We provide a carefully curated list of resources and suggestions, but your local examples are also important. Additional materials are also available for each session, including a reading and discussion activity, classroom activities and create to learn production activities for educators to use with middle school, high school, and college students.

Step 4: Decide on Format and Choose a Location or Online Platform

If you choose to meet in person and know your target audience, the location might be obvious (workplace, church, classroom, etc.) For a more general community audience it's important to select a place that is easy for residents and local media to get to and who offer space for free. Some ideas are your city or town hall, community centers, schools, universities and colleges, church halls, and public libraries that have adequate parking and experience with community meetings. A typical meeting style set-up will work for the session(s).

If you are planning to break the group into two or more discussion groups, make sure there are adequate chairs for your expected participants. The room will need to be large enough so the groups can rearrange their chairs in circles to be able to hear each other and not be distracted by other groups, as well as a sufficient number of chairs.

For audio/visual needs, you'll need a location with WiFi access, a laptop and necessary connection and power cords, projector, screen or blank wall to project onto for the information component of the program. Depending on the size of the room and your audience, a speaker system might also be helpful. Ask about the availability for use of these items at the location. Make sure there are adequate outlets for your A/V needs, and that cords can be secured safely.

If you choose to hold your session(s) online, the Media Education Lab will provide you with a Zoom link. Please email Yamaya Jean at yamaya@mediaeducationlab.com who will support the tech needs of those who offer online Courageous Conversation sessions between Fall 2023 and Spring 2024.

Step 5: Program Dates and Time

Start by registering your event using this Event Registration Tool. When selecting a date or dates, check out local school and community calendars to avoid competing community events. When selecting a time, think about your target audience - a working audience will likely prefer an evening, while an elderly audience typically prefers not to drive at night.

Whether online or in person, if you are doing more than one session, we recommend that you select a regular day/time per week, either weekly or bi-weekly. A monthly meeting is discouraged as it doesn't allow continuity to build between sessions. If your program will be held online, take time zone differences into consideration if your audience includes people from outside of Rhode Island/New England. If you plan to hold your program series in person, coordinate with your selected location to book the program space and equipment for your preferred dates.

You may choose to allow more time for discussion or offer two topics in a longer session. We decided to keep our Courageous Conversation sessions to one hour and begin and end on time out of respect for people's busy schedules, but feel free to adjust as necessary for the needs of your audience. Hosts decide how many sessions they wish to offer their identified audience from among the topics in the series. If possible, provide a link to a pre-survey asking your target audience whether in-person or online sessions are preferred, best days and times for participation, and which topics are of most interest will help your planning.

Step 6: Promotion

To bring an audience together, you need to tell them about the event. Marketing is an essential ingredient for success! You can find a promotional blurb at the top of each Session Content page. You can modify this description based on the needs of your audience. A general community audience will need more general and widespread marketing (local news outlets, community newsletters, bulletin boards, etc. while a narrow target audience, e.g. co-workers, church congregants, etc., will need more specific marketing via organizational communication methods.

You can find images to use for your event promotion needs here. You can modify the images as needed but please do not create your own visual design materials for your program. **The Ripple Effect program you run needs to be clearly identified as part of the Courageous program.**

In reaching out to your potential audience, consider using email distribution lists, church newsletters, announcements from the pulpit from local ministers, school bulletins, local calendars, posters/flyers, social media, local community and/or recreation centers, YMCA, friends and other networks, etc.

Step 7: Plan to Collect Data

It's important to gather information to know how people learned from this discussion program. To receive a gift card, you must provide attendance records and collect some information from participants. This is the required information you need to collect:

- Names of participants (emails are desirable but optional)
- Pre-test question: "On a 7-point scale, how much do you know about...[embed the focus question of the program session here]?"
- Open-ended question: "What was a key takeaway for you from this session?"
- Post-test question: "On a 7-point scale, now how much do you know about...[embed the focus question of the program session here]?"

If you are offering an online program, you can embed these questions as polls on Zoom. Yamaya Jean at yamaya@mediaeducationlab.com can help provide assistance for this when she sets up a Zoom meeting for you.
If you are offering a face-to-face session, you can use this data collection tool. You will be expected to provide this information to us after your session is over.

As part of your planning process, you may want people to register for your event or gather RSVPs. It's best to know how many people to expect, so decide on a way for people to register. As long as you are able to get a satisfactory number of registrations, the event should not be rescheduled. Remember that typically, only 50% of people who register actually attend, and that for in-person events, some people show up who have not registered. Online participants must register in order to receive the link to join the session. The Media Education Lab and COURAGEOUS RI staff can help you make decisions about the best way to conduct registration for your program session(s).

Step 8: Practice and Prepare

As mentioned earlier, we suggest finding someone with whom to co-host the program. The Power of Two format allows the audience to hear more than one voice and perspective, and also allows for each partner to facilitate one of two breakout groups. If your audience increases in size, you will need additional discussion facilitators for additional groups. It is best for breakout groups to be no larger than 6-8 people so all participants have ample opportunity to speak. All small group discussion facilitators will be provided with the Courageous Conversation Small Group Facilitation Guide for those discussions.

Plan your program with your team members. Before the event, take time to review and edit your program outline, which should include these elements:

- Welcome and overview of the session (5 minutes)
- Play Video with Session Content explained by Pam Steager and Renee Hobbs (15 minutes)
- Introduce Discussion Questions and Guidelines (5 minutes)
- Gather for Small Group Discussion (20 minutes or more)
- Reflections and Debriefing (10 minutes)
- Thank you and goodbyes (5 minutes)

This information is provided for you via the Courageous Rhode Island website, but you'll want to review it carefully and modify it if needed, so it is relevant to your target audience and you feel comfortable using it all.

Practice, practice, practice! Especially if you're new to presenting either in person or online, practice the script; practice how you and your co-host will divide the text; practice using the media clip; practice breaking into breakout groups.
If you're meeting in person, practice using the laptop with the projector, either before event day, or arriving early enough that day to make sure everything is working as you need it to in advance. Know who to go to (or call or text) for tech support, if needed. As part of your preparation, you will need these things for an in-person program:

- Session sign-in sheet, filled out in advance using the pre-registration information Ask people to check off or add their name and contact info upon arrival.
- To use the session video and PPT slides associated with the COURAGEOUS RI session that you have selected, you'll need a laptop, data projector, and screen or blank wall. Use an external sound system when your group is over 15 people because the sound quality of a data projector is generally poor. You can use a portable bluetooth speaker to help ensure everyone can hear the sound on the video.
- Extension cord and possibly a multiple outlet power strip, if the location doesn't have sufficient outlets near your laptop/projector
- Print copy of your presentation notes
- OPTIONAL. We will provide you with Media literacy Smartphone cards for distribution as you teach people how to use critical questions for analyzing media. Email hobbs@uri.edu 14 days prior to your event and supply a mailing address.

For online sessions, ensure you or someone serving as your tech support know how to access and use the platform features you'll need during each session, such as:

- admitting participants
- screen sharing
- muting/unmuting participants
- removing a participant if needed
- using the break out room feature,
- Enabling original sound
- Using the chat.

Step 9: Event Day

On the day of your program, you and your partner must remember one key idea: *If you're having fun, they're having fun!* Your energy and enthusiasm will be contagious. Do try to take one or more photographs of your events. For face-to-face events, check your checklist and make sure you take everything you need with you. Also:

- Arrive early. Check the room set-up. Set up the registration/resource table and tech equipment.
- Check that all equipment is set-up and functioning properly.
- Greet participants as they arrive and pass out copies of the Participant Feedback Tool. Provide instructions on what to fill out and when.
- A helper could be assigned to documents noteworthy comments and questions from the audience.
- Start and end on time and have fun!

For online sessions:

- Enter the online session with your co-host at least 15 minutes early to do a last check-in and test session functions.
- Leave participants in the Waiting Room until 5 minutes before start time.
- Welcome participants as they enter or use the CRI-CC Intro playlist to set the mood until start time.
- During the session, take at least one screenshot of people in the virtual room.
- Use the Zoom Poll to launch the pre- and post-survey questions.
- Start and end on time and have fun!

Step 10: Post-Event Matters

Complete these final tasks to receive your gift certificate:

CHECKLIST:

- ☐ Complete a One-Page Planning Document
- ☐ Register Your Event
- ☐ Implement the event
- ☐ Complete the Program Documentation form asking for details about your experience.
- ☐ If you promoted the event online, send us the link, along with one or more photographs to Pam Steager at pamsteager@mediaeducationlab.com.
- ☐ If you held a face-to-face event, send paper copies of the Participant Feedback Tool to Renee Hobbs at University of Rhode Island, 108 Davis Hall, Kingston RI 02881.
- ☐ Receive your gift card within 15 days of submitting your materials.

Participants and their partners who implement one discussion program get a $50 stipend and receive $50 for every subsequent session, up to a maximum payment of $300. Participants will be formally recognized at a culminating in-person ceremony in fall of 2024.