



ARGUMENTS  
AGAINST  
AGGRESSION

# ARGUMENTS AGAINST AGGRESSION

## GUIDE



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This Guide is part of a training scheme which has been developed within the Erasmus+ Strategic Partnership **Arguments Against Aggression – Strategies and Tools against Hate Speech in Face-to-Face Encounters and in Social Media** (2018–2020).

Hate speech and aggressive argumentation are an attack on the rights of different ethnic, religious and/or national groups, in clear violation of the principles of equal human dignity and respect for the racial and cultural differences among human groups.

In **Arguments Against Aggression**, a team from seven European institutions provides tools to help people in public positions to counter aggressive arguments and hate speech in personal encounters and in the social media. Specifically targeted are persons working as civil servants, teachers, youth workers, persons in cultural institutions, or people working in public media.

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Find more information about the project on the homepage: [www.contra-aggression.eu](http://www.contra-aggression.eu)

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# PREFACE

Dear readers,

there is probably hardly anyone who has not already been confronted with hate speech and aggressive communication. This ranges from a possibly unintentional aggressive response to a request or question to death threats to people who perform public functions in democratic civil societies. The span between the two poles is narrower than one might think.

All partners in the project Arguments Against Aggression knew such situations personally when they came together for the project. We were united by the firm intention not to give aggression and hate speech any space in our personal relationships or in our daily working tools (which social media have long since become). In the course of the project, we agreed that aggressive communication should not be answered with the same aggressive communication. We were looking for a different kind of communication. On the one hand, this should convey to the other person that his/her views are perceived and accepted as such, but that at the same time clear boundaries are drawn where aggression and hate speech hurt, threaten – or even constitute a punishable offence.

The present Guide is therefore an equivalent accompanying instrument to the many prejudices and counter-arguments that were collected and processed in the project. You will find all of them in seven languages (English, German, Slovenian, Slovakian, Spanish, Greek and Dutch) on the Arguments Against Aggression training platform, which also includes national versions.

The quick access to the homepage and training platform ([www.contra-aggression.eu](http://www.contra-aggression.eu)) is complemented by a wealth of in-depth information. If you are professionally confronted with aggression and hate speech, it is advisable to delve a little deeper into the topic in order to be able to react better with the knowledge of social, psychological and physical factors.

In [Chapter 1](#), read about the **legal situation**, which focuses on the limits of freedom of expression. We have also collected encouraging court decisions and initiatives against hate speech from seven European countries. [Chapter 2](#) is devoted to **social learning** and how the learning environment can help to prevent hate speech and aggressive communication. Chapter 3 deals explicitly with **aggression from the perspective of psychology and behavioural science** and what strategy can be used to deal with it. [Chapter 3](#) deals with **communication in social processes** and how it can be used non-violently. [Chapter 4](#) is devoted to **dealing with disorders**, because aggression can also be related to physical and psychological disorders.

All chapters provide you with examples and exercises to avoid further aggression and hate speech and – if possible – to get into a relaxed and communicative relationship.

The Arguments Against Aggression – Team has gained the firm conviction during the implementation of the project that we are by no means at the mercy of aggression and hate speech, but that we have a wealth of possibilities to deal with it in such a way that both sides will ultimately come to an understanding. An understanding, however, ends where there is a criminal offence – this Guide also deals with that.

The Arguments Against Aggression team wishes you a fruitful reading and inspiration for your work!



# CHAPTER 1: CIVIL RIGHTS

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# 1 ♦ OBJECTIVES OF THIS CHAPTER

Hate speech often makes us helpless because we can neither understand the aggression and its contents nor react spontaneously to it. This makes it difficult to deal quickly with hate speech, although we would like to be able to react swiftly and spontaneously. But spontaneity and quick-wittedness are only one way to react to hate speech. Hate speech can also transcend the boundaries that our civil society imposes on all concerned. To this end, there are legal instruments whose enforcement is left to the law enforcement authorities. There are statements that are forbidden under criminal law.

In this chapter you will learn more about these instruments and their application – and also about the fact that we are by no means at the mercy of hate speech.

## 2 ♦ FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION AND ITS LIMITS

### 2.1 ♦ Conflicting rights – different interests

Several rights compete when it comes to freedom of expression. The right to freedom of expression can be limited by the right to freedom of thought, conscience or religion. When it comes to **hate speech**, it often comes to the question how to balance the conflicting interests that result from exercising two fundamental European freedoms: on the one hand, the right to communicate ideas on (religious, societal, etc) beliefs to the public, and, on the other hand, the right of persons to respect of their right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion.

In some circumstances, freedom of expression can also be a threat to the right to respect of privacy. And, finally, there is the risk of conflict between freedom of expression and the interdiction of all forms of discrimination in those cases where exercising this freedom is used to incite hatred and shows the characteristics of “hate speech”.

In fact, very often it is a tightrope walk of law courts and can easily be misunderstood as juridical hair-splitting. However, these discussions are also indicators of how societies deal with it.

### 2.2 ♦ Hate speech – definition in a legal sense

Hate Speech is not a fixed, legally defined term. Hate speech is violence that is spread through language, words and images, both online, and offline. Hate speech targets with hatred entire groups that are excluded and hostile in ‘real-life’ and on the Internet. Hate speech insults, threatens and despises people because of their origin, faith, gender or sexual orientation. In social networks, hate speech creates a hostile climate that can also trigger acts of violence in real life.

## 2.3 ♦ Identification criteria for hate speech

The identification of statements that could be classified as ‘hate speech’ is difficult because this kind of speech does not necessarily manifest itself through expressions of hatred or emotions. Hate speech “can be concealed in statements which at a first glance may seem to be rational or normal.”<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, it is possible to distil certain parameters for distinguishing expressions which, though they are of an insulting nature, are fully protected by the right to freedom of expression from those that do not enjoy such protection.

The concept of ‘hate speech’ encompasses a multiplicity of situations:

- incitement of racial hatred or in other words, hatred directed against persons or groups of persons on the grounds of belonging to a race;
- incitement to hatred on religious grounds, to which may be equated incitement to hatred based on a distinction between believers and non-believers;
- incitement to other forms of hatred based on intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism.
- Homophobic speech also falls into what can be considered as a category of ‘hate speech’.<sup>2</sup>

## 2.4 ♦ Hate speech on the internet

Hate on the Internet is by no means to be seen detached from ‘real’ life, actually, it is ‘real life’ for many people in the virtual world. In addition, however, a kind of disinhibition effect can be observed on the Internet. “Opinions that in real life are often only openly represented by a minority are published with a few clicks and find a big stage on the Internet. Behind them are often right-wing extremist groups and people who use the possibilities of the Internet for their propaganda. The lack of a direct counterpart, the opportunity to remain anonymous, and the knowledge that they are hardly ever held accountable further contribute to the disinhibition. Not only is there an anonymous rush, but there is also often an open rush of clear names.”<sup>3</sup>

**Hate speech** on the net is mainly directed against people because they are assigned to a certain group. They experience a devaluation because of their skin colour, their (supposed) origin, their religion, their sex, their sexual orientation or their body. However, hate speech can also meet those who are not themselves assigned to one of the groups mentioned, but who stand up online and offline for their rights and against misanthropy.

1 Weber, Anne (2009). Manual of Hate Speech. A publication commissioned by the Council of Europe. Strasbourg. Council of Europe Publishing.

2 More indications are published in Weber (2009).

3 Arbeitsgemeinschaft Kinder- und Jugendschutz (AJS) NRW e. V und Landesanstalt für Medien NRW (2019). Hate Speech – Hass im Netz – Informationen für Fachkräfte und Eltern. 5. Edition.

## 3 ♦ APPLICABLE INSTRUMENTS ON EUROPEAN LEVEL

In the meantime, there is a wealth of initiatives, recommendations, decisions and agreements against hate speech at the European level. In the following we give you a small overview with some relevant links for further reading. In fact, there is now a great deal of material showing how important the issue is for European institutions – and how great the need is to take clear action against hate speech.

### 3.1 ♦ Instruments of the Council of Europe

The **No Hate Speech Movement** is a youth campaign led by the Council of Europe Youth Department seeking to mobilise young people to combat hate speech and promote human rights online. Launched in 2013, it was rolled out at the national and local levels through national campaigns in 45 countries: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/no-hate-campaign>.

In order to achieve greater unity in its Member States' legislation, the Council of Europe has recourse to recommendations, being non-legally binding instruments, through which the Committee of Ministers can, in fact, define guidelines for the Member States' policies or legislation.

Since 1997, there were several so-called Recommendations, Communications and Resolutions published by the Council of Europe as well as the European Commission, e.g. on 'Hate Speech' (1997), on the 'Media and the Promotion of a Culture of Tolerance' (1997), on 'Freedom of political debate in the media' (2004), on 'Freedom of expression and respect for religious beliefs' (2006), on 'Blasphemy, religious insults and hate speech against persons on grounds of their religion' (2007).

The Council of Europe has established the '**European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)**', of which the mission is to combat racism and racial discrimination in greater Europe from the perspective of the protection of human rights. ECRI formulates notably general policy recommendations addressed to all Member States which provide guidelines for the development of national policies and strategies in various areas. ECRI also publishes country-by-country monitoring reports on national situations: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/european-commission-against-racism-and-intolerance/>

### 3.2 ♦ Instruments of the European Union

The **Charter of Fundamental Rights** brings together all the personal, civic, political, economic and social rights enjoyed by people within the EU in a single text: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/aid-development-cooperation-fundamental-rights/your-rights-eu/eu-charter-fundamental-rights/why-do-we-need-charter\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/aid-development-cooperation-fundamental-rights/your-rights-eu/eu-charter-fundamental-rights/why-do-we-need-charter_en).

It covers:

- ♦ all the rights found in the case-law of the Court of Justice of the EU
- ♦ the rights and freedoms enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights
- ♦ other rights and principles resulting from the common constitutional traditions of EU countries and other international instruments

In response to the spread of racist and xenophobic online hate speech, in May 2016 the European Commission, together with four major IT companies (Facebook, Microsoft, Twitter, and YouTube), presented a **“Code of Conduct to combat hate speech on the Internet”**. Under the Code, online platforms undertook to evaluate messages and, where appropriate, remove content considered illegal under EU or national law: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-code-conduct-counter-illegal-hate-speech-online\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/racism-and-xenophobia/eu-code-conduct-counter-illegal-hate-speech-online_en)

### 3.3 ♦ Instruments of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe

Several commitments of the states participating in the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) are directly relevant to the combat against ‘hate speech’. While the participating states have recognised the primary character of the right to freedom of expression on numerous occasions, they have also expressed their firm commitment against ‘hate speech’ and other manifestations of aggressive nationalism, racism, chauvinism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and violent extremism, as well as occurrences of discrimination on grounds of religion or belief, and have stressed that promoting tolerance and non-discrimination can contribute to eliminating the basis for ‘hate speech’.

## 4 ♦ APPLICABLE INSTRUMENTS ON NATIONAL LEVEL IN THE AAA COUNTRIES

### 4.1 ♦ Austria

In Austria, the §283 of the Penal Act (StGB) deals with the offense of incitement. It is defined as the explicit incitement to hatred against someone in public or in front of a broad mass, on the basis of his/her belonging to a certain group, as well as his/her insulting in a way that violates human dignity. The penalty is up to two years imprisonment. §283 in its current form has only been in force since the beginning of 2019. The amendment brought the inclusion of disability, age, sexuality and gender, as well as the incitement of individuals.

At a more general level, before this §283 StGB comes already the prohibition law (VerbotsG), whose paragraph §3h punishes the denial, trivialization, justification and approval of national socialist crimes.

There are hardly any judgments on hate speech in Austria; except of a few judgments on the Prohibition Law, there are only isolated judgments, which may well be due to the high requirements regarding the publicity of the statements. Even after the lowering of the requirements, the threshold is still relatively high.

#### Incitement

An aggressive posting may, under certain circumstances, constitute an incitement to hatred and may therefore be punishable by law. The offence was extended as of 1 January 2016 in order to combat computer crime more effectively.

There are different ways to commit incitement:

An incitement is committed by anyone who incites or encourages, in front of many people (from about 30 people), violence or hatred against any person for the purpose of committing such violence or hatred because of their

- ♦ race,
- ♦ skin colour,
- ♦ language,
- ♦ religion or ideology,
- ♦ nationality,
- ♦ descent or national or ethnic origin,
- ♦ gender
- ♦ physical or mental disability,
- ♦ age or
- ♦ sexual orientation.

An incitement is also committed by anyone who insults one of the above-mentioned groups of persons in such a way that

- this group could be despised or discredited in public opinion and
- it violates the human dignity of these people.

Public denial, public approval, public gross trivialisation, or justification of a judicially determined genocide or war crime also constitutes incitement if it is committed against one of the above-mentioned groups (religion, origin, skin colour, etc.) or against a person because he or she belongs to one of the above-mentioned groups.

### 4.1.1 • Counselling centres and initiatives against hatred on the Net

#### ZARA – ZIVILCOURAGE & ANTI-RASSISMUS-ARBEIT

In Austria, the most well-known advice centre against hatred on the net is the association **ZARA – Zivilcourage & Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit**. This counselling centre supports and advises victims and witnesses of hate postings, cyber bullying, and other forms of verbal and psychological violence on the Internet. Their services are aimed at

- Victims of hatred and hate on the Net
- Members of disadvantaged groups who are being agitated against on the Net or who are being victims of false reporting
- People affected by cyber-bullying
- Employees of organizations that work with affected persons

After an initial assessment of the contents, the clients are informed about their options for action and possible counter-strategies. They receive support in possible legal and other steps as well as information on further assistance. The counselling centre reports the corresponding contents to the respective IT companies in order to obtain a deletion.

The consultation takes place via chat, messenger, e-mail, or telephone and is free of charge. Personal consultation appointments are possible by prior arrangement.

#### NO HATE SPEECH COMMITTEE

The Austrian **National No Hate Speech Committee**, founded in June 2016, aims to raise awareness of the issue of hate on the Internet, to counteract it and to stimulate and support actions against hate speech. The aim of the committee is to address causes and contexts in order to counteract the acceptance of hate speech and thus combat racism, sexism, and discrimination on the net. Young people should be strengthened in their commitment to democracy and human rights and actions against hate speech should be bundled on the net.

#### MORE INITIATIVES

Other Austrian institutions and initiatives like **Demokratiezentrum Wien**, **Dialogue Instead of Hatred**, **CounterACT!**, and **Gewalt im Netz** work with similar objectives. They are partly public initiatives, partly they are based on activities of civil society.

## 4.1.2 ♦ Austrian examples for law cases

### THE NEW YEAR BABY CASE 2018

On 12 March 2019, the Regional Court sentenced a 65-year-old man for his hate posting against the Vienna New Year's baby 2018. The girl Asel was born at 0.47 in the Rudolf Foundation Hospital on 1 January 2018. The reason for the hate posting was the mother's headscarf and the Muslim faith of the family.

In social networks, the photo of the New Year's baby 2018 sometimes triggered violent racist reactions. The criminal prosecution investigated several of the hate posters, accused them and sentenced them. The 65-year-old pensioner was one of them. He posted the following comment under Baby Asel's photo on Facebook: "Six Muslim jihadists are born for every Austrian baby".

The verdict for the 65-year-old was six months on probation. In addition, the court ordered probation assistance – the pensioner must participate in the program "Dialogue Instead of Hatred" of the association Neustart.

The shitstorm was followed by a wave of outrage in the social media and numerous media reports. Caritas Vienna General Secretary Klaus Schwertner took up the scandalous case on Facebook. Hardly 24 hours later, his posting received almost 20,000 positive reactions and was shared 9,300 times. Among them are around 18,000 comments from people who congratulate and welcomed the Viennese New Year baby.

### AUSTRIAN DATA ON CRIMINAL CONVICTIONS FOR INCITEMENT

Criminal convictions for incitement doubled in 2017 compared to 2016, and convictions for Nazi re-activation under the Prohibition Act also increased significantly in 2017.

In 2016, 672 investigations for incitement (public call for violence or incitement to hatred because of descent, religion, skin colour, etc.) and 1156 for Nazi re-activation were conducted by the public prosecutor's offices throughout Austria. These ended with 55 and 89 convictions respectively. In 2017 there were 867 proceedings for incitement and 1128 for re-activation; in 108 and 123 cases, respectively, they led to a conviction. That is twelve and eleven percent of the cases, respectively, and not a bad average. In the case of property offences, the ratio between charges and convictions is only five per-cent.

## 4.2 ♦ Germany

As already defined, hate speech is not a fixed, legally defined term. Basically, everyone can say what they want to say. The German legal system places freedom of expression under the constitutional protection of **Article 5.1 of the Basic Law (Grundgesetz, GG)** and thus grants this right the highest priority. This includes not only value judgments, but also true factual assertions insofar as they can serve to form opinions. Untrue factual claims are not covered by the protection of Article 5.1 of the Basic Law.

But the right to freedom of expression does not apply unrestrictedly: If human dignity is affected, the right of personality is violated or derogatory criticism is expressed, a person affected can take legal action against it. The right to freedom of expression also rescinds if the criticism fulfils criminal law norms. The same applies if provisions for the protection of minors are violated.

The Basic Law is very clear about this in Article 5 of the Basic Law Freedom of Expression: "(1) Everyone has the right to express and disseminate his opinion freely in speech, writing and pictures and to inform himself freely from generally accessible sources. Freedom of the press and freedom of reporting through radio and film are guaranteed. Censorship does not take place. (2) These rights shall be limited by the provisions of general law, the provisions of law for the protection of minors and the right to personal honour".



Criminal offences are clearly identified: punishable content such as slander, insults, and incitement to hatred are not covered by freedom of expression – regardless of whether statements are made online or offline. Hate speech can, for example, fulfil the following elements of the Criminal Code (StGB): § 111 Public invitation to commit criminal offences, § 130 Incitement of the people, § 185 Insult, § 186 Defamation, § 187 Slander.

The so-called **Act to Improve Enforcement of the Law in Social Networks (Network Enforcement Act, NetzDG)** aims to combat hatred and agitation in social media. The law obliges social networks to delete or block certain punishable contents within seven days as soon as a user has complained to the network about the contents. In the case of “obviously” punishable content, the platform operator even has only 24 hours to remove the content. Among the illegal content, the law includes insults, defamation, or the criminal distribution of false messages. The law reacts to the increasing spread of hate crime and other criminal content, especially in social networks. For example, providers of social networks are subject to a number of obligations within the scope of the NetzDG: Reporting obligations, the establishment of a complaints management system, and the obligation to designate authorised representatives and authorised recipients. The Act entered into force on 1 October 2017.

#### 4.2.1 ♦ Initiatives combatting hate speech

Meanwhile, there are numerous initiatives combatting hate speech. They are acting on national level as well as on the level of the regional authorities.

- The **PLATFORM “NO HATE SPEECH”** collects examples of counter speech which can be downloaded as graphics, pictures, sayings, and videos. These are intended as practical aids for immediate use: <https://no-hate-speech.de/de/kontern/fuer-gegen-alle-hate-speech/>
- The **HATE REPORTING PLATFORM** can be used to report hate comments, racist attacks, insults, or threats. Reports whose contents are presumably relevant under criminal law are passed on to the investigating authorities and prosecuted: [www.hassmelden.de](http://www.hassmelden.de)
- **NETTZ** is a networking against hate speech. The NETTZ promotes digital civil courage and advocates a positive debate and opinion culture on the net. NETTZ supports actors of civil society in their work as a “community of counter-talk”. Numerous initiatives and projects are accessible via this site: <https://www.das-nettz.de>
- **STOP ANTI-SEMITISM** offers argumentation aids and information to counter anti-Semitic statements: <https://www.stopantisemitismus.de/>
- **HATEAID** is a platform that offers support to all people who have experienced violence on the net. HateAid provides independent and non-partisan support with personal advice and litigation cost financing: <https://hateaid.org/>

## 4.2.2 ♦ German examples of law cases

The following two examples are from Arbeitsgemeinschaft Kinder- und Jugendschutz (AJS) NRW e. V. . They were treated as law cases according to the criminal offence of incitement to hatred (§ 130 Strafgesetzbuch StGB): Incitement to hatred occurs when a person incites hatred or incites violence against a person or group of persons on the basis of their membership of an ethnic group or religion in a manner likely to disturb public peace.

Two examples of racist posts whose authors have been fined for incitement to hatred:

“I’m for reopening the gas chambers and putting all the brood back in there.”

(4.800 € fine – AG Tiergarten Berlin Az. 259 Cs 218/15)

“I would have a gas bottle and a hand grenade lying around [...]” –

(7.500 € fine – AG Passau Az. 4 Ds 32 Js 12766/14)

However, not every racist commentary immediately fulfils the criteria of incitement to hatred. For the courts to classify a comment as incitement to hatred, there must be publicity. So it makes a difference whether an utterance is made in a private group of regulars or on social media. Via the Internet, the public and thus the pillory effect is all the greater.



### 4.3 ♦ Greece

On September 4, 2014, the Greek Parliament adopted an amendment to Law No. 927/1979 on Combating Race Discrimination, in order to align domestic legislation with European Union rules pertaining to hate speech and denial of genocide. (Law No. 4285/2014 [in Greek], EPHEMERIS TES KYVERNESEOS TES HELLENIKES DEMOKRATIAS [GAZETTE OF THE HELLENIC REPUBLIC], Part A, No. 191 (Sept. 10, 2014).) Hate crimes and denial of genocide are governed by the EU Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA of 28 November 2008 on Combating Certain Forms and Expressions of Racism and Xenophobia by Means of Criminal Law (2008 O.J. (L 328) 55.)

Greece's Law 4285/2014 criminalizes the following intentional conduct:

#### ♦ PUBLIC INCITEMENT OF VIOLENCE OR HATE SPEECH

Anyone, who publicly incites, provokes or stirs, either orally or through the press, the Internet, or any other means, acts of violence or hatred against a person or group of persons or a member of such a group defined by reference to race, color, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability, in a manner that endangers the public order and exposes the life, physical integrity, and freedom of persons defined above to danger, will be punished by imprisonment of from three months to three years and a fine of €5,000 to €20,000 (about US\$6,455- \$25,820). (Law No. 4285/2014, art. 1 ¶ 1.)

If the conduct described above results in the commission of a crime, then it will be punishable by imprisonment of at least six months and a fine of €15,000 to €30,000. When the court imposes one year of imprisonment, it may also impose deprivation of political rights for a period of one to five years. (Id. art. 1 ¶¶ 1 & 3.)

Public officials or employees who engage in the conduct described above are subject to harsher punishments. They face imprisonment of six months to three years and fines of €10,000 to €25,000. If additional acts are committed by such officials, the term of imprisonment will be at least one year and the fine will range from €25,000 to €50,000. (Id. art. 1 ¶ 5.)

#### ♦ PUBLIC ENDORSEMENT OR DENIAL OF CERTAIN CRIMES

Anyone who intentionally, either orally, through the press, online, or by any other means or methods, condones, trivializes, or denies the existence or seriousness of the crimes of genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity, the Holocaust, or Nazi crimes, when those crimes have been established by international court decisions or the Greek Parliament, if this conduct is directed against a group of persons or a member of such a group defined by race, color, religion, descent, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, or gender identity and in a manner that is likely to incite hatred or violence or is of a threatening or insulting nature against such a group or one of its members, will be punished by the punishments indicated above. (Id. art. 2.)

#### ♦ LIABILITY OF LEGAL PERSONS

In addition, the Law provides for the liability of legal persons or groups of persons when the crimes described above are committed by a natural person, acting either alone or as a member of the legal person, for the benefit of such a legal person or group of persons. (Id. art. 4.)

#### ♦ INITIATION OF PROSECUTION

Crimes committed are investigated and prosecuted ex officio; therefore, there is no need for a report from or an accusation by a victim(s) before the initiation of an investigation and/or prosecution. (Id. art. 5.)

Source: <https://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/greece-new-law-criminalizes-denial-of-genocide-hate-speech-and-other-acts-of-racism/>

### 4.3.1 ♦ Initiatives combatting hate speech

- The online platform '**Say No to Hate Speech**' has been developed in the framework of a project funded by the European Youth Foundation of the Council of Europe entitled 'Say No to Hate Speech – Young People Empowered.'. Source: <https://www.notohatespeech.com/el/> & <https://www.notohatespeech.com/>.
- **SELMA** (Social and Emotional Learning for Mutual Awareness) is a two-year project co-funded by the European Commission which aims to tackle the problem of online hate speech by promoting mutual awareness, tolerance, and respect. The overall vision of the SELMA project is captured by its catchphrase: Hacking Hate. It builds upon a Social and Emotional Learning approach to empower young people to become agents of change; it helps them to better understand the phenomenon of online hate; it provides them with tools and strategies to act and make a difference. Source: <https://hackinghate.eu/>
- **WORDS ARE STONES:** A EU network to train young social media managers, bloggers, online activists, YouTubers and young people to counter, monitor and prevent (online) hate speech and other form of intolerance. Sources: <https://www.facebook.com/Wordsarestonesgreece/?ref=settings> & <https://www.wordsarestones.eu/>

## 4.4 ♦ Slovakia

The protection of Human Rights is anchored in the Slovak Constitution.

The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights was established by the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic no. 308/1993 Coll. on the establishment of the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights with effect from 1 January 1994. The Centre's role is to provide comprehensive action in the field of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the rights of the child.

In Slovakia, a special body was established in 2002 – the Ombudsman's Office – which supervises the observance of human rights in the country.

The most serious human rights problems in Slovakia in last years were privacy, corruption, extensive discrimination against Roma, and violence against ethnic and racial minorities, from which the government did not discourage its actions or rhetoric.

### 4.4.1 ♦ Initiatives combatting hate speech

There are several human rights organizations: People in need Slovakia; Amnesty International; Citizen, Democracy and Accountability NGO and others.

**PEOPLE IN NEED SLOVAKIA** focused their interest on the situation of human rights in the world and in Slovakia. They support activities in countries that share similar historical experiences like Slovakia in the fight against authoritarian regimes. In Slovakia itself, they have worked on the issues of racism, discrimination, intolerance, human trafficking, minority rights, and extremism.

They launched a simple online form where anyone can report as a victim or witness of a hate crime. They want to help collect more realistic numbers of hate crimes that have happened and help resolve the

situation. This initiative is supported by international project 'Tackling Hate Crime and Hate Speech' and was funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality, and Citizenship Program.

<http://diskriminacia.sk/slovenske-narodne-stredisko-pre-ludske-prava/>

<https://clovekvothrozeni.sk/aktuality/?krajina=slovensko&typ=ludske-prava>

<http://www.vop.gov.sk/vznik-a-vyvoj-v-slovenskej-republike>

<http://odz.sk/en/foreword/>

#### 4.4.2 • Slovakian example of a law case

Milan Mazurek, deputy of the "Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko" party of Marián Kotleba, will lose his mandate in Parliament. The court found him guilty for racist speech on the radio. According to the court, he committed a deliberate offense of defamation of a nation, race, and belief. This is the first time in Slovakia that the judiciary has deprived the mandate of a Member of Parliament.

Source: <https://dennikn.sk/1571676/mazurek-v-parlamente-konci-sud-mu-potvrdil-vinu-za-rasisticke-re-ci-v-radiu/>

#### 4.5 • Slovenia

While the Council of Europe has precisely defined hate speech as any dissemination, promotion or apology of hatred based on intolerance, aggressive nationalism, discrimination, and hostility towards minorities, migrants or persons with the migrant background, Slovenian legislation does not contain the term »hate speech«. Actually, there is very little hostile speech in Slovenia that, in view of the regulatory framework and legal practice, would actually be considered as a criminal offense. In recent years, many legislative documents focus on speech restraint, which spreads, promotes, and justifies hatred.

##### THE FRAME OF SLOVENIAN LEGISLATION CONCERNING HATE SPEECH

According to article 63 of the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia, any incitement to national, racial, religious, or any other inequality and intolerance is unconstitutional.

Hate Speech in the Penal Code

The term »hate speech« is not included in Slovenian legislation. Punitive hate speech is understood by the professional and general public as the promotion of hatred, violence or intolerance under Article 297 of the Penal Code, which is one of the criminal actions against public order and peace. At the same time, the supreme state prosecutor expresses the view that hate speech cannot in any way be a criminal offense if the consequence of the act is not the result of threats or disruptions to public order and peace.

##### HATE SPEECH AS AN OFFENSE IN THE MEDIA

According to Article 8 of the media act, it is also forbidden to disseminate programs that promote national, racial, religious, sexual, or other types of inequality, hatred or intolerance. At the same time, no sanctions are foreseen for violation of this article. Sanctioning the media for the promotion of racial, sexual or ethnic discrimination and religious or political intolerance is foreseen in Article 47 of the law, but exclusively

for cases where violations occur in advertisements. In May 2015, the Ministry of Culture prepared a draft amendment to the Act aimed at reducing the prevalence of hate speech, especially in online media.

### **HATE SPEECH AS AN OFFENSE UNDER THE ACT ON THE PROTECTION OF PUBLIC ORDER AND PEACE**

Article 20 of the Act provides penalties for offenders with higher fines if acts are committed in order to incite ethnic, racial, gender, religious, political intolerance, or intolerance with regard to sexual orientation. From the point of view of prosecution of hate speech, the key limitation of the law is that the offense does not define the terms of hatred or intolerance transmitted over the Internet or other modern means of medial content.

### **CODES, GUIDELINES, REGULATIONS**

**The Code of Journalists of Slovenia**, in particular Article 20 and 21, contains ethical standards, guidelines, and commitments for the work of journalists and other content creators.

The professional criteria and principles of journalistic ethics in the programs of the National Radio and Television RTV Slovenia were accepted by the public institution in June 2000. The criteria and principles refer to hate speech in several articles.

**Code of regulation of Hate Speech on Web Portals:** In December 2011, six major national web portals joined this Code: Delo.si, Dnevnik.si, MMC, Siol.net, Večer.com, and Zurnal24. In 2011, the portals 24ur.com and Slovenskenovice.si, and 2015 Mediaspeed.net joined the Code.

**The Code of Police Ethics** contains general provisions and basic principles, determines relations between police officers and police officers' relations with people, state bodies, non-governmental organizations, and other institutions.

**The Code of Educational Professional Ethics** declaratively defines the personal and collective professional responsibility of teachers and other employees in education (Article 7 of the Code).

The definition of respecting equality and avoiding hate speech can be traced back to some other codes of conduct.

## **4.5.1 ♦ Initiatives combatting hate speech**

### **PEACE INSTITUTE / SOCIAL MEDIA HATE SPEECH REPORTING**

With topics and themes related to hate speech (wider coverage of Human Rights), this institute has opposed intolerance and discrimination for more than 20 years. Their projects raise awareness of the general stigmatisation of hate speech and promote the role of actors in communities that oppose racism, xenophobia, and related forms of intolerance. Through its research projects, the institute seeks to disseminate its results as widely as possible and contributes to the recognition of hate speech.

### **LEGEBITRA**

Since December 2011, Legebitra Information Center has been systematically engaged in the prevention of hate speech. At that time it also organised a public forum titled »Online comments: the realisation of democracy or polygon of hostility?«. Preventing hate speech is addressed through various programmes, projects and activities. Due to the specific skills, the focus lies primarily on hate speech based on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia.

### **CULTURAL EDUCATION SOCIETY PINA**

In close collaboration with the Slovenian Philanthropy, the society PINA, in response to the growing hostility speech related to the arrival of migrants and refugees, conducted a major workshop »How to constructively respond to hate speech and xenophobia?«. Within the project Equality of National Communities of the nations of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, it carried out activities that discriminate against these communities (performances of theatre of oppressed or forum theatres). Amateur actors played scenes from everyday life in which hate speech and discrimination occurred. On this basis, a Legislative Theatre was also conducted where the proposals for the reform of legislation at the national and local levels were conducted.

### **BAKERY OF MAGDALENE'S NETWORK MARIBOR**

Through numerous campaigns and organized events (workshops, seminars) they are urging and encouraging to solve the intertwined social meanings associated with unequal power relations in society. These include hate speech, racism, unemployment, homophobia, gender equality, social participation, poverty. Since 2013, the institute organises workshops and seminars for the 'Theatre of the Oppressed'.

### **NIPRAV.SI (IT'S NOT RIGHT)**

There are many unreported acts of hatred in Slovenia, whose victims are LGBTIQ people. Most of the reasons for this are fears of disclosure to the family and law enforcement agencies, the belief that the event is "not enough" to report, or the concern that the police will not properly handle the report. Victims of violence and discrimination based on hate speech often do not know where to seek help or who can, in these cases, provide them with information, protection, and assistance in prosecuting perpetrators. To this end, Legebitra has developed the NiPrav.si website as part of the Call it Hate project.

## **4.5.2 ♦ Slovenian examples for law cases**

### **THE COUNCIL FOR RESPONDING TO HATE AND DISCRIMINATORY SPEECH**

Within the framework of a project initiated by the Peace Institute in cooperation with partners (Z (od)govorom na sovražni govor), a Council for the Response to Hate Speech was established in 2015. The Council, chaired by the former Information Commissioner of the Republic of Slovenia, responds to cases of hate speech by making public statements. The initiators are convinced that the best response to hate speech is to talk more about this topic. Intolerant, xenophobic, and discriminatory public rhetoric is becoming increasingly a part of public communication.

The Council for the Response to Hate Speech is set up as an independent body and seeks to bring together a wide range of interested individuals working within civil society, media, education, and government. It consists of nine individuals who do not represent any interest group or institution in the world, but who act on a voluntary basis.

The Hate Response Council reports that the majority of hate speech statements relate to hate speech towards refugees, migrants, the Islamic faith, and the LGBT community.



## 4.6 ♦ The Netherlands

### LEGISLATION

Article 1 of the Dutch constitution states that everyone in the Netherlands is to be treated equally in every case. Discrimination, according to this article, based on religion, philosophy of life, political disposition, race, gender, or on any other grounds is illegal. In article 1 the 'principle of equality' is displayed. "This principle gives legislators, boards and judges the order to treat people in an equal way when making rules or decisions. Discrimination based on religion, philosophy of life, political disposition, race, gender, or on any other grounds is illegal. The words 'or any on any other grounds' expand the illegality of discrimination beyond those mentioned in this article. In the 'Algemene wet gelijke behandeling' (AWGB, General equal treatment act) this article is further explained. Article 137 of the criminal law contains provisions that can be used to punish discrimination." (see [https://www.denederlandsegrondwet.nl/id/vkugbqvds5wq/artikel\\_1\\_gelijke\\_behandeling\\_en](https://www.denederlandsegrondwet.nl/id/vkugbqvds5wq/artikel_1_gelijke_behandeling_en))

### PUBLIC DEBATE

In 2014, a discussion started in the Dutch public debate about the extent to which freedom of speech is limited by article 1 of the constitution. The reasons for this, among others, were comments by politicians that some view as hateful. In the case "Fewer Moroccans" against the politician Gert Wilders, the judge ruled that Wilders was guilty of group insults and provoking discrimination. This ruling has been appealed.

### 4.6.1 ♦ Initiatives combatting hate speech

In the Netherlands, several organizations focus on preventing, reporting and counteracting discrimination. Important organizations are:

- **ANNE FRANK STICHTING:** organization that raises awareness for the danger of anti-Semitism, racism, and discrimination ([www.annefrank.nl](http://www.annefrank.nl))
- **ART 1:** national expertise center in the field of preventing discrimination ([www.art1.nl](http://www.art1.nl))
- **CIDI:** institute for counteracting anti-Semitism and racism ([www.cidi.nl](http://www.cidi.nl))
- **COC:** organization committed to helping lesbian women, homosexual men, bisexuals and transgenders ([www.coc.nl](http://www.coc.nl))
- **IEDER(IN):** organization that wants people with a disability to participate fully in society ([www.iederin.nl](http://www.iederin.nl))
- **MOVISIE:** national institute dedicated to working on social issues ([www.movisie.nl](http://www.movisie.nl))
- **TRANSGENDER NETWERK NEDERLAND:** national interest group for transgender persons and their loved ones ([www.transgendernetwerk.nl](http://www.transgendernetwerk.nl))



Besides prominent organizations in the Netherlands, there are other ways to report discrimination. The website [discriminatie.nl](http://discriminatie.nl) is an example of such a website. Via this website, citizens that feel discriminated are helped. This website also refers to local anti-discrimination agencies.

Citizens can also report to the national counselor ([www.nationaleombudsman.nl](http://www.nationaleombudsman.nl)). This government agency in collaboration with the public prosecutor made the 'Stop discrimination' map. This map details what people can expect from their municipality, police, and public prosecutor. There is also a 'Stop gay bullying' map, because mostly gay men are victims of bullying. (See: <https://www.nationaleombudsman.nl/nieuws/videos/discrimineren-en-pestten>)

See also:

- Amnesty International ([www.amnesty.nl](http://www.amnesty.nl))
- College voor de rechten van de mens ([www.mensenrechten.nl](http://www.mensenrechten.nl))
- Meldpunt Internet Discriminatie ([www.mindnederland.nl](http://www.mindnederland.nl))
- [www.meld.nl](http://www.meld.nl)
- RAN – The Radicalisation Awareness Network
- [www.meldpunt.nl](http://www.meldpunt.nl)
- [www.meldknop.nl](http://www.meldknop.nl)
- Samenwerkingsverband van Marokkaanse Nederlanders ([www.smn.nl](http://www.smn.nl))
- Stichting Platform Islamitische Organisaties Rijnmond ([www.spior.nl](http://www.spior.nl))
- [www.zeteenstreepdoordiscriminatie.nl](http://www.zeteenstreepdoordiscriminatie.nl)

#### 4.6.2 ♦ Dutch examples of law cases

##### Example 1: (NJFS 2017/22; [rechtspraak.nl](http://rechtspraak.nl))

During the results evening of the March 2014 municipal elections, Dutch politician Geert Wilders spoke to his supporters in a café and asked them if they wanted more or fewer Moroccans. The audience chanted “less,” to which Wilders replied, “OK, we’ll arrange that.” Thousands of reports of discrimination arrived at the Public Prosecution Service. In December 2014, the Public Prosecution Service finally decided that Wilders should be prosecuted because of the “fewer Moroccans” ruling.

The court decided that Wilders, with his statements, had contributed to further polarization within Dutch society. This is precisely the case in a multiform society where the principle of equality and respect for (the rights of) others are of great importance. The fact that Wilders says he feels supported by possibly millions of people does not mean that he cannot be blamed. Group insult and incitement to discrimination are punishable. Wilders cannot rely on freedom of expression, insult groups, or incite discrimination. That also applies to a politician. This court declared Wilders guilty, but did not impose punishment.

## Example 2 (mindnederland.nl; omroep Gelderland)

A 37-year-old man has been convicted of group insult and incitement to discrimination. The judge gave him 120 hours of community service, half of which was conditional. The Public Prosecution Service had demanded 120 hours of community service for maintaining a website on which he acted against the mixing of „superior“ and „inferior“ races.

He held Jews responsible for problems within our society and he called colored and dark people „degenerate and inferior.“ He did not see himself as a race hater, but rather as a race protector. He believed that races should not mix, that people should stay with their own race. „That is also what nature teaches us.“ However, the OM did not agree with this. The site was taken offline in 2017.

### 4.7 ♦ Spain

The Spanish legal system places freedom of expression under the constitutional protection according to Article 20 of the Spanish Constitution, „freedom of expression is a fundamental right of the human being that guarantees the possibility of freely expressing and disseminating thoughts, ideas and opinions by word, writing, or any other means of reproduction.“ However, this type of autonomy must be exercised responsibly and, therefore, entails certain obligations. Its limit appears when the rights of other people are violated.

Thus, the hate-motivated crime is foreseen in the title of crimes committed on the occasion of the exercise of Fundamental Rights and Public Freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution, specifically Art. 510 paragraph 1 of the Penal Code. This Code establishes the modality of provocation to discrimination, hatred or violence, punishing with a prison sentence of one to four years and a fine of six to twelve months to those who publicly promote, encourage or incite directly, or indirectly to hatred, hostility, discrimination, or violence against a group, a part of it or against a person determined by reason of their belonging to it, for racist, anti-Semitic, or other reasons related to ideology, religion or belief, family situation, belonging of its members to an ethnic group, race or nation, its national origin, its sex, orientation, or sexual identity, for reasons of gender, illness or disability.

That is to say, in the crimes of hate, the motive or subjective spirit that the author has to commit the crime is his animosity or open hostility towards the people or towards the collectives in which they are integrated by the color of their skin, their origin, their ethnicity, their religion, their disability, their ideology, their orientation, or sexual identity, among other discriminatory motives. Recently, some collectives, such as the State Security Forces, have tried to make the hate crime cover them (for example, against humorous content about them in satirical media), but it is debatable as it does not form part of the assumptions of Article 510 of the Penal Code.

Also, in recent years, with the emergence of social networks, a new type of crime has appeared in relation to this matter: the incitement to commit public disorder by showing certain opinions in applications such as Twitter. This is contained in Article 559 of the Penal Code: “It is a crime to publicly disseminate, through any means, messages that serve to reinforce the decision to commit some of the crimes of disturbing public order.”

From all this, we can conclude that although ideological freedom and freedom of speech protect the free expression of ideas, even rejectable and inconvenient for some people, in no case can such freedoms cover disparagement and insult against persons or groups, or the generation of feelings of hostility against them.

### 4.7.1 ♦ Initiatives combatting hate speech

The State Federation of Lesbians, Gays, Transsexuals, and Bisexuals (Felgtb) launched its campaign under the motto **‘The BUT Syndrome’** in April 2019.

This is an initiative that aims to **combat hate speech against the LGBTI collective** by providing counter-argumentation tools to all those people who feel offended by the reappearance and proliferation of certain LGBTIphobic messages.

Felgtb has created a test that allows identifying symptoms through the web:

<https://felgtb.com/sindromedelpero/#sindrome>.

People can know in six steps if they have the “BUT syndrome” and **provide arguments to dismantle those theses mediane their treatment:**

<https://felgtb.com/sindromedelpero/#tratamiento>

“As many people we have arguments within our reach, easier it will be to refute this discourse in our daily situations and end the buts,” they say. The LGBTI Federation has decided to define, pulling irony, a **“certain tendency as a pathology that threatens the Spanish population”**. You can also download the posters and help fight the syndrome:

<https://felgtb.com/sindromedelpero/campana/>

According to the president of FELGTB, Uge Sangil, the Federation has decided to launch a campaign of these characteristics because **“we are at a time in which the arrival of hate speech to the public sphere, together with the misinformation of much of the population about the reality of LGBTI people, is reopening historically overcome debates about collective rights”**.

Among the potential people who can get this syndrome stand out those who are in favour of gays getting married “but do not call marriage,” or those who advocate kissing “but do it at home.” To combat it, the FELGTB proposes “Argumentine”, a “medication” of six pills with which to respond “to all the people who ‘turn on’ when someone adopts hate speech in colloquial conversations,” but who lack information enough to know how to answer these “intransigent ideologies”, they say.

Link image: [https://felgtb.com/sindromedelpero/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/AF\\_Cartel\\_A3\\_Teaser.pdf](https://felgtb.com/sindromedelpero/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/AF_Cartel_A3_Teaser.pdf)

### 4.7.2 ♦ Spanish examples for law cases

According to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), hate speech includes all forms of expression they propagate incite, promote, or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, and other forms of hate based on intolerance, among others the intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, the discrimination and hostility against minorities, immigrants and people from an immigrant origin. What is punished is not the expression itself of ideas, however execrable they may be, but that this expression is done in a way and in circumstances that involve a provocation to hate, discrimination or violence, violating the values constitutional of human dignity and non-discrimination on the grounds of birth, origin, sex, religion or any other personal or social circumstance contained in the arts. 10 and 14 of the Spanish Constitution.

## SEVERITY OF HATE SPEECH

Human dignity and non-discrimination of the person (10, 14 CE) vs ideological freedom and conscience (16 CE and freedom of expression (20 Constitution).

The Constitutional Court (from now on TC), in Judgment 214/1991 (Violeta Friedman case) and Judgment 176/1995 (Makoki case):

Neither the exercise of ideological freedom nor that of expression can protect manifestations or expressions intended to belittle or generate feelings of hostility against certain religious or social groups<sup>4</sup>.

The judgment of TC 176/1995, of December 11 was the first resolution in use of the term **hate speech** in Spain. This resolution gave the reason for a criminal sentence that prohibited the publication of a certain comic that was about an alleged Nazi death camp. The bullet points, in the Court's judgment, ridiculed the suffering of the victims, deliberately and unscrupulously seeking the vilification of the Jewish people (FJ 5th).

The Penal Code punishes with prison sentences of one to four years and a fine of 6 to 12 months to whom:

Article.510.1. ... publicly encourage, promote or directly or indirectly encourage hatred, hostility, discrimination or violence against a group or part thereof or person determined by his or her membership for racist reasons, anti-Semites, ideology, religion or beliefs, family situation, ethnicity, race, national origin, sex, sexual orientation or identity, gender reasons or their disability<sup>5</sup>.

Basis of this crime: danger of increased hostility to certain especially vulnerable groups and putting their conditions at risk existential security.

Nature: a crime of abstract danger, that is, it is not necessary for the provocation or incitement to hate acts of violence or discrimination towards specific people or groups, it is enough to incite or provoke the violence or discrimination to consume this crime<sup>6</sup>.

4 Ni el ejercicio de la libertad ideológica ni la de expresión pueden amparar manifestaciones o expresiones destinadas a menospreciar o a generar sentimientos de hostilidad contra determinados grupos religiosos o sociales.

5 Artículo.510.1. ...públicamente fomenten, promuevan o inciten directa o indirectamente al odio, hostilidad, discriminación o violencia contra un grupo o parte del mismo o persona determinada por su pertenencia a aquél por motivos racistas, antisemitas, ideología, religión o creencias, situación familiar, etnia, raza, origen nacional, sexo, orientación o identidad sexual, razones de género o su discapacidad.

6 Alises, Charo (2017). Guía de Delitos de Odio LGTBI. Sevilla. Junta de Andalucía. <https://www.juntadeandalucia.es/export/drupaljda/publicacion/19/01/Guia%20LGTBIfobia.pdf>



## 5 ♦ SOURCES

### 5.1 ♦ Sources in English

- A most valuable compendium on European instruments against hate speech is a manual by the Council of Europe by Weber, Anne: “Manual of Hate Speech”, Council of Europe Publishing, Straßburg 2009, ISBN 978-92-871-6614-2). This manual is strongly recommended for a further consideration of the subject.
- RAN, the European Radicalisation Awareness Network, regularly publishes information dealing with hate speech:
- This is the “Communication on Tackling Illegal Content Online of the European Commission: <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/communication-tackling-illegal-content-online-towards-enhanced-responsibility-online-platforms>
- More links for useful information can be found here: <http://contra-aggression.eu/about/useful-links-and-project/>
- No hate speech: <https://no-hate-speech.de/en/knowledge/>
- Unesco – handbook for journalists against fake news – <https://en.unesco.org/fightfakenews>

### 5.2 ♦ Sources in German

- German Act to Improve Enforcement of the Law in Social Networks (Network Enforcement Act, NetzDG) – [information in English](#):
- Arbeitsgemeinschaft Kinder- und Jugendschutz (AJS) NRW e. V und Landesanstalt für Medien NRW: “Hate Speech – Hass im Netz – Informationen für Fachkräfte und Eltern”. 5. Auflage 2019
- The Rhineland-Palatinate Ministry of the Interior has set up a “Task Force Calls for Violence on the Right”, which opposes hate speech against politicians and employees of public institutions. [Read more \(in German\)](#)
- A survey of 1055 German mayors of the online platform ‘Kommunal’ in 2019 makes it clear that 40 percent of all town hall chiefs and their employees have already struggled with stalking, abuse and threats. [Read more \(in German\)](#)

### 5.3 Sources in Slovenian

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## 5.4 ♦ Sources in Slovakian

- Zdpovedne (2019). Netolerncia na internete. Retrieved from: <https://www.zdpovedne.sk/index.php/sk/ohrozenia/netolerancia-na-internete>
- Filmy a metodická príručka pre prácu s deťmi a mládežou. (2019) Title ? Retrieved from: <https://nehejtuj.sk>
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# **CHAPTER 2:** **SOCIAL LEARNING**



ARGUMENTS  
AGAINST  
AGGRESSION

# 1 ♦ INTRODUCTION

**Social Learning Theory** (SLT) covers one of the most important aspects of **influential learning**. It states that behaviour is learned from the environment through the process of observational learning. The theory is based on observational learning where social elements are added to the concept of learning, meaning that individuals learn new information and behaviours by watching other people.

Most human behaviour is **learned by modelling**, by observation. From observing others, one forms an idea how a new behaviour is performed; and on later occasions its coded information serves as a guide for action. It includes, of course, how and in which way this shapes our own behaviour.

An important factor in social learning is the model of the person himself or herself. A person with status and power is more likely to influence other individuals.

Understanding the main concepts of the **Social Learning Theory**, it helps to understand how people can learn new things and develop new behaviours by observing other people.

## 2 ♦ CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL VULNERABILITY

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### 2.1 ♦ Sociocultural theory

Scholars have for a long time been interested in the relations between social factors and cognitive development. Sociocultural theory, into which we will look deeper in this chapter, is credited to Lev Vygotsky, who created it as a response to behaviourism. Vygotsky believed that development is a deeply social process and that learning is always assisted by others, who are more competent in the skills and technologies available to the specific culture. This does not seem as a very innovative approach, but at the time when Vygotsky was working on his theory, the general belief was rather that children would discover the world around them by themselves, and that children, like scientists who are working alone, would try to make sense of the surrounding in which they grew up.

Based on the sociocultural theory, the child develops thanks to the interactions with its surrounding, and parts of it are the people around. Vygotsky says that above all, a human being is influenced by social interactions with other people. Of course the people around are firstly the child's parents or caretakers. From them the child takes over their values and knowledge from previous generations. Without these interactions the child cannot develop its skills.

The theory of Vygotsky suggests that the society in which people are born and raised plays a crucial role in their development and learning. Culture influences not only the way how people relate to the outside world, but also how they relate towards one self. The main idea of the theory is that the ways people interact with others and the culture they live in shape their mental abilities and influence the social interactions that happen within a particular society.



Vygotsky considered games as a very important part of the learning process of a child, in particular he emphasized the strong importance of “make-believe plays” in child’s development. It is one of the main ways of development during the preschool years. Children use make-believe plays to test multiple skills and achieve important cultural abilities. Vygotsky suggested that as children take part in made-up situations, they learn how to act in agreement with their internal ideas, not just external ideas.

During a play children put themselves into the adult roles of their culture and practice how they will act in the future. A play takes place before the development, so children can start to gain the motivation, abilities and attitudes needed for social participation, which can be done only with the help of peers and adults. Make-believe plays allow children to practice how they would act in the real world. It provides them with a way to gain the basic skills needed to function in their society before they become adults. However, learning these roles and skills is only done with help from others in their culture. As such, interaction and games happen to be the crucial elements of enculturation.

## 2.2 ♦ Cultural diversity and social coherence

Culture has the characteristics of offering people a certain frame of reference, it is providing them with a certain vision of the world, and forming them. In this context, the theory speaks of the socializing function of culture.

Despite the diversity of social theory schools and directions, there is a certain consensus in understanding culture as a specifically human sphere of reality, or as an ancestral attribute of humanity, which distinguishes Homo sapiens from other beings. In the process of historical development, the social person changes the ways and forms of his behaviour, transforms natural dispositions and functions, creates and develops new forms of specific cultural behaviour.

Thus, a particular culture is a specific way of life of a specific group or society of people. This is given by the pattern of behaviour of the members of society, the apparent practices and behaviours that the outside observer can follow. These patterns of behaviour lead to expectations and beliefs that again create other patterns of behaviour. Both activities, mental and overt, can be considered a culture. Man becomes the whole man by the process of learning culture, in other words by adopting common models of reality.

Very often, sociology, intercultural psychology or cultural anthropology speak of cultures (plural) rather than of culture (singular) – this emphasizes that although in the abstract sense culture can be considered as one as a whole, in fact, there actually existed and there are different cultures which differ from each other. The differences of cultures can be observed mainly in time, but also in space.

Transcultural approach says that one person can be a member of more culture. They all have influence on the identity of the specific person and they influence as well the preferences and reactions of that specific person. In the transcultural understanding, a culture is something a group of people with a specific feature have in common, for example women, hockey players, parents, teachers etc.

Human beings are extremely diverse in many ways. People differ in opinions, race, nationality, gender, age, sexuality, ethnicity, class, religion, lifestyle and so much more. Today, the changes in time and technology have made it extremely impossible for any group of people to live without interacting with others outside their group. Often people of different cultural and geographical backgrounds meet in international conferences, education exchange programs, sports, etc. Sadly, the history of mankind discriminating against each other based on cultural differences has been with us for ages. Therefore, it should be understood that the importance and uniqueness of our diversity lie in these following attributes:

### ➤ Diversity creates richness in opinion

Some problems cannot be solved by a homogenous group of people. The complexity of challenges facing the world today requires the input of people from different cultural backgrounds. Diverse groups have often been found to be creative and thus producing better solutions to problems.

### ➤ Diversity makes us compassionate about others

When we interact and try to understand others, we will not judge them. Compassion allows us to empathize with others. Hatred amongst people of cultural differences only makes us resentful and full of hunger, often denying us the opportunity to live our life to the fullest.

### ➤ Diversity opens up new market opportunities

Today we have multinationals setting up offices in different parts of the world which would not be possible without embracing diversity. This further creates employment opportunities for people in those parts of the world.

### ➤ Diversity is a growing trend

Today there is no country in the world that has only natives living there. Each and every day, millions of people are moving from one part of the world to another. Most people are in search for better opportunities, education and lifestyle. As citizens of this world, we are therefore left with no choice other than to embrace our diversity. Children have to be taught to live and respect people who are different from them in some way so that the world would be a peaceful place to live.

## 2.3 ♦ Cultural literacy and cultural awareness

Cultural literacy is a term coined by E. D. Hirsch referring to the ability to understand and participate fluently in a given culture. On the other hand, it is the ability to be open to learning about other cultures and sharing one's own culture, to change personal perspectives, to communicate effectively across cultures, and to act as a cultural change agent.

Cultural literacy is important both to individuals and to the society they live in. As an individual, your cultural literacy will help you to successfully interact with people from diverse backgrounds. It helps you to develop a critical cultural perspective, especially if you are part of the 'dominant culture': instead of taking your own cultural beliefs and practices for granted and seeing them as 'normal', you can see them in the context of many cultures and evaluate their strengths and limitations.

Cultural literacy also helps to develop associated skills, such as communication and self-reflection. Cultural literacy contributes positively to the society in which you live. It reduces prejudice and inequality based on culture, increases the value placed on diversity, and increases participation in the social practices of that society, including access to institutions and services. For example, when culturally literate people have influence in institutions like universities or government agencies, they can ensure that people from all cultural backgrounds are able to participate equitably in education and services.

When we talk about cultural awareness, we talk about understanding of cultural differences and being aware of different cultural values, beliefs, and perceptions. It is the knowledge of, understanding of and experiences with one's own culture as well as others' cultures that inform one's ability to navigate new experiences. This usually involves internal changes in terms of attitudes and values. Awareness and sensitivity also refer to the qualities of openness and flexibility that people develop in relation to others. Cultural awareness must be supplemented with cultural knowledge.

Increasing cultural awareness means to see both the positive and negative aspects of cultural differences. Cultural diversity could be a source of problems, in particular when the organization needs people to think or act in a similar way. Diversity increases the level of complexity and confusion and makes agreements difficult to reach. On the other hand, cultural diversity becomes an advantage when the organization expands its solutions and its sense of identity, and begins to take different approaches to problem solving. Diversity in this case creates valuable new skills and behaviours.

## 2.4 ♦ Culture, language and social behaviour

As thus defined and envisaged, culture covers a very wide area of human life and behaviour, and language is manifestly a part, probably the most important part, of it.

Language is much more than the external expression and communication of internal thoughts formulated independently of their verbalization. In demonstrating the inadequacy and inappropriateness of such a view of language, attention has already been drawn to the ways in which one's native language is related to the rest of one's life in a community and to smaller groups within that community. This is true of all peoples and all languages; it is a universal fact about language. Anthropologists speak of the relations between language and culture. It is indeed more in accordance with reality to consider language as a part of culture. Culture is here being used in the anthropological sense, to refer to all aspects of human life insofar as they are determined or conditioned by membership in a society.

The fact that people eat or drink is not in itself cultural; it is a biological necessity for the preservation of life. That they eat particular foods and refrain from eating other substances, though they may be perfectly edible and nourishing, and that they eat and drink at particular times of day and in certain places are matters of culture, something "acquired by man as a member of society". Although the faculty of language acquisition and language use is innate and inherited, every individual's language is "acquired by man as a member of society," along with and at the same time as other aspects of that society's culture in which people are brought up. Society and language are mutually indispensable. Language can have developed only in a social setting, however this may have been structured, and human society in any form even remotely resembling what is known today or is recorded in history could be maintained only among people utilizing and understanding a language in common use. If language is transmitted as part of culture, it is no less true that culture as a whole is transmitted very largely through language, insofar as it is explicitly taught. The fact that humankind has a history in the sense that animals do not is entirely the result of language.

Languages and variations within languages play both a unifying and a diversifying role in human society. Language is a part of culture, but culture is a complex totality containing many different features. The boundaries between cultural features are not clear-cut, nor do they all coincide. Physical barriers such as oceans, high mountains, and wide rivers constitute impediments to human intercourse and to culture contacts, though modern technology in the fields of travel and communication makes such geographical factors less and less important. More potent for much of the 20th century were political restrictions on the movement of people and of ideas, such as divided Western Europe from formerly communist Eastern Europe. The frontiers between these two political blocks represented much more of a cultural dividing line than any other European frontiers. The distribution of the various components of cultures differs, and the distribution of languages may differ from that of nonlinguistic cultural features. This results from the varying ease and rapidity with which changes may be acquired or enforced and from the historical circumstances responsible for these changes.

When people with different languages need to communicate, various opportunities are open to them, the most obvious being second-language learning and teaching. This takes time, effort, and organization, and, when more than two languages are involved, the time and effort are that much greater. Other instruments may also be applied. Tacit or deliberate agreements have been reached whereby one language is chosen for international purposes when users of several different languages are involved.

Language is used not just as a tool for the exchange of information, but as a symbolic system with the power to create and shape symbolic realities, such as values, perceptions, identities through discourse. The relation of culture and language is the way they share human values, realities and behaviours of a social group.

## 2.5 ♦ Culture and aggression

Does culture play a role when it comes to aggression? We can say that aggression is one of the examples of language of the culture of an individual.

The occurrence of aggression is an example of the interaction between personal variables and situational variables. Although the social situation is extremely important, it does not influence everyone equally – not all people become aggressive when they view violence. For example: You may be able to watch a lot of violent television and play a lot of violent video games without ever being aggressive yourself. On the other hand, other people may get influenced on different level. So, they communicate differently.

The personality variables that are known to relate to aggression, and how these variables may interact with the influence of the social situation, are:

### ► Individual differences in aggression

Aggression is particularly likely among people who feel that they are being rejected by others whom they care about. In addition, people who experience a lot of negative affect, and particularly those who tend to perceive others as threatening are likely to be aggressive.

### ► Gender differences in aggression

Aggression connected to self-enhancement desire for status appears between men as well as women. In comparison to women and girls, who use more nonphysical and relational aggression such as shouting, insulting, spreading rumors, and excluding others from activities, men and boys prefer more physical and violent aggression–behaviours such as hitting, pushing, tripping, and kicking. But gender differences are not entirely determined by biology and evolution; many of these differences are the result of social learning.

### ► Cultural and societal differences in aggression

Cultures vary dramatically in how, and how much, their members aggress against each other. When children enter a violent culture such as that of the United States, they may be socialized to be even more violent. In a study of students at a high school near Detroit, it was found that the children who had been born in the United States were more ready to accept aggression than children who had emigrated from the Middle East, especially if they did so after the age of 11. The earlier children face aggression as a normal part of the social behaviour, the more it becomes for them a pattern that they accept and even use in their adult age.



## 2.6 ♦ Examples

### 2.6.1 ♦ Example of racist speech to cultural – vulnerable group

Milan Mazurek, deputy of the Kotleb People's Party LSNS ended his political career in parliament, as the court found him guilty for racist speech on the radio. The court sentenced him to pay a 10,000 € fine. If he did not pay the fine, he would face a half-year imprisonment. This is the first time that the judiciary has deprived the mandate of a Member of Parliament in Slovakia.

The Supreme Court Senate, led by Judge Peter Paluda in the appeal, confirmed his guilt in the case of racist talks about the Roma in Radio Frontinus in Žilina.

According to the court, he has committed a deliberate offense of defamation of a nation, race or belief, and will end up in parliament. Although Mazurek's lawyers advised that they would file an appeal as an extraordinary remedy, this has no suspensory effect.

The Constitution states that the mandate of a member "shall expire on the date on which the judgment by which the member was convicted of an intentional crime" comes into force.

If Mr. Mazurek does not pay the fine, he will not be able to stand in the next parliamentary elections. The law says that an obstacle to the right to be elected is "a final conviction for an intentional crime if the conviction has not been obliterated". However, if he pays the fine, his candidacy for the next year's elections will be possible. <https://dennikn.sk/1571676/mazurek-v-parlamente-konci-sud-mu-potvrdil-vinu-za-rasisticke-reci-v-radiu/>

### 2.6.2 ♦ Example of initiative in Slovakia to support another ethnic group

ZAIntegro – an initiative that has started after a wave of petitions against Roma pupils in public school in a Slovak town Žilina.

A segregated school was closed down by the decision of municipality. Parents from schools in the neighbourhood (schools where the Roma children were supposed to be distributed to) started to organize a petition in order not to receive Roma children from socially disadvantaged background in the schools of their children. Due to the pressure of the public, the Roma children were redistributed to eight different schools around the town, some of them on the other side of the town. The ZAIntegro initiative supported the change of the town regulations concerning free transport of students. Many of the children were not allowed to travel in the public transport with a special card that would make it free for them, due to the debts of their parents towards the town. ZAIntegro claimed that no child should be punished for something their parents are responsible. There is as well the right for education for everyone. After a successful lobbying for that and organizing a money collection to cover the costs of transport to the schools, the initiative focuses on after school help to the children from socially disadvantaged families. <https://www.facebook.com/ZAIntegro-1708512602501197/>

### 2.6.3 ♦ Example of not equal treatment of ethnical groups

Anti-discrimination: The Commission sends reasoned opinion to SLOVAKIA urging the country to comply with EU rules on equal treatment of Roma schoolchildren

On 10th of October 2019, the European Commission decided to send a reasoned opinion to Slovakia, calling upon the country to comply with EU rules on equality. The EU Racial Equality Directive prohibits



discrimination on grounds of racial or ethnic origin in a number of key areas of life, including education. In Slovakia, however, a disproportionate share of Roma children are placed in special schools or classes for children with mental disabilities and there are also different ways of marginalisation in mainstream education, by placing Roma children in separate Roma-only classes or in Roma-only schools. Following the letter of formal notice sent in April 2015, Slovakia has undertaken several measures intending to tackle this problem. However, after carefully assessing the measures and monitoring the situation on the ground, the Commission concluded that they are not yet sufficient to resolve the problem. School discrimination on grounds of ethnic origin remains a serious issue. Slovakia now has two months to respond and take the relevant action; otherwise, the Commission may decide to refer the matter to the Court of Justice of the EU.

[https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_INF-19-5950\\_en.htm?fbclid=IwAR24lIH0EJWq-VvzWkhYozCJmd-K37ehUr95iCbiUe23jDQzktP3vlt5BZ-o](https://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_INF-19-5950_en.htm?fbclid=IwAR24lIH0EJWq-VvzWkhYozCJmd-K37ehUr95iCbiUe23jDQzktP3vlt5BZ-o)

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## 3 ♦ AGGRESSION

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### 3.1 ♦ Human aggression

By definition aggression is an act of doing harm consciously and intentionally upon an unwilling victim. Aggressiveness and aggression are phenomena that accompany us in our daily lives, but nonetheless aggression is one of the most controversial concepts in the science of human behaviour. The term aggression is usually used when referring to an instantaneous reaction, whereas the term aggressiveness is a more enduring characteristic of an individual.

The notion of aggression is found not only in the psychological profession but also in the sociological, legal and political sciences while it is necessary to emphasize that for our purpose, the description will be taken from the field of social learning.

When we talk about aggression, we can define it as any behaviour, whether **physical** or **verbal**, performed with the intention of **hurting someone**. But at the same time, we also emphasize that aggression does not involve only physical violence. People can be aggressive without being physically violent. When defining the term aggression, it is important to know that not each behaviour that hurts and effects another is aggression. This refers in particular to two types of cases: self-defence and accidents.

In psychology, there are different classifications of aggression:

- ♦ **Instrumental aggression** – in this form of aggression there is no emotional relation between the perpetrator and the victim; the victim is an obstacle that the perpetrator must overcome in order to reach the goal (power, social status, money...).
- ♦ **Affective aggression**, where hate between the perpetrator and the victim is expressed; the purpose of aggression is directed at the victim (e.g. the person wants to hurt her, or take revenge on him).
- ♦ **Active aggression**, by which a violent act with specific aggressive elements is committed (sharp criticism, hits, slaps, etc.)
- ♦ **Passive aggression**, when harm is caused through passivity (e.g. we don't want to help people in an accident or in need, etc.)

Most aggressive acts happen under the influence of **strong emotions** like fear, hatred, anger, disappointment, jealousy, etc. However, it should be emphasized that emotions are not necessary component of aggressive behaviour, as there are individuals who even under the pressure of negative emotions respond non-aggressively.

## 3.2 ♦ Aggression as learned behaviour

According to the Social Learning Theory, also aggressive behaviour can be observed, imitated and modelled.

Especially through modelling, humans can learn quickly specific acts of aggression and integrate them into their behaviour. In this way we can learn also **indirectly** when we observe aggression in others and they have been somehow rewarded for behaving aggressively.

Let us look at the process through four ways of social learning:

- ❶ **Attention** – the model is showing the behaviour (parent, teacher or someone in a position of power or someone similar in age or sex)
- ❷ **Retention** – remembering the model's behaviour
- ❸ **Motivation** – having a good reason for copying the behaviour
- ❹ **Reproduction** – known as self-efficacy (the observer has the confidence to imitate the behaviour).

An important aspect of social learning is **self-efficacy**. If a person believes that he or she is capable of carrying out observed behaviour that will achieve the desired results, then it is likely that this behaviour will be imitated or mimicked. This helps to explain why individuals will behave aggressively in situations where they feel confident of success.

Self-efficacy helps to increase the **sense of similarity**. The power role models are of course the parents, especially in the way how they behave (not so much what they say). Researches show that those children who have been subjected to physical punishment, often later in life use violence themselves. In recent years, **powerful models** are also presented through **media**, where much concern has been expressed about the aggressive models in films, on television and in video games. If the models are seen to have gained, through their aggression, wealth or high societal status or both, they may have a particular powerful influence.

Researchers conducted a series of experiments, designed to demonstrate the imitation of aggression. They became known as “The Bobo Doll Studies”. After having carried out many variations of the study, the general conclusion was that human behaviour is often shaped by the **socio-cultural process of social learning**. The theory by itself helps us to explain why children might copy aggressive behaviour.

Beside of that, we must also be aware of potential **biological factors** such as genetic, bio-chemical or neuro-anatomical causes, which with no doubt can also influence aggressive behaviour. However, we must not forget the significant influence of the emotions.



In early 1990's researchers who studied the role of biology and imitating behaviour, discovered a group of cells in the brain named mirror neurons. These special neurons become active when we see another person acting in the same way if we were performing an action ourselves. **Mirror neurons** allow us to experience what others are doing and feeling. From this point of view, social learning of aggression suggests that imitating behaviour may be rather biologically than psychologically based. In understanding human aggression, the discovery of mirror neurons was a major breakthrough.

### 3.3 ♦ Aggression and emotions

Aggressive behaviour, either physical or verbal, intends to cause physical or psychological harm to others. With such behaviour people express **different emotions** or experiences: anger, hatred, fear, frustration, discomfort, shame. It is therefore an emotional reaction when an individual feels threatened or impeded in meeting his needs. The level of excitement may vary, but may be directed outwards or towards oneself.

Although aggression is basically self-protective, it is also destructive. Its purpose is to hurt, injure, remove, destroy. Individuals differ in how they express their emotions. In doing so, the **character traits, learned behaviour** and **circumstances** that provoke such experiences have a significant impact.

The **difference between the sexes** is mainly in the way how they express aggression – women are more verbal, men more physical. The intensity of an aggressive reaction generally reflects the level of threat that the individual recognizes, his or her level of self-control and his or her energy capacity. Some life circumstances may provoke it more often and more intense, e.g. wars, chaos, disasters, etc.

#### EMOTIONS

**What are emotions?** Emotions are perceptions of a particular event that we respond to through our own reaction. This perception can be internal or external. Emotions are learned primarily from parents as they react to individual life changes.

In order to be able to feel emotions, there must be appropriate internal and external stimuli. **We all have the ability to control our emotions through our behaviour.** We decide whether or not to show emotions but in order to do so, we must learn to recognize them. Healthy individuals should raise conscious awareness about their emotions. In this way they will be able to express them appropriately and not to suppress them.

We basically distinguish between pleasant and unpleasant emotions. Pleasant ones are affirming our values, unpleasant emotions are usually endangering them, but they are important to our overall mental health, so it is also right that we learn to cope and to deal with them in an appropriate way.

#### UNPLEASANT EMOTIONS

Anger, sadness, disappointment, aggression, rage, anxiety, fear are feelings that are often understood as negative. But the right term for them is “unpleasant”. They exist, of course, for a reason, and as such, they are an important part of our psychological makeup, without them we would be in a serious danger. **We live in a society where it is dangerous when we begin to oppress everything that is not positive.** Thus, we are moving away from the palette of negative emotions that have their important functions. Fear protects us from danger, anger drives us to action, that is, to change. The feeling of guilt forces us to think about whether we may have hurt someone by words or actions.

Suppressing anger, sadness, anxiety or feelings of guilt are dangerous practices for an individual's development. Prolonged repression of negative emotions can erupt into severe mental illness. Unpleasant emotions are therefore just as important as positive ones, as they both evaluate our life and the experiences that result from it. Through them, we grow in the acquisition and management of emotional experiences. This is called **“lifelong emotional development”**. It is about recognizing and dealing with emotions in the way that we become competent, wise, experienced, internally calm, and sovereign in our opening outwards. When an individual conquers this, he or she broadens his or her range of emotional competence, and thus his or her social intelligence.

»Emotional and social intelligence refers to the competencies linked to self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management, which enable people to understand and manage their own and others' emotions in social interactions«.

Social intelligence is a measure of self-awareness and social awareness that leads to social attitudes and beliefs. People with a well-developed social intelligence can manage complex social changes in their lives, and they can adapt to different stressful events.

#### **SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE ENCOMPASSES FOUR DIMENSIONS:**

- **Awareness** – Social awareness means that the person has knowledge of what is going on in society. It is the ability to understand social contexts (which consist of social situations). When a person is aware of a situation, they can choose the appropriate behaviour.
- **Presence** – This characteristic is the matter of how an individual's sense of self reflects outwards and how it is experienced by other people. People who are confident and respect and value themselves, also reflect these qualities outwards and that is how other people experience them, when they come in contact.
- **Authenticity** – A person with this quality reflects sincerity, loyalty, and acts in such a way as to give the impression of credibility, trustworthiness. It is the quality of being authentic or genuine.
- **Empathy** – Means the ability to put oneself in somebody else's shoes, to understand them and feel them. Empathy is very important in a relationship because people use it to connect, help each other, encourage one another and seem effective and authentic.



### 3.4 ♦ Types of aggression

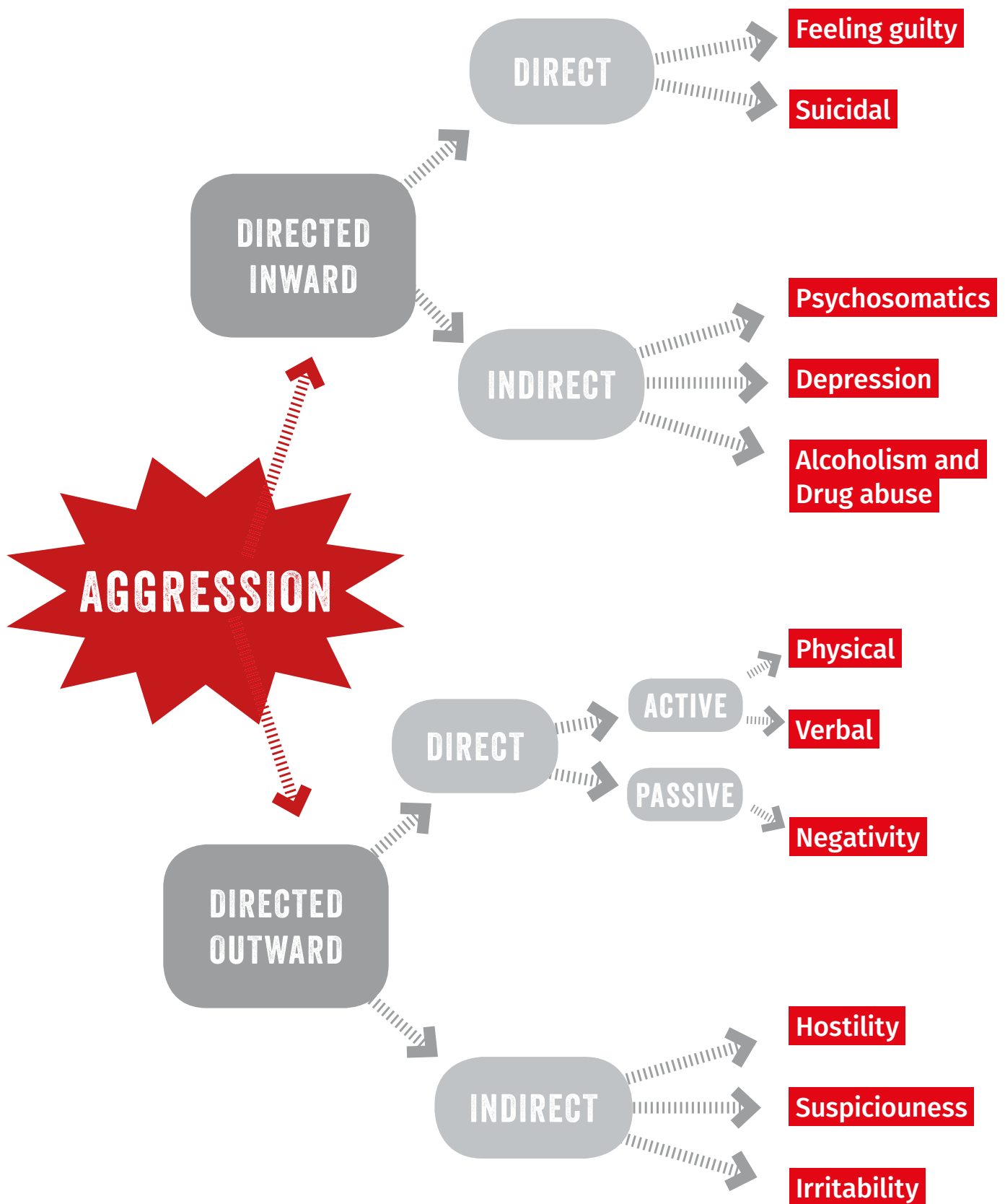


Figure 1: Direction scheme and forms of aggression (Tanja Lamovec, 1978)

### 3.4.1 ♦ Physical aggression

In all modern societies, physical violence is becoming a major concern. In the last four decades many studies have been conducted about the development of physical aggression – from a very young and innocent, playful child to violent juvenile delinquents.

In the background of aggressive behaviour are not just anger, rage and hatred, as we may think, but very often it can be a whole range of other emotions, such as fear, or jealousy, self-hatred, envy, sadness, etc. The source of aggressive behaviour can actually be any unpleasant emotion.

Aggressive behaviour also depends on the **social environment**, especially the **social norms** associated with aggression. The norms in the social system determine when certain behaviour is labelled aggressive, which forms of aggressive behaviour are encouraged, desirable, inherently self-evident and which are not, where is the origin of aggression, etc.

If the norm in society says that aggression is something innate, society must take care of control and restraint – most often with a medical approach, but if the norm in society says that aggressive behaviour is highly dependent on the environment, then it changes the environment by itself.

More recent studies emphasize that different factors affect aggression, particularly when operating interconnected. For example, the internal physical and mental state may act as a predisposition, if the aggressive behaviour may indeed occur in certain circumstances depending on the situation itself, on the learned forms of reaction (influenced by broader cultural and narrower social norms, on socialization), on the intensity and types of emotions (anger, rage, fear, shame), from assessing the consequences of aggressive behaviour.

An individual's tendency towards aggressive behaviour is usually the result of **the interconnection** of many different influences:

- lack of love and affection from parents,
- the strict and overly rigid discipline from parents in the childhood,
- genetic basis and neurological equipment,
- the level of stress in life and the degree to which an individual succeeds or fails to satisfy important personal needs and desires,
- attitudes and values about aggression that apply in the society in which the individual lives (norms created with friends and acquaintances),
- aggressive behaviour towards others while solving their problems (in real life or through movies and TV screens),
- how an individual has learned to see his own social world.

When we talk about the expression of physical aggression, we are also talking about physical violence, which is recognized violence that leaves visible consequences on the victim.

This set of aggressive behaviour includes all of the undesired compression, tapping, pushing, smacking, slap in the face, kicks to the arm, boxing, minor injuries, serious injuries, mutilation, all the way to murder. The consequences of such behaviour are manifested in the victim as fear, isolation, loss of self-esteem, loss of confidence, crying, suppression of needs or even thoughts of suicide.

When it comes to physical aggression, of course, we cannot omit the extreme aggression or threats that threaten our society in general. Of course, radicalism and terrorism represent the greatest threat.



### 3.4.2 ♦ Verbal aggression

Verbal aggression is a behaviour that **attacks person's self-image in order to inflict mental pain**; an abuser through blaming, accusing, insulting, or moderating, justifies his or her actions and decisions.

In most cases, it is a means of asserting the authority or physical superiority of a weaker individual. The ultimate goal is to devalue and humiliate the other.

A verbally abusive person uses insults, threats, ridicules or makes other verbal assaults to achieve his goal without any compassion, which makes the victim feel personally deprived. His/her self-esteem gradually diminishes. Verbal aggression is in most cases a means of asserting authority or physical superiority to a weaker person. All forms of verbal violence listed are also forms psychological violence and emotional pressure.

In this sense, we understand and classify **hate speech as a form of more severe verbal violence** and zero tolerance towards it.

#### CONFLICTS

Conflicts are normal elements of life and relationships that we build. There are conflicts in all areas of life: in family, in marriage, friendships and in the workplace. **Learning how to deal with them rather than avoiding it is crucial.** There are many strategies which help us to resolve problems correctly. But we also need to understand why conflicts arise and what they actually mean.

**Conflicts arise from differing needs.** Each individual wants to be heard, understood, and respected. A person in a situation or relationship where these needs are not met may feel frustrated and angry. Conflicts usually arise from such dissatisfaction. It should be understood that an individual has a basic need to be respected and understood.

**A conflict is more than just a disagreement.** Conflicts arise when people feel threatened. The threat may be obvious or it can be hidden in the individual's fear that he will lose his freedom, possibility of choice, identity, and personal power.

**Conflicts continue to aggravate when they are ignored.** The error which most people make is that they try to ignore or deny the problem. Doing this only increases the discontent and the problem does not get solved.

**We respond to conflicts based on our perceptions.** Each person has her own interpretation of a situation or conflict. Our internal beliefs, values, attitudes and experiences define how we see a person and her behaviour. Because of this diversity, people need to talk to each other and try to resolve the conflict.

**Conflicts trigger strong emotions.** Conflicts are closely linked to the emotions of an individual and when a conflict arises, strong personal feelings usually surge to the surface. A person has first to be aware of her own emotions and has to know how to manage them in order to be successful in solving conflicts.

**Conflicts are an opportunity for growth.** Conflicts are an integral and indispensable part of relationships. If we perceive them as opportunities rather than threats we may turn them to our advantage.

**Successful conflict resolution depends on our ability to regulate stress and our emotions.** Emotional awareness is the key to understand ourselves and others. If we do not know how we feel or why we feel that way, we will not be able to communicate effectively or resolve disagreements. It takes a lot of effort but at the same time it can be rewarding if we know how to properly evaluate and express our own emotions. A person that knows how to express her own feelings and is capable of high emotional awareness will enter into fewer conflicts and will create a less stressful environment for herself and for those around.

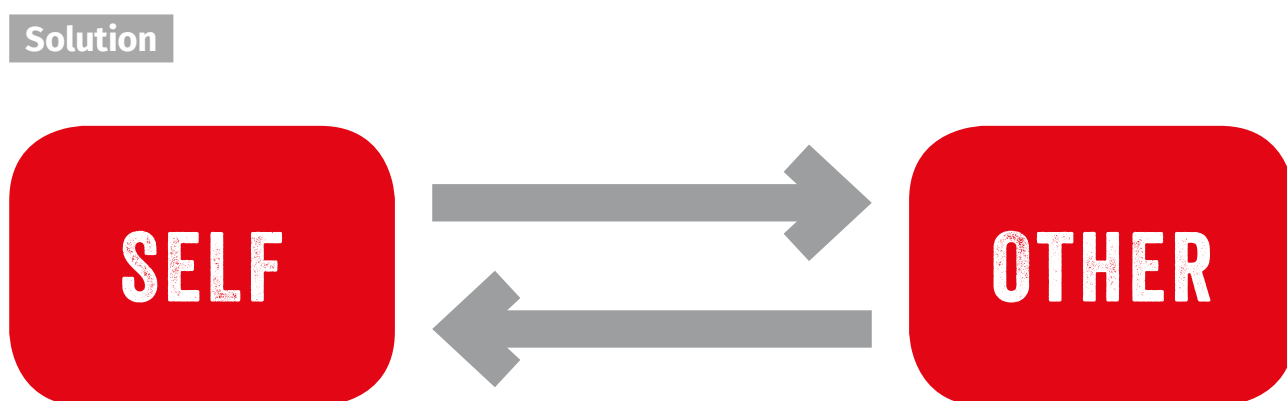




The famous and respected author in the field of interpersonal communication, Thomas Gordon, speaks about **no-lose method which turns conflicts into cooperation**. Collaboration techniques take conflict resolution as an opportunity to come to a mutual result and are focused on finding an alternative which meets each party's concerns.

The **No-lose Method** is a technique of resolving conflicts in a manner where no person who is involved in the conflict loses. This technique is effective as it produces a solution which brings mutual need satisfaction. Within the conflict every person is heard, understood and respected. A person in the process of the No-lose Method does not use his own power to dominate another person, but wants to come to a common solution, which will be beneficial for both sides.

In diagram form No-lose Method looks like this:



**Solution**

In the process of No-lose Method, the person uses a **two-way communication**, which contains I-messages, active listening and respectful language.

### 3.4.3 ♦ Online aggressive behaviour

In recent time, the use of Internet and online virtual environments have become increasingly popular. Most households have a computer at home and also have the access to the World Wide Web. In the last years, mobile devices have joined and even expanded the possibility “to be connected”, allowing web contents to be accessed almost anytime and from anywhere. Although the Internet offers various benefits, including instant access to an overwhelming amount of information, easy communication and affordable entertainment, it is not without repercussions.

The virtual world is becoming more and more a place of escapism as it can also lead the way to a departure from the everyday real world. Of course **there are certain rules for online and virtual environment behaviour**, but they are nevertheless grossly violated in various forums, blogs and especially on social networks. Content is deliberately and frequently offensive. Homophobic language, sexist, racist language is often used and it is certainly part of a group's identity – crossing borders to gain attention.

Among social scientists anonymity has long been a topic of great interest. The most known example of deindividuation is the Stanford Prison Experiment in which individuals who hide their faces and are dressed in guard uniforms engaged in cruel behaviours toward prisoners. This kind of behaviour probably would not occur if they were not anonymous.

**Anonymity and social modeling components** are also involved in online social settings. The online atmosphere may affect the degree to which an individual displays verbal aggression, as well as the temptation to engage in various pro-social or antisocial behaviours, coded for direct and indirect aggression. The **purpose of direct aggression** is confrontation in the way to »damage« the victim's self-esteem, reputation or social status.

Confrontation is a scary prospect. And passive-aggressive individuals know this. But without directly addressing such behaviour, the dynamic will be played out again and again.

How then can we confront online passive aggressive behaviour? The confrontation works best through **reflective and respectful verbal communication**.

Step 1: Recognize the pattern of passive-aggressive behaviour

Step 2: Refuse to engage in conflict cycle

Step 3: Affirm the anger

Step 4: Manage the denial

Step 5: Revisit the thought

### 3.4.4 ♦ The anger scale

The self-assessment questionnaire is available at the following links:

➤ [https://www.mhankyswoh.org/Uploads/files/pdfs/Anger-NovacoAngerScale\\_20130812.pdf](https://www.mhankyswoh.org/Uploads/files/pdfs/Anger-NovacoAngerScale_20130812.pdf)

➤ <http://www.midss.org/sites/default/files/cas.pdf>

➤ <http://www.midss.org/sites/default/files/cas.pdf>

## 3.5 ♦ Examples

### 3.5.1 ♦ Example 1: Bobo doll experiment (Social learning theory and aggression)

Bandura and his colleagues already in early 1960s developed and conducted a series of experiments to demonstrate the imitation of aggression. They became famous as "The Bobo Doll Studies."

For the purpose of the study, 72 children were selected, with equal numbers of girls and boys. Each child conducted the process individually and under two conditions: either they saw an aggressive or non-aggressive model. Within each experimental group, half of them saw a same-sex model interacting with the Bobo doll, and the other half of them watched the opposite-sex model doing the same.

The control group, composed of 24 children, took the same process, but did not see an adult role model interacting with the doll. For the purpose of the experiment, the children have been rated for their level of aggressiveness before the process, as well later, after the process (cause and effect).

The child initially entered a playroom with an adult role model and an experimenter. In one corner of the room the child played, while the adult role model went to another corner of the room. The construction set which the adult role model had consisted of a mallet and the Bobo doll which was 1 meter and a half tall.

The experimenter left, and after a few minutes of playing with the construction set, the aggressive role model started to hit the Bobo doll. Both physical violence (hitting the doll with the mallet) and verbal violence (comments like "Take that Bobo" or "Sockeroo") was used by him. In the non-aggressive condition the role model simply ignored the Bobo doll and continued to play with the construction set.

After ten minutes the experimenter entered the play room again and asked the role model to leave. The child was asked to follow the experimenter to another playroom, where lovely toys have been placed. After a few minutes where the child was able to play with the toys, the experimenter raised a frustration in the child to tell him that actually these toys are for other children. The child was taken to another room with other toys, among them also the Bobo doll and some aggressive toys (e.g. gun, mallet) and some non-aggressive toys (e.g. lorries and cars, paper and crayons, tea set).

Behind a two-way mirror, Bandura and his colleagues were able to observe the children's behaviour. Those children who had observed the behaviour of the aggressive role model showed much stronger aggressive behaviour, and the role models' gender played a significant influence on how the behaviour was imitated.

When the role model was male, boys showed more aggressive behaviour. For girls, while the same trend was seen, it was less significant. This might be partly explained by the generalisation that boys on the whole are more aggressive than girls.

In variations to his original study, Bandura showed that rewarding the behaviour of the model encouraged the imitation of it. This process is known as vicarious reinforcement.

### 3.5.2 ♦ Zimbardo's Stanford prison simulation

When aggression and violence occur within an institutionalised setting, it often attracts the attention of the media.

To maintain order and combat anti-social behaviour, institutions often create a set of rules. This particular form of aggression involves the behaviour of people who serve in institutions such as schools, healthcare settings, police, security services and military as well as criminals and terrorist groups. Shortly, those who are bound together by a common purpose to be aggressive. For example, wearing an uniform and taking away individual clothes may take away also a part of their personal identity. This can play a major part in depersonalization.

The question to arise and consider here is whether some people are just aggressive to other people because of the type of their personality, or whether good people do bad things when they are put into a situation that encourages aggressive behaviour. Such a situation was created by Zimbardo in the famous **Stanford Prison Study**.

In 1973 in the basement of Stanford University a “prison situation” was set up for the purpose of the experiment. Participants were randomly assigned to take roles of prisoners and prison guards. The aim was to see if they would internalise their role. The experiment came out control and had to be completed prematurely as the prison guards became increasingly cruel within the duration of the experiment. Some of the prisoners showed all the signs of a „pathological prisoner syndrome“, manifested either in rebellion and negative emotional responses or in excessive obedience. Some of them showed various signs of depression, others had violent attacks of rage. They all showed signs of depersonalization and deindividuation, and at the same time as loss of personal identity and lack of control.

Prison guards, on the other hand, showed all the “pathology of power”. They got involved in their role, even enjoyed it, so that some of them did unpaid part-time work and they were very disappointed when the experiment stopped. Many of them abused their power and rejected food intended for prisoners, visits to toilets, removing their bedding, etc. The punishment was carried out with little or no justification. Most notable, however, was the fact that good guards never questioned the activities and operation of their colleagues, the bad guards. And although the experiment was actually supposed to be a „role play“, as it went on, this was not the case. The guards' brutal behaviour was not there at the start but developed over the first few days. They also did not play up to the cameras as might be expected, but rather their behaviour was worse when they knew that they were not observed. Each participant who was considered that the „role“ was suitable for him, passed an initial physical and psychological test. All of them were considered ‘normal’ with no participant being assessed as more aggressive than the others. Participants were consistent with the results of tests allocated either in the role of a prison guard or a prisoner. Dave Eshleman was one of the participants who was assigned to the role of prison guard. He was the most degrading of all guards. Did he have any predispositions for this kind of aggressiveness? He came from an upper middle class academic family, he loved music, food and people. He described himself as a person who is in favour all human beings. Is it not then that the situation itself „hijacked“ his normal thinking so that he subjected the prisoners to his ruthless and relentless behaviour only as “little experiments”, as he described them.

Aggressive behaviour is undoubtedly more dynamic than simply having social or institutional motives. Observation of aggression in individuals suggests the need to examine possible biological explanations.

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# CHAPTER 3:

# COMMUNICATION

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ARGUMENTS  
AGAINST  
AGGRESSION

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.” (George Bernard Shaw).

“I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change.  
I am changing the things I cannot accept.” (Angela Y. Davis)

## 1 ♦ INTRODUCTION

Communication is a social process in which people use symbols to establish and interpret the meanings of the context. The correct interpretation of messages ensures survival in all senses: from the detection of dangers and improvement of living conditions, to the accumulation of knowledge and transmission to next generations.

Communication can be defined as the process of transmitting information and common understanding from one person to another (Keyton, 2011).

Several elements participate in the communicative process. The **sender** initiates the communication. The **receiver** is the individual to whom the message is sent. The sender encodes the idea by selecting words, symbols, or gestures with which to compose a message. The sending element and the receiver can perform alternate functions and interchangeable roles, especially in interpersonal communication and social networks. The message is the outcome of the encoding, which takes the form of verbal, nonverbal, or written language. The message is sent through a **medium** or channel, which is the carrier of the communication (Lunenburg, 2010).

The message is composed of signifier and signified. Feedback allows the sender to determine whether the message has been received and understood, but the meaning of a message, i.e. the signified, is interpreted in relation to other signifiers and depends on the context or frame of reference, the culture, or the expectations of the people who communicate. That is the strength but also the paradox of communication.

## 2 ♦ TYPOLOGY, TAXONOMY

### 2.1 ♦ Verbal and non-verbal communication

Communication is intrinsic to our species and has become an essential factor for the survival of the individual in our society given the central role of customs, rituals, social and cultural traditions and history.

One of the elements of communication is the code, which is „the set of signs and rules that are used and combined“ (Hervás, 1998, p. 14). Regarding verbal and non-verbal communication, we refer specifically to the code used to „encrypt the message“ (Hervás, 1998, p.23). These codes can be linguistic – verbal, oral or written language – or „non-linguistic“ – non-verbal language, , sonorous, visual or body language ... -.

Thus, we can establish different subtypes of verbal and non-verbal communication.

**In verbal communication** words are used for the transmission of the message and is „specific to humans“

(Hervás, 1998, p.23). This communication may be carried out in different ways: face to face between two people, groups, via different channels, through different resources and media such as telephone, writing, press, radio, television, smartphone, computer, etc.

Verbal communication is divided into two basic modalities (Hervás, 1998):

a) Oral or spoken form, as the spontaneous form of the language. It can be used by all speakers of a language regardless of their educational level. It is acquired naturally and is accompanied by expressive forms, such as intonation, mime, etc. The sense used to receive the message is the ear, but the related expressive forms are perceived through sight, and even touch (when there is physical contact between the people who speak).

b) Written form, where the auditory linguistic signs of the oral form are replaced by writing -the graphic representation of signs-. In this case, knowledge of the written language is necessary in order to be able to communicate, so not all people who speak a language can use this form of communication since this requires literacy. It is „an artificial form that fixes the language“, that needs to be learnt and that has some rules. The sense used in written communication is sight.

Regarding **non-verbal communication**, it is perceived mostly through our body and has a wide variety of signs, such as our gestures, sounds, movements we make with the body, hands, eyes, in addition to sensory images (both visual, olfactory or auditory). In other words, non-verbal communication uses non-linguistic signs to communicate (Cestero, 2006).

Verbal and non-verbal communication are connected, they are not two separate entities, so when we use verbal communication through our voice, together with words and sense, additional information about us is also being sent to the other person (that is, non-verbal communication). For example, the tone of our voice, its resonance or the intensity, etc. Also, the tone and intonation of our speech, the syllabic duration or the rhythm and silences greatly affect the information we send with our voice (Foguet & Balcells, 1999).

With regard to non-verbal communication we must not forget that, besides all the non-linguistic signs, the habits and cultural customs of each community are also included. Within non-verbal communication most research has established that there are four systems (Uribe, 2009):

Proxemic: the space, disposition and distance that is acquired when speaking.

Paralinguistic: the system that analyzes the tone, volume, rhythm or speed

Kinesthetic: related to the gestures, bodily postures and attitudes of the person speaking.

Diacritic: associated with symbols, such as the objects they carry with them, tattoos or the clothes they wear.

In comparison, written communication is more complex and difficult than oral communication, as Hervás emphasizes (1998):

When we write, „we do not have the gestures and tones that can supply deficiencies in the expression“. In the digital environment, emoticons, smileys or emojis have been precisely created to solve this problem.

In oral communication, errors of expression can be excused or corrected directly, which cannot be done in written communication

There are words and constructions of the oral language that are not usual in the written language, and the same happens in the opposite direction.

In the written language, the use of an unintelligible handwriting prevents communication, the same as noise in oral communication.



## 2.2 ♦ Interpersonal communication, face to face

Interpersonal communication is understood as the process in which participants express something of themselves, using verbal or non-verbal signs, with the intention of influencing in some way in the behaviour or the attitude of the other person (Marroquín & Villa, 1995). Therefore, this process requires a physical approach, there is a direct contact with the other person. In addition, interpersonal communication combines both verbal and non-verbal communication. A very important aspect should be taken into account when we address personal communication: this process is not linear, but circular, because when we are speaking with someone, we are talking and listening at the same time, so there is a mutual interaction and influence between what we consider “sender and receiver” (Marroquín & Villa, 1995, p. 24)

However, the interpersonal communication process presented above has had to be reconsidered with the emergence of technological devices and the different options that they bring to communication. Moreover, there is also an interpersonal communication when two or more people communicate with each other using some electronic device, and the processes inherent to verbal and non-verbal communication are also present. For example, if we make a video conference, we can observe the expressions, the tone of voice, or how the other person is dressed. This fact has meant a revolution in our communication, since now it is mainly digital, and the sound, text and image take part in it (Paniagua, 2006).

Therefore, interpersonal communication can be extended to all communication developed between two people, regardless of the channel used, or whether or not there is proximity between them.

The interpersonal communication process involves several participants. Usually, the process is developed between two, three or four people without the intervention of technology (Bolgueri Escorza, 2018), but the number can be increased through any technological device. The physical proximity between the receiver and the sender is closed, so the communicative act can easily happen and both people can use their senses and speak comfortably. However, the technology has revolutionized this “proximity” and we can establish a communicative process in which all aspects of non-verbal and verbal communication take part even if that person is thousands of kilometers away. Perhaps, feedback and the circular communication process are the most important aspects of interpersonal communication. This communication is never produced in a linear way such as mass communication, but there is a continuous interaction between people who communicate with each other. This fact, in turn, has an effect among communicators due to the high affective involvement that they have in this process since the other person is demanding a constant response.

The intervention of technology in interpersonal communication also has other consequences because sometimes communicative acts occur at the same time in different forms. We can be talking to someone face-to-face while we answer a message or send an image to another person.

A large group of scholar members from the communication area have focused on the emotional aspect through non-violent communication, also known as “compassionate communication”, which attempts to listen compassionately to the other person (Rosenberg, 2003).

In this sense, assertive communication is the ability to express positive and negative ideas and feelings in an open, honest and direct manner. In this way, our rights are recognized but, at the same time, the rights of others are respected. It forces us to take responsibility for ourselves and our actions without judging or blaming others. It allows us to confront each other constructively and find a mutually satisfactory solution when there is a conflict.

## 2.3 ♦ Communication in the digital environment

Internet has changed our way of communicating and relating to each other. As sociologist Castells points out, „since human activity is based on communication and the Internet transforms the way we communicate, our lives are deeply affected by this new communication technology“ (Castells, 2001: 19). In addition, unlike traditional mass media, Internet is at the same time an interpersonal media and mass media (Cardoso, 2010). The development of ICT has opened new interaction channels that combine written word, voice or image. In our current global network society, personal bonds are established both in the real physical world and the virtual world -where space-time barriers break down-.

Internet is an open space, where the development of the social web or web 2.0 has made possible an active participation of the citizenship, the power to pass from mere consumers to content producers (prosumers). But the Internet has lights and shadows, like the real physical world itself. And the anonymity with which users can act favors the development of hate behaviours and verbal aggressions (such as cyberbullying or other online harassments).

Digital literacy – to have enough competences to deal with this new environment – is key to the full inclusion in the Information Society, and to face problems such as fake news. One of the basic digital competences for the coexistence on the Net is the „netiquette“, which combines communicative and social competences and is based on ethical standards of behaviour in the digital environment. The key lies in a responsible exercise of freedom of expression, based on the respect and tolerance, avoiding any type of message or content that might harm or be offensive or degrading to another person.

### 3 ➤ RESPOND TO HATE SPEECH FROM NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION

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#### PLEASE PAY ATTENTION TO THE FOLLOWING DISCLAIMER!

The method that is explained below has the aim to have a sincere dialog with another person. Don't use this method when the situation is not favourable for such dialog:

- when the other person is physically or verbally threatening you;
- when he/she has a mental disorder you can't handle;
- when you are not able to feel any empathy not for them neither for others because you have too much emotional burdens yourself.

"Don't touch me, fag!" "All immigrants can fuck off, if you ask me." Statements like these nearly always affect us: they shock us, or we become angry or scared. The intensity of our reactions causes us to find it hard to react adequately: we become aggressive, shut down and build anger up inside, or we become indifferent. It's likely the situation will escalate: the anger and misunderstandings grow, and people grow further and further apart.

Below, we've described a way to react to aggression without escalating the situation. This method aims to approach the other with an open attitude. Not necessarily to what the other is saying, but to what's happening deep within them. With an open attitude like that, an opportunity for conversation presents itself, which helps the connection between you and the other to continue to exist, instead of drifting apart further.

This method consists of four steps:

- ➊ Awareness
- ➋ Empathic resonance
- ➌ General humanity
- ➍ Reflection and empowerment

This method is mostly inspired by mindfulness and the model of 'Non-Violent Communication' (See references). But this approach is not a complete training in mindfulness or Non-violent Communication. That requires professional trainers!

### 3.1 ♦ Step 1: Awareness

The first step to reacting adequately to aggression is being aware that signs of aggression are present. Expressions of aggression can be recognised cognitively and affectively. In both cases, listening is the most important skill. Listening to your own body and listening to the words that are being said.

#### AFFECTIVE RECOGNITION OF AGGRESSION

Affective means on a level of sensations and emotions. Affectively recognising aggression happens through physical reactions: your muscles tense up, your temperature rises, you feel like you can't breathe, you feel cramped or you don't feel anything at all anymore, it seems like you're sedated. These reactions stem from the reptilian brain, which is the oldest part of the human brain. That part of our brain focusses on survival, and responds with the well-known survival reflexes: fight, flight or freeze.

It's easy to get carried away with our emotions, because of those reflexes. They're subconscious reactions. It makes it hard for us to act rationally and often makes aggression even worse. You can learn how to consciously deal with the reflexes of your reptilian brain with the help of mindfulness.

#### MINDFULNESS

All our relationships, communication, work / home life and other experiences spring forth from our thoughts, feelings and actions, together called patterns. Some of these patterns help us, whilst others tend to lead to suffering. By becoming more mindful or aware, we enhance our capacity to cope with life's challenges with dignity and elegance. Instead of adding to the confusion or fueling hate. When we are greedy to end greed or when we hate people who express hateful behaviour, we could actually strengthen the things we are fighting against.

That is not to say that practicing mindfulness or awareness is being passive. We can stand up for our rights, set boundaries or undertake action while practicing mindfulness or awareness, in a more efficient and more productive way. We do not let our lizard-brain determine our reaction: fight, flight or freeze. This type of reactivity clouds our mind and does not help us to make the best decisions.

So how does mindful awareness help when being confronted with aggression? We pause. We start by noticing how this expression of aggression influences us: which thoughts, feelings or behavioural tendencies arise?

Pausing, sometimes a few seconds is sufficient, creates awareness and offers us a choice: first of all, it helps us to make a conscious decision about how we would like to invest our attention and our energy. Do you want to invest in a very primitive response, such as fight, flight or freeze? Or a more investigative response, what could help you and the situation?

Secondly, it helps us to choose from different reaction patterns. We can ask ourselves the question, what will really help this situation and place our attention upon those thought, feelings, actions and skills that are most beneficial? Instead of, for example, lashing out.

Thirdly, it helps us to see the needs of the parties involved. Yours and also those of the aggressor. Which makes it for more easier to work towards a solution.

Is this for everyone? Yes. Developing mindfulness or awareness is beneficial and accessible for almost everyone, everywhere. This is proven by more than 7.000 academic peer-reviewed studies. For the sake of this project when speaking about awareness we refer to mindfulness.

Awareness is cultivated by practicing with the tree pillars of awareness: training our attention, gaining insights in helpful and harmful patterns, enhancing kindness for ourselves and others.

## TRAINING OUR ATTENTION:

Training our attention helps us to invest our time and energy in those things we would like to invest it in. Instead of drifting off regularly in thoughts, emotions or behaviour that does not benefit us. Training the attention can be done by mindfulness meditation.

**Practice:** The most simple way is sitting down comfortably, directing the attention inward by counting each outbreath until reaching ten. When reaching ten, simply starting again from one. And when losing count, starting from one as well, without judging.

## GAINING INSIGHTS IN HELPFUL AND HARMFUL PATTERNS:

Whilst training our awareness, we will be distracted. The attention tends to drift off and no longer be with the breath.

**Practice:** Each time the attention is somewhere else, name where the attention has gone (e.g. planning, contemplating, remembering, desiring or resisting) and then return to the breath nonjudgmentally.

Each time we do this we start gaining insights in how and where we invest our energy in, over and over again. And whether the patterns are helpful or harmful. Each practice round strengthens our ability to being aware of which patterns are present and with the help of the first pillar we can shift our attention.

## ENHANCING KINDNESS FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS:

Cultivating self-care and self-acceptation helps us to take better care of ourselves and others.

**Practice:** When meditating do not judge, cling to or resist thoughts, emotions or behaviour. Simply let them be. Name them (second pillar), smile and focus the attention again on the breath (first pillar) This helps us to be less reactive and to direct our attention where we would actually like to place it upon.

**Practice:** 5 or 10 minutes a day is a wonderful start to become more skilled with these three pillars and thus to become more aware.

The huge benefit is that they enable us to become aware of what is really happening and what is really needed, in all sort of situations. This is necessary because when people display aggressive behaviour there are often unmet needs, for everyone involved. Being able to see what those unmet needs are, helps us to investigate what is a possible solution for the situation. This requires awareness.

## COGNITIVE RECOGNITION OF AGGRESSION

On a cognitive level, which is basically your intellect, aggression can be recognised by listening to what is being said, the words that are spoken. Aggression can be recognised by the style of language that's used. Expressions of aggression are often black and white, lacking nuance. They're expressions based on moral matters of right and wrong, normal and abnormal. People get depersonalised, and are put into boxes or get labels. Forms of aggressive communication are: judging someone, stereotypes, cursing or insulting someone, embarrassing or humiliating someone, accusing someone, comparing, generalising, demanding.

Aggressive communication leads to blame and punishment. Marshall Rosenberg, the creator of Non-Violent Communication, calls it 'Communication which is alienated from life'. We become separated from life because since the heart has disappeared, as result of such communication. Life-alienating communication is communication that encourages violent behaviour towards both others and ourselves. It leads to conflict, fights, and war.

**Assignment:** What makes the following sentences 'life-alienating'?

- Women criticise anything and everything.
- Teenagers are so incredibly rude.
- He looks like a bulldozer.

**Practice:** For one day, pay attention to titles of articles in the newspaper or on news sites. What kind of life-alienating language do you find in those?

Life-alienating communication hardens people, which in turn helps aggression and violence grow. People get separated and estranged more and more. The connection is lost. This can be restored by focussing on what's really happening within people, and between those individuals. Communication that connects people is life-enriching communication.

## 3.2 ♦ Step 2: Empathic resonance

That what takes inside you, which you also experience physically, are feelings and needs. When reacting to aggression, you should focus less on the words that are being said. Instead, you should focus on the underlying feelings and needs. The content of the other's words can be unacceptable to you. But the feelings and needs behind them may not be unacceptable, because often those are universally human. By resonating with that, instead of focusing on the content, you'll move along with the other's 'attack', in a martial-art-like way. It enhances the chance that the aggression will decrease.

Empathic listening is a way to do this. That doesn't mean you have to agree with the other. It means that you show the other that you're actually listening and they're being heard. Being heard is a deep human need. Showing someone that you're actually hearing what they're saying, means you're treating them respectfully.

Empathically receiving someone's expressions can be done by naming their feelings. Don't do that in a judging or condescending way. Instead, try to help, search for the right words and try to guess carefully what kind of feelings the other is experiencing.

### FEELINGS

Feelings, or emotions, are sensory sensations. They give signals about your survival, safety or wellbeing.

Basic emotions are: anger, disgust, fear, sadness, happiness and surprise.

- When you're angry, that's a signal that a boundary has been crossed. You feel irritated, frustrated, livid, rebellious, or furious.
- When you're scared or when you feel a strong aversion for something, you're getting a signal that you're in danger or there's something you can't trust. You feel restless, worried, insecure, distrustful, or panicky.
- When you're sad, you're getting a signal that you've lost something or someone (or you could lose something or someone). You feel gloomy, dreary, unhappy, or bitter.
- When you're happy, you're getting a signal that everything is okay. You're doing something that suits you, that's good for you, or which gives you energy. You feel comfortable, calm, safe, connected and loved.

There are more ways to categorize different feelings. You can find a list that's used in the NVC-program Mediate Your Life at the end of this chapter (See attachment 1).

The signals of feelings travel to your brain through nerve pathways. The human brain consists of 3 parts, or three brains. We can react to those signals based on each of those brains. The oldest part of our brains is the reptilian brain. This part reacts to emotional signals, as described earlier, with survival instincts: flight, fight or freeze. When you're experiencing anger, for example, you can instinctively start to flail or kick. When you're scared, you could freeze in panic, finding it hard to move.

The second part of the human brain is the mammalian brain, or the "limbic system". It takes care of memory, learning, motivation and regulation. From this brain we react to signals similarly to what other mammals do. Our reaction to fear (tensed muscles, alertness) is very similar to the behaviour herd animals show when they approach a lion. Monkeys, much like us, use their anger to communicate that they want others to stay away from them. The outer part of our brain, the cortex, is where our human brain is. It's focussed on thinking, speaking, connecting patterns, and defining things. The meaning and causes we attach to our feelings come from this place. I feel sad because my dog died and I miss him.

**Practice:** Think back to a moment when you experienced one of the basic emotions. Do you recognise any survival instincts? Any reaction from your mammalian brain or human brain?

### NON-VIOLENT FEELINGS

The function of the third brain is incredibly important for humans. It gives us the ability to take care of ourselves, our safety, our wellbeing, and to regulate our emotions better. At the same time, it sometimes makes us think that we're experiencing a feeling or emotion, when it's actually a judgement, interpretation, or generalisation. Which makes it 'life-alienating' according to NVC.

#### Examples:

- "I feel like I'm clumsy."
- "Do you feel like you're a loser?"
- "I feel that you dislike me."
- "Do you feel like you owe us an explanation?"

In those examples, it's not about actual emotions. It's about thoughts and judgements.

We can also mix emotions up with thoughts, judgements, and evaluations when we use words that make others responsible for how we feel. For example, when you say "I feel neglected", it sounds like you're expressing an emotion. But actually, you're saying something about the other: you are neglecting me. You're saying the other is the cause of your negative emotions. You're not talking about what you're actually feeling (sadness, anger), but you're stating your opinion about the other and you're blaming them.

Those expressions, where emotions get mixed up with thoughts/judgements, are called false feelings in NVC. They can be viewed as a way of using our human brain to avoid dealing with our actual emotions, because those might be too intense or confrontational. But when you really want to communicate openly and connect with someone, it's truly about the deeper feelings within you and the other person, instead of what we're thinking.



**Practice:** What's the real feeling behind those false feelings?

- I feel like a wet rag.
- I feel abandoned.
- I feel like you're lying.
- I feel manipulated.

**Practice:** Watch a discussion program on tv. Which (false) feelings do the participants of the discussion express?

### 3.3 ♦ Step 3: General humanity

Just like in (neuro)psychology, NVC assumes that the function of emotions is to send a signal. They tell you if you have or haven't met a certain need. NVC doesn't classify individual longings as 'needs'. Needs are values which are important to humans on an existential level. Important needs are: physical wellbeing, safety, connection, acknowledgement, autonomy, relaxation, peace, self-expression, and meaning (of life and actions).

Needs are universal, every human on earth has the same ones. The way everyone fulfils them differs per person, environment, place, and time. One person will fulfil the need to relax by watching tv, while someone else will go running. At one moment you'll need a warm sweater to feel physically comfortable, at another you'll need a cold glass of water. The way that is or can be used to fulfil a need is called 'strategy' in NVC.

**Practice:** Which needs are hidden within these expressions?

- I really need a new computer.
- I really need a cup of coffee in the morning before I can get to work.
- I want to know if you approve of my plan.
- I think that within our team, all of us should have the same goal and focus.

NVC divides feelings in two groups: those that show a need has been fulfilled and those that show it hasn't been fulfilled. When you're scared, it's possible that your need for safety hasn't been fulfilled. When you're angry, it's possible that your need of autonomy or acknowledgement hasn't been fulfilled. You could feel happy when your need of connection has been fulfilled.

You can find another categorisation system of needs in the list of Mediate Your Life (See attachment 2). There's three main categories of needs: Wellbeing, connection, self-expression. The first category, wellbeing, contains needs that have to do with the following: sustenance, safety, and order. The second category contains the following: love, empathy, and belonging. The third: freedom, honesty, and meaning.

**Practice:** How do you fulfil your needs of wellbeing, connection, and self-expression? Name as many examples as you can.

Non-violent Communication can broaden your view, whereas views during conflict can be narrow and close-minded. According to Marshal Rosenberg conflicts, judgements, and blame aren't necessarily the result of different insights or points of view. They're "tragic expressions of unmet needs". Certain needs (that are universally human) aren't met, or at least not fulfilled in a way you would like, which causes



disharmony. When you find out which needs aren't being met, your view on the situation will broaden. This will cause everyone involved to reconnect with their (meaningful) needs. This could possibly even lead to the insight that the needs of two seemingly opposing parties don't actually have to conflict at all.

**Practice:** Which needs could be hidden behind the following aggressive expressions?

- Immigrants are stealing our jobs.
- Men are so insensitive.
- Old people are always complaining.

## EMPATHIC LISTENING

Everything you've learned up until now about emotions and needs can be used to listen to someone with empathy, even when they're aggressively expressing themselves. When it comes to empathic listening, it doesn't mean you have to accept everything and agree with the other. What you are doing is putting your own thoughts and judgements aside. Instead, you're truly focussing on what the other is saying. When it comes to doing that, you're not really focussing on their words, but on what they're feeling and what they need. Even when the other's tone is aggressive, intimidating or violent, you're listening to and hearing their underlying emotions and needs. By doing this, the conversation opens up. It becomes deeper and more meaningful. Empathic listening can be done without words. It's nonverbal, by making eye-contact, occasionally nodding as the other speaks, and having an open physical attitude.

Verbally, you're empathically listening to someone by trying to guess or figure out what they're feeling. You empathise with them, put yourself in their shoes, and you try to mention what they're feeling. If you state those feelings in a questioning manner (you are guessing, after all!), the other gets the chance to reflect on how they're feeling and if you're correct. That way, the conversation becomes about what the other is really experiencing deep within. The other feels seen and heard.

### Examples:

"Kids are so noisy!"

Guessing what they're feeling: "Do you feel annoyed/tense/restless/tired/empty?"

Guess what they need: "Would you like more peace/relaxation/harmony?"

It's not a big problem if you don't guess the other's feeling or needs correctly right away. With your suggestions, you give the other a little push to figure out what it is that they feel or need themselves.

And again: there is no need for you to agree with the other. All you're doing, is helping the other to express what they're really feeling or experiencing. When you really don't agree with the other, you can always tell them after you've listened empathetically. There's a reasonable chance that there will be enough space for you to express your opinion as well. **Practice:** How could you listen empathetically to the following expressions? Try to guess the feelings and needs behind them.

- Women talk too much.
- Elderly employees are way too slow.
- Civil servants are lazy.

**Practice:** Watch a discussion program on tv. Try to guess what the feelings and needs of its participants are.

### 3.4 ♦ Step 4: Reflection and empowerment

When you've taken the first three steps and you notice that the aggression has lessened, and you and the other haven't drifted apart further, you can decide to leave it at that. The conflict has eased up and there's less tension between the two of you. There is an understanding, not necessarily for what has been said, but for what each of you feels and needs at that moment. This understanding can exist because the other's feelings and needs are familiar to you, they're universally human. Like this, you can understand someone else, even if you don't agree with them. In mindfulness, that's called 'compassion'.

#### EMPOWERMENT

You could also take a step further. You could try to help the other to grow and broaden their view. By looking at and reacting to expressions of aggression in this non-violent manner, you create a possibility to take a deeper look and understand more about the world. Reflection can lead to empowerment.

With this fourth step you give the other the opportunity to reflect and gain new insights, by asking open questions. **For example:**

- How did your view on immigrants/refugees/gays come to exist?
- Do you know any immigrants/refugees/gays? What would it be like if your brother/sister/daughter/son/best friend got into a relationship with an immigrant/refugee? Or if they would be gay or transgender?
- What is it like for you to look at his subject like this? What stands out to you?
- Do you notice any differences in how you're looking at this problem? What has changed about your view on this subject?

#### SELF-EMPATHY

In the approach as described above, the focus is completely on the other person: you're offering an empathic space to the other. But expressions of aggression also affect you. You too have feelings and needs.

It's a sign of self-care when you pay attention to your own feelings and needs as well. You can do that with silent empathy for yourself: you register what you're feeling and what needs those emotions stem from. You acknowledge that you have those feelings and needs. That means that you don't downplay them, but you also don't exaggerate them. They just exist and there's nothing wrong with that! That too requires mindfulness.

After you've gone through the first four steps, if there's enough space for it, you can inform the other of your own feelings and needs about what happened. For example: "What you said shocked me, because you're making a judgement about a very big group of people. I prefer to see them as individuals and would prefer our conversation to have more nuances. What is it like for you when I'm saying this?" This too can lead to a deeper conversation, reflection, and empowerment.

After this, it may be possible to take a look at the content of the conversation. The fierceness and intensity of the conversation has calmed down due to empathic listening, so now there's room to listen to what both of you actually have said.

It is important to remember that this approach doesn't work like magic. Even if you follow the described steps perfectly, there's no guarantee that you can stop every aggressive action or expression. Aggression is usually a sign that a person's 'bucket' is nearly full, sometimes so much that it seems impossible to reach the bottom. In those cases, there may be need for much more to tone down the aggression. But this approach can be used to take a tiny step in emptying that bucket!

### 3.5 ♦ Putting NVC into practice:

an example based upon the Declaration of Nashville

#### ARTICLE 7

WE CONFIRM that our understanding of masculine and feminine is to be decided by God's divine plan, as He describes in the Bible.

WE DENY that it's in line with the divine plan when people consciously portray themselves as someone with a homosexual or transgender identity.

A: It's just not normal to present yourself as gay or transgender. You're either a man or a woman, and it's normal to act like it.

B: You're irritated when people don't act obviously masculine or feminine?

A: Well, more than irritated. I just think it's ridiculous!

B: You're mad about it?

A: Yes. You want to know what you're dealing with, right? With a man or a woman!?

B: You'd prefer it if it's more clear?

A: Yeah well, otherwise I don't really know how to act either.

B: It confuses you?

A: Yeah, I find it difficult when I suddenly find out that my colleague lives with another man, or when my neighbour suddenly becomes a woman instead of a man.

B: You'd feel more comfortable if that's more predictable?

A: Yeah.. yeah, I think so... Don't you think it's nice when you can rest assured that things are what they are, and will go as they should?

B: Yes, that's definitely nice. Then again, we all know that life doesn't always work like that either.

A: Eh... no, I guess that's true. Life itself isn't always predictable either...

B: What would you feel like if your own son happened to be gay and struggled with that?

A: ...



## 4 ► EXAMPLES

### 4.1 ► Stop rumours

It is a strategy of communicative and social impact, which aims to fight, in a sustained manner over time, against rumours and negative stereotypes that hinder coexistence in diversity in the southern part of Spain in general and, in particular, in Andalusia, Melilla and Ceuta.

The “Andalusia Acoge Federation” promotes this campaign with the intention of incorporating associations, entities and individuals (professionals, citizens, journalists ...) that generate synergies to fight rumours.

The aim is to create a working network through the training and involvement of “Anti-Rumour Agents” that adopt an active attitude to combat rumours and stereotypes in their local and nearby environments. They represent the capillary vessels of the strategy carried out in neighbourhoods, towns and cities, presenting objective and argued information against false claims, and detecting the appearance of new rumours that must be fought.

#### CONSIDERATIONS:

##### Find the moment

- Rate whether you have time to develop the conversation.
- Decide whether the environment is suitable to start the conversation.

##### Show respect

- You must be willing to listen to the other person’s arguments. It is not a confrontation.
- Finish the conversation in a comfortable way. That will help the other person reflect on what you have talked about and make you feel better.

##### Value the other person

- Rumours have to do with our worries and fears.
- Try to understand and recognize the other person’s concerns in order to achieve a better receptivity. Avoid accusations.

##### Listen actively

- Active listening helps to understand the thoughts, feelings and actions of the other person and to give meaning to what he/she tells us.
- in order to listen you have to let speak, do not interrupt or speak above.
- Ask questions.

##### Get your attention

- Your arguments should be short and clear. With gentle language.
- Use real and close examples.

##### Keep calm

- A positive attitude favours the success of the dialogue.
- Control your emotions and provide calm answers.

- If you cannot control yourself, do not continue the conversation, close it in the best way possible and look for another time

**Web:** [www.stoprumores.com](http://www.stoprumores.com)

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/stoprumores](https://www.facebook.com/stoprumores)

**Twitter:** [www.twitter.com/stoprumores](https://www.twitter.com/stoprumores)

**Youtube:** [www.youtube.com/user/StopRumores](https://www.youtube.com/user/StopRumores)

**Instagram:** [instagram.com/stoprumores](https://www.instagram.com/stoprumores)

## 4.2 ♦ Maldita.es

Maldita.es is a non-profit media outlet whose purpose is to provide tools to the public for detecting errors, inaccuracies, lies and hoaxes widely disseminated in social networks. From their first variants “Maldita Hemeroteca” and “Maldito Buló”, with presence in various media as sections and independently on the Internet, the project have diversified their work in “Maldita Ciencia” and “Maldito Dato”, which focus on the control of disinformation and the public discourse through fact-checking techniques and data journalism, as well as “Maldita Migración” or “Maldito Feminismo”, two issues, migration and feminism, that are usually subject to fake news.

Recently they have been joined as a non-profit association with three main objectives:

- To make monitoring and control of political discourse and to promote transparency in public and private institutions.
- To verify and fight against misinformation.
- To promote media literacy and technological tools to create an aware community that can defend against misinformation in all areas.

Its slogan is “Journalism so you don’t get fooled” because through verification techniques, data journalism, newspaper research, technological tools and education they create content that allows citizens to be more confident about what is real and what is not. They have developed innovative formats especially focused on social networks and the creation of a committed community that collaborates with the project.

For her work, “Maldita Hemeroteca” has been awarded with the José Manuel Porquet Journalism Award in 2015 and finalist of the European Press Prize 2016. In addition, “Maldito Buló” was also a finalist of this same award in 2017. Since June 2017, they have also been part of the International Fact Checking Network as signatories of its Code of Principles and are the only Spanish media that was part of the High Level Group on ‘fake news’ and misinformation appointed by the European Commission in 2018.

**Web:** <https://maldita.es/>

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/mhemeroteca/>

**Twitter:** [https://twitter.com/maldita\\_es](https://twitter.com/maldita_es)

**Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/maldita.es/>

**Youtube:** [https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2sbPylvF9U7Rk-6b\\_MggGw](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2sbPylvF9U7Rk-6b_MggGw)

**Telegram:** [https://t.me/maldita\\_es](https://t.me/maldita_es)

**Whatsapp:** 655 19 85 38

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## **WEBSITES**

<https://www.ai-opener.nl/oefeningen/>

<https://cupofempathy.com/daily-5-minute-nvc-practice/>

<https://nvctraining.com/>

<https://www.gfk-training.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/kurzskript-neu-1.4.pdf>

<http://chooseconnection.squarespace.com/handouts-and-resources/>

## **APPS:**

For learning how to meditate / to train awareness:

Insight timer

Headspace

## **ONLINE TRAINING MATERIAL:**


For learning how to meditate / to train awareness:

<https://www.tarabrach.com/howtomeditate/>

<https://www.soundstrue.com/store/power-of-awareness/?sq=1>







# **CHAPTER 4:** **DEALING WITH DISORDERS**

**Partner: WIN**

Author: Wolfgang Eisenreich



**ARGUMENTS  
AGAINST  
AGGRESSION**

# 1 ♦ INTRODUCTION

## ANGER AND AGGRESSION

Anger is an immediate response that arises when we feel threatened or mistreated. Threats can come in many forms and are not just physical (such as being assaulted) but also include financial threats such as losing one's job. Feelings of jealousy, guilt and embarrassment can also be behind anger.

Anger is a natural response that everyone experiences, however when it gives rise to aggression it becomes a problem. Shouting and physical violence are ways we release anger that may cause problems with family, friends and work colleagues.

Aggressive behaviour exists not only in humans, it is prevalent in most species. Aggressive behaviour patterns may serve an adaptive function and be helpful in certain situations where the individual or the group is in danger. In humans however, extreme and persistent forms of aggression are often indicative of psychopathology, especially when they persist across a longer period or the lifetime.

# 2 ♦ AGGRESSION AS DISORDER

## CAN ANGER BE A MENTAL ILLNESS?

When a person acts out with the intent to cause physical or emotional harm to another person or object, this behaviour is known as aggression. Aggressive behaviour can be planned in advance or can occur as an impulsive reaction to a trigger.

We can distinguish two categories of aggression:

- Physical or hostile aggression
- Emotional or relational aggression

**Physical or hostile aggression** happens when an individual attempts to injure a person by physical harm, e.g. hitting, pushing, stabbing or inflicting any other type of physical harm. Hostile aggression is also the destruction of property.

**Emotional or relational aggression** is defined as a type of aggression that is „intended to harm others through deliberate manipulation of their social standing and relationships“.

Manifestations of relational aggression include excluding others from social activities, damaging victim's reputations with others by spreading rumors and gossiping about the victim, or humiliating them in front of others. Psychological manipulation and coercion are also considered as a type of relational aggression.

Many people learn aggressive behaviours already early in life. Some people behave aggressively while under the influence of drugs, or due to the presence of an untreated mental health disorder.

**Anger disorders** describe pathologically aggressive, violent or self-destructive behaviours which are driven by an underlying and chronically repressed anger or rage. Anger disorders result primarily from the long-term mismanagement of anger, a process in which normal, existential anger grows inside the person over time into resentment, bitterness, hatred and destructive rage. Anger disorders may also be caused by neurological impairment and substance abuse, which can inhibit a person's ability to resist aggressive, angry or violent impulse.

The most commonly used psychiatric diagnoses for aggressive, angry or violent behaviour are oppositional defiant disorder, attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and conduct disorder (in children and adolescents), psychotic disorder, bipolar disorder, antisocial, borderline, paranoid and narcissistic personality disorder, adjustment disorder with disturbance of conduct, and intermittent explosive disorder.

## 2.1 ♦ Aggression and the brain

### WHY DO SOME PEOPLE REACT SO AGGRESSIVELY?

Some researchers believe that extremely aggressive behaviour is the result of a lack of serotonin in the brain and is associated with defects in the prefrontal cortex. The prefrontal cortex is the part of the brain that is associated with impulse control and is responsible for thorough reflection.

### WHAT HAPPENS IN THE BRAIN WHEN YOU ARE ANGRY?

The role that chemistry plays in anger is by the two chemicals epinephrine, also known as adrenaline, and non-epinephrine. Without these two chemicals the body would not be able to give off any reactions when one becomes angry or tries and shows any other emotions that involve adrenaline. Epinephrine allows us to engage into the fight-or-flight reaction which determines how we handle a dangerous situation, by either walking away from the problem or engage aggressively. Non-epinephrine is known as the adrenaline rush which in some cases can lead to aggression in a situation. It gives the person the strength to defend himself in an extreme situation.

Adrenaline acts as a neurotransmitter involved in regulating visceral functions (e.g., respiration), and plays an important role in the fight-or-flight response by increasing blood flow to muscles, output of the heart, pupil dilation response, and blood sugar level. Epinephrine is one of the chemicals rapidly produced by the adrenal gland when a person experiences frustration, anger, or other form of stress.

The human body has a relatively predictable reaction to a rush of epinephrine:

- ♦ A marked increase in blood pressure and heart rate
- ♦ Sweating
- ♦ Pupil dilation
- ♦ Increase in blood sent to the skeletal muscles

All of these physiological reactions are designed to assist the person in reacting to whatever is causing the anger. It is interesting to note that the chemical reaction of anger is the same chemical reaction to fear.

Decreased non-epinephrine is a characteristic of people who are depressed. An increase in non-epinephrine as a result of anger is characterized by:

- ♦ The constriction of blood vessels
- ♦ The contraction of heart muscles

This chemical gives the person the sudden burst of strength and motivation that may be needed in order to defend themselves against an attack, which can include both physical and emotional attacks that can result in anger and possible aggression.

## 2.2 ♦ Explosive personality disorder

This is a disorder that affects control over impulses and emotional regulation. It is characterized by two decisive factors:

People who have to struggle with this disorder experience episodes in which they are dominated by tantrums. These are emotional states in which they lose control and show aggressiveness, adopt a threatening posture, which becomes apparent through screams, often also physically through hitting or stepping on objects and even through a tendency of violence towards animals or humans. This is not a momentary loss of control, but an uncontrolled emotional state that occurs frequently.

These tantrums are disproportionate with regard to the event that triggers them. They are usually triggered by situations that are interpreted negatively by the person affected, but which others can easily overcome, such as a minor dispute, a failed task, criticism from a colleague at work, etc. The most common of these situations is the temper tantrum. In some cases, the reason for this is even imaginary, for example the feeling of being attacked in a discussion, although in reality no attack has taken place, or jealousy because of imaginary facts. All these are “reasons” that result in a strong aggressive appearance.

### **A disturbance of the impulse control is not easy to overcome!**

Not being able to control anger has devastating consequences in the lives of all those who suffer from this disorder and also in the lives of those who form the environment of an affected person, because controlling aggressive behaviour is essential to living together in a society.

Most people with this disorder have problems in their personal relationships, be it within the family, with their partner or in a friendship. Living with someone who has this disorder means being constantly tense. It is impossible to predict when this person will explode, leading their fellow human beings and loved ones to distance themselves for fear of outbursts of anger and their consequences.

A disturbance of impulse control also affects the working life of those affected. Since this person does not know how to deal with anger and rage and cannot foresee such episodes, he will explode sooner or later, which can lead to a bad working atmosphere and possible dismissal if such situations accumulate.

## 2.3 ♦ Types of disorders connected with aggression

### 2.3.1 ♦ Intermittent explosive disorder

Intermittent explosive disorder (IED) is an impulse-control disorder which is characterized by sudden episodes of unjustified anger. The disorder is described by hostility, impulsivity, and recurrent aggressive outbursts. People with IED essentially “explode” into a rage despite a lack of apparent provocation or reason. Individuals suffering from intermittent explosive disorder have described feeling as though they lose control of their emotions and become overcome with anger. People with IED may threaten to or actually attack objects, animals, and/or other humans. IED has the potential of predisposing individuals to depression, anxiety, and substance abuse disorders. Intermittent explosive disorder is not diagnosed unless a person has displayed at least three episodes of impulsive aggressiveness.

Individuals with IED have reported that once they have released the tension that built up as a result of their rage, they feel a sense of relief. Once the relief wears off, however, some people experience feelings of bad conscience or embarrassment. IED can be managed through proper treatment, through education about anger management, and possibly through the use of medication.

## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF INTERMITTENT EXPLOSIVE DISORDER

The following are some examples of various signs and symptoms that a person suffering from IED may show:

### **Behavioural symptoms:**

- Physical aggressiveness
- Verbal aggressiveness
- Angry outbursts
- Physically attacking people and/or objects
- Damaging property
- Road rage

### **Physical symptoms:**

- Headaches
- Muscle tension
- Chest tightness
- Palpitations
- Tingling
- Feelings of pressure in the head
- Tremors

### **Cognitive symptoms:**

- Low frustration tolerance
- Feeling a loss of control over one's thoughts
- Racing thoughts

### **Psychosocial symptoms:**

- Feelings of rage
- Uncontrollable irritability
- Brief periods of emotional detachment

## EFFECTS OF INTERMITTENT EXPLOSIVE DISORDER

IED can lead to devastating consequences for those with the disorder, but this depends upon the specific symptoms and behaviours the person exhibits. The following are examples of effects that untreated intermittent explosive disorder can have on individuals:

- Impaired interpersonal relationships
- Domestic or child abuse
- Legal problems

- Incarceration
- Drug or alcohol addiction
- Trouble at work, home, or school
- Low self-esteem and self-loathing
- Self-harm
- Suicidal thoughts and behaviours

### 2.3.2 • Passive-aggressive personality disorder

If someone openly says what bothers him and thus makes his anger a theme, then one can react and solve the problem. But it is different when someone does not openly say what is going on, but clearly lets you feel that he is angry with you, be it through his aggressive behaviour or his facial expressions.

This kind of aggression is much harder to endure because one does not have an exact point of reference to which one can respond. With the result that one is oneself the one who feels bad. And it's just extremely gruelling to discuss with passive-aggressive people because one never comes to a satisfying solution.

Passive-aggressive people suffer from a personality disorder. They are mostly very negative thinking people. Their basic attitude is characterized by sarcasm and devaluation of all things in their environment, and they are extremely suspicious and sceptical. If they are criticized or pushed to something by other people, they put up passive resistance. Usually passive-aggressive people feel permanently misunderstood and treated unfairly.

#### CHARACTERISTICS OF A PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE PERSON

- He/she talks badly about others instead of telling them directly to their faces what bothers him/her.
- He/she tries to manipulate other people by distorting the facts – for as long that one starts to doubt on one's own perception.
- He/she can say incredibly mean things. And when one feels hurt, it was just a joke.
- He/she is a master of sarcastic remarks.
- He/she is not willing to compromise and will not let people talk to him/her. Either it goes after him/her, or nothing goes.
- He/she avoids conflicts, but lets people feel that something is bothering him/her.
- Instead of talking openly about problems, he/she attacks the other behind his/her back. To take revenge suits him/her better than to look for a common solution.
- He/she always blames others for his/her mistakes.

What makes dealing with passive-aggressive people so complicated is the fact that in conflicts and difficult situations they do not react as we are used to. With our learned quarreling behaviour one does not get any further with them. But one can feel their anger and aggression all the more. That is a bit like psycho terror.

Since none of the normal behaviours is successful in dealing with passive-aggressive people, one has to get involved in their peculiar way of arguing. This leads to uncertainty and the other person has already distracted from his actual problem and projected the conflict onto oneself.

People with a passive-aggressive (also: negativistic) personality disorder show passive resistance to social and occupational stimuli and performance requirements and a comprehensive pattern of negative attitudes. Those affected often assume that they have been treated unfairly, misunderstood and overly held to their duties. They often behave inconsistently by initially agreeing to the external demands, but then preventing the task from being fulfilled by a passive attitude of refusal. Often they also complain persistently about their own misfortune and are sometimes grumpy and quarrelsome.

What are the typical symptoms of a passive-aggressive personality disorder?

According to DSM, there is a profound pattern of negative attitudes and passive resistance to requirements for appropriate achievement. These characteristics begin in early adulthood and occur in a variety of different situations.

At least four of the following criteria should be met:

- ❶ they passively resist the performance of routine social and professional tasks.
- ❷ they complain of being misunderstood and disregarded by others.
- ❸ they are grumpy and quarrelsome.
- ❹ they criticise authorities inappropriately and despise them.
- ❺ they consider others to be more fortunate than themselves and express envy and resentment.
- ❻ they complain exaggeratedly and persistently about their personal misfortune.
- ❼ they alternate between hostile defiance and repentance.

### 2.3.3 • Post-traumatic stress disorder and aggression

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a delayed, strong response to a traumatic experience. PTSD occurs after stressful events – such as sexual abuse or rape, physical violence, torture, imprisonment, war, terrorist attacks, natural disasters or accidents.

While possible physical injuries are usually treated directly, psychological injuries are sometimes so severe that the affected person suppresses them for self-protection.

Not every person who experiences an unusually stressful situation suffers from a post-traumatic stress disorder as a result. Other factors and triggers also play a role, such as previous traumatic experiences or genetic influences. In general, people who are not very mentally stress-resistant tend to develop PTSD, but mentally stable people can also develop PTSD. Women develop post-traumatic stress disorder more frequently than men. Another risk factor for the development of PTSD is the age of the affected person: If the stress occurs at a young age, the probability of contracting the disease increases. A lack of social network and a low socio-economic status also contribute to post-traumatic stress disorder.

People with PTSD experience the traumatic event over and over again, for example through sudden memories of what they have experienced (intrusions) or repetitive nightmares. In so-called flashbacks, the affected person suddenly remembers images of the trauma. He then feels and acts exactly as if he were reliving what happened. People with post-traumatic stress disorder tend to avoid situations that might



remind them of the trauma. They withdraw from the outside world. In addition, people with PTSD are in a state of vegetative hyperexcitability, which manifests itself through symptoms such as irritability, concentration problems, anxiety or sleep disturbances.

Not only persons who were directly victims of a traumatic situation can develop a post-traumatic stress disorder. Even eyewitnesses who have witnessed a very stressful event – for example an attack on another person – can subsequently suffer from PTSD.

Inner alertness and the fear of a new trauma can lead to psychological stress and make people forgetful, irritable or aggressive. The caution that is to be achieved through inner alertness often turns into aggression and outbursts of anger. This behaviour is enormously stressful also for the relatives, because the rage outbursts are not explainable and comprehensible. The affected persons themselves are often ashamed of their inexplicable behaviour and the fear that this behaviour is a symptom of a mental illness worsens the situation. If those affected become aware that hyperexcitability is a consequence of trauma, they can also learn to control this behaviour.



## 3 ♦ STRATEGIES FOR ADULT ANGER DISORDERS

### 3.1 ♦ Why are some people angrier than others?

According to psychologists who specialize in anger management, some people are more “hot-headed” than others are; they get angry more easily and more intensely than the average person does. There are also those who do not show their anger in loud spectacular ways but are chronically irritable and grumpy. Easily angered people do not always curse and throw things; sometimes they withdraw socially, sulk, or get physically ill.

People who are easily angered generally have what some psychologists call a low tolerance for frustration, meaning simply that they feel that they should not have to be subjected to frustration, inconvenience, or annoyance. They cannot take things in stride, and they are particularly infuriated if the situation seems somehow unjust: for example, being corrected for a minor mistake.

What makes these people this way? A number of things. One cause may be genetic or physiological: There is evidence that some children are born irritable, touchy, and easily angered, and that these signs are present from a very early age. Another may be sociocultural. Anger is often regarded as negative; we are taught that it is all right to express anxiety, depression, or other emotions but not to express anger. As a result, we do not learn how to handle it or channel it constructively.

Research has also found that family background plays a role. Typically, people who are easily angered come from families that are disruptive, chaotic, and not skilled at emotional communications.

Is It Good To “Let it All Hang Out?”

Psychologists now say that this is a dangerous myth. Some people use this theory as a license to hurt others. Research has found that “letting it rip” with anger actually escalates anger and aggression and does nothing to help you (or the person you’re angry with) resolve the situation.

It is best to find out what it is that triggers your anger, and then to develop strategies to keep those triggers from tipping you over the edge.

### 3.2 ♦ Relaxation

Simple relaxation tools, such as deep breathing and relaxing imagery, can help calm down angry feelings. There are books and courses that can teach you relaxation techniques, and once you learn the techniques, you can call upon them in any situation. If you are involved in a relationship where both partners are hot-tempered, it might be a good idea for both of you to learn these techniques.

- ♦ Some simple steps you can try:
- ♦ Breathe deeply, from your diaphragm; breathing from your chest will not relax you. Picture your breath coming up from your “gut.”
- ♦ Slowly repeat a calm word or phrase such as “relax,” “take it easy.” Repeat it to yourself while breathing deeply.
- ♦ Use imagery; visualize a relaxing experience, from either your memory or your imagination.
- ♦ Nonstrenuous, slow yoga-like exercises can relax your muscles and make you feel much calmer.
- ♦ Practice these techniques daily. Learn to use them automatically when you’re in a tense situation.

### 3.3 ♦ Cognitive restructuring

Simply put, this means changing the way you think. Angry people tend to curse, swear, or speak in highly colourful terms that reflect their inner thoughts. When you are angry, your thinking can get very exaggerated and overly dramatic. Try replacing these thoughts with more rational ones. For instance, instead of telling yourself, “oh, it’s awful, it’s terrible, everything’s ruined,” tell yourself, “it’s frustrating, and it’s understandable that I’m upset about it, but it’s not the end of the world and getting angry is not going to fix it anyhow.”

Be careful of words like “never” or “always” when talking about yourself or someone else. “This !&\*%@ machine never works,” or “you’re always forgetting things” are not just inaccurate, they also serve to make you feel that your anger is justified and that there is no way to solve the problem. They also alienate and humiliate people who might otherwise be willing to work with you on a solution.

Remind yourself that getting angry is not going to fix anything, that it will not make you feel better (and may actually make you feel worse).

Logic defeats anger, because anger, even when it is justified, can quickly become irrational. So use cold hard logic on yourself. Remind yourself that the world is “not out to get you,” you are just experiencing some of the rough spots of daily life. Do this each time you feel anger getting the best of you, and it will help you get a more balanced perspective. Angry people tend to demand things: fairness, appreciation, agreement, willingness to do things their way. Everyone wants these things, and we are all hurt and disappointed when we do not get them, but angry people demand them, and when their demands are not met, their disappointment becomes anger. As part of their cognitive restructuring, angry people need to become aware of their demanding nature and translate their expectations into desires. In other words, saying, “I would like” something is healthier than saying, “I demand” or “I must have” something. When you are unable to get what you want, you will experience the normal reactions-frustration, disappointment, hurt-but not anger. Some angry people use this anger as a way to avoid feeling hurt, but that does not mean the hurt goes away.

### 3.4 ♦ Problem solving

Sometimes, our anger and frustration are caused by very real and inescapable problems in our lives. Not all anger is misplaced, and often it is a healthy, natural response to these difficulties. There is also a cultural belief that every problem has a solution, and it adds to our frustration to find out that this is not always the case. The best attitude to bring to such a situation, then, is not to focus on finding the solution, but rather on how you handle and face the problem.

Make a plan, and check your progress along the way. Resolve to give it your best, but also not to punish yourself if an answer does not come right away. If you can approach it with your best intentions and efforts and make a serious attempt to face it head-on, you will be less likely to lose patience and fall into all-or-nothing thinking, even if the problem does not get solved right away.

### 3.5 ♦ Better communication

Angry people tend to jump to – and act on – conclusions, and some of those conclusions can be very inaccurate. The first thing to do if you are in a heated discussion is slow down and think through your responses. Do not say the first thing that comes into your head, but slow down and think carefully about

what you want to say. At the same time, listen carefully to what the other person is saying and take your time before answering.

Listen, too, to what is underlying the anger. For instance, you like a certain amount of freedom and personal space, and your “significant other” wants more connection and closeness. If he or she starts complaining about your activities, do not retaliate by painting your partner as a jailer, a warden, or an albatross around your neck.

It is natural to get defensive when you are criticized, but do not fight back. Instead, listen to what is underlying the words: the message that this person might feel neglected and unloved. It may take a lot of patient questioning on your part, and it may require some breathing space, but do not let your anger – or a partner’s – let a discussion spin out of control. Keeping your cool can keep the situation from becoming a disastrous one.

### 3.6 ♦ Using humour

“Silly humour” can help defuse rage in a number of ways. For one thing, it can help you get a more balanced perspective. When you get angry and call someone a name or refer to them in some imaginative phrase, stop and picture what that word would literally look like. If you are at work and you think of a coworker as a “dirtbag” or a “single-cell life form,” for example, picture a large bag full of dirt (or an amoeba) sitting at your colleague’s desk, talking on the phone, going to meetings. Do this whenever a name comes into your head about another person. If you can, draw a picture of what the actual thing might look like. This will take a lot of the edge off your fury; and humour can always be relied on to help unknot a tense situation.

The underlying message of highly angry people is “things ought to go my way!” Angry people tend to feel that they are morally right, that any blocking or changing of their plans is an unbearable indignity and that they should not have to suffer this way. Maybe other people do, but not them!

When you feel that urge, picture yourself as a god or goddess, a supreme ruler, who owns the streets and stores and office space, striding alone and having your way in all situations while others defer to you. The more detail you can get into your imaginary scenes, the more chances you have to realize that maybe you are being unreasonable; you will also realize how unimportant the things you are angry about really are. There are two cautions in using humor. First, do not try to just “laugh off” your problems; rather, use humour to help yourself face them more constructively. Second, do not give in to harsh, sarcastic humour; that is just another form of unhealthy anger expression.

What these techniques have in common is a refusal to take yourself too seriously. Anger is a serious emotion, but it is often accompanied by ideas that, if examined, can make you laugh.

### 3.7 ♦ Changing your environment

Sometimes it is our immediate surroundings that give us cause for irritation and fury. Problems and responsibilities can weigh on you and make you feel angry at the “trap” you seem to have fallen into and all the people and things that form that trap.

Give yourself a break. Make sure you have some “personal time” scheduled for times of the day that you know are particularly stressful. One example is the working mother who has a standing rule that when she comes home from work, for the first 15 minutes “nobody talks to Mom unless the house is on fire.” After this brief quiet time, she feels better prepared to handle demands from her kids without blowing up at them.



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