

THE ROLE MODELS PROJECT

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT...?

FAKE NEWS

ARTICLES AND ACTIVITIES

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WHAT IS THE ROLE MODELS PROJECT?

What do we wish we'd known when we were younger

A team of students who are currently studying or recently completed Higher Education courses in Sussex were asked to consider issues particularly relevant to your age group. They started with the question 'What do we wish we'd known about that topic when we were younger?'

In response to this question the team have written articles and made videos that offer ideas, tips and advice on each topic that might be helpful to you right now.

Find out more about the Role Models project:

<https://www.sussexlearningnetwork.org.uk/lisetoolkits/Role-Models-Resource-Books>

WHAT IS THIS BOOKLET?

The Role Models team were asked to consider the topic of 'Fake News'. They discussed the impact of fake news on their own lives, as well as wider society. They also considered why it was such a critical issue at the moment.

Each article in this booklet offers a personal perspective from one of the team on fake news, based on their own experiences. They also offer tips and tasks to help you consider whether the information you are seeing and passing on is really what it appears. At the end of the booklet there are also links to further information and support on the topic.

Each member of the team has approached the topic in their own way. Find an article that interests you.



Watch the short video that accompanies this booklet

The video that accompanies this booklet introduces the Role Models team and offers some of their initial thoughts and tips on how to deal with fake news:

<https://www.sussexlearningnetwork.org.uk/lisetoolkits/Role-Models-Resource-Books>

This project is funded by



www.sussexlearningnetwork.org.uk

FAKE NEWS AND THE FUTURE GENERATION

I don't know what or who to trust when it comes to hearing news. Everyone has their own interpretations of what they are told.

Fake news can come in many forms in this day and age. There are youtube videos, Tiktok's, articles, receiving texts from friends and family – and even trusted politicians on social media.

Fake news has always existed. But the Fake News we have today is really close to real news which makes it hard for everyone to understand what is real and what is fake. The spread of 'Fake News' has made many of us very sceptical of the information we see and hear. Especially in these times, with COVID-19, fake news can cause more problems in all our lives: whether it be for young people, or vulnerable people like our own grandparents.

I've listed some of the tips I use when trying to recognise fake news below. I hope you will use them and share you're your family and friends as this can help to battle the ongoing problem of fake news:



Ani

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS
STUDENT
UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

TOP TIPS

- 1 **Don't just make assumptions on the headline.**
- 2 **Make sure to find out the original source.**
- 3 **Tread carefully when you see a highly surprising story.**
- 4 **Always double check information after you see it and definitely before sharing it with others.**
- 5 **Don't share information from the news with others unless you have checked it.**

What's the difference? Task

For this task:

Internet access
30 mins +

There's a difference between Disinformation and Misinformation. Both can end up as 'Fake News'.

DISINFORMATION

'Fake or misleading stories created and shared deliberately, often by a writer who might have a financial or political motive, e.g. propaganda.'

MISINFORMATION

'Fake or misleading stories, but in this case the stories may not have been deliberately created or shared with the intention to mislead.'

Both are misleading but knowing if something has been written by mistake or has been written to intentionally deceive might help us understand the motives of the writer and decide what to believe.

1

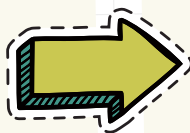
Find one example of an article/advert/message containing Disinformation (intentionally misleading).

2

Find another example containing Misinformation (unintentionally misleading).

3

Read them both and think about the following things:



- How can you tell the difference between the two?
- What were the writers' motives?
- What might be the negative impact of each story?
- Does it make it worse if something is intentionally misleading?
- Ask someone else to look at both articles and see if they can identify which is which.

HERE'S A COUPLE OF EXAMPLES TO GET YOU STARTED:

A video of a dinosaur being unloaded from a truck went viral in Indonesia.

DISINFORMATION

It was a publicity stunt and turned out to be a robot filmed to promote a theme park. The theme park was trying to attract more customers, so the motive was money.)

Dolphins were filmed in the canals of Venice

MISINFORMATION

The writer of a newspaper article that had seen the video got the wrong region of Italy by mistake!

Sources: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zjykkmn> <https://theday.co.uk/stories/2020-the-year-in-seven-fake-news-stories>

ECHO CHAMBER

The idea of 'truth' and its relationship with social media has had a sketchy time of late. 'Post-truth' was the Oxford Dictionary word of the year in 2016 and five years on, social media still appears to be filling up with opinions presenting themselves as fact and heated arguments everywhere you look.

From about the ages of 16-19, I reflect back now and realise that most of my perception of the world was filtered through social media echo chambers, and this did not bring me much joy. Within my own experience, I was personally consumed by social media opinions and 'fact-based articles' from shady 'news sources'. The more I explored and involved myself with such opinions, the more the opinions consumed my home feeds on various social media sites – this is commonly known as an 'echo chamber'. At the time I felt as if I had all the answers, seemingly backed by the masses of similar opinion and articles clogging up my feeds.

As the echo chambers of social media consumed me more and more, I would assert my opinion as undeniable truth more and more. And I found myself regularly involved in arguments with my family and friends about things that were often irrelevant to my actual life.



Drew

**SOCIOLOGY STUDENT
UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX**

To reach any kind of truth, there must be a consideration of a diverse and inclusive range of viewpoints and a healthy discussion should always focus on what the other person has to say. The dynamic of differing ideas through conversation is the best way to reach truth – this is what I have learnt from my experience and this is the basic principle of a healthy democratic society.

My advice would undoubtedly be to stay off social media as much as you can. My life, my sense of well-being and most definitely my openness to the ideas of others has improved dramatically since coming off of social media. Coming off social media altogether may seem really difficult in the current time, but you can start small...

THE DISCUSSION CHALLENGE



Pick a current topic you'd like to discuss (e.g Covid, Climate Change, BLM).



On this day, discuss your topic with three different people. Try and discuss the topic with people from three different generations for a wider diversity of opinion.



The people can be family members, friends, teachers or anybody around the world – the conversations can be virtual.



During the discussion, focus far more on listening to the other person and finding out why they think the way they do and how they have come to reach their opinion.



Notice if your experience of these conversations is more enriching than scrolling through the echo chambers of social media...

For this task:

Three other people for a discussion – in person or online.
One day.



If you felt an improvement in your understanding (and your well-being) through the task, try and aim to do the same again, avoiding social media and engaging in healthy discussion, for one day each week!

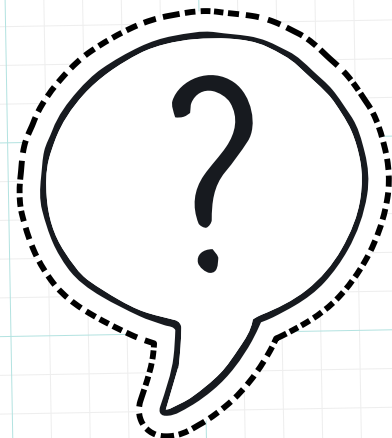


Perhaps you could journal what you have learnt about yourself and other people on these days.

For me, the meaning that can be found through listening, understanding and true conversation is far deeper than any false sense of security or certainty that is felt through echo chambers on social media feeds. Give it a go! After a while, you will find that this practice of good conversation becomes an important part of who you are!

Tip

To get the most out of this task, try and avoid using social media for the whole day. This is to give your mind a deserved break from all the scrolling, giving you a fresh perspective ready to fully engage with conversation and discussion.



CHOICE IS YOUR SUPERPOWER

Think back to a time to when you believed something to be true but later learnt the answer was the complete opposite. Triggering right? What changed? The answer most of the time is raised consciousness through experience.

When I was younger, I would listen to people I admired: from the coolest girl in school wearing the newest trainers, to my celebrity crush from my favourite show. Because I found them cool, what they said must have been true, right? I believed so many stories; from the clothes that would supposedly make me happy, to the tea that would give me the dankest abs. I can confidently cringe at what I used to think to be true.

When I was in my teens, I had severe anxiety but never acknowledged it. I had assumed that only adults had mental health problems because they faced 'real world' problems. Then I researched and found out that 50% of mental health problems are established by age 14 and 75% by age 24. I spoke to my parents who said mental health was never explained when they were at school and therefore, they didn't know much about the topic.

It wasn't until I had researched about mental health that I realised all my overthinking: about my mates, difficulties focusing on my classes and irritableness was because



Lola

MEDIA PRODUCTION STUDENT
UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX

I had been dealing with anxiety – which by the way, is completely normal. Once I knew more about mental health, I researched into coping mechanisms and experiments to see if something would work well for me. Fortunately, enough, I was able to channel my anxious thoughts into exercise, breathwork and seeking discomfort – things I wouldn't have known about, if I hadn't researched and tried and tested it for myself.

Fast forward a few years and mentally I'm in the highest form of growth. I'll never be as old as I am today and as young as I am today. Life is so beautiful and there is much information out there that can positively change the course of your life. The key to knowing who to admire and trust is to know yourself first. Again, much easier said than done.

The key way I was able to get myself out of the habit of believing everything I saw in the media was to see if science could back it up, if my parents could corroborate it, and if I could draw from personal experience to challenge or agree. Doing Independent research on a topic is a brilliant way to discover your view on something. Whether you're drawing from science, twitter or whatever floats your boat, make sure to take everything with a pinch of salt and question 'why', always. Information provides us with opportunity to broaden our knowledge whilst challenging our own view.

Disinformation reminds me of a childhood game that I used to play when I was younger. We'd all gather in a circle, and the first person comes up with a message and whispers it to the ear of the second person and so on. When the last player is reached, they announce the message they heard to the entire group. The first person then compares the original message with the final version. In every single game I played, the end answer was always wackier than the original statement. What we see on social media or hear from our peers has often gone through the same cycle. That person who posted that comment on your

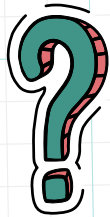
feed might have obtained this information from a non-reliable source. But we'll never know, unless we do our own research.

Research introduces us to new ideas and cultivates our curiosity. We live in a time where knowledge is now at our fingertips. From podcasts, YouTube, websites and science, there are so many ways to consume knowledge.

Having a choice has become our superpower, so make sure to experiment and see what works for you.

Sources: Lifetime Prevalence and Age-of-Onset Distributions of DSM-IV Disorders in the National Comorbidity Survey Replication (2005).

TRUE OR FALSE RESEARCH TASK



- Research the information in each of the boxes.
- Once you have found research you believe you can trust: Put a tick in the box if you decide the statement is true. Put a cross in the box if you decide the statement is false.
- Check the back of the booklet for the correct answers.

Have fun learning something new and make sure to double check your sources before crossing something off!

For this task:

Internet and/or Library
Access for research
Pen or pencil
15 mins +

1. Only two countries use purple in their national flags.

2. 41 countries have recognised sign language as an official language.

3. Monaco is the smallest country in the world.

4. The great wall of China is visible from space.

5. Your nostrils work one at a time.

6. Showers spark creativity.

7. An octopus has two hearts.

8. Coffee is made from berries.

9. Your 'radius' bone is in your leg.

10. It can take anywhere from 18 to 254 days for a person to form a new habit.

11. A whole ecosystem lives in your belly button.

12. 85% of all Facebook videos are watched silently.

13. Instagram has 1 million monthly active users.

14. Tiktok was the top downloaded app of 2020.

15. 10% of the entire world population is still illiterate.

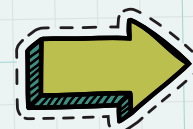
16. The human body literally glows.

17. The Twitter bird's official name is Larry.

18. Sydney is the capital of Australia.

19. A heptagon has 8 sides.

20. High heels were first designed for men.



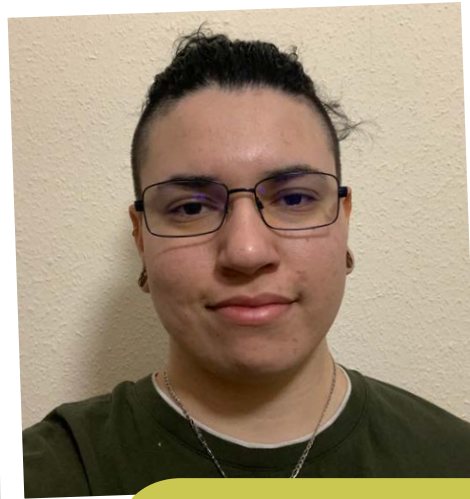
Answers on
page 13

IF IT LOOKS TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE...

As a young person living with chronic pain and other physical and mental health conditions, hearing the term 'disinformation' kind of hits differently.

I have had to find a lot of different techniques, equipment and medication to cope on a daily basis and try to understand the science behind what's happening to me as well. Now, we all have seen those posts and articles that boast about the many natural and alternative methods that can 'cure' all your physical and mental health conditions. I am in no way suggesting that natural remedies can't help someone feel better, but it can be harmful if that same person then chooses to completely ignore seeking medical attention when they might really need it.

Growing up in the Caribbean, I have had my fair share of experiences with natural remedies. Where some actually did help, but most did not. I have a very fond memory, that never fails to make me laugh, of my

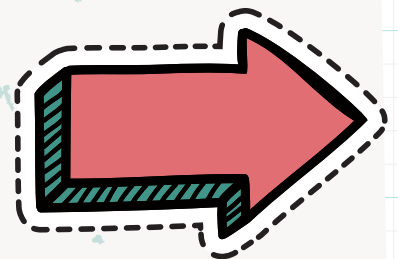


Vic

**DIGITAL MEDIA DESIGN STUDENT
EAST SUSSEX COLLEGE GROUP**

grandmother overloading my eggs in the morning with black pepper because she heard it was a good source of vitamin C. Set my mouth ablaze! But all jokes aside, I do believe in blend of natural remedies and living healthily. But making sure to get medical when I really need it.

It's worth being wary of the promise of 'quick and easy' especially when it comes to topics such as weight loss or gaining muscle. These trends and methods can end up doing way more harm than good. I used to fall for them all the time and believed in 'no pain, no gain'. Instead I got all pain and very little gain. It's always best to do your research and take the slower and safer approach and be kind to your mind and body.



Bust a Myth Task

For this task:

Internet and/ or library access for research
15 mins +
Pen or pencil

MYTHS

Here's some health myths that often get passed on as facts – All are untrue!

- ☒ Muscle turns to fat when you don't exercise
- ☒ Eating late at night results in weight gain
- ☒ Peeing on a jellyfish sting alleviates the pain
- ☒ Shaving makes hair grow back faster and thicker
- ☒ We only use 10% of our brains
- ☒ If you go outside with wet hair, you'll catch a cold.

- Think of some health tips that have been passed on to you:
- Write up to three below
- Now research them to see if they are really true....

HEALTH MYTHS

1

☐ True ☐ False

2

☐ True ☐ False

3

☐ True ☐ False

Sources used:

<https://www.mirror.co.uk/lifestyle/health/13-health-myths-old-wives-7464115>
<https://www.thehealthy.com/bodies/popular-old-wives-tales-fiction-or-fact/>

THINK BEFORE YOU SPEAK

Okay, I'm going to start by saying I am as much guilty of doing the things I'm going to write about as any. Thinking about these simple points could stop us saying the wrong thing and getting into trouble.

I'LL GIVE YOU AN EXAMPLE:

At the start of the pandemic I flew back into the UK from LA. I received a news article from a friend - a friend I know who is clever. It was about things you could do to prevent catching the virus. It didn't seem harmful and I thought...I should share this, so I sent it to all my friends on Facebook. Then I got a very angry message from a friend. Being out of the country I didn't know that there had been lots of FAKE NEWS articles and that the government was telling people to ignore them. The fact of the matter is I ASSUMED it was legit and didn't check it.

It might not seem so serious, but you have to remember that people WILL take your word for it, so you have to be sure that what you say is true, because just like a virus, it spreads very quickly.

Here are 2 tips that I have picked up and swear by.

A portrait of Nick, a young man with curly brown hair and a beard, wearing a red shirt. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is a blurred outdoor scene with trees.

Nick

COMMUNICATION DESIGN STUDENT
GREATER BRIGHTON
METROPOLITAN COLLEGE

TIP NUMBER 1:

Don't give an opinion on something you know very little about.

If you are desperate to put in your two pence worth, then start by saying...

"I don't really know much about this, but it sounds like...."

Then you aren't claiming to know more than you do.

Why is this so important I hear you say? Well people will be able to tell you are talking nonsense. Your words will gradually have less weight and people will hear your words but not listen.

TIP NUMBER 2:

Check your sources.

Oh yes, as you read earlier, I have fallen into this trap. You read something or get told something. You think the source is reliable. Then the subject comes up with some friends and your like,

'Yeahhhh I know about this' and boom you drop your fact.

'WHAT? WHAT DID I SAY?'

What did you say indeed? You don't know because it's JUST SOMETHING YOU HEARD and guess what? It was wrong.

We need to check our sources, especially if it is something that is political or delicate. Fake news has become very powerful in today's world and has been used to shape elections. Now with social media too it is so easy to fall into the trap of reading what people want you to read.

The only way to look smart is to be smart. Know what you're saying (and trust me) having your words have weight is a very powerful tool in life.

I read in a book in which Nelson Mandela spoke of how to be a good leader. He talks about how the Chief that raised him used to gather the people in a circle and let everyone talk first. He would listen and once everyone one had spoken he would give his opinion based on all the information he had heard.

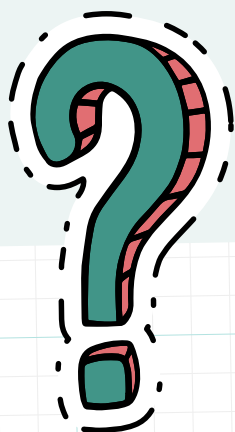
So let people say what they have to say and then give your opinion from a better-informed position.

DIG DEEPER RESEARCH TASK

For this task:

**Internet Access
10mins +**

- In the morning take 5 - 15mins or more and go onto BBC News (<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news> or on tv).
- Find a story that interests you and watch/read it.
- Now google the topic. See what you find.
- Look for sources with weight: these will be large, world recognised organisations, foundations, University papers etc...



**OH yeah I hear you...HEAVYYYYYYYYY...
but trust me, the time will go VERY quickly.
Checking your sources however is
VERY good practice, allowing you to talk
with weight and confidence.
This is admired by many!**

ANSWERS TO LOLA'S TRUE OR FALSE RESEARCH TASK

- ☒ 1. Only two countries use purple in their national flags.
- ☒ 2. 41 countries have recognised sign language as an official language.
- ☐ 3. Monaco is the smallest country in the world.
- ☐ 4. The Great Wall of China is visible from space.
- ☒ 5. Your nostrils work one at a time.
- ☒ 6. Showers spark creativity.
- ☐ 7. An octopus has two hearts.
- ☒ 8. Coffee is made from berries.
- ☐ 9. Your 'radius' bone is in your leg.
- ☒ 10. It can take anywhere from 18 to 254 days for a person to form a new habit.
- ☒ 11. A whole ecosystem lives in your belly button.
- ☒ 12. 85% of all Facebook videos are watched silently.
- ☐ 13. Instagram has 1 Million monthly active users.
- ☒ 14. TikTok was the top downloaded app of 2020.
- ☒ 15. 10% percent of the entire world population is still illiterate.
- ☒ 16. The human body literally glows.
- ☒ 17. The Twitter bird's official name is Larry.
- ☐ 18. Sydney is the capital of Australia.
- ☐ 19. A heptagon has 8 sides.
- ☒ 20. High heels were first designed for men.

Sources:

<https://bestlifeonline.com/random-fun-facts/>

<https://www.cosmopolitan.com/uk/worklife/a32612392/best-true-false-quiz-questions/>

<https://bestlifeonline.com/50-basic-facts-about-life-everyone-should-know/>

SIGNPOSTING

Some recommendations of further information from the team.

Articles

A brief history of fake news:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zwcgn9q>

The real history of fake news:

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/nov/22/factitious-taradiddle-dictionary-real-history-fake-news>

What's so bad about fake news?:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zjykkmn>

How false information spreads:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/articles/zcr8r2p>

How to report misinformation online:

<https://www.who.int/campaigns/connecting-the-world-to-combat-coronavirus/how-to-report-misinformation-online>

Fact checking on Youtube:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/54269085>

The dangers of echo chambers:

<https://www.theguardian.com/science/blog/2017/dec/04/echo-chambers-are-dangerous-we-must-try-to-break-free-of-our-online-bubbles>

BBC real or fake quiz:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/quizzes/real-or-fake-news-quiz>

Websites/Dedicated pages

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/tags/zr2yscw/fact-or-fake/1>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/topics/cjxv13v27dyt/fake-news>

<https://www.getsafeonline.org/social-networking/fake-news/>

<https://www.factcheck.org/2016/11/how-to-spot-fake-news/>

Videos

What is Fake News and how does it spread?:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/technology-46149888>

Fake News explained:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7ufIK6MbGDo>

How to spot Fake News:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/52943167>

Echo chambers:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4AckfHcoZDY>

THE TEAM BEHIND THIS BOOKLET STUDIED AT THE FOLLOWING INSTITUTIONS:

East Sussex College Group | www.escg.ac.uk

Greater Brighton Metropolitan College | www.gbmc.ac.uk

University of Sussex | www.sussex.ac.uk

For more information about the Role Models projects including links to our Role Models films and other topic booklets visit

<https://www.sussexlearningnetwork.org.uk/lisetoolkits/Role-Models-Resource-Books>

Thanks for supporting the Role Models Project.