

Building Skills of Vulnerable Adults to Combat Online Disinformation

Non-formal Educational Program for Adult Educators



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Introduction

This manual has been developed within the Erasmus+ project **Combating Online Misinformation to Prevent Radicalisation of Vulnerable Adults**. It is designed to support adult educators in addressing one of the most pressing challenges of contemporary education: helping learners recognise, critically evaluate, and respond to online misinformation.

Today, educators increasingly encounter learners who bring information from social media, messaging platforms, and online communities into classrooms and workshops. Much of this information is incomplete, misleading, emotionally charged, or deliberately manipulative. For many educators, the challenge is not simply identifying misinformation, but responding in ways that encourage reflection without creating confrontation or reinforcing existing beliefs.

The final beneficiaries of this programme are **vulnerable adults**, including people with limited digital skills, migrants and refugees, socially isolated individuals, and others who may be particularly susceptible to manipulation, exclusion, or radicalisation. By strengthening educators' competences, the programme aims to help these learners develop critical thinking, digital resilience, and informed participation in democratic society.

The programme is based on a simple but important principle: misinformation is rarely accepted because people lack information alone. Beliefs are also shaped by emotions, personal experiences, social identity, and trust. For this reason, effective educational responses require more than fact-checking. They require empathy, dialogue, and opportunities for learners to reflect on how information influences their thinking.

The *Online Combat* project therefore equips adult educators with practical methods to:

- identify and analyse online misinformation and manipulation techniques;
- strengthen learners' critical thinking and digital literacy;
- use engaging educational approaches, including digital and AI-supported tools;
- facilitate respectful dialogue on controversial topics while promoting democratic values.

Rather than positioning educators as authorities who provide the "correct" answers, the programme encourages them to act as facilitators of inquiry. Through structured discussions, practical exercises, and collaborative reflection, learners are encouraged to question information, compare perspectives, and develop greater resilience to manipulation while maintaining mutual respect.

This manual combines evidence-based knowledge with ready-to-use educational activities that can be adapted to different learning environments. Together with the Online Combat online course, AI-supported tools, educational game, and other project resources, it provides adult educators with a practical toolkit for strengthening media literacy and democratic resilience among vulnerable adults.

How to Use This Manual

This manual is designed as a **practical resource**, not a textbook. Educators are not expected to teach every chapter or complete all activities. Instead, they are encouraged to select and adapt materials according to the needs, experience, and interests of their learners.

The manual is organised into **five thematic modules**, each addressing one key aspect of misinformation:

1. **Disinformation Types and Techniques:** understanding how misinformation is created and disseminated.
2. **Cognitive Factors:** recognising psychological mechanisms and cognitive biases that influence belief formation.
3. **Emotional Factors:** exploring how emotions affect the spread and acceptance of misinformation.
4. **Social Factors:** examining the role of identity, trust, and group dynamics.
5. **Combating Disinformation:** applying practical strategies, fact-checking methods, and prebunking approaches.

Each module follows the same structure:

- a concise overview of the topic;
- key theoretical concepts relevant for educators;
- practical implications for adult learning;

- ready-to-use classroom and workshop activities;
- printable worksheets and supporting materials.

The activities can be delivered individually or combined into longer workshops. Depending on participants' needs, educators may choose to focus on a single module or integrate activities from several modules into a broader training programme.

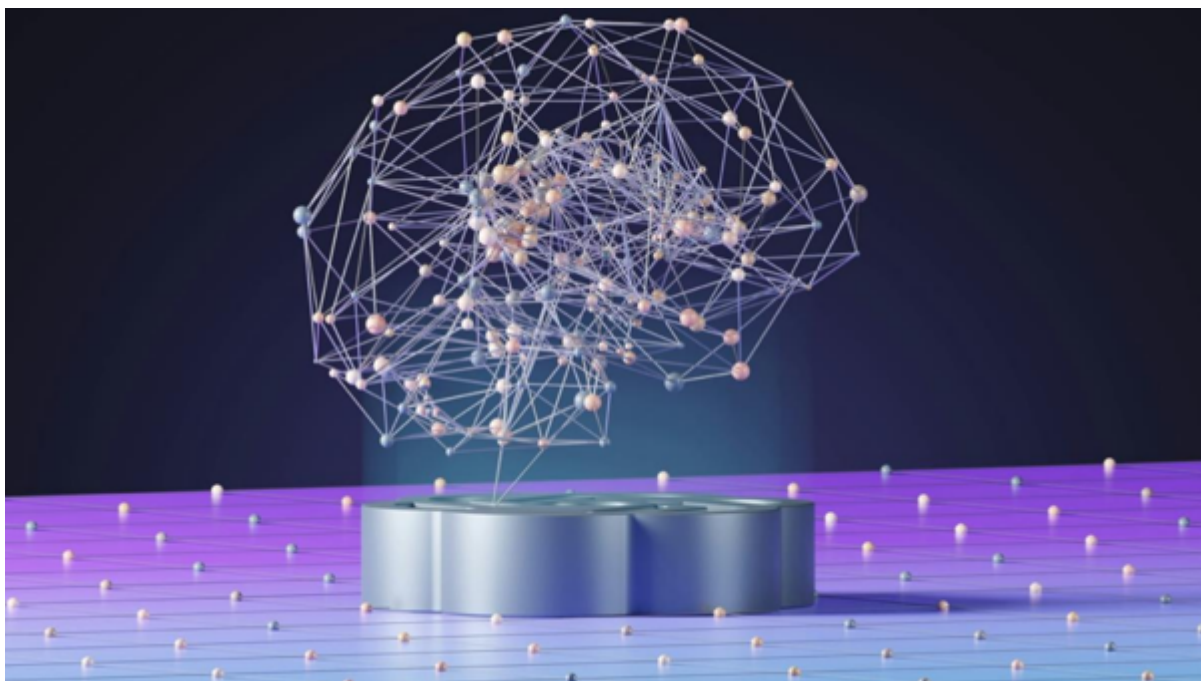
For the greatest educational impact, we recommend combining short theoretical introductions with interactive exercises, group discussions, and opportunities for personal reflection. Many activities can be complemented by the project's online course, AI chatbot, and digital learning tools, allowing participants to continue learning independently after the workshop.

The materials are intentionally flexible. Educators are encouraged to adapt examples, discussion topics, and case studies to the cultural background, digital skills, and learning needs of their participants while maintaining the programme's core principles of respectful dialogue, evidence-based reasoning, and critical reflection.

Additional Project Resources

Continue your learning with the free *Online Combat* resources:

- **Online Course:** self-paced modules with videos, quizzes, and additional case studies.
- **AI Chatbot:** practice analysing misinformation and receive personalised feedback.
- **Educational Game:** learn prebunking and manipulation techniques through interactive simulations.
- **Downloadable Materials:** printable worksheets, templates, and updates.



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Educational Approach

Why this programme?

Online misinformation has become part of everyday life. Social media, messaging platforms, and AI-generated content make it increasingly difficult for learners to distinguish between reliable information and manipulation. False information often spreads rapidly because it is emotionally engaging, easy to share, and consistent with existing beliefs.

Research shows that people rarely accept misinformation simply because they lack knowledge. Beliefs are also influenced by cognitive biases, emotions, personal experiences, and social identity. For this reason, effective media literacy education requires more than teaching fact-checking skills. It also requires developing critical thinking, reflection, emotional awareness, and respectful dialogue.

This programme adopts a **human-centred educational approach** that helps educators address these different aspects of misinformation through active learning and practical experience.

Learning Principles

The programme is based on several evidence-based educational principles.

- **Learning by doing.** Participants learn through analysing authentic examples, solving problems, discussing real-life cases, and reflecting on their own thinking rather than memorising theoretical concepts.
- **Reflection before correction.** Instead of immediately correcting misinformation, educators encourage learners to examine where information comes from, why it appears convincing, and how its credibility can be evaluated.
- **Dialogue and collaboration.** Many activities use group discussion, role-play, and collaborative analysis to expose participants to different perspectives while maintaining a respectful learning environment.
- **Building resilience rather than memorising facts.** Since misinformation constantly changes, the programme focuses on developing transferable competences that learners can apply to new situations, including critical thinking, source evaluation, emotional awareness, and digital literacy.

Psychological Foundation

The programme is informed by research on the psychology of misinformation, which shows that belief formation is influenced by three interacting factors:

- **Cognitive factors**, such as confirmation bias, repetition, and mental shortcuts;
- **Emotional factors**, including fear, anger, and moral outrage, which increase the likelihood of believing and sharing misinformation;
- **Social factors**, such as identity, group belonging, and trust in social networks.

These three dimensions form the structure of the programme and are reflected throughout the learning activities. Rather than studying them as abstract theories, participants experience how these mechanisms operate in everyday online communication and learn practical strategies for recognising and managing them.

The Role of Adult Educators

Adult educators play an important role in strengthening learners' resilience to misinformation, particularly when working with migrants, refugees, older adults, and people with limited digital literacy.

Within this programme, educators are viewed not as providers of the "correct" answers, but as **facilitators of critical inquiry**. They create learning environments where participants feel comfortable asking questions, analysing information, challenging assumptions, and discussing controversial topics respectfully.

The programme therefore helps educators to:

- strengthen their own digital and media literacy;
- understand psychological mechanisms underlying misinformation;

- facilitate constructive dialogue on controversial issues;
- design engaging learning activities that promote critical thinking and democratic participation.

Alignment with the DigCompEdu Framework

The programme is aligned with the **European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu)**, ensuring that participants develop not only knowledge about misinformation but also the competences needed to teach digital literacy effectively.

DigCompEdu Area	How this programme contributes
Professional Engagement	Collaboration and exchange of educational practices
Digital Resources	Critical evaluation and responsible use of digital information
Teaching and Learning	Interactive, learner-centred and gamified activities
Assessment	Reflection, quizzes, worksheets and formative feedback
Empowering Learners	Inclusive activities adapted to diverse adult learners
Facilitating Learners' Digital Competence	Critical thinking, source evaluation and responsible digital citizenship

By integrating these competences throughout the five modules, the programme supports the goals of the **Digital Education Action Plan** and promotes lifelong digital resilience among adult learners.



Source: Unsplash

Module 1. Disinformation Types and Techniques

Disinformation is more than false information. It is deliberately designed to influence how people think, feel, and act. By appealing to emotions, reinforcing existing beliefs, and exploiting trust, misleading content can shape public opinion, increase social division, and contribute to radicalisation.

Adult educators often work with learners who encounter misinformation through social media, messaging platforms, and informal networks. Understanding how disinformation operates is therefore the first step towards helping learners critically evaluate online information.

Learning objectives

After completing this module, educators will be able to:

- distinguish between different forms of misinformation and disinformation;
- recognise common persuasion and propaganda techniques;
- explain how digital platforms amplify misleading content;
- facilitate activities that help learners identify manipulation before accepting or sharing information.

Types of Disinformation

Not all misleading information has the same purpose. A useful distinction is between:

- **Misinformation** – false information shared without the intention to mislead.
- **Disinformation** – false information deliberately created or shared to deceive.
- **Malinformation** – genuine information presented selectively or out of context to cause harm.

In practice, these categories appear in many forms, including fake news, manipulated images, pseudoscientific claims, sponsored content disguised as news, and greenwashing. Although their objectives differ, they all influence how people interpret information rather than simply presenting facts.

How Disinformation Persuades

Successful disinformation rarely depends on convincing evidence. Instead, it relies on psychological persuasion.

Common techniques include:

- appealing to emotions such as fear, anger, or pride;
- using authority figures or supposed experts;
- creating the impression that "everyone believes this";
- presenting only selected information while ignoring contradictory evidence;
- repeating simple messages until they become familiar.

These techniques are effective because people often rely on quick intuitive judgments rather than careful verification, especially in fast-moving online environments.

Information Ecosystems

Digital platforms influence not only what information people see, but also how quickly it spreads.

Algorithms tend to prioritise content that generates engagement, making emotionally charged and controversial messages more visible. At the same time, **filter bubbles** and **echo chambers** reduce exposure to alternative viewpoints and reinforce existing beliefs.

Trust also plays an important role. People are often more influenced by information shared by friends, relatives, community leaders, or influencers than by the original source itself. Developing healthy scepticism therefore requires evaluating both the content and its source.

Learning from Case Studies

Real-life examples help learners recognise manipulation techniques in authentic contexts.

This module uses case studies from areas such as political communication, migration, public health, and environmental communication to illustrate how misinformation combines emotional appeals, repetition, and selective evidence.

When discussing controversial topics, the focus should remain on analysing **how the message works**, rather than debating political opinions or personal beliefs. This approach encourages critical thinking while maintaining a respectful learning environment.

Learning Approach

The activities in this module are based on active participation rather than lectures. Participants analyse realistic social media posts, identify manipulation techniques, discuss why messages appear convincing, and only then evaluate their accuracy.

This sequence is intentional. Research shows that understanding **why misinformation feels convincing** is often more effective than simply presenting factual corrections. The aim is not to memorise examples of false information, but to develop transferable skills that can be applied whenever learners encounter new online content.

Preparing for the Activities

Many vulnerable adults encounter misinformation through everyday digital platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, YouTube, WhatsApp, Telegram, or Instagram rather than through traditional news media. Messages are often emotionally engaging, visually convincing, and shared by trusted friends or community members, making them appear credible before they are critically evaluated.

The activities in this module are designed to help participants recognise common manipulation techniques without creating shame, confrontation, or political conflict. The emphasis is not on telling learners what to believe, but on helping them pause, ask questions, and evaluate information more critically before accepting or sharing it.

Facilitation Tips

When using these activities:

- **Create a psychologically safe environment.** Emphasise that everyone is vulnerable to misinformation and avoid ridiculing incorrect beliefs.
- **Focus on mechanisms, not opinions.** Analyse how messages persuade rather than debating political or ideological positions.

- **Encourage reflection before correction.** Ask questions such as *"What makes this message convincing?"* or *"Which emotions does it evoke?"* before discussing whether the information is accurate.
- **Use accessible materials.** Short texts, visual examples, worksheets, and collaborative analysis are particularly effective for learners with diverse language abilities and digital skills.
- **Normalise uncertainty.** Encourage participants to say, *"I'm not sure," "I need more information,"* or *"I would verify this first."* Developing this habit is an important step towards digital resilience.

The following activities use realistic but fictionalised examples to illustrate common misinformation techniques while avoiding the reinforcement of harmful narratives or unnecessary emotional distress.

EXERCISE 1.1. Spot the Manipulation

 Goal	Recognise common misinformation and manipulation techniques in social media posts.
 Time	30 min
 Group	6–12 participants
 Materials	Social media cards, Manipulation Detection Worksheet, pens
 Difficulty	Beginner

Instructions

1. Divide participants into small groups.
2. Give each group 3–4 social media cards.
3. Ask participants to:
 - identify the type of message;
 - highlight manipulation techniques;
 - decide whether they would trust or share it.
4. Introduce common techniques:
 - emotional language;
 - fake authority;
 - urgency;
 - social proof ("everyone says this");
 - conspiracy framing;
 - selective information.
5. Invite each group to present its analysis.

Reflection

- Which post seemed most convincing?
- Which manipulation techniques appeared most often?
- Which warning signs were easiest to recognise?
- Did emotions influence your judgement?

Facilitation Tip

Focus discussion on **how** the message persuades rather than whether participants agree with it.

Manipulation Detection Checklist

Post / Example No.: _____

What do you notice?

- ☐ Emotional language
- ☐ Fear or anger
- ☐ Urgency ("Act now!")
- ☐ Expert without evidence
- ☐ "Everyone says..."
- ☐ One-sided information
- ☐ No reliable source
- ☐ Suspicious image
- ☐ Clickbait headline
- ☐ Other: _____

Reflection

What is the main message?

Would you trust this post?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

Would you share it? Why?

How could you verify this information?

EXERCISE 1.2. True, Misleading, or Manipulative?

 Goal	Distinguish factual, misleading, manipulative, and unverifiable information.
 Time	20–30 min
 Group	6–12 participants
 Materials	Statement Cards, Classification Sheet, category labels
 Difficulty	Beginner

Instructions

1. Spread the statement cards on a table or wall.
2. Participants work in pairs.
3. Each pair classifies every statement as:
 - Mostly True
 - Misleading
 - Manipulative
 - Impossible to Verify
4. Ask participants to explain their decisions.
5. Facilitate discussion about:
 - missing context;
 - selective facts;
 - emotional framing;
 - unreliable sources.

Reflection

- Which statements were hardest to classify?
- What makes information misleading rather than completely false?
- Why are emotionally dramatic messages often more persuasive?

Facilitation Tip

There is not always one correct answer. Encourage participants to justify their reasoning.

✂ Statement Cards

1	"Doctors hate this simple trick!"
2	"A study shows people sleep better after walking."
3	"Thousands are secretly being replaced."

4 	"Breaking: New law destroys your rights!"
5 	"Scientists are divided about this issue."
6 	"This video was deleted because they fear the truth."

Information Classification Sheet

Card	 Reliable	 Needs More Context	 Manipulative	 Cannot Verify	Why? (1–2 keywords)
1	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
2	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
3	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
4	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
5	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____
6	☐	☐	☐	☐	_____

Reflection

Which statement was the most difficult to classify? Why?

Which warning signs helped you make your decision?

- ☐ Emotional language
- ☐ Missing evidence
- ☐ Clickbait headline
- ☐ Authority without proof
- ☐ Urgency
- ☐ One-sided information
- ☐ Other: _____

EXERCISE 1.3. Build a Fake Post

 Goal	Understand how misleading social media posts are intentionally designed.
 Time	30 min
 Group	6–12 participants
 Materials	Fake Post Builder Worksheet, example headlines, pens
 Difficulty	Intermediate

Instructions

1. Divide participants into small groups.
2. Explain that each group will create a fictional misleading social media post.
3. Each group chooses:
 - topic;
 - emotional trigger;
 - headline;
 - image description;
 - fake expert quote;
 - urgency phrase.
4. Groups present their posts.
5. Other participants identify the manipulation techniques used.

 **Important:** Keep all examples fictional and avoid extremist, racist, or traumatic topics.

Reflection

- Which techniques made the posts seem believable?
- Was creating misleading content easier than expected?
- How can recognising these patterns help online?

Facilitation Tip

The objective is not to create convincing misinformation, but to understand how manipulation is constructed.

Fake Post Builder Template

 **Topic** _____

 **Emotion** ☐ Fear ☐ Anger ☐ Hope ☐ Pride ☐ Curiosity ☐ Urgency |

 **Headline** _____ |

 **Authority** _____ |

 **Image** Describe the image you would use:
_____ |

 **Call to Action** ☐ Share now ☐ Don't miss this ☐ Learn more ☐ Act now

☐ Other: _____ |

 **Which techniques did you use?**

☐ Emotional language

☐ Fake authority

☐ Urgency

☐ Social proof

☐ Clickbait headline

☐ Selective information

☐ Conspiracy framing

☐ Other: _____

 **Reflection**

Why would people believe or share this post?

EXERCISE 1.4. Pause Before Sharing

 Goal	Develop the habit of evaluating online content before sharing it.
 Time	20 min
 Group	6–12 participants
 Materials	Pause Before Sharing Checklist, example social media posts
 Difficulty	Beginner

Instructions

1. Present several emotionally engaging social media posts.
2. Participants individually complete the checklist before deciding whether they would share each post.
3. Compare decisions in small groups.
4. Discuss how slowing down changes perception.
5. Introduce the idea that misinformation often relies on immediate emotional reactions.

Reflection

- Did your decision change after completing the checklist?
- Which questions were most useful?
- What usually makes people share content too quickly?

Facilitation Tip

Emphasise that taking a few extra seconds to verify information is one of the simplest and most effective ways to reduce the spread of misinformation.

Pause Before Sharing Checklist

Example / Post No.: _____

 Before sharing, ask yourself:

	Question	 Yes	 No
	Do I know where this information comes from?	☐	☐
	Is there evidence rather than only emotional language?	☐	☐
	Does the headline try to shock, scare, or provoke me?	☐	☐
	Can I verify this information using another reliable source?	☐	☐
	Am I reacting emotionally rather than thinking critically?	☐	☐
	Would I still share this if I waited a few minutes?	☐	☐

Final Decision

- ☐ I would share it.
- ☐ I would verify it first.
- ☐ I would not share it.

Reflection

Which question made you stop and think the most?

What would you do before sharing this post?

Remember

Pause. Verify. Think critically. Then decide.



Source: Unsplash

Module 2. Cognitive Factors of Disinformation Belief

People do not believe misinformation because they lack intelligence or education. Instead, they rely on normal mental shortcuts that help them process large amounts of information quickly. These shortcuts are essential for everyday decision-making, but they can also make people more susceptible to misleading information, particularly in fast-moving digital environments.

For adult educators, understanding these cognitive processes is important because it shifts the focus from correcting "wrong answers" to helping learners understand **how they think**. This approach reduces defensiveness and encourages reflection rather than confrontation.

Learning objectives

After completing this module, educators will be able to:

- recognise common cognitive biases that influence belief;
- explain why repeated or emotionally engaging messages feel convincing;
- help learners distinguish familiarity from evidence;
- facilitate activities that promote reflective rather than automatic thinking.

How Our Brain Processes Information

The human brain constantly simplifies information to make quick decisions. Rather than carefully analysing every message, people often rely on mental shortcuts, known as **cognitive biases** and **heuristics**.

These shortcuts are useful in everyday life but can also increase susceptibility to misinformation. For example:

- **Confirmation bias** encourages people to seek information that supports existing beliefs.
- **Familiarity bias (illusory truth effect)** makes repeated information seem more credible.
- **Anchoring** causes first impressions to influence later judgments.
- **Overconfidence** may lead people to overestimate their ability to judge information critically.

These processes affect everyone and should be understood as normal features of human thinking rather than personal weaknesses.

Why Misinformation Feels True

Many misleading messages are persuasive not because they contain strong evidence, but because they are easy to understand, emotionally engaging, and repeatedly encountered.

Simple slogans, dramatic headlines, personal stories, and emotionally charged language require little mental effort to process. As a result, they often feel more convincing than detailed, evidence-based explanations.

People also tend to remember the main message while forgetting where it came from or whether it was later corrected. Repeated exposure further increases familiarity, making the message seem increasingly trustworthy.

Understanding these mechanisms helps learners pause before accepting information simply because it feels familiar or obvious.

Learning Through Self-Reflection

The activities in this module encourage learners to examine their own thinking rather than evaluate the beliefs of others.

Participants explore questions such as:

- Why does this message feel convincing?

- Which mental shortcut might influence my judgement?
- Am I relying on evidence or familiarity?
- Am I reacting automatically or thinking critically?

This reflective approach helps learners recognise that everyone is influenced by cognitive biases and that careful thinking can reduce their impact.

Learning Approach

The exercises in this module combine short explanations with interactive activities that make cognitive biases visible in everyday situations. Rather than asking learners to memorise psychological concepts, they experience how attention, repetition, and intuitive thinking influence their own decisions.

By analysing realistic examples, comparing first impressions with later reflections, and discussing their reasoning with others, participants develop greater awareness of how beliefs are formed and how they can make more informed decisions online.

Preparing for the Activities

People often believe misinformation not because they are careless or unintelligent, but because the human brain naturally seeks quick, simple, and familiar explanations. These activities help participants recognise their own thinking patterns in a supportive and non-judgemental environment.

Facilitation Tips

When using these activities:

- **Normalise cognitive biases.** Emphasise that everyone relies on mental shortcuts, regardless of education or experience.
- **Focus on thinking, not being right.** Encourage participants to explain how they reached a conclusion rather than defend it.
- **Use everyday examples.** Health advice, advertisements, viral videos, and social media posts are usually more relatable than political debates.
- **Slow down decision-making.** Give learners time to reflect before discussing or evaluating information.
- **Encourage uncertainty.** Participants should feel comfortable saying, *"I'm not sure,"* or *"I need more information before deciding."*

The following activities help learners recognise common cognitive biases, distinguish familiarity from evidence, and develop habits of reflective thinking before accepting or sharing information.

EXERCISE 2.1. The Familiarity Illusion

 Goal	Experience how repeated exposure influences perceived credibility.
 Time	20–30 min
 Group	6–12 participants
 Materials	Statement Cards, Believability Rating Sheet, pens
 Difficulty	Beginner

Instructions

1. Give each participant a Believability Rating Sheet.
2. Present six short statements one by one.
3. Some statements should appear several times during the activity without drawing attention to the repetition.
4. After each statement, participants rate how believable it feels.
5. Reveal that repetition was intentional and compare the ratings.
6. Facilitate a discussion about how familiarity influences judgement.

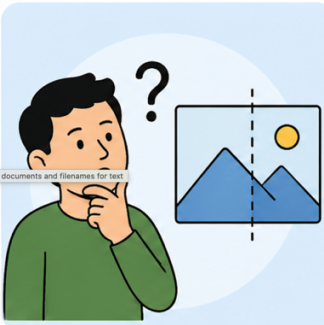
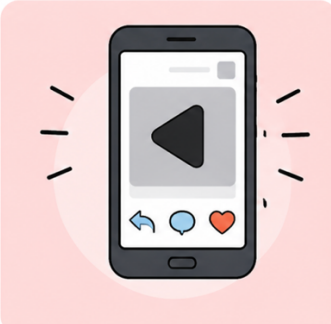
Reflection

- Which statements felt most believable?
- Did repeated statements seem more trustworthy?
- Why does repetition influence our judgement?
- Where do we encounter repeated messages online?

Facilitation Tip

Remind participants that the purpose is **not to decide whether the statements are true**, but to observe how repeated exposure affects their perception.

✂️ Example Claim Cards

	1. Most people cannot detect AI-generated images.		4. People trust information shared by friends more than by strangers.
	2. Drinking water improves concentration.		5. A viral post is usually accurate.
	3. Social media platforms secretly listen to conversations.		6. Seeing information many times makes it feel true.

Believability Rating Sheet

Participant: _____

How believable does each statement feel?

Statement	 1 Not believable	 2	 3	 4	 5 Very believable
1	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Reflection

Which statement did you find most believable? Why?

Did repeated statements feel more convincing?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

What does this activity tell us about misinformation online?

EXERCISE 2.2. Fast Thinking vs Slow Thinking

 Goal	Compare automatic first impressions with reflective analysis of online information.
 Time	30 min

 Group	6–12 participants
 Materials	Social media cards, Fast vs Slow Thinking Worksheet, timer
 Difficulty	Beginner

Instructions

1. Show participants a social media post for **10 seconds**.
2. Ask them to record their immediate reaction without discussion.
3. Give participants **2–3 minutes** to analyse the same post more carefully using the worksheet.
4. Compare first impressions with the second analysis.
5. Discuss how slowing down changed their judgement.

Reflection

- Did your opinion change after analysing the post?
- What influenced your first reaction?
- What important information did you notice only later?
- How can slowing down help reduce the spread of misinformation?

Facilitation Tip

Emphasise that changing your mind after reviewing evidence is a strength, not a weakness.

Fast vs Slow Thinking Worksheet

Participant: _____

Post / Example No.: _____

First Reaction (10 seconds)

	Question	Response
	What caught your attention first?	_____
	What emotion did you feel?	_____
	My first impression	☐ Trust ☐ Doubt ☐ Not sure

Second Look (2–3 minutes)

	Question	Response
	What evidence is provided?	_____
	What information is missing?	_____
	Which persuasion or emotional techniques do you notice?	_____
	Can this information be verified elsewhere?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

Final Decision: After taking time to think...

☐ I would trust it. ☐ I would verify it first. ☐ I would not trust it.

Reflection

What changed between your first reaction and your final decision?

What is one question you will ask yourself before sharing information online?

EXERCISE 2.3. Match the Bias

 Goal	Recognise common cognitive biases that influence how people interpret online information.
 Time	30 min
 Group	6–12 participants
 Materials	Bias Cards, Scenario Cards, Matching Sheet
 Difficulty	Intermediate

Instructions

1. Introduce five common cognitive biases:
 - Confirmation Bias
 - Familiarity Effect
 - Authority Bias
 - Negativity Bias
 - Availability Heuristic
2. Divide participants into small groups.
3. Give each group one set of Bias Cards and one set of Scenario Cards.
4. Ask participants to match each scenario with the cognitive bias they think best explains it.
5. Compare answers and discuss why different groups may have chosen different matches.

Reflection

- Which bias was easiest to recognise?
- Which bias do you encounter most often online?
- Have you experienced any of these biases yourself?
- How can recognising cognitive biases improve critical thinking?

Facilitation Tip

Some scenarios may involve more than one bias. Encourage discussion about **why** participants made their choices rather than looking for a single "correct" answer.

Bias Cards

Card	Cognitive Bias
 1	Confirmation Bias
 2	Familiarity Effect
 3	Authority Bias
 4	Negativity Bias
 5	Availability Heuristic



Scenario Cards

Card	Scenario
 A	"I only follow pages that agree with my opinions."
 B	"I've seen this claim many times, so it feels true."
 C	"A famous person shared it, so it must be reliable."
 D	"Negative news always seems more important."
 E	"I saw one dramatic example online, so I think it happens everywhere."

Bias Matching Sheet

Group: _____

Scenario	Selected Bias	Why? (1–2 keywords)
A	_____	_____
B	_____	_____
C	_____	_____
D	_____	_____
E	_____	_____

★ Reflection

Which scenario was most difficult to match? Why?

Which bias do you think affects your online behaviour most often?

EXERCISE 2.4. How Memory Works

 Goal	Explore how emotional framing influences attention, memory, and recall.
 Time	25–30 min
 Group	6–12 participants
 Materials	Story Version A, Story Version B, Memory Recall Worksheet, pens
 Difficulty	Intermediate

Instructions

1. Divide participants into two groups.
2. Give **Group A** the neutral version of the story.
3. Give **Group B** the emotionally framed version.
4. Ask participants to read (or listen to) the story only once.
5. Wait 3–5 minutes before distributing the Memory Recall Worksheet.
6. Participants complete the worksheet individually.
7. Compare the two groups' memories and discuss the differences.

Reflection

- Which details were remembered most accurately?
- Which details were remembered differently?
- Did the emotional version make some details seem more important?
- How can emotional framing influence what people remember and later share online?

Facilitation Tip

Avoid revealing that there are two versions until after the recall activity. The surprise helps participants recognise how framing influences memory.

🔗 Example Story

Story A: Neutral		Story B: Emotionally Framed	
Community Park Renovation		Beloved Community Park Faces Major Disruption	
			
The local council announced plans to renovate the central community park next month. The project includes repairing walking paths, planting new trees, installing additional benches, and replacing playground equipment. Construction is expected to last approximately six weeks. During this period, some sections of the park will be temporarily closed, while other areas will remain open. Residents can submit comments about the project through the council website.		Many local residents are worried after the council announced major changes to the community park. Popular walking areas will be closed, familiar trees removed, and construction work will continue for weeks. Some parents fear children will lose access to their favourite playground, while others are concerned that the neighbourhood will become less welcoming during the renovation. Residents are encouraged to voice their concerns through the council website.	
			

Memory Recall Worksheet

Participant: _____

Story: ☐ A ☐ B *(completed after the discussion by the facilitator)*

What happened?

Emotional details

What emotions or concerns do you remember?

Facts you remember

Write down any facts, places, dates, numbers, or actions you remember.

What are you unsure about?

Reflection

Which details stayed in your memory?

- ☐ Facts
- ☐ Emotions
- ☐ Images
- ☐ Opinions
- ☐ Other _____

Group Discussion

After revealing that there were two versions:

- Which group remembered more emotional details?
- Which group remembered more factual details?
- Did anyone remember information that was **implied but never stated**?
- How might emotional framing affect the way stories spread on social media?

EXERCISE 2.5. Why Does This Feel True?

 Goal	Develop metacognitive awareness by exploring why some messages feel convincing before deciding whether to trust them.
 Time	30–40 min
 Group	6–12 participants
 Materials	Social media examples, Reflection Worksheet, pens
 Difficulty	Intermediate

Instructions

1. Present participants with several realistic social media posts.
2. Ask them to record their first impressions without discussing the content.
3. Participants complete the Reflection Worksheet individually.
4. Compare responses in pairs or small groups.
5. Discuss how personal beliefs, message characteristics, and evidence influenced participants' judgements.

Reflection

- Which post felt most convincing?
- What influenced your first impression?
- Which questions helped you think more critically?
- How can this reflection help when using social media?

Facilitation Tip

Encourage participants to analyse **their own thinking**, not the opinions of others. The objective is to understand *why* a message feels convincing before deciding whether it is trustworthy.

Examples of Social Media Posts

Familiarity	Simplicity
 Daily Health Tips @DailyHealthTips Follow Drinking warm lemon water every morning detoxes your body and boosts your immunity! 🍋💧 Do it for a week and feel the difference!  8:30 AM · May 12, 2024 167 1.2K 3.4K	 Simple Facts @SimpleFacts_ Follow 8 glasses of water a day. Move your body. Eat real food. Sleep enough. That's it.  6:00 PM · Feb 3, 2024 89 2.1K 5.8K
Identity Relevance	Trust in the Source
 Alex Turner ✓ @AlexTurnerFit Follow As a dad and a coach, I only recommend products I use with my own family. Keeping kids active is the best gift we can give them. ❤️  9:15 AM · Mar 18, 2024 123 743 2.6K	 Dr. Sarah Mitchell ✓ @DrSarahM_D Follow New study: Daily 20-minute walks can reduce the risk of heart disease by up to 30%. Read the full research here 📌  healthresearch.org Daily Walking and Heart Health: New Findings from a 2024 Study 4:45 PM · Apr 28, 2024 56 311 1.1K

Reflection Worksheet

Participant: _____

Post / Example No.: _____

Example 1 – Familiarity

Question	Notes
☁ Have you seen similar messages before?	_____
🔄 Does the message feel familiar? Why?	_____
★ Would familiarity make you trust it more?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

Example 2 – Simplicity

Question	Notes
✨ Is the message simple and easy to remember?	_____
💬 Does it leave out important information?	_____
★ Does simplicity make it feel more believable?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

Example 3 – Identity Relevance

Question	Notes
👤 Does this message relate to your identity?	_____
❤ Would someone in this group trust it?	_____
★ Does personal relevance increase trust?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

Example 4 – Trust in the Source

Question	Notes
👤 What makes the source appear trustworthy?	_____

 Is evidence actually provided?	_____
 Would you trust this post because of the source?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

 Final Reflection

Question	Notes
Which post felt most convincing?	_____
Which factor influenced you most?	☐ Familiarity ☐ Simplicity ☐ Identity ☐ Source
What will you pay more attention to next time?	_____



Source: Unsplash

Module 3. Emotional Factors of Disinformation Belief

Emotions strongly influence how people interpret, remember, and share information. Messages that evoke fear, anger, outrage, or hope attract attention more quickly and often feel more convincing than neutral information. In online environments, emotionally charged content is also more likely to be shared, making it a powerful vehicle for misinformation.

For vulnerable adults, emotions may be particularly important because uncertainty, exclusion, or insecurity can increase the appeal of messages that offer simple explanations, identify someone to blame, or create a sense of belonging. Adult educators therefore need to address misinformation not only as a question of facts, but also as an emotional and social process.

Learning objectives

After completing this module, educators will be able to:

- recognise common emotional triggers in online content;
- explain how emotions influence judgement and sharing behaviour;
- distinguish emotional reactions from evidence;
- use practical strategies to support emotional awareness and self-regulation.

How Emotions Influence Judgement

People often rely on emotions as a quick guide when evaluating information. If a message creates a strong emotional reaction, it may seem more important, more urgent, or more believable than it really is.

Online platforms amplify this effect by promoting content that generates engagement. Messages that trigger fear, anger, moral outrage, or anxiety receive more attention and are therefore more likely to spread.

Common emotional triggers include:

- **Fear** – increases attention to potential threats.
- **Anger** – encourages quick judgement and blame.
- **Disgust** – strengthens rejection and stereotypes.
- **Negativity** – makes negative information more memorable than positive information.

These emotional reactions are normal, but they can reduce careful evaluation if they remain unexamined.

Emotions, Identity and Group Belonging

Emotions do not operate in isolation. They are closely connected to identity and social relationships.

People are more likely to accept information that supports their values, confirms the views of their community, or strengthens the distinction between "people like us" and "people like them." Emotionally charged messages often reinforce these identities rather than encourage critical analysis.

As a result, misinformation may feel convincing not because of strong evidence, but because it aligns with existing feelings of belonging, injustice, or shared experience.

Managing Emotional Reactions

The goal of media literacy is not to suppress emotions, but to recognise them before acting on them.

Adult learners can develop simple habits that reduce emotional influence:

- pause before reacting;
- identify the emotion being triggered;
- separate feelings from evidence;
- compare multiple sources;

- delay sharing until information has been verified.

These strategies encourage reflective rather than impulsive responses and help learners develop greater resilience to emotional manipulation.

Learning Approach

The activities in this module encourage participants to experience how emotions shape attention, memory, and judgement.

Rather than debating controversial topics, learners analyse realistic media examples, identify emotional triggers, compare emotional and neutral versions of messages, and practise simple regulation strategies. Throughout the activities, the emphasis is on understanding **how emotions influence thinking**, not on judging participants' beliefs.

Preparing for the Activities

Emotional reactions are a normal part of information processing. The purpose of these activities is not to eliminate emotions but to help learners recognise them and create space for reflection before responding.

Facilitation Tips

When working with emotionally sensitive topics:

- **Create a psychologically safe environment.** Establish respectful discussion rules and allow participants to opt out of activities if needed.
- **Acknowledge emotions without reinforcing them.** Validate feelings while encouraging reflection on what triggered them.
- **Focus on communication strategies, not political opinions.** Analyse how messages are designed rather than whether participants agree with them.
- **Use realistic but non-traumatic examples.** Avoid graphic images or examples targeting specific identity groups.
- **Encourage reflection before discussion.** Written responses often reduce impulsive reactions and improve the quality of conversation.
- **Model emotional regulation.** Demonstrate how pausing, questioning, and rephrasing emotionally charged messages can support critical thinking.

The following activities help learners identify emotional triggers, distinguish emotions from evidence, and develop practical habits for responding thoughtfully to emotionally charged online information.

EXERCISE 3.1. Emotion vs Evidence Challenge

 Goal	Distinguish between emotional reactions and evidence-based evaluation when interpreting online information.
 Time	35–45 min
 Group	6–20 participants
 Materials	News article or social media post, Emotion or Evidence? Worksheet, pens
 Difficulty	Beginner

Instructions

1. Present participants with a realistic news article or social media post.
2. Without discussion, ask them to record their immediate emotional reaction.
3. Participants complete the worksheet individually.
4. In pairs or small groups, compare emotional reactions and identify:
 - emotional language,
 - factual claims,
 - missing information,
 - supporting evidence.
5. Ask participants to review their initial judgement after completing the analysis.

Reflection

- Which emotion did you experience first?
- Did your judgement change after analysing the evidence?
- Which emotional cues influenced your first impression?
- How can separating emotion from evidence improve critical thinking?

Facilitation Tip

Emphasise that emotions are valuable signals, but they should not replace evidence when making decisions or sharing information.

Emotion or Evidence? Worksheet

Participant: _____

Post / Example No.: _____

♥ 1. MY REACTION

What did I feel when I first saw the message?

	Question	Response
♥	What emotion did I feel first?	_____
🔥	How strong was this emotion?	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5
⚡	What made me react immediately?	_____

📢 2. THE MESSAGE

How does the message influence my emotions?

	Question	Notes
💬	Which words or images trigger emotions?	_____
⚠️	Does the message create fear, anger, urgency, or hope?	_____
🎯	What action does the message encourage?	_____

🔍 3. THE EVIDENCE

What information supports the message?

	Question	Notes
📄	Which statements are factual?	_____
🔍	What evidence is provided?	_____
?	What information is missing?	_____
🌐	Can I verify this information elsewhere?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

★ 4. MY DECISION

After analysing the message...

☐ My opinion stayed the same. ☐ My opinion changed. ☐ I need more information.

 **My Key Takeaway**

What helped you move from an emotional reaction to a more balanced judgement?

EXERCISE 3.2. Pause, Reflect, Respond

 Goal	Develop emotional awareness and practise responding thoughtfully to emotionally charged media content.
 Time	30 min
 Group	8–12 participants
 Materials	Reflection Worksheet, media example (article, video or social media post), pens
 Difficulty	Intermediate

Instructions

1. Present participants with a media example.
2. Ask them to complete the Reflection Worksheet individually.
3. In small groups, compare answers and discuss how emotions influenced interpretation.
4. Invite participants to suggest strategies that could help them respond more thoughtfully in similar situations.
5. Summarise the discussion by highlighting the importance of recognising emotions before making decisions or sharing information.

Reflection

- Which step was easiest? Which was most difficult?
- Did identifying your emotions change your interpretation?
- Which strategies could help you pause before reacting?
- How might these strategies improve your online behaviour?

Facilitation Tip

There are no right or wrong emotions. The purpose is to recognise emotional reactions and decide how to respond thoughtfully rather than automatically.

Pause, Reflect, Respond Worksheet

Participant: _____

Post / Example No.: _____

1. NOTICE

What emotions did you experience?

	Question	Notes
	What emotion did you feel first?	_____
	Which emotion do you think the message is trying to trigger?	_____

2. REFLECT

What caused these emotions?

	Question	Notes
	Which words, images, or ideas triggered your reaction?	_____
	Have you experienced similar feelings before?	_____

3. NAME IT

Describe your emotional reaction as precisely as possible.

	Question	Notes
	Can you describe your emotion more specifically? (e.g., concern, frustration, anxiety, curiosity)	_____

4. RESPOND

How could you communicate your reaction respectfully?

	Question	Notes
	If you wanted to comment or discuss this post, what would you say?	_____

5. CHOOSE

What is the best next step?

Question		Response
	What would you do now?	☐ Pause ☐ Verify ☐ Discuss ☐ Share ☐ Ignore

 **My Key Takeaway**

What strategy will help you respond more thoughtfully in the future?

EXERCISE 3.3. The Same Story, Different Feelings

 Goal	Explore how emotional framing changes the way people interpret, trust, and respond to the same information.
 Time	30–40 min
 Group	10–15 participants
 Materials	Three versions of the same story (Neutral, Fear-based, Outrage-based), Rating Sheet, pens
 Difficulty	Intermediate

Instructions

1. Divide participants into small groups.
2. Give each group three versions of the same story:
 - Version A – Neutral
 - Version B – Fear-based
 - Version C – Outrage-based
3. Ask participants to read each version independently.
4. Complete the Rating Sheet for all three versions.
5. Compare ratings within the group.
6. Discuss how emotional framing influenced perception, trust, and willingness to share.

Reflection

- Which version felt most convincing?
- Which version triggered the strongest emotions?
- Did stronger emotions make the story seem more believable?
- Which version would be most likely to spread on social media? Why?

Facilitation Tip

Reveal only after the discussion that all three stories describe the same event. This helps participants recognise how emotional framing can shape interpretation without changing the underlying facts.

The Same Story, Different Feelings Worksheet

Participant: _____

 What changed between the three versions?

- ☐ Headline
- ☐ Word choice
- ☐ Images
- ☐ Tone
- ☐ Facts
- ☐ Order of information
- ☐ Call to action
- ☐ Other _____

Story Version	❤️ Emotion (1–5)	✅ Credibility (1–5)	🕒 Urgency (1–5)	📧 Would I Share It?
 Neutral	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
 Fear-based	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
 Outrage-based	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5	○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

★ Reflection

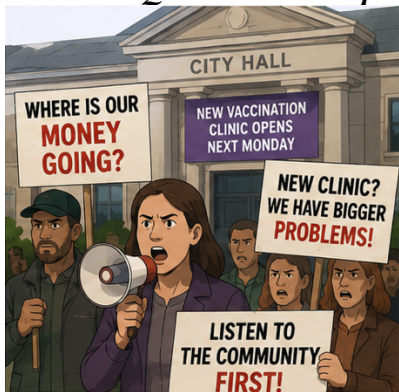
Which version...

Question	Answer
Triggered the strongest emotions?	_____
Seemed most believable?	_____
Created the greatest sense of urgency?	_____
Would be shared most often online?	_____

 My Key Takeaway

What did this activity teach you about emotional framing?

Examples Stories

Story A.: Neutral <i>Community Health Centre Opens New Vaccination Clinic</i>  Screenshot	The local health centre will open a new vaccination clinic next Monday to improve access to routine vaccinations. The clinic will operate three days a week and appointments can be booked online or by telephone. According to the municipality, the new service is intended to reduce waiting times and improve access for residents. Participation is voluntary, and people can choose whether or not to use the new clinic. Additional information is available on the municipality's website.
Story B: Fear-Based <i>Residents Warned About Increasing Health Risks</i> 	Local health officials say that more people could become seriously ill if routine vaccinations continue to be delayed. In response, the municipality is opening a new vaccination clinic next Monday. Officials warn that long waiting times may leave some residents without timely protection. Although attendance is voluntary, health experts encourage people not to postpone important vaccinations. More information is available on the municipality's website.
Story C: Outrage-Based <i>Residents Question Municipality's Priorities</i> 	Some local residents are criticising the municipality after it announced the opening of a new vaccination clinic next Monday. Critics argue that public money should be spent on improving existing healthcare services rather than creating new facilities. Others question whether local authorities listened to community concerns before making the decision. The municipality states that the clinic is intended to reduce waiting times and improve access. Participation remains voluntary, and additional information is available on the municipality's website.

EXERCISE 3.4. How Emotional Messages Are Designed

 Goal	Explore how emotional communication strategies influence attention, interpretation, and sharing behaviour.
 Time	35–45 min
 Group	9–15 participants (groups of three)
 Materials	Role Cards, Scenario Cards, pens
 Difficulty	Intermediate

Instructions

1. Divide participants into groups of three.
2. Assign one of the following roles:
 - **Message Designer**
 - **Critical Analyst**
 - **Audience Member**
3. Give each group a Scenario Card.
4. The Message Designer creates a short social media post using emotional communication techniques **without inventing false facts**.
5. The Critical Analyst identifies persuasive techniques used in the message.
6. The Audience Member describes their emotional reaction and whether they would trust or share the post.
7. Rotate roles and repeat with a new scenario.

Reflection

- Which communication techniques attracted your attention?
- Which emotions were strongest?
- Which techniques influenced trust the most?
- How can recognising these strategies help us respond more critically online?

Facilitation Tip

Emphasise that the goal is **not** to create convincing misinformation, but to recognise how communication choices can shape emotional responses.

Role Card 1. Message Designer

Your Role

Create a short social media post based on the scenario.

 Your task	You may use	Do not
Try to make the message: ☐ Attention-grabbing ☐ Emotional ☐ Easy to remember ☐ Easy to share	☐ Emotional language ☐ A personal story ☐ A strong headline ☐ A call to action	☒ Invent facts ☒ Attack individuals or groups ☒ Use offensive language

Draft your post

Role Card 2. Critical Analyst

Your Role

Analyse how the message is constructed.

Question	Notes
 Which emotions does the message try to trigger?	_____
 Which communication techniques are used?	_____
 Which statements are factual?	_____
 What evidence is missing?	_____
 Would you verify the information before sharing?	☐ Yes ☐ No



Role Card 3. Audience Member

Your Role

Describe your reaction as if you had seen the post online.

Question	Response
 What emotion did you feel first?	_____
 How believable does the message feel?	☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
 Would you share it?	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure
 Why?	_____

Scenario Cards

Scenario 1. Community Park Renovation 	The local council has announced plans to renovate the community park next month. The project includes repairing walking paths, planting new trees, installing additional benches, and replacing playground equipment. Construction is expected to last about six weeks. During this period, some areas of the park will be temporarily closed, while other sections will remain open.
Scenario 2. New School Attendance Policy 	A local secondary school has introduced a new attendance policy aimed at reducing late arrivals and unexcused absences. The school says the policy will help improve learning and classroom organisation. Some parents support the changes, while others are concerned that the new rules may not be flexible enough for families facing unexpected circumstances.
Scenario 3. Public Transport Schedule Changes 	Starting next month, the local transport authority will introduce a new timetable for buses and trains. The changes are intended to improve connections and reduce delays during peak hours. Some routes will operate more frequently, while others will have fewer evening services. The authority says it will monitor passenger feedback after implementation.
Scenario 4. Supermarket Purchase Limits 	During a period of unusually high demand, several supermarkets have temporarily limited the number of selected products that each customer can purchase. According to the retailers, the measure is intended to ensure that essential goods remain available for all customers until supplies return to normal.
Scenario 5. New Community Health Service 	The municipality has announced the opening of a new community health centre that will provide preventive health services, mental well-being support, and educational workshops. The centre aims to improve access to local healthcare and promote healthy lifestyles. Participation in all programmes is voluntary.



Source: Unsplash

Module 4. Social Factors of Disinformation Belief

People rarely evaluate information alone. Friends, family, colleagues, online communities, and social media networks all influence what we believe and whom we trust. Messages that reinforce our identity or strengthen our sense of belonging often feel more credible than information from unfamiliar sources.

For vulnerable adults, these social influences may be particularly important. Experiences of exclusion, uncertainty, or distrust in institutions can increase reliance on peer networks and online communities, where misinformation may spread through repeated sharing and social validation rather than evidence. Adult educators therefore need to understand misinformation not only as an individual decision, but also as a social process shaped by relationships, trust, and group identity.

Learning objectives

After completing this module, educators will be able to:

- explain how social relationships influence belief formation;
- recognise the role of identity, trust, and group belonging in misinformation;
- identify echo chambers and filter bubbles;
- facilitate respectful dialogue across different perspectives.

How Social Influence Shapes Beliefs

People naturally look to others when deciding what is true or trustworthy. Information shared by friends, family members, respected community figures, or online groups often feels more convincing than messages from unfamiliar sources.

Belonging to a group also shapes how people interpret information. Messages that support the values of "people like us" are often accepted more easily, while contradictory information may be questioned or ignored.

This does not mean that people are irrational. Social trust helps us make everyday decisions efficiently, but it can also make us more vulnerable to misinformation when trust is based primarily on group identity rather than evidence.

Echo Chambers and Filter Bubbles

Digital platforms personalise the information we see. At the same time, people tend to follow and interact with others who share similar views.

Together, these two processes create information environments where the same messages are repeatedly reinforced.

- **Echo chambers** develop through social interaction within like-minded communities.
- **Filter bubbles** are created when algorithms recommend similar content based on previous online behaviour.

These mechanisms increase familiarity, strengthen confidence in existing beliefs, and reduce exposure to alternative perspectives.

Trust, Identity and Dialogue

Trust plays an important role in how people evaluate information. Many individuals rely more on personal networks, community leaders, or online influencers than on traditional institutions.

When misinformation becomes connected to identity or group belonging, simply correcting facts is often ineffective. Challenging a belief may also feel like challenging a person's community or values.

Adult educators can support learners by creating respectful spaces where different perspectives can be explored without judgement. The goal is not to persuade participants to adopt particular opinions, but to encourage curiosity, dialogue, and critical reflection.

Learning Approach

The activities in this module help learners recognise how social environments influence their thinking.

Participants analyse information networks, identify trusted sources, explore different perspectives through role-play and dialogue, and reflect on how online communities shape beliefs. Throughout the module, the emphasis is on understanding social influence rather than debating political or ideological positions.

Preparing for the Activities

Discussions about identity, trust, and group belonging can become emotionally sensitive. Adult educators should therefore focus on creating respectful dialogue rather than convincing participants that one viewpoint is correct.

Facilitation Tips

When facilitating these activities:

- **Create a psychologically safe environment.** Agree on respectful discussion rules before beginning.
- **Focus on understanding rather than persuading.** Encourage participants to explain how they reached their conclusions.
- **Separate experience from interpretation.** Distinguish between what happened and how it is understood.
- **Encourage perspective-taking.** Invite learners to consider how different people might interpret the same situation.
- **Value uncertainty.** Participants should feel comfortable saying, *"I don't know"* or *"I need more information."*
- **Avoid polarising examples.** Use everyday community situations whenever possible.

The following activities help learners recognise social influences, understand information networks, and practise respectful dialogue across different perspectives.

EXERCISE 4.1. Understanding Different Perspectives

 Goal	Practise understanding how different people may interpret the same issue without agreeing or disagreeing with their conclusions.
 Time	30–40 min
 Group	6–12 participants (pairs or small groups)
 Materials	Narrative Cards, Perspective Worksheet, pens
 Difficulty	Intermediate

Instructions

1. Divide participants into pairs or small groups.
2. Give each group one Narrative Card.
3. Explain that the task is **to understand the reasoning behind the narrative**, not to defend or criticise it.
4. Complete the Perspective Worksheet together.
5. Each group briefly presents its analysis.
6. Discuss similarities and differences between the narratives.

Reflection

- What was most difficult about understanding this perspective?
- Which values or concerns became clearer?
- Did understanding the reasoning mean you agreed with it?
- Why is it useful to separate understanding from agreement?

Facilitation Tip

Remind participants that the objective is **curiosity rather than persuasion**. Exploring another perspective helps us communicate more effectively, even when we disagree.

Perspective Worksheet

Group: _____

Narrative: _____

1. Main Message

What is the main idea or concern expressed in this narrative?

2. What assumptions does it make?

What would someone have to believe for this message to make sense?

3. What values or needs are important?

Which values or concerns seem most important?

- ☐ Safety
- ☐ Freedom
- ☐ Fairness
- ☐ Trust
- ☐ Community
- ☐ Security
- ☐ Respect
- ☐ Other _____

4. Why might people find this convincing?

5. Another Perspective

How might someone with a different experience see the same issue?

Reflection

What did you learn about understanding different perspectives?

🔗 Narrative cards

	Narrative A – Local Hospital	"People should use local hospitals whenever possible because strong public healthcare benefits everyone in the community."
	Narrative B – Digital Services	"Many public services should remain available in person because not everyone feels comfortable using digital systems."
	Narrative C – Social Media	"Independent creators often explain complex issues more clearly than traditional news organisations."
	Narrative D – Community Safety	"Neighbourhood groups should work together to improve local safety instead of relying only on authorities."

EXERCISE 4.2. Facts or Interpretation?

 Goal	Practise distinguishing between direct experience and personal interpretation during discussions about social issues.
 Time	30 min
 Group	8–12 participants
 Materials	Dialogue Rules, Facts or Interpretation? Worksheet, timer
 Difficulty	Intermediate

Instructions

1. Arrange participants in a circle or small discussion groups.
2. Introduce a neutral discussion topic (for example: *"Social media has changed how people trust information."*)
3. Give participants a few minutes to complete the worksheet individually.
4. Invite participants to share their responses one at a time.
5. Before responding, each participant briefly summarises what the previous speaker said.
6. Continue until everyone has contributed.
7. Discuss how separating facts from interpretations influenced the conversation.

Reflection

- Was it easier to describe experiences or interpretations?
- Did summarising another person's viewpoint improve understanding?
- Where did different interpretations begin?
- How can this approach improve conversations about controversial topics?

Facilitation Tip

Remind participants that different people can interpret the same experience differently. The aim is to understand these differences rather than decide who is right.

Facts or Interpretation? Worksheet

Topic: _____

Before You Speak

1.  Take turns speaking.
2.  Listen without interrupting.
3.  Before responding, briefly summarise what the previous speaker said.
4.  Separate:
 - **Facts** – what happened or what you observed.
 - **Interpretation** – what you think it means.
5.  Focus on understanding, not convincing.

1. Facts

What did I personally experience, observe, or verify?

2. Interpretation

What do I think these facts mean?

3. Another Perspective

What did the previous speaker say?

4. What Did I Learn?

Did hearing another perspective change or expand my understanding?

☐ Yes ☐ A little ☐ No Why?

Key Takeaway

One thing I will do differently in future discussions:

EXERCISE 4.3. Seeing Through Different Eyes

 Goal	Develop perspective-taking skills by exploring how different stakeholders may understand the same community issue.
 Time	40–50 min
 Group	6–18 participants
 Materials	Role Cards, Preparation Sheet, Scenario Card
 Difficulty	Intermediate

Instructions

1. Present one community scenario (for example, a new health centre, changes to public transport, or a neighbourhood festival).
2. Assign each participant a different stakeholder role.
3. Give participants 10 minutes to prepare using the worksheet.
4. Conduct a moderated discussion in which each participant speaks from the perspective of their assigned role.
5. Finish by identifying areas of agreement and shared values.

Reflection

- Which perspective was most difficult to understand?
- What legitimate concerns did each stakeholder have?
- Which values were shared by everyone?
- How can understanding different perspectives improve discussions about misinformation?

Facilitation Tip

The goal is not to "win" the discussion but to understand why reasonable people may see the same situation differently.

Example Scenario

A New Community Health Centre

The municipality plans to open a new community health centre offering preventive healthcare, mental well-being support, and educational workshops.

Different community members have different expectations and concerns about the project.

✂️ Role Cards

Your role	Your perspective	Consider
 Citizen	Think about how this decision affects everyday life.	• How will it affect you or your family? • What benefits do you see? • What concerns do you have?
 Municipality Representative	Explain why this decision was made	• Public benefit • Limited budget • Long-term planning
 Healthcare Professional	Focus on health needs and practical implementation.	• Access to services • Prevention • Community well-being
 Older Resident	Think about accessibility and everyday practical needs.	• Transport • Information • Ease of access
 Community Blogger	Think about how the story might be presented online.	• Which information would attract attention? • How can you report responsibly? • Which questions would your audience ask?
 Community Volunteer	Focus on cooperation and inclusion.	• Who benefits? • Who may feel excluded? • How can different groups work together?

 Preparation Worksheet

Role: _____

 My Perspective

What is most important from my role?

 Main Concerns

List two concerns.

1. _____

2. _____

 Shared Values

Which value do you probably share with everyone?

- ☐ Safety
- ☐ Fairness
- ☐ Health
- ☐ Respect
- ☐ Community
- ☐ Trust
- ☐ Inclusion
- ☐ Other _____

 One Question I Would Ask

 Reflection

After the discussion...

Something I understand better now:

EXERCISE 4.4. Learning Through Dialogue

 Goal	Practise respectful discussion by listening to different perspectives, recognising uncertainty, and being willing to revise your own thinking.
 Time	30–40 min
 Group	10–15 participants
 Materials	Dialogue Rules, Reflection Sheet, timer
 Difficulty	Intermediate

Instructions

1. Divide participants into two small groups.
2. Introduce a discussion topic (for example, *"Social media platforms should do more to reduce misinformation."*)
3. Explain that the purpose is **to learn**, not to win.
4. Conduct the discussion in short timed rounds.
5. Participants may change or refine their opinions at any point.
6. At the end, everyone completes the Reflection Sheet.

Reflection

- Did any argument make you think differently?
- What helped you understand another perspective?
- Did your opinion change completely, partly, or not at all?
- What questions remain unanswered?

Facilitation Tip

Celebrate curiosity and thoughtful reflection. Participants should feel comfortable saying *"I'm not sure"* or *"I've changed my mind."*

Learning Through Dialogue Guidelines

During the Discussion

Listen respectfully.

Allow everyone to finish before responding.

Explain your reasoning.

Share why you think something, not just what you think.

Acknowledge good points.

It is acceptable to say:

"That's a good point." or "I hadn't considered that."

Be open to changing your mind.

Learning often means refining your ideas as you hear new information.

Uncertainty is acceptable.

It is perfectly acceptable to say:

"I'm not sure."

"I need more information."

"My opinion has changed."

 Reflection Sheet

Topic: _____

 My Starting Position

☐ Agree ☐ Disagree ☐ Unsure

Why?

 One idea that made me think

 Has my thinking changed?

☐ Yes ☐ Partly ☐ No

How?

 What questions remain?

 One thing I learned today



Source: Unsplash

Module 5. How to Combat Disinformation

Recognising misinformation is only the first step. Adult educators also need practical strategies that help learners respond confidently, verify information, and resist manipulation before it takes hold.

Research shows that simply correcting false information is often not enough. Once misinformation becomes familiar or connected to emotions and identity, people may continue to believe it even after it has been disproved. Effective education therefore focuses not only on correcting misinformation but also on preventing it and strengthening critical thinking.

Learning objectives

After completing this module, educators will be able to:

- explain the difference between pre-bunking and debunking;
- use Inoculation Theory to build resistance to misinformation;
- teach practical verification strategies;
- encourage respectful responses to misinformation in everyday life;
- select appropriate digital tools and educational resources.

Prevention Before Correction

Many people assume that misinformation should simply be corrected. Although corrections are important, research shows they are often less effective once false beliefs have become established.

A more effective approach is **pre-bunking**—preparing learners before they encounter misinformation. Rather than correcting individual false claims, educators explain how manipulation works so that learners can recognise it themselves.

This preventive approach reduces susceptibility across many different topics and supports long-term resilience.

Inoculation Theory

One of the best-supported approaches to preventing misinformation is **Inoculation Theory**.

The idea is similar to a medical vaccine: people become more resistant to manipulation when they are first exposed to weakened examples together with an explanation of how they work.

An effective inoculation activity usually includes three elements:

-  **Warning:** Explain that misleading information and manipulation are common online.
-  **Explanation:** Show how common techniques work, such as emotional language, fake experts, conspiracy narratives, or misleading images.
-  **Practice:** Give learners opportunities to recognise and respond to these techniques using realistic examples.

Research shows that **active participation**—analysing, discussing, and practising—is more effective than simply receiving information.

Practical Verification Skills

Prevention works best when learners also know how to verify information.

Simple verification habits include:

- checking the original source;
- comparing several reliable sources;
- looking for evidence rather than opinions;
- recognising emotional language;

- checking whether images or statistics are used in context.

Verification should become a routine habit rather than an occasional activity.

Responding to Misinformation

When misinformation is shared by friends, relatives, or colleagues, direct correction may create resistance.

Adult educators can encourage learners to:

- ask questions rather than argue;
- explore evidence together;
- acknowledge uncertainty;
- avoid public embarrassment;
- model respectful dialogue.

The goal is to keep conversations constructive while encouraging critical reflection.

Learning Through Practice

People learn best when they actively practise recognising misinformation.

Interactive activities such as simulations, role-play, quizzes, and educational games help learners experience how manipulation works in a safe environment.

Research also shows that active learning is more effective than passive information delivery because participants generate their own responses instead of simply memorising facts.

Digital Tools for Adult Educators

Many free digital tools support misinformation education.

Examples include:

- **Bad News** – recognising common manipulation techniques.
- **Harmony Square** – understanding polarisation and social manipulation.
- **Cranky Uncle** – identifying misleading arguments and logical fallacies.

These tools are useful examples, but educators should adapt activities to local contexts and learners' needs.

Preparing for the Activities

The activities in this module focus on building everyday habits rather than testing factual knowledge.

Facilitation Tips

When using these activities:

- **Focus on practical habits.** Encourage learners to pause, question, and verify rather than memorise facts.
- **Avoid public correction.** Create a supportive learning environment where mistakes become opportunities to learn.
- **Use collaborative activities.** Verification is often more effective when learners work together.
- **Practise everyday situations.** Use examples from family conversations, messaging apps, workplaces, and community groups.
- **Normalise uncertainty.** Encourage participants to say, *"I'm not sure"* or *"Let's check together."*
- **Adapt activities to learners' needs.** Printed materials and discussion-based exercises work well for groups with limited digital skills.

EXERCISE 5.1. Pause, Check, Decide

 Goal	Practise verifying information before deciding whether to trust or share it.
 Time	30–40 min
 Group	6–12 participants
 Materials	Example Cards, Verification Checklist, Source Cards, pens
 Difficulty	Beginner

Instructions

1. Divide participants into small groups.
2. Give each group:
 - one Example Card,
 - several possible Source Cards,
 - the Verification Checklist.
3. Ask groups to investigate the message by completing the checklist.
4. Participants decide whether they would:
 - trust it,
 - verify it further,
 - or avoid sharing it.
5. Each group explains **how** they reached their decision.

Reflection

- Which question was most useful?
- Which messages seemed convincing at first?
- Did your opinion change after checking the information?
- Which verification habits will you use in everyday life?

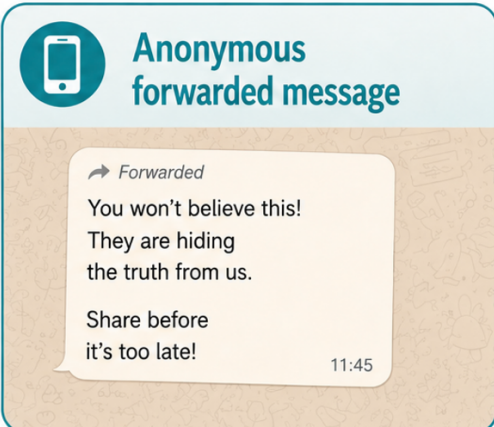
Facilitation Tip

Focus on **the process**, not on whether participants reach the same conclusion. Good verification means asking thoughtful questions before reacting or sharing.

Example Cards

Example	Claim
	A new law will ban several everyday foods starting next month.
	Scientists have discovered a treatment that works for everyone.
	Migrants receive secret financial benefits that local residents cannot access.
	A recently shared video proves election fraud.

Source cards

 Local newspaper 	 Government website 
 University researcher 	 Friend on social media 
 Influencer 	 Anonymous forwarded message 

Verification Checklist

Participant: _____

Example: _____

1. THE SOURCE

	Question	Answer
☐	Who created this message?	
☐	Is the source clearly identified?	

2. THE EVIDENCE

	Question	Answer
☐	Is there evidence or only claims?	
☐	Can another reliable source confirm it?	

3. THE MESSAGE

	Question	Answer
☐	Does it use fear, urgency, or outrage?	
☐	Is the headline or image misleading?	
☐	What important information might be missing?	

4. MY REACTION

	Question	Answer
☐	Am I reacting emotionally?	
☐	Am I making assumptions?	

5. MY DECISION

After checking the information:

☐ I trust it.

☐ I need more information.

☐ I would not share it.

 Why?

EXERCISE 5.2. The Rumour Chain

 Goal	Observe how information changes as it is passed from one person to another.
 Time	25–35 min
 Group	10–20 participants
 Materials	Message Cards, Rumour Chain Worksheet, pens
 Difficulty	Beginner

Instructions

1. Ask one participant to read a short message silently.
2. They whisper the message to the next participant only once.
3. The message continues around the group.
4. The last participant says the final version aloud.
5. Compare the final message with the original.
6. Repeat with a second message that contains more emotional language.

Reflection

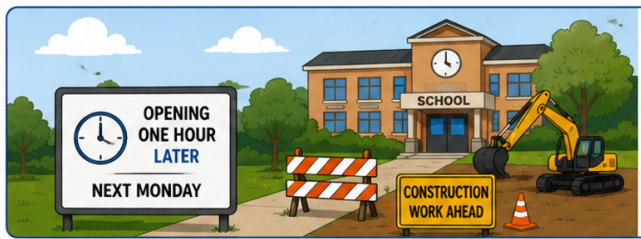
- Which details stayed the same?
- Which details changed or disappeared?
- Were emotional details remembered more easily?
- How can information change when it is repeatedly shared?

Facilitation Tip

Remind participants that memory naturally changes information. The exercise is about understanding how rumours spread—not about testing anyone's memory.

Message Cards

Message A (Neutral)



The local school will open one hour later next Monday because construction work is taking place near the entrance.

Message B (Emotional)



Parents are worried because the local school will open later next Monday while construction work takes place near the entrance.

Message C (Neutral)



The community park will be partly closed for six weeks while new playground equipment is installed.

Message D (Emotional)



Many families are upset because large parts of the community park will be closed for several weeks.

Rumour Chain Worksheet

Group: _____

Original Message

Write the original message.

Final Message

Write the final version you heard.

Compare the Messages

	Question	Observation
☐	Which details stayed the same?	
☐	Which details changed?	
☐	Which details disappeared?	
☐	Were new details added?	

Why do you think this happened?

What can we learn?

One thing I will remember before sharing information:

EXERCISE 5.3. Respond Calmly

 Goal	Practise responding to misinformation in ways that encourage dialogue rather than conflict.
 Time	30–40 min
 Group	6–12 participants
 Materials	Scenario Cards, Response Cards, Reflection Sheet
 Difficulty	Intermediate

Instructions

1. Divide participants into pairs.
2. Give each pair one Scenario Card.
3. One participant reads the scenario aloud.
4. The other responds using calm and constructive communication.
5. Discuss which responses encourage conversation and which increase conflict.
6. Swap roles and repeat with a different scenario.

Reflection

- Which responses helped keep the conversation open?
- Which responses created resistance?
- Why is asking questions often more effective than correcting people?
- Which response would you use in everyday life?

Facilitation Tip

The aim is not to persuade immediately, but to create opportunities for respectful dialogue and shared fact-checking.

Scenario Cards



SCENARIO 1

A family member shares a conspiracy video in a family WhatsApp group.



SCENARIO 2

A colleague says that all mainstream media cannot be trusted.



SCENARIO 3

A friend shares a dramatic health warning on social media.



SCENARIO 4

A neighbour repeats an unverified rumour about migrants.

Response Cards

 Helpful Responses	 Escalating Responses
Where did this information come from?	That's nonsense.
Shall we check another source together?	Only stupid people believe that.
I'm not sure this is accurate.	You're completely wrong.
That sounds concerning. Let's look at the evidence.	Stop spreading lies.
Maybe there's more context.	You clearly don't understand.
How do we know this is true?	That's fake news. End of discussion.
Could there be another explanation?	You're brainwashed.
I'd like to learn more before deciding.	Anyone who believes this is ignorant.

Reflection Sheet

Scenario: _____

😊 Which response did you choose?

👉 Did it encourage conversation?

☐ Yes ☐ Partly ☐ No

Why?

💬 What could you say differently?

★ One phrase I will remember

 Helpful Conversation Starters	 Responses to Avoid
✓ Where did this information come from?	✗ That's stupid.
✓ Shall we check another source?	✗ You're wrong.
✓ What makes this seem convincing?	✗ You're brainwashed.
✓ Could there be another explanation?	✗ Only an idiot would believe that.
✓ Let's look at the evidence together.	✗ Stop spreading lies.

EXERCISE 5.4. Building a Resilient Community

 Goal	Identify practical ways to reduce misinformation and strengthen trust within the local community.
 Time	35–45 min
 Group	8–15 participants
 Materials	Community Mapping Worksheet, flipchart, sticky notes, markers
 Difficulty	Intermediate

Instructions

1. Divide participants into small groups.
2. Ask each group to discuss how information spreads in their community.
3. Complete the Community Mapping Worksheet together.
4. Identify practical actions that could improve access to reliable information.
5. Present one or two priority actions to the whole group.
6. Compare ideas and discuss which could realistically be implemented.

Reflection

- Which ideas could be implemented immediately?
- Which community members could help?
- What challenges might arise?
- Which action would have the greatest impact?

Facilitation Tip

Encourage participants to focus on **realistic local actions**. Small community initiatives are often more effective than large campaigns.

Community Mapping Worksheet

1. Where does information spread?

Where do people in our community usually get news or information?

- ☐ Family
- ☐ Friends
- ☐ WhatsApp or messaging apps
- ☐ Facebook or social media
- ☐ Television
- ☐ Newspapers
- ☐ Community organisations
- ☐ Religious organisations
- ☐ Other:

2. Who do people trust?

Who do people usually listen to?

3. Who may need extra support?

Which groups may find misinformation more difficult to recognise?

- ☐ Older adults
- ☐ Young people
- ☐ Newcomers
- ☐ People with limited digital skills
- ☐ Socially isolated people
- ☐ Other:

Why?

4. What could help?

Choose three actions.

- ☐ Fact-checking together
- ☐ Community discussions
- ☐ Printed information guides
- ☐ Media literacy workshops
- ☐ Peer learning
- ☐ Local information ambassadors
- ☐ Trusted community contacts
- ☐ Other:

★ 5. Our Community Action

One realistic action we could start within the next month:

👉 **Who could help?**

 **First step**



Source: Unsplash

Adapting the Activities for Different Learners

Adult education groups are rarely homogeneous. Participants differ in their educational backgrounds, digital skills, language proficiency, cultural experiences, confidence in using technology, and previous exposure to misinformation. These differences influence not only how learners understand information, but also how they participate in discussions, interpret online content, and respond to educational activities.

For this reason, the exercises presented in this manual are intentionally flexible rather than prescriptive. Educators are encouraged to adapt the activities to the characteristics of their learners while maintaining the overall learning objectives. In many cases, small adjustments—such as simplifying language, using more visual materials, allowing additional discussion time, or working in smaller groups—can substantially improve engagement and learning outcomes.

The following recommendations provide guidance for adapting the activities to some of the learner groups most frequently encountered in adult education.

Adults with Limited Digital Skills

Many adult learners have limited experience navigating digital environments or evaluating online information. They may use smartphones confidently for everyday communication while lacking familiarity with concepts such as algorithms, sponsored content, reverse image search, or AI-generated media. Technical terminology may therefore become an unnecessary barrier to learning.

When working with these participants, educators should begin with familiar examples and gradually introduce more complex concepts. Printed materials often provide a more comfortable starting point than live demonstrations on digital devices, allowing participants to focus on recognising manipulation techniques rather than navigating technology.

Learning activities should progress step by step, with sufficient opportunities for repetition and discussion. Pair work is particularly effective because participants can support one another and discuss their reasoning before sharing it with the whole group.

Exercises that work particularly well with this group include **Spot the Manipulation**, **Pause Before Sharing**, **Pause, Check, Decide**, and **Respond Calmly**, as they focus on practical decision-making rather than technical skills.

Migrants and Refugees

Adult learners with migration or refugee backgrounds often bring diverse experiences of media systems, government institutions, and political communication. Trust in information sources may vary considerably depending on previous experiences in their countries of origin. Some participants may also face language barriers or rely primarily on information shared within their own communities.

Educational activities should therefore encourage comparison rather than judgement. Inviting participants to discuss how information is communicated in different countries can enrich learning while recognising the diversity of perspectives within the group.

Whenever possible, examples should be culturally inclusive and available in participants' preferred languages. Discussions should remain respectful and focus on understanding how misinformation operates rather than debating political positions. Additional time for clarification and small-group discussion can help participants feel more confident contributing to conversations.

Activities such as **Experience vs Interpretation**, **Respond Calmly**, and **Building a Resilient Community** are particularly well suited to multicultural groups because they promote dialogue, perspective-taking, and collaborative problem solving.

Older Adults

Older adults increasingly use digital technologies to communicate with family and friends, particularly through messaging applications and social media platforms. At the same time, they may be especially exposed to misinformation circulated through trusted personal networks, where messages often arrive without clear sources or opportunities for verification.

Learning activities should build on participants' everyday experiences. Examples involving WhatsApp, Facebook, email, or local community networks are often more meaningful than examples drawn from unfamiliar digital platforms. Providing larger print, uncluttered visual layouts, and sufficient time for discussion helps ensure that participants can concentrate on analysing information rather than managing the learning materials.

Older adults frequently possess extensive life experience that can enrich group discussions. Encouraging participants to share their own examples not only increases engagement but also demonstrates that misinformation affects everyone, regardless of age or experience.

Particularly suitable activities include **Spot the Manipulation**, **Pause, Check, Decide**, and **The Rumour Chain**, which connect directly to situations participants may encounter in everyday life.

Adults with Limited Literacy

Some learners may experience difficulties reading longer texts or interpreting complex written information. In these situations, visual communication becomes particularly important.

Many of the worksheets in this manual have therefore been designed using consistent icons, simple layouts, and limited amounts of text. Educators can further adapt activities by reading instructions aloud, demonstrating tasks before participants begin, and encouraging collaborative rather than individual work.

Where appropriate, written responses may be replaced with oral discussion, drawing activities, or group decision-making. The emphasis should remain on understanding ideas and practising skills rather than producing written answers.

Mixed Groups

Many adult education programmes bring together participants of different ages, educational backgrounds, cultures, and levels of digital competence. Although such diversity can initially appear challenging, it often creates valuable opportunities for collaborative learning.

Participants with stronger digital skills can support those with less experience, while learners from different cultural backgrounds contribute alternative perspectives on information, trust, and media use. Structured pair and small-group activities encourage this exchange of knowledge while reducing the pressure on individual participants.

Educators should ensure that no single participant assumes the role of "expert" throughout the workshop. Rotating roles during activities helps maintain balanced participation and reinforces the idea that everyone can both contribute to and learn from the group.

Ultimately, the goal is not to create perfectly homogeneous learning groups but to create a learning environment in which participants feel safe to ask questions, express uncertainty, and explore different perspectives together. Such an environment strengthens not only critical thinking but also the trust and dialogue that are essential for building long-term resilience to misinformation.



Source: Unsplash

Designing Workshops

The exercises presented in this manual are designed to be flexible and can be delivered individually or combined into workshops of different lengths. Adult educators work in a wide variety of settings—from community centres and libraries to vocational training programmes and integration courses—and no single workshop format will meet every need.

Rather than following a fixed curriculum, educators are encouraged to select activities according to participants' experience, learning goals, and available time. Some groups may benefit from a short introduction focusing on practical verification skills, while others may be ready to explore the psychological mechanisms behind misinformation or engage in more complex discussions about dialogue and community resilience.

The sample workshop plans below illustrate how the activities can be combined into coherent learning sessions. They may be adapted freely by adding or removing exercises depending on participants' needs.

Introduction Workshop (90 minutes)

A 90-minute workshop is suitable for awareness-raising events, introductory media literacy sessions, libraries, community organisations, or as part of a larger training programme. The main objective is to introduce participants to the basic principles of misinformation recognition and encourage simple verification habits that can be applied immediately in everyday life.

Time	Activity
10 min	Welcome, introductions and learning objectives
15 min	Introduction: What is misinformation?
25 min	Exercise 1.1 – Spot the Manipulation
25 min	Exercise 1.4 – Pause Before Sharing
15 min	Reflection, discussion and key takeaways

Learning outcomes

By the end of the workshop, participants should be able to recognise several common manipulation techniques, identify warning signs in online content, and apply a simple verification process before sharing information.

Half-Day Workshop (3 hours)

A half-day workshop allows participants to move beyond recognising misinformation and begin exploring why misleading information often feels convincing. This format is particularly appropriate for adult education centres, integration programmes, workplace training, and community organisations seeking a more interactive learning experience.

The workshop combines practical activities with guided discussion and encourages participants to reflect on their own thinking and decision-making.

Time	Activity
15 min	Welcome and introduction
20 min	Educational approach and overview
35 min	Module 1: Understanding misinformation

30 min	Exercise 1.1 – Spot the Manipulation
15 min	Coffee break
35 min	Module 2: Why misinformation feels true
30 min	Exercise 2.2 – Fast Thinking vs Slow Thinking
20 min	Reflection and discussion

Learning outcomes

Participants understand how repetition, familiarity, emotions, and cognitive shortcuts influence judgement, and begin using reflective strategies when evaluating online information.

Full-Day Workshop (6 hours)

A full-day workshop provides sufficient time to explore all five modules and gradually build participants' knowledge and confidence. This format is recommended for professional development programmes, training of adult educators, and Erasmus+ multiplier events.

Throughout the day, participants move from recognising misinformation to understanding psychological mechanisms, managing emotional responses, engaging in constructive dialogue, and finally developing strategies for strengthening resilience within their own communities.

Time	Activity
09:00–09:30	Welcome and introduction
09:30–10:45	Modules 1 and 2
10:45–11:00	Coffee break
11:00–12:15	Practical exercises
12:15–13:00	Lunch
13:00–14:30	Modules 3 and 4
14:30–14:45	Coffee break
14:45–15:45	Module 5 and Community Action Plan
15:45–16:00	Reflection and evaluation

Learning outcomes

Participants complete the full learning pathway presented in this manual. They leave with practical tools for recognising misinformation, facilitating respectful discussions, supporting critical thinking, and adapting activities for different learner groups.

Choosing Activities for Different Learning Goals

Not every workshop needs to cover all five modules. Depending on participants' interests and previous experience, educators may select different combinations of activities. The examples below illustrate possible learning pathways.

Learning goal	Suggested modules
Introduction to misinformation	Modules 1 → 5
Digital media literacy	Modules 1 → 2 → 5
Critical thinking	Modules 2 → 3
Dialogue and social cohesion	Modules 3 → 4
Community resilience	Modules 4 → 5
Comprehensive training	Modules 1 → 2 → 3 → 4 → 5

These pathways should be viewed as suggestions rather than fixed programmes. Educators are encouraged to adapt them according to participants' interests, available time, and local context.

Delivering Workshops Online

Most activities in this manual can also be delivered successfully in online or blended learning environments. While some exercises require minor adaptations, the overall learning objectives remain the same.

When planning online workshops, educators should provide participants with worksheets in advance and make use of digital collaboration tools such as breakout rooms, online whiteboards, shared documents, or polling software. Activities that involve pair work or small-group discussion can usually be transferred to virtual breakout rooms with minimal modification.

To maintain participant engagement, online sessions should alternate between short presentations, interactive activities, and group discussions. Frequent opportunities for reflection and feedback help sustain attention and encourage active participation throughout the session.

Teaching strategy	Suggested tools
Small-group discussion	Breakout rooms (Teams, Zoom)
Collaborative worksheets	Microsoft Forms, Google Docs, Padlet
Brainstorming	Miro, Mural, Jamboard alternatives
Quick reflection	Mentimeter, Slido, polls
Resource sharing	Project website, LMS, email

Regardless of whether the workshop is delivered face-to-face or online, the educator's role remains the same: to create a safe learning environment in which participants feel comfortable asking questions, exploring different perspectives, and practising new ways of evaluating information. The emphasis throughout the programme should remain on curiosity, reflection, and collaborative learning rather than on testing knowledge or debating political viewpoints.



Source: Unsplash

Conclusion

The rapid growth of digital communication has transformed the way people access, interpret, and share information. While these changes have created unprecedented opportunities for learning, participation, and social connection, they have also increased exposure to misinformation, manipulation, and emotionally persuasive content. For many vulnerable adults, navigating today's information environment can be challenging, particularly when misleading information aligns with existing beliefs, emotions, or trusted social networks.

This manual has been developed to support adult educators in addressing these challenges through practical, evidence-based educational approaches. Rather than treating misinformation simply as a problem of false information, the programme recognises that people's beliefs are influenced by cognitive shortcuts, emotional responses, social relationships, and the design of digital platforms. Building resilience therefore requires more

than teaching participants how to identify false claims. It requires developing critical thinking, emotional awareness, respectful dialogue, and practical verification habits that can be applied in everyday life.

Throughout the five modules, educators and learners gradually move from recognising misinformation techniques to understanding why misleading information feels convincing, how emotions and social influences shape judgement, and how individuals and communities can respond constructively. The activities emphasise active participation, reflection, collaboration, and experiential learning rather than memorising facts or debating controversial issues. This approach helps participants develop transferable skills that remain relevant even as digital technologies and misinformation strategies continue to evolve.

The exercises in this manual are intended to be flexible rather than prescriptive. Adult educators are encouraged to adapt them to different learning contexts, cultural backgrounds, and levels of digital competence. Whether working with migrants and refugees, older adults, community organisations, or learners with limited digital experience, the educator's role remains the same: to create a supportive learning environment in which curiosity, respectful dialogue, and critical reflection can flourish.

Ultimately, strengthening resilience to misinformation is not only an educational challenge but also a social one. Every conversation that encourages questioning rather than confrontation, every learner who pauses before sharing information, and every community that values evidence alongside empathy contributes to a healthier information environment. Adult educators play a vital role in supporting this process by helping learners become confident, reflective, and responsible participants in digital society.

We hope that this manual serves not only as a collection of teaching activities but also as a practical resource that inspires educators to continue adapting, experimenting, and sharing good practices. As new technologies emerge and information environments continue to change, lifelong learning, critical inquiry, and collaboration will remain essential foundations for democratic participation and social cohesion.

The Online Combat project demonstrates that building resilience to misinformation is possible when education combines scientific evidence with practical experience, active participation, and respect for learners' diverse backgrounds. By equipping adult educators with effective methods and adaptable learning resources, we aim to contribute to more informed individuals, stronger communities, and a more resilient digital society.

The field of misinformation research develops rapidly as digital technologies evolve. Educators are encouraged to explore new research, share experiences with colleagues, and adapt the activities in this manual to the needs of their learners and communities. Continuous professional learning is one of the most effective ways to strengthen resilience to misinformation in adult education.



Source: Unsplash

Further Reading

Readers who wish to deepen their understanding of the topics covered in this manual may find the following resources particularly useful. The selection below includes foundational publications, recent scientific reviews, and practical frameworks that complement each module.

Introduction: Understanding Misinformation

- Greifeneder, R., Jaffé, M., Newman, E., & Schwarz, N. (Eds.). (2020). *The Psychology of Fake News: Accepting, Sharing, and Correcting Misinformation*. Routledge.
- Wardle, C., & Derakhshan, H. (2017). *Information Disorder: Toward an Interdisciplinary Framework for Research and Policy Making*. Council of Europe.

- European Commission. (2020). *European Democracy Action Plan*. Publications Office of the European Union.

Module 1. Recognising Misinformation

- Vosoughi, S., Roy, D., & Aral, S. (2018). The spread of true and false news online. *Science*, 359(6380), 1146–1151.
- Chen, X., Zhou, Y., Lv, J., Zhang, X., & Chen, H. (2023). The spread of misinformation on social media: A systematic review. *Social Network Analysis and Mining*, 13(1), 1–28.
- Kozyreva, A., Lewandowsky, S., & Hertwig, R. (2020). Citizens versus the Internet: Confronting Digital Challenges With Cognitive Tools. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 21(3), 103–156.

Module 2. Why People Believe Misinformation

- Ecker, U. K. H., Lewandowsky, S., & Cook, J. (2022). The psychological drivers of misinformation belief and its resistance to correction. *Nature Reviews Psychology*, 1, 13–29.
- Pennycook, G., & Rand, D. G. (2019). Lazy, not biased: Susceptibility to partisan fake news is better explained by lack of reasoning than by motivated reasoning. *Cognition*, 188, 39–50.
- Brashier, N. M., & Marsh, E. J. (2020). Judging truth. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 71, 499–515.
- Hassan, A., & Barber, S. J. (2021). The illusory truth effect: A meta-analysis. *Cognitive Research: Principles and Implications*, 6(1), 1–16.

Module 3. Emotions and Misinformation

- Brady, W. J., Wills, J. A., Jost, J. T., Tucker, J. A., & Van Bavel, J. J. (2017). Emotion shapes the diffusion of moralized content in social networks. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 114(28), 7313–7318.
- Gross, J. J. (2015). The extended process model of emotion regulation: Elaborations, applications, and future directions. *Psychological Inquiry*, 26(1), 130–137.
- Brackett, M. A., Bailey, C. S., Hoffmann, J. D., & Simmons, D. N. (2025). RULER: A theory-driven, systemic approach to social, emotional, and academic learning. In *Social and Emotional Learning* (pp. 20–38). Routledge.
- Keib, K., Espina, C., Lee, Y. I., Wojdyski, B. W., Choi, D., & Bang, H. (2018). Picture this: The influence of emotionally valenced images on attention, selection, and sharing of social media news. *Media Psychology*, 21(2), 202–221.

Module 4. Social Influence and Dialogue

- Sunstein, C. R. (2017). *#Republic: Divided Democracy in the Age of Social Media*. Princeton University Press.
- Pariser, E. (2011). *The Filter Bubble: What the Internet Is Hiding from You*. Penguin Press.

- Oyserman, D., & Dawson, A. (2020). Your fake news, our facts: Identity-based motivation shapes what we believe, share, and accept. In R. Greifeneder et al. (Eds.), *The Psychology of Fake News*.
- Moore-Berg, S. L., Hameiri, B., & Bruneau, E. G. (2022). Empathy, dehumanization, and misperceptions. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 13(2), 645–655.

Module 5. Building Resilience

- Compton, J., van der Linden, S., Cook, J., & Basol, M. (2021). Inoculation theory in the post-truth era: Extant findings and new frontiers for contested science, misinformation, and conspiracy theories. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 15, e12602.
- van der Linden, S., & Roozenbeek, J. (2020). Psychological inoculation against fake news. In R. Greifeneder et al. (Eds.), *The Psychology of Fake News*.
- Banas, J. A., & Miller, G. (2013). Inducing resistance to conspiracy theory propaganda: Testing inoculation and metainoculation strategies. *Human Communication Research*, 39(2), 184–207.
- Spearing, E. R., Gile, C. I., Fogwill, A. L., Prike, T., Swire-Thompson, B., Lewandowsky, S., & Ecker, U. K. H. (2025). Countering AI-generated misinformation with pre-emptive source discreditation and debunking. *Royal Society Open Science*, 12(6).

Adult Education and Teaching Practice

- Redecker, C. (2017). *European Framework for the Digital Competence of Educators (DigCompEdu)*. Publications Office of the European Union.
- European Commission. (2021). *Digital Education Action Plan 2021–2027: Resetting Education and Training for the Digital Age*. Publications Office of the European Union.
- Aryal, M. (2024). Reflective teaching and practices in the classroom. *Journal of Multidisciplinary Research Advancements*, 2(1), 26–31.
- Mathew, N. G. (2012). Reflective classroom practice for effective classroom instruction. *International Education Studies*, 5(3), 205–211.

Practical Online Resources

In addition to academic literature, educators may find the following freely available resources useful for classroom preparation and professional development:

- **Online Combat** – Digital Media Literacy online course, AI assistant and educational game. <https://onlinecombat.org>
- **European Digital Media Observatory (EDMO)** – <https://edmo.eu>
- **EUvsDisinfo** – <https://euvsdisinfo.eu>
- **UNESCO Media and Information Literacy** – <https://www.unesco.org/en/media-information-literacy>
- **Digital Competence Framework for Educators (DigCompEdu)** – European Commission.