



# **LESSON 17**

### **GOOD SPEECH**

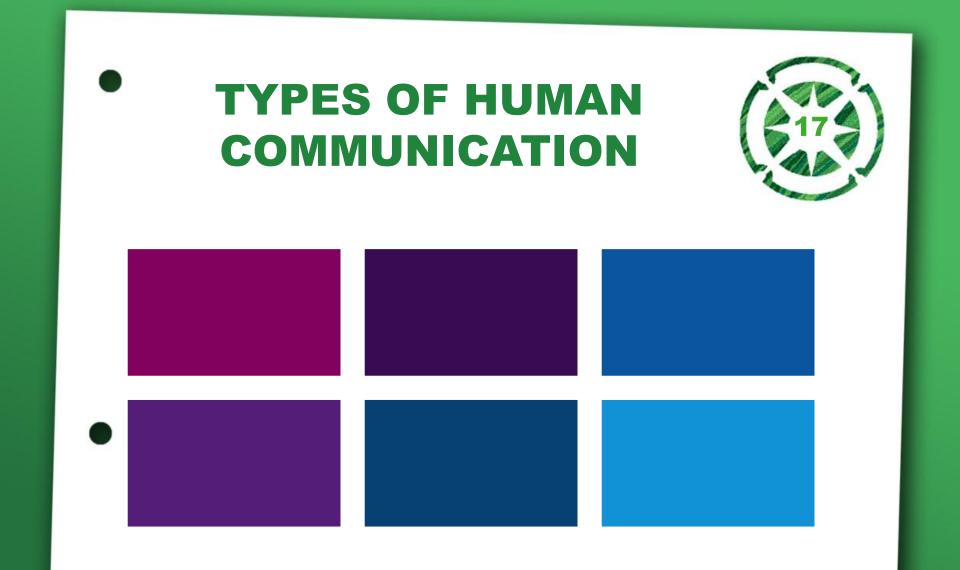
CHARACTER EDUCATION



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# **SESSION 1**

• 'The wise ones fashioned speech with their thought, sifting it as grain is sifted through a sieve.' The Buddha



Courage, Justice, Honesty, Compassion, Self-discipline, Gratitude, Humility



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### "It's a free country, we can say what we want."

Imagine a world where this statement is true. What is it like to live in that world? Do we live there already? Give reasons for your opinions.

# LIMITING FREEDOM OF SPEECH



For each of the different types of human communication you have identified, decide on any limits that should be placed on them.

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### WHAT ABOUT...



Publishing detailed instructions on the internet for making lethal nerve gas from household ingredients.

Posting comments on a blog that are deeply offensive to members of a religion.

A piece of art that shows children naked.

Printing lies about someone in a newspaper.

A political party that is openly racist, sexist and homophobic.

A comedy programme that jokes about how bad and incompetent the government is.

Finding and selling the secrets of your country's biggest company to a company in another country (risking its profits).

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### **LIBERTY vs LICENCE**



'When <u>self-governing</u> people demand freedom of speech, they are not saying that every individual has an unalienable right to speak whenever, wherever, however she chooses. They do not declare that any person may talk as she pleases, when she pleases, about what she pleases, about whom she pleases, to whom she pleases.'

Alexander Meiklejohn

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### LIBERTY vs LICENCE QUESTIONS



What is the difference between 'liberty' and 'licence'?

What do you think it means to be 'a self-governing person'? What is a 'self-governing person' like?

Is there a difference between a 'self-governing person' speaking freely and a non-self-governing person speaking freely?

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# FREE SPEECH AND THE VIRTUES



Identify an 'icon' of this virtue: someone who speaks in this way, e.g. Martin Luther King for Justice

Identify what it means to speak according to this virtue e.g. courageous speech challenges false or harmful ideas

Apply your virtue to a form of communication, e.g. what would Twitter be like if everyone used it with compassion?

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# **SESSION 2**

# SPEECH AND HARM, A MORAL VIRTUE

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Individual **<u>adults</u>** should be free to do what they wish up to the point where they harm another person in the process: John Stuart Mill, *the harm principle*. Mill was writing about physical harm, not psychological or economic harm.

Does Mill's harm principle cover internet trolls (people who post abusive comments online for their own pleasure)?

Should internet trolls be forbidden from using the internet or should they be allowed freedom to express their (offensive) opinions?

If we allow internet trolls to express their opinions on the principle of freedom of expression, what measures can we put in place to deal with the harm they do?

# HARMFUL AND OFFENSIVE SPEECH



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# **'Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me.'**

#### Do you agree with this old saying?

What are your reasons for agreeing or disagreeing?

#### Is harm only physical?





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Dislike of, contempt for, or ingrained prejudice against women or girls. The literal meaning of the word is hatred of women.

Misogyny may be expressed through gender discrimination, violence towards women and the sexual objectification of women. It may also be expressed through harmful or offensive speech, including speech intended as humour.

# MISOGYNY CASE STUDY: MARY BEARD



Were the comments misogynistic?

What are your reasons for thinking this?

Were the comments immoral?

• What are your reasons for thinking this?

What (if anything) should be done about comments such as these?

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Do you use this expression?

Is there anything wrong with this expression?

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# **SESSION 3**

# • Countering Bad Speech With Good Speech; A Performance Virtue

# DO YOU AGREE WITH THIS?



Any speech or writing that is false or that causes offence should be suppressed.

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SHOULD GOVERNMENTS CENSOR DANGEROUS IDEAS AND DANGEROUS INDIVIDUALS?



"People should not fear their governments; governments should fear their people."

'V' in the film V for Vendetta.

"When a people fears their government, there is tyranny; when a government fears their people, there is liberty."

Thomas Jefferson, 3<sup>rd</sup> President of the USA.

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#### IDEAS THAT WERE ONCE FALSE/OFFENSIVE (AND STILL ARE TO SOME)



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The earth is not flat	Humans evolved from apes	Women can vote
Black people have equal rights	Gay men and women can get married	The planets revolve around the sun (not the earth)
Healthcare and education are free	Slavery is wrong	The truth of scripture can be questioned

# FALSE AND OFFENSIVE SPEECH



You have just seen examples of false and/or offensive speech. What is your response to it?

Divide your responses up into what you **thought** and how you **felt**.

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#### HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND TO SPEECH WE DISAGREE WITH OR THAT IS OFFENSIVE?



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'One reason that false and offensive speech is permitted in most liberal democracies is precisely because the best answer to bad speech is good speech, rather than censorship.'

**Alan Dershowitz** 

# **BETTER SPEECH: JOHN STUART MILL**



'Mill's response is that assuming that we posses the truth having gagged or avoided dissenting voices, is very different from holding a view that has been contested openly and emerged unscathed or even strengthened.

For Mill freedom to contradict an orthodox opinion is also a condition of intellectual development and of progress. In an atmosphere of intimidation and explicit or implicit danger attached to expressing heretical views, only the brave will speak out.'

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### **OLIVER KAMM**



'The notion that free speech, while important, needs to be held in balance with the avoidance of offence is questionbegging, because it assumes that offence is something to be avoided. Free speech does indeed cause hurt – but there is nothing wrong in this. Knowledge advances through the destruction of bad ideas. Mockery and derision are among the most powerful tools in the process.'

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### **RICHARD POSNER**



'People get upset when their way of life is challenged, yet that upset may be the beginning of doubt and lead eventually to change. Think of all the currently conventional ideas and opinions that were deeply offensive when first voiced. Perhaps, therefore, a condition of being allowed to hear and utter ideas that may challenge other people's values and beliefs should be the willingness to extend the same right to others and thus agree that offensiveness will not be a permissible ground for punishing expression.'

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# **SESSION 4**

# PORNOGRAPHY

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# PORNOGRAPHY HARMS OUR SOCIETY



#### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

WHAT ARE YOUR REASONS FOR THINKING THIS?

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# **PORNOGRAPHY MIGHT AFFECT...**



Our ideas of what is normal physically.

Our ideas of normal sexual behaviour.

Our idea of what to expect from a sexual relationship.

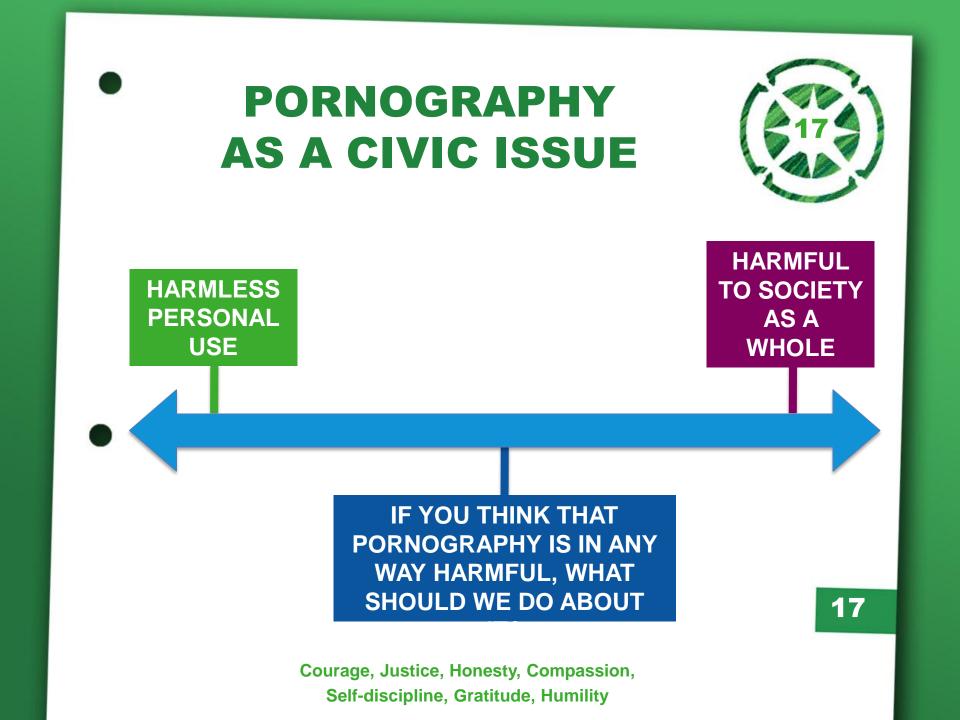
Those who take part, or are forced to take part in its production.

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# WHAT IS NORMAL?



Body hair shaved off	Lots of short sexual	
Violence	relationships Casual sex with no emotional involvement.	
Foreplay	One man and one woman	
Sex with more than one person	Being drunk or on drugs	
The 'perfect' body	Dressing up/role play	
Sex within 5 minutes of meeting someone	The man being in charge	
Anal sex	Oral sex	
Animals or children	Cuddling/tenderness/affection	1





# **SESSION 5**

# • SO WHAT'S CHANGED?

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### "It's a free country, we can say what we want."

What do you think about this statement now?

What are your reasons for thinking this?

What has changed? Anything?

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# HOW DO I WANT TO SIFT MY SPEECH BETTER?



Avoid speech that harms or offends

Challenge speech in others that harms or offends

Be more skilful or virtuous when posting comments online

Challenge false or offensive speech with reasoned argument

Meet false or offensive speech with compassion or empathy

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