

Digital Balance

Digital Media as a Resource for Resilience and Wellbeing

WORKSHOP

MODULE B1



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Module B1

„Digital Balance“

Digital Media as a Resource for Resilience and Wellbeing

Overview

Topic	This workshop explores how digital media can strengthen wellbeing and resilience, especially for queer youth.
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Raise awareness of the positive potential of digital media for youth wellbeing and emotion regulation.» Reflect on how different platforms and types of content impact young people» Identify digital spaces, tools, and practices that can serve as resources for self-expression, connection, and support.» Encourage balance by recognizing both the opportunities and the limits of digital media in promoting mental health.
Duration	90 minutes
Target Group	Young people between 16 and 21; mainly queer or marginalized youth, but also suitable heterogenous groups
Group Size	6 – 20 participants
Complexity and Context	<p>The module is designed for entry to intermediate level youth work contexts. It requires no prior in-depth knowledge of mental health, but assumes basic digital literacy and openness to discussing personal experiences.</p> <p>The <u>European Digital Competence Framework (DigComp)</u> defines the key skills needed to use digital technologies confidently and responsibly. This module aligns most strongly with Protecting health and wellbeing (4.3), Identifying needs and technological responses (5.2) and Managing digital identity (2.6). The proficiency level targeted is Foundation to Intermediate (Levels 2–3).</p>

Triggers

Discrimination & hate speech → even when discussed as examples, references to queerphobia, racism, body shaming, or bullying can be painful.

Body image / comparison → scenarios around Instagram/Dating Apps may trigger shame or dysphoria.

Mental health struggles → references to loneliness, stress, anxiety, depression.

How to mitigate

- » Set a clear safer space agreement at the start (respect, confidentiality, voluntary sharing).
- » Always use fictional characters/scenarios for sensitive issues (instead of asking directly "Who here feels lonely?").
- » Offer opt-out options for all activities: Participation is voluntary at any point. Silent participation is an option.
- » Provide grounding or break options if something feels too much: Participants can step outside, grab a glass of water, take a break at any point.
- » Have a list of local, regional or national support resources (e. g. hotlines, counseling) ready in case someone is affected.

Materials

General setup

- » Projector / screen & laptop (for slides, Mentimeter, input, or visual instructions)

Alternative: Printed material

- » Optional: Internet connection (if Mentimeter is used)
- » Optional: Flipchart or whiteboard + markers

Activity: If You Were Them...

- » Printed scenario cards (Annex B1.2) OR digital access if you want to show them on slides
- » Optional: Projector/Large Screen to show the introductory videos
- » Pens and paper for note-taking in small groups

Activity: My Feel-Good Media Map

- » Printed Feel-Good Media Map templates OR digital version (e.g. Canva)
- » Pens, markers, or colored pencils (if on paper)

Closing & Takeaways

- » Whiteboard/flipchart or Menti for sharing takeaways

Other

- » Copies (printed or digital) of local/regional/national support resources (hotlines, queer youth groups, counseling services)
- » Timer or clock to keep track of activity times
- » Optional: Water/refreshments

Potential Adjustments

To fit the workshop into a 45-minute slot, e.g. for school classes, one of the two activities can be left out.

Additional Recommendations

We recommend to pair this workshop with one or several workshops from the QueeResilience Workshop Modules A, that focus on risks of digital media. This way, participants get a well-rounded view of benefits and challenges of digital media use.

Instructions

Introduction (10 min)

Share these ground rules with the participants:

- » We treat each other with respect – no judgment, no put-downs.
- » What is shared here stays here – confidentiality is key.
- » Sharing is always voluntary – you can say pass or just listen.
- » We use fictional examples for sensitive topics – no one has to speak about themselves.
- » If something feels too much, it's okay to take a break – step outside, get water, breathe.
- » Support is available – we have a list of local and national resources if you ever want to reach out afterwards.

Then continue with these icebreaker questions, using either Mentimeter or a quick in-person round:

- » "What is your favorite app?"
- » How do you use social media – in one word?"
- » "Is there a queer creator you really enjoy?"
- » "Which game, video, or song instantly puts you in a good mood?"

Short input (5 min)

This short input introduces the idea that while social media is often seen as harmful, research shows it can also have clear positive effects when used intentionally. Key points to highlight are: it can reduce feelings of loneliness, strengthen friendships, provide spaces for creativity and self-expression, and offer support — especially for queer youth facing minority stress. Online communities can serve as safe spaces and even as gateways to mental health resources.

Note: A full script of this input is available in the annexes (**Annex B1.1**)

Activity: If You Were Them... (35 min)

In this activity, participants explore how digital resources can support wellbeing by responding to fictional problems and scenarios. They are asked to imagine a friend in a given situation and think about which apps, platforms, content types, or online communities might help. The goal is to raise awareness of positive digital strategies, build empathy, and strengthen peer-to-peer exchange.

Instructions for the facilitator:

- » Divide participants into small groups or pairs.
- » Show the introduction videos on YouTube (**see Annex B1.1**)
- » You may let groups pick the fictional person they want to work with or you hand out one fictional scenario randomly to each group (examples are provided in the annexes, or you may create your own).
- » Ask groups to discuss the scenario and brainstorm digital resources that could be supportive.
- » After 10 - 15 minutes, invite each group to share their recommendations briefly in the plenary. The plenary can add recommendations if they have any.
- » Summarise key points and highlight the diversity of strategies that can be helpful.

Guiding questions for participants:

- » What kind of app or platform (e.g. Discord, Reddit, TikTok, Calm, a game) could help in this situation?
- » What kind of content (e.g. queer creators, self-care videos, memes, music playlists) might be supportive?
- » Are there any online communities or safe spaces (e.g. forums, IG pages, support groups) that could be useful?
- » Why do you think this recommendation would be helpful for the friend in this scenario?
- » Are there possible risks to be aware of when using this digital resource?

Note: Examples of fictional characters and situations are available in the annexes (**Annex B1.2**). For each of the characters, there is an introduction video on YouTube (linked on the worksheet). You can change the video's language in the video settings.

Facilitators may also create their own characters and scenarios that best reflect the realities of their group.

Activity: My Feel-Good Media Map (30 min)

This activity invites participants to reflect on how digital media can support their wellbeing and how to recognize personal warning signs of overuse. Each participant creates their own Feel-Good Media Map, combining suggested categories with their own ideas and experiences.

Instructions for the facilitator:

- » Provide participants with the template (digital or on paper) that asks them to list stress triggers and potential digital helpers for each situation, as well as red flags that make them aware when their digital media use is getting too much.
- » Explain that this is an individual exercise: participants fill in their own map privately. They are free to share only what they feel comfortable with.
- » Allow about 15 minutes for individual work. Encourage creativity: participants can use words, doodles, or symbols.
- » Invite volunteers to share one or two aspects of their map in the group. Keep sharing optional to maintain a safe space.
- » Wrap up by summarising that everyone has different digital resources and limits, and that mapping them helps to use media more consciously.

Note: The template for the feel-good media map can be found in the annexes (**Annex B1.3**). It can be either printed or used as a template to fill out on a tool such as Canva or another simple image editing app.

Closing & Key Takeaways (10 min)

End the session with a short reflection round to help participants integrate what they've learned and take something concrete with them.

Instructions for the facilitator:

- » Invite participants to think about one key takeaway they are taking away from the workshop. This could be an idea, an app, a tool, a creator. Ask volunteers to share their takeaway.
- » Thank participants for their openness and contributions.
- » Remind them that support is available, both in their peer group and through the listed local/national resources

Annex B1.1: Input Script

We often hear: Social media is addictive, it makes you unhappy, it's bad for your mental health.

But research shows: that's not entirely true. It very much depends on how and for what purpose we use digital media.

Studies from Harvard and other universities have found that when we use social media consciously – for example, to stay in touch with friends, to support each other, or to follow inspiring content – it can actually strengthen our wellbeing.

Other research shows that social media can help us feel less alone. This is especially important for queer youth, because online it's often easier to find people who share similar experiences.

There is evidence that online communities, in times of stress, anxiety, or loneliness, can serve as a kind of safe space – a place where you feel understood.

Of course, there are downsides too: hate, comparison, spending too much time online. But the positive effects are real, for example:

- » Social media can be a place to meet people who are like us – queer people, people with similar interests, or with similar life experiences. This matters because offline many of us don't have that many such contacts.
- » It can be a space for self-expression and creativity – through posts, memes, art, cosplay, music, or gaming. Many young people say social media gives them a place to show their creative side.
- » Relationships and friendships: Online you can build, maintain, and nurture friendships – sometimes more easily than in "real life", especially if you don't feel understood at school or at home. It can also mean meeting a more diverse range of people than in your offline environment.
- » Social media can provide real support and encouragement: Studies show that young people report:
 - 58% feel more accepted through social media
 - 67% say they have people there who support them in tough times
 - 71% feel they have a place to show their creative side
 - and 80% feel more connected to what's going on in their friends' lives
- » For queer youth, this is especially important: Online communities can help with developing and strengthening identity. They offer social support that may sometimes be missing offline. Studies show: Social media can act as a buffer against stress – protecting against the negative effects of discrimination or minority stress.
- » And even in the field of mental health, things are moving forward: There are apps and online offers that help young people talk about their feelings, seek help, or even take the first step toward therapy. For some, social media is not just entertainment – it can be a gateway to real support.

(feel free to mention some online resources available from your countries, e.g. JugendNotmail in Germany)

List of references:

This input script is based on these studies. Feel free to look into the studies if you would like to have a deeper understanding of the subject matter before facilitating the workshop.

Bekalu, M. A., McCloud, R. F., & Viswanath, K. (2019). Association of social media use with social well-being, positive mental health, and self-rated health: Disentangling routine use from emotional connection to use. *Health Education & Behavior*, 46(2_suppl), 69–80. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1090198119863768>

Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. (2020, January 6). Social media use can be positive for mental health and well being. Retrieved from <https://hsph.harvard.edu/news/social-media-positive-mental-health/>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2023). Social media and youth mental health: A collection [Surgeon General's advisory]. Retrieved from <https://www.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/sg-youth-mental-health-social-media-advisory.pdf>

Julia: Coming-Out Worries

What's wrong?

Julia (17) has been questioning her sexuality and realized she is gay. She would like to come out to her parents, but she has heard them make negative comments about queer people on TV before.

She feels torn between wanting to be honest and fearing rejection. Anna needs stories and advice from others who have gone through similar situations, reassurance that she isn't alone, and positive spaces that affirm her identity.



Watch Julia's
introduction
video:



Leading Questions:

- » What kind of **app or platform** (e.g. Discord, Reddit, TikTok, Calm, a game) could help in this situation?
- » What kind of **content** (e.g. queer creators, self-care videos, memes, music playlists) might be supportive?
- » Are there any **online communities or safe spaces** (e.g. forums, IG pages, support groups) that could be useful?
- » **Why** do you think this recommendation would be helpful for the friend in this scenario?
- » Are there **possible risks** to be aware of when using this digital resource?

Max: Nonbinary Struggles

What's wrong?

Max (16) has started using they/them pronouns, but at school classmates often laugh or make jokes when Max introduces themselves. They feel unsafe and don't know how to respond. Teachers don't always step in, and Max feels isolated.

Max needs to connect with people who respect and validate their identity, learn coping strategies for microaggressions, and see nonbinary role models who show that life can be different and more supportive elsewhere.



Watch Max'
[introduction
video:](#)



Leading Questions:

- » What kind of **app or platform** (e.g. Discord, Reddit, TikTok, Calm, a game) could help in this situation?
- » What kind of **content** (e.g. queer creators, self-care videos, memes, music playlists) might be supportive?
- » Are there any **online communities or safe spaces** (e.g. forums, IG pages, support groups) that could be useful?
- » **Why** do you think this recommendation would be helpful for the friend in this scenario?
- » Are there **possible risks** to be aware of when using this digital resource?

Lea: Feeling Alone

What's wrong?

Lea (18) spends a lot of time in her room scrolling through her phone. She feels that none of her classmates share her interests, like anime and gaming, and she doesn't have close friends she can really talk to.

She needs new ways to make friends with people who understand her passions, safe queer-friendly communities where she can be herself, and positive activities that make her feel less isolated.



Watch Lea's
[introduction
video:](#)



Leading Questions:

- » What kind of **app or platform** (e.g. Discord, Reddit, TikTok, Calm, a game) could help in this situation?
- » What kind of **content** (e.g. queer creators, self-care videos, memes, music playlists) might be supportive?
- » Are there any **online communities or safe spaces** (e.g. forums, IG pages, support groups) that could be useful?
- » **Why** do you think this recommendation would be helpful for the friend in this scenario?
- » Are there **possible risks** to be aware of when using this digital resource?

Jonas: Body Image Struggles

What's wrong?

Jonas (19) spends hours every day on Instagram and dating apps. He follows lots of fitness influencers and sees profiles with "perfect" bodies. Instead of motivating him, it makes him feel insecure about his own looks

He wishes he could find more realistic and positive role models online. He needs encouragement to feel good in his body, content that inspires confidence rather than comparison, healthier routines to limit endless scrolling, and authentic connections that go beyond appearances.



Watch Jonas' [introduction video](#):



Leading Questions:

- » What kind of **app or platform** (e.g. Discord, Reddit, TikTok, Calm, a game) could help in this situation?
- » What kind of **content** (e.g. queer creators, self-care videos, memes, music playlists) might be supportive?
- » Are there any **online communities or safe spaces** (e.g. forums, IG pages, support groups) that could be useful?
- » **Why** do you think this recommendation would be helpful for the friend in this scenario?
- » Are there **possible risks** to be aware of when using this digital resource?

Samira: Too Much Stress

What's wrong?

Samira (20) is under pressure from her demanding university classes while also dealing with her parents' divorce. She still lives at home and she often feels caught in the middle of her parents' arguments. At night, she often scrolls endlessly on TikTok to escape, but it doesn't really make her feel better.

She feels exhausted and overwhelmed. Samira needs healthier ways to calm down and recharge, tools for managing stress and sleep, and communities where she feels supported rather than judged.



Watch Samira's
[introduction
video:](#)



Leading Questions:

- » What kind of **app or platform** (e.g. Discord, Reddit, TikTok, Calm, a game) could help in this situation?
- » What kind of **content** (e.g. queer creators, self-care videos, memes, music playlists) might be supportive?
- » Are there any **online communities or safe spaces** (e.g. forums, IG pages, support groups) that could be useful?
- » **Why** do you think this recommendation would be helpful for the friend in this scenario?
- » Are there **possible risks** to be aware of when using this digital resource?



My Feel-Good Media Map

Social Media use can be beneficial if it's **intentional** and **moderate**



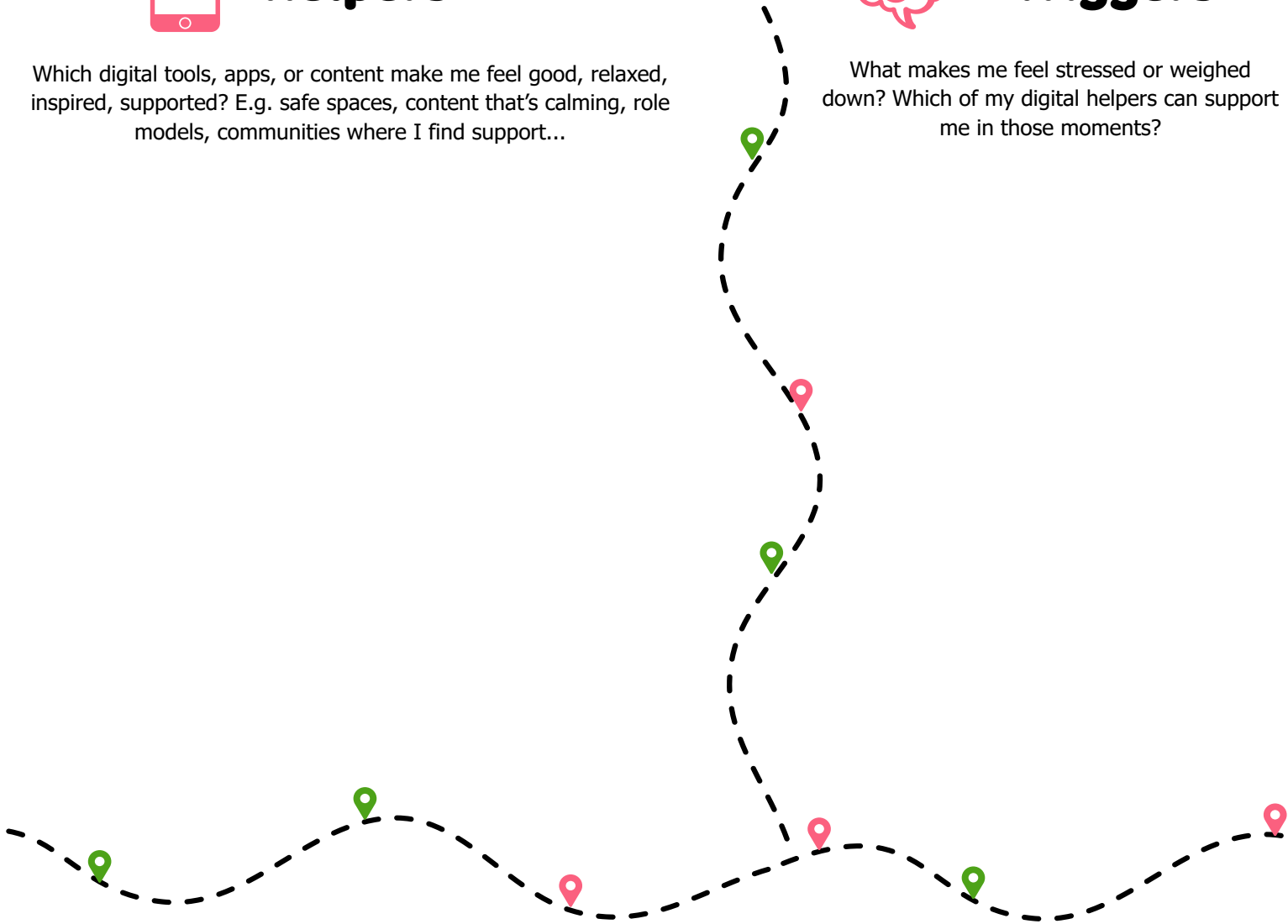
Digital Helpers

Which digital tools, apps, or content make me feel good, relaxed, inspired, supported? E.g. safe spaces, content that's calming, role models, communities where I find support...



Stress Triggers

What makes me feel stressed or weighed down? Which of my digital helpers can support me in those moments?



Digital Red Flags

How do I notice that scrolling has gone too far and I need a break? What signals tell me that I've spent too much time online or that it's not making me feel good anymore?