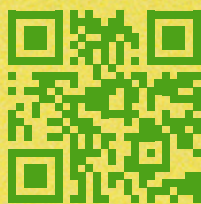


Reframing Hate into Power: Creating Queer Joy through Memes

WORKSHOP

MODULE C2



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Module C

„Reframing Hate into Power: Creating Queer Joy through Memes“

Overview

Topic	C2. Digital Content Creation: Memes as Tools for LGBTQ+ Resilience and Anti-Discrimination (from Content Creation for LGBTQ+ Resilience and Against Discrimination)
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none">» Purpose:» To empower participants to transform hate messages into positive self-expression.» Objectives:» Understand the method of reframing as a response to discrimination.» Develop critical thinking and emotional resilience in the digital space.» Practice using humor and pride instead of engaging in conflict» Explore memes as a tool for self-expression and activism.
Duration	45-60 minutes
Target Group	Youth (15–19 years old), also suitable for non-formal education with youth groups
Group Size	Up to 25 participants. Optimal: 5–6 groups of 4–5 participants each.
Complexity and Context	<p>Level 2: Does not require prior knowledge, focuses on developing communication, creativity, and media literacy skills.</p> <p>Level 3: Encourages deeper critical thinking, discussions on discrimination, and building resilience strategies.</p>

The workshop can be implemented in both formal and non-formal education settings. It can also be linked to the Council of Europe's Compass recommendations for human rights education. Various triggers connected with previous experiences on social media can come out during the activity.

Triggers

Exposure to real or fictional hate comments – Even as examples, they may be painful for LGBTQ+ youth who have experienced discrimination or bullying.

References to religion or "God hates..." rhetoric – These may trigger internal conflict in participants with religious backgrounds.

Group pressure to make jokes about painful experiences – Not every participant feels comfortable using humor to process hate.

Sharing personal stories – Participants may feel vulnerable if they open up and then regret it.

Performance pressure to be 'creative' – Some participants may feel anxious about their artistic skills or public presentation.

Memes may unintentionally become mocking (humor can be misunderstood).

Possible disagreements within the group due to different views on humor. Facilitators should mediate respectfully if disagreements arise.

Materials

- » Printed or digital meme examples (can include the two provided images).
- » Paper, markers, and scissors OR digital design tools (e.g. Canva, phone apps).
- » Printed examples of hate comments or reframing prompts (e.g., "God hates..." → positive meme response).
- » Trainer's slides explaining the reframing method.
- » Short theoretical summary on the role of humor in resilience (Annex).

Additional Recommendations

Safety Considerations:

- » Use clear trigger warnings before showing hate comments.
- » Ensure that participants can choose how much they want to share
- » Encourage discussion on the boundary between laughing "at oneself" and mockery.



Introduction (5 min): Greeting, presentation of objectives, brief introduction to meme culture.

Start by showing 2–3 memes (e.g. Cher depicted as a divine figure, a Scar meme about being ‚hot‘).

Ask: ‚Have you ever seen hateful messages online about LGBTQ+ people? How do people usually respond?‘

Then ask: ‚What would it feel like to respond with power and humor instead of fighting back?‘

Theoretical input (5–10 min): What is reframing, how humor can serve as a response to hate (with examples).

Give short instructions about the concept of *reframing*: transforming negative or hateful messages into empowering or humorous responses.

Group activity (20–25 min):

Split students into small groups. Work in small groups to create memes based on the provided hate messages.

Each group receives 1–2 harmful messages and is tasked with:

1. Reframing the message into something powerful, funny or absurd.
2. Creating a meme (on paper or digitally).

Presentations (10 min):

Groups present the memes they created and explain the message behind it.

Debrief (5–10 min): Discussion on emotional impact and how this method can be applied online/in everyday life. Talk about impact, visibility, and how humour can serve as a form of resistance.

Closing (5 min):

Summary, reflection, presentation of resources.

Annex

- » Example memes used (Cher, Scar).
- » Sample hateful messages to reframe.
- » Theoretical background for reframing

Example memes used (Cher, Scar).

- » Cher depicted as a divine or empowering figure.
- » "Scar" meme (from The Lion King) reframed as confident and attractive.
- » Additional LGBTQ+ empowering memes can be included to diversify examples.

Memes are also included in the annex folder.

Sample hateful messages to reframe.

- » "God hates..." → turned into an absurd or humorous counter-message.
- » "You don't belong here" → reframed as "We belong everywhere."
- » "Being queer is wrong" → reframed as "Being queer is fabulous."

Theoretical background for reframing

Reframing is a cognitive-behavioral and creative strategy that shifts the meaning of negative or hostile messages by changing perspective. Instead of reacting with anger or retreat, participants learn to transform hate into empowering, humorous, or absurd responses.

Humor as resilience: Research shows that humor can function as a coping mechanism for marginalized groups. It reduces the emotional weight of discrimination, strengthens individual and collective resilience, and supports identity affirmation.

Recent research indicates that humor—and particularly the use of memes—plays a significant role in helping marginalized groups cope with adversity. A 2025 study focusing on queer communities during the COVID-19 pandemic found that memes served multiple purposes—validation-seeking, community-building, personal coping, and systemic advocacy—thus reinforcing humor's function in promoting emotional resilience and collective identity¹. Additionally, a 2024 quasi experimental study involving students showed that exposure to humorous linguistic memes significantly reduced anxiety related to the pandemic, demonstrating humour's potential for alleviating emotional distress².

Memes as activism: Memes are not only tools for entertainment but also for political expression and activism. By reframing hostile messages, LGBTQ+ communities use memes to reclaim narratives, resist stereotypes, and create solidarity in digital spaces.

A 2022 study examines how internet memes contribute to social movements by helping construct collective identity. The process of creating and sharing memes allows communities to define themselves and co-create shared meanings and goals³. A 2024 analytical framework of social movement framing on social media includes LGBTQ+ rights among other issues. The study highlights how activists use digital discourse—including diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational framing—to shape narratives and mobilize support⁴.

Educational relevance: Reframing exercises support digital literacy, emotional intelligence, and human rights education. They align with competence areas of digital citizenship and critical media literacy, as well as Council of Europe’s Compass framework for Human Rights Education.

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.

Council of Europe, Compass: Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People – <https://www.coe.int/en/web/compass>

Brown, A. (2017). Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds. AK Press.

Kuipers, G. (2008). The sociology of humor. In V. Raskin (Ed.), *The Primer of Humor Research* (pp. 361–398). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Milner, R. M. (2016). The World Made Meme: Public Conversations and Participatory Media. MIT Press.

Ford, T. E., et al. (2004). The social consequences of disparagement humor: A prejudice norm theory. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 8(1), 79–94.