

PODCAST



PODCAST 6 - CONFLICT WITHOUT DRAMA: SPEAKING UP AGAINST HATE

“HATE ON THE INTERNET: HOW I REACTED”

When we talk about hate on the internet, we often imagine big scandals - viral posts, trending hashtags, thousands of angry comments.

But most of the time, hate looks different. It hides in everyday language. In jokes that aren't really funny. In comments that seem casual - but cut deep for someone on the other side of the screen.

The first time I witnessed online hate up close, it was aimed at someone I knew from school. A classmate posted a photo from a school event. Nothing controversial. Just a moment from her life. And then the comments started appearing. Sarcastic. Cruel. Completely unnecessary.

At first, I scrolled past. It made me uncomfortable, but I told myself, “It's not my business.”

Later that evening, I went back to the post. I reread the comments. And suddenly, something hit me. Not one person had spoken up. Not one. Not even me.

That moment stayed with me. I kept asking myself why staying silent felt easier than showing support. I realised that online, silence often feels like safety. We're afraid of becoming the next target. Fearful that speaking up might make things worse.

But the truth is this: When we stay silent, we give hate permission to stay. By not acting, we unintentionally allow it to continue.

The next day, I decided to do something small - but meaningful. I sent a private message to the person who had been targeted. I told her that what had happened was wrong and that I admired her courage to stay visible and authentic, even in the face of hate.

That short message turned into a conversation that lasted for hours. She told me how isolated she had felt. How invisible. And how one message from someone at school made her feel seen again.

That experience changed how I see online spaces. We often say, "Words are just words." But online, words can be louder than actions. Hate spreads fast because it's emotional, simple, and provocative. But empathy spreads too - if we choose to use it.

Since then, whenever I see something hateful online, I try to react. Sometimes I leave a comment that challenges the hate - calmly, without attacking. Sometimes I report the post. Sometimes I reach out privately to the person who was targeted and remind them they're not alone.

It's not about fighting haters. It's about making sure hate isn't the only voice in the room. Of course, reacting to online hate isn't always easy. You have to know your limits. You have to protect your own well-being. But there is always something we can do. We can learn how to recognise hate speech. We can talk about it - with friends, teachers, or online communities. We can make caring normal.

Imagine this: What if everyone who felt uncomfortable decided to act - even in a small way? The internet would look very different. It would be a space where respect outweighs mockery, where people remember that behind every profile picture is a real person.

When I look back now, I still remember that hesitation - the moment when I almost said nothing. I've learned that being neutral in the face of hate is also a choice. And it's a choice that supports the wrong side. Once I understood that, staying silent was no longer an option.

So when I see hate online today, I remind myself of this: Speaking up isn't just about defending someone else. It's about protecting the kind of world I want to live in. A world where people are brave enough to care. And kind enough to speak - even when it's not easy.

Reflective Questions

1. Think about the last time you saw something online that made you uncomfortable.
2. Did you scroll past - or did you react?
3. What stopped you from responding, if you didn't? Fear, uncertainty, lack of support?
4. What small action could you take next time to show empathy or support online?



Remember:

Empathy begins with awareness - but it grows through action.

Funded by the EU. The views and opinions expressed are those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the European Union or the Foundation for the Development of Education. Neither the European Union nor the Foundation for the Development of Education are responsible for them.

All results developed within the project „Building Community Links” are made available under open licenses (CC BY-SA 4.0 DEED). They can be used free of charge and without restrictions. Copying or processing these materials in whole or in part without the author's consent is prohibited. In the case of using the results, it is necessary to indicate the source of financing and its authors.