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Toolkit

I. Methodology for teachers

MODULE 2 Perspectives

Values, norms and biases



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Learnable

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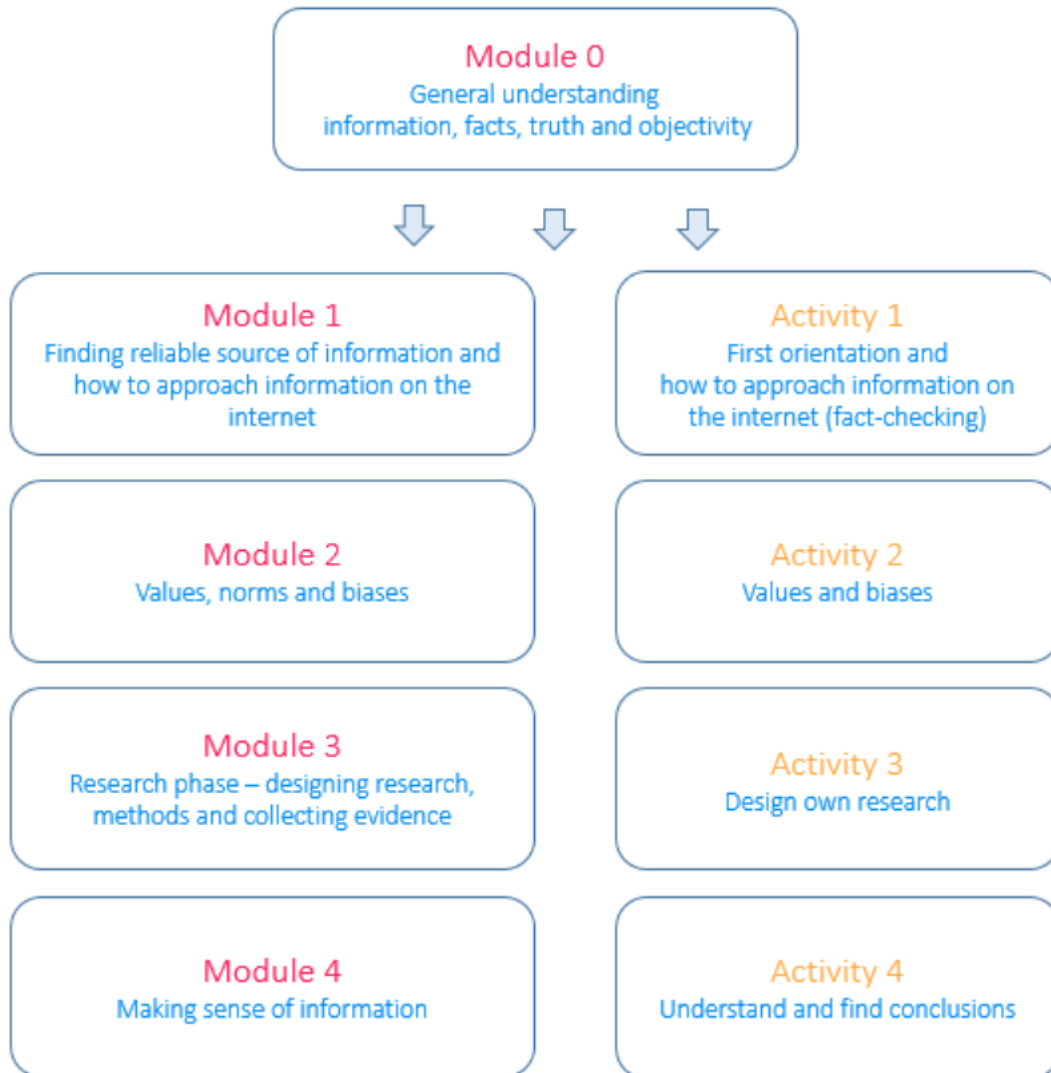
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Module and Activity overview

Modules & Activities





MODULE 2: Values, norms and biases

"THE HIGHEST FORM OF INTELLIGENCE IS THE ABILITY TO OBSERVE WITHOUT JUDGEMENTS."

(Jiddu Krishnamurti)

Structure of the module:

Topics covered:

- 🌈 Factors influencing our perception
 - 🌈 Norms, Values, Believes
 - 🌈 Attitudes. Motivation. Habits, World Views
- 🌈 Personality based on MBTI typology
- 🌈 Biases
- 🌈 Approach of Nonviolent communication
- 🌈 Role of logic and emotions
- 🌈 Social media and our perception
- 🌈 Actors and their role

Main topics of the module:

In this module we will explore following topics:

- How and why to understand our values, norms and believes?*
- What are biases and is it possible to overcome them?*
- How does our assumptions and biases influence our judgment?*
- What is framing?*
- The role of our perception in decision making?*
- Good and wrong, how to define it?*
- How are social media influencing our perception?*
- Is the logical thinking the answer for relevant understanding?*
- Who are the actors concerned (the stakeholders)?*
- What are the attitudes, values and norms of the actors concerned?*
- What are your values and norms (self-reflection)?*

1.1. Factors influencing our perception and action

"KNOW YOUR SELF AND UNDERSTAND THE OTHERS"

How we perceive the world around us and act is influenced by our values, attitudes and believes, societal norms, and our personality. Besides other factors as is our position in the certain situation (are we teacher or student, or manager or technician...), physical a genetic predispositions and so on.

Basically we act based on our interpretation of the world around us (our rational and emotional response) rather than in reaction to the world itself.



If the way we perceive the world around us and our decisions is influenced by factors that we are not aware of, how could we make conscious and responsible decisions? So to understand our selves and others is important as we want to be free about the choices we make so that **our decisions are directed towards fulfilling our basic human needs** as to have joyful and fulfilling life (for more explanation see Emphatic communication below).

Responsible decision is, as we would define it, a decision that is based on relevant information available (**evidence based or information informed decision**) and decision that **leads to fulfilment of our needs** (see below). By decision we (in the context of this Methodology) understand actually any “decision” that is behind that we do something: act, interpret data or respond to a situation in certain way (externally and internally). **In this sense the “decision” does not have to be fully or at all rational.** As rationality is only one component for our decision making and if we would limit term “decision” only to rational decision making than we would have no decision at the end actually fulfilling such a definition.

Unconscious aspects are also **influencing our perception of information and thus directly distorting the way we would collect evidence to support our decisions** or understand an issue or topic concerned. In the Module 1 we stressed out that we are all prone to manipulation techniques conceded with disinformation and fake-news and that these techniques are effective when we lack awareness of ourselves our values and the social norms we are exposed to.

Perception (from Latin *perceptio* 'gathering, receiving') is the organization, identification, and interpretation of sensory information in order to represent and understand the presented information or environment.¹

Our perception can be distorted in many ways. That basically means that “what we see does not have to be what we see”. There are many aspects that influence our perception (our experience, personality, being human, our believes and values and other...).

EXAMPLE Take for example how differently will an architect compared to car enthusiast perceive the very same street. What would each other see and what impressions they would have to walk through the street? Note that they both would be in the same street and even if they do not distort the really their perception will be quite different. This example is easily showing us that we are in some way already biased by our experience and motivations (**we already see – perceive from some perspective**).

In Module 1 we have also seen that **different actors have different motivations** influenced by the same factors as are influencing our own behavior (we mean principle factors not how are these manifested in reality). To understand these motivations and underling factors will help us to navigate between different opinions and data sources when collecting evidence and making sense of information. For this reason in this Module we will examine factors that influence our (and anyone else’s) approaches to information and decision making and also underline our biases towards the subject matter.

IMPORTANT The topics in these Module could be expanded into several scientific fields (psychology, neuroscience, social psychology) and as such we cannot cover all the topics and all the aspects of the topics presented. The aim is mainly **to inspire you as a teacher** by presenting some selected topics and

¹ Definition from Schacter, Daniel (2011). *Psychology*. Worth Publishers. [ISBN 9781429237192](https://doi.org/10.1002/9781429237192) (taken from Wikipedia.org).



concepts that you can use in your daily work with students. We encourage you to explore further any topic you find interesting and useful.

IMPORTANT We would like to acknowledge in advance that the topics we will cover in this Module might be **complicated for someone rooted in any world view** which is in principle oriented in believing in its truths as the only right ones. On the other hand we are not claiming that what is presented is true carved in the stone. On the contrary, take it more as an inspiration how these complex and complicated issues might be approached and seen. As such we are open to any discussion about the topics and concepts presented.

We kindly invite you to allow yourself to openness and will to explore and possibly also to challenge “your own truths”.

...Let’s get inspired...

1.1.1. Norms, values and believes

How we deal with any issue is influenced consciously or unconsciously by many factors based on our **predispositions and experience**. These factors are forming ones values, believes and attitudes. We also act in a specific environment with certain norms and societal structures.

As there could be countless debates what influences what and what is considered under each term we do not want and need for our purposes go into details and academic debate. We will set basic usable framework and also provide a practical tools that can be used in real communication situations (see below).

Norms are accepted standards or ways of being or doing things **shared by members of a social group** as standards of behavior. Norm is concrete, specifying certain things that have to be done (or omitted). Norms refer to and are (sometimes seemingly) justified by underlying values. Norms refers to behavior and **attitudes which are considered as “normal”**.

But it is important to also notice that **everyone perceive the norms differently** and these perceptions may or may not reflect what most others actually do or expect. And **we also have a choice** if we will act „accordingly“ to those perceived norms. **Norms do not represent some standalone rules how we all behave but are an individually perceived framework in which we act as an individual.**

What can be and often is a problematic for communication and understanding is when issues (people, ideas, action etc.) are **judged trough lenses of a norm as a means of truth, right and wrong**. Without acknowledging that the norm is habitual custom. And as such does not have and apriority “goodness” in it (even we might see it that way). We are not saying that the norms are not important for the society to function. But let be open to assess if the norms we are setting up are really serving us well.

IMPORTANT As our goal is to make responsible decisions we should look for the best possible option for our action based on our needs and the purpose of the action. If the norm is not serving us or its purpose lest be open to change it. Not trough braking the norm but by discussion and finding better solutions (the approach depends on the situation and the norm concerned).

Values can be understand in different way (we can say on different levels). Some (and also generally used) define values as *“what we find important in life”*, or *“what we care about”*. This definition might (by our opinion) well serve an organization such as private company which can define its core



“values”. But on the personal level such a definition is quite misleading as it points out more to desires or “artefacts” representing status in society or even objects (I can care about objects). As such we cannot agree that something (mentioned when you browse the internet) as “wealth” or „foundation of a strong marriage“ should be seen as anyone’s value. We would rather call this as desires.

- x **Desires are not values** As such we cannot agree that something (as often mentioned when you browse the internet) as “wealth” or „foundation of a strong marriage“ should be seen as anyone’s value. We would rather call this a desires.

How to define values then? Lets first ask what is behind the above mentioned “desires”:

- Behind desire for wealth we could see many different need for different people such as: security, survival, comfort, dignity, freedom and choice, consideration, respect etc.
- Behind the desire for „foundation of a strong marriage“ we could see many different need for different people such as: emotional safety, stability, security, respect, harmony, reciprocity, support, trust, comfort etc.

We can see that **the term “values” can be quite tricky**. Basically we can say that something has value for us (it is desirable and worth to invest our effort – time, money... - to achieve it). Like this we could say that our car has value for us, but this is arguably not what we are looking for here (as we would call this as desire)... We can go little further and for example say that “education has a value for us”. In this case we would also rather look up for the motivations as these might differ person to person (for one it could be means to gain better prospect for job, for other it is for desire to have knowledge).

In this way we would (on its essence) propose to understand **values as basic human needs**. The purpose is to find the underlying cause or circumstance that makes us truly feeling fulfilled (happy) as human being. In this regard **the values (our true needs) could serve as the best guiding principle for our life** (for more explanation see the chapter Empathetic communication below).

So usually when we talk about values we refer to something that represents or express the “real” underlying need. As we can say “he most value his family”, or “position in job” etc. The language is used in certain way and that how it is. But to deepen our understanding it is good to understand that these “values” are “just” representing and expressing our needs in the particular societal and cultural context.

Believes is by Cambridge English Dictionary defined as “to think that something is true, correct, or real”. We would add without evidence. This is true meaning of the word “believe”: **Believe is something that I do not (or cannot) actually know if it is true or not**. Believing is actually **formulation and setting up assumptions that cannot be (or are not in principle) subject of further investigation** – cannot be further challenged and discussed.

Commonly the word “believe” is also used in a situations like: “I believe this person/expert” or I could even say: “I believe that the sun will rise again tomorrow” (as I cannot be sure or actually prove it because it did not happen yet). But for these circumstances we would rather use a term such as **“trust”** as we do not actually base this statements just purely based on “believe” without any **evidence or experience**. I can trust someone because I know him and he already has proved to be reliable or I know that all the knowledge we have about the solar system is giving chance limiting close to 100 % that the sun will rise tomorrow even I cannot prove it yet.



We do not want to be nitpicking about the words and it is probably common/normal to use term “believe” in above situations. But we should understand the real meaning and **difference between “believe” (without any evidence or experience) and “trust or judgment” based on some evidence or experience that can support such judgement.** **Difference is that with “believe” there is no point to ask about robustness of the evidence, because it is just believe.** So even we use/hear the term “believe” we should be able to recognize whether it is an opinion or judgement possibly prone to examine the robustness of the evidence or pure believe.

1.1.2. Attitude, motivation, habits and world view

Attitude is our tendency to evaluate some symbol, object, or aspect of our world in a favorable or unfavorable manner. Attitude may be defined as a **feeling or disposition to favor or be against objects, persons, and situations.** It also can be defined as a state of mind or feeling with regard to some matter. But there are many definitions of term attitude and the term attitude is also commonly used relatively loosely for collection of one’s opinions, prejudices, and sentiments,

Important is that we can be consciously aware of our own attitude or the attitude (towards something) might be unconscious, but still, affecting our behaviors.

Motivation the mix of factors as above mentioned values, norms, attitudes, personality (see below) and also our experience and current situation are influencing our motivation to do what we do and how we do it. **Motivation is concrete desire to act to fulfill a certain goal or objective.** Motivation is concrete manifestation of our personality, values, norms and attitudes in reality. In this sense the motivation is closely connected to our desires to have or achieve something (see above). **“I am motivated to do something because I want to ‘achieve’* something”.** The motivation can be conscious (I am aware what I want to achieve) or unconscious (I do not have established or articulated goal).

***Achieving something** does not have to be material in nature or serving achieving certain goal (achievement). As for example someone is motivated to go running for the pure enjoyment of doing it and not necessarily to win a race or run marathon under 3 hours. But still we can see the motivation is coming from desire to ‘achieve’ the pleasure (get in to the state of pleasure or feeling good after the run). So in this case the motivation might even be unconscious.

Habits are also quite important preconditions for our behavior, how we do things. Habits are **what we do because we are used to do it.** In the sense “we do what we do”. It is something we tend to do regularly. Habits can be quite strong and hard to get rid of. There is lot of motivation books how to change and set the “right” habits to serve you well. On one hand we can see that habits can help us in life. But on the other hand as our goal is to act responsibly (to benefit ourselves) we should also see that **habits are actually denying to choose and act from free will.** If we do everything based on habits we would be like automatic machine. Let’s ask ourselves if we want to be an automatic machine or human being with a choice to act.

World view could be defined as a comprehensive conception or apprehension of the world especially from a specific standpoint² (point of view). It is **how we or society perceive, conceptualize and understands the world around us and our place in it.** It is connected to our understanding and

² Taken from: www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/worldview



knowledge, interpretation of phenomena we engage with and the norms and values. It is formed in rather iterative process where it is not possible to say for example if the norms are base for the world view or the world view is a base for setting up the norms. As one is influencing the other in both ways. Based on their world view people tend to make decisions what's right and wrong, what should be done and what not and make moralistic judgments (see also below Empathetic communication). Specific and especially strong (and unconscious) world view is often times the case for biased perception and decision making.

(SUMMARY) Take into the class Our action concerning also our approach to information is influenced by mix of factors (see above). To understand each other we should first understand our selves only than we can see what is "behind" the choices, decisions, action of others.

1.2. Personality types (MBTI)

"IT'S SO INCREDIBLE TO FINALLY BE UNDERSTOOD AND TO UNDERSTAND OTHERS."

(from 16Personalities.com - modified)

There are many ways how we can see and describe a personality. Let us provide you with one example that we consider as relevant and useful that the teachers could be inspired by and use when working with students.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a personality test designed to determine personality types, based on Carl G. Jung's work on psychological types and expanded to include additional personality specifications by Isabel Briggs Myers. **It focuses on how different people perceive the world and make their decisions**, what their values, needs and motivations are. The MBTI personality typology is one of the best known and most commonly used, for example, in job applicant interviews or for personal development.

The MBTI personality test classifies people according to their attitudes and actions in specific situations. The type assessment consists of four letters that represent a person's most salient traits and their way of approaching information, making decisions and behaving in society. Testing most often takes the form of a questionnaire that contains a carefully constructed set of questions on human behavior in everyday situations.

The MBTI methodology differentiates people according to **four basic personality traits**:

- Introversion (I) versus Extroversion (E)
- Sensing (S) versus Intuition (N)
- Thinking (T) versus Feeling (F)
- Judging (J) versus Perceiving (P)

According to this approach, each person has four dominant traits (always one of the opposites) that together tell us about their personality, strengths, weaknesses, career aptitudes, or workplace habits, as well as behaviors in romantic relationships, friendships, childhood, parenthood and general interpersonal relationships.

For more details you can check the [following web sites](#) about each personality type, how to use them and tests to find your MBTI type: [16Personalities](https://16Personalities.com) or [Truity](https://www.truity.com).



IMPORTANT When applying MBTI types be careful **not to use it to judge others** and to set limits for them (as saying that they would not fit to do something or have certain lead position in a team etc.). MBTI typology is about **the way we would do and approach things and not about what we can and cannot achieve**. In this regard it is good to be aware that there are many **sources on the internet** that explain MBTI types in quite primitive and not adequate way.

(SUMMARY) Take into the class By understanding MBTI types you will understand the differences why people (students) are behaving in certain way and why they tend to have certain roles in the collective (team). MBTI also give us understanding **how we and others perceive certain situations and what motivate us** and what makes us unmotivated or is hurting us. MBTI is giving us opportunity to understand self and others not by judging what is right and wrong but acknowledging our natural personality settings (**who we are and where we feel comfortable and can thrive**). So than we can **support the students to fulfill their potential**.

MBTI can serve as key instrument to understand and appreciate each other instead of rejection of the different. **As each type has its own quality and diversity brings to the society the potential for development**. For example if we take Sensing (S) and Intuition (N) type. One can oversee and preserve the set up rules (S) and one can see thing that are not here yet (N). The S type might consider the N type not following the rules and opposite the N type can perceive S type as to be too rigid to move things forward. So in this case for example the S type should learn to see and appreciate potential that the N type can bring in form of new visions. Someone might be more spontaneous (P types) and some can get things done (J types).

1.3. Cognitive biases

As we have to navigate ourselves in very complex environment to survive and be able to do (relatively) quick decisions **we have been equipped with ability to interpret perceived information by connecting it to our “knowledge” (base on our experience) and current feelings**. This ability helped us to survive by being able to make quick decisions to avoid danger or seize opportunity (to obtain food and so on). So it is connected to our survival process, in other words with preserving our selves. Thus it is deeply **connected with sense for protection (defense) or seizing opportunity**.

But on the other hand this ability is also responsible for **doing “short cuts”³ when interpreting information** or during decision-making and can (and often does) leads to misinterpretation. These errors are called cognitive biases.

A cognitive bias is a subconscious error that leads you to **misinterpret information you perceive**, and thus affects the accuracy of decisions and judgments. In other words: **Leads the judgement or interpretation of the information in a way that diverges from reality**.

- x **Logical Fallacy** is not cognitive bias. Logical fallacy represents an error in logical argument. Cognitive bias is connected with how we perceive and interpret information.

³ Called Heuristics (see for example article: [What Are Heuristics?](#))



1.3.1. Selected common cognitive biases

Let's take a look at some of the most common and for our purposes useful to know and be able to recognize biases:

Confirmation Bias is a tendency for people to favor information that confirms their preconceptions. That means orienting ourselves to receive, perceive and interpret information in a way that is confirming our "current selves" (our beliefs, our conceptions of the topic, our mental models, our desires, our status, our behavior, our likes, our attitude etc.). Basically it is about receiving and/or interpreting information that supports one's position on an issue. It allows us to conclude that our views are correct but may often obscure reality as we do not see things as they are but as we want them to be.

In a broad sense we might to some extent argue that all biases are just different manifestations of confirmation bias. That all biases actually "serve" us to defend our current self (as we perceive our self or want to be perceived by others). WHAT YOU IDENTIFY WITH you defend it as being it your self.

Confirmation bias is closely connected with the need to be accepted that is manifested in strive for validating and identity (to belong somewhere). As we can see with "conspiracy theories" or strong identity mindsets (see Module 4), the more people have invested into building their personality around particular role in society or world view, the harder it is for them to see from possible different perspective, point of view.

Very important role and let's say magnifier in supporting confirmation bias are in the society playing the social media. The algorithms of social media are designed to promote to us what we already like or is in favor of our world view. To overcome this we have to invest in deliberate action to search for alternatives (see the Module 2 for details).

Where confirmation bias leads us to:




- We look up information that confirms our point of view (selective exposure)
 - We are looking up for information close to and confirming our point of view
 - We are letting the algorithms of social media present us with information that only confirms our point of view⁴
 - Individuals strongly committed to certain religions often avoid contact with information or people that can "tempt them away" from their doctrine
- We perceive information in a way that confirms our point of view (we might see or hear only some parts of the story/information presented and ignore the part that does not fit to our conception)
 - It is quite important to understand that due to confirmation bias we are not even confronted with other opinion or information contradicting our point of view (we just do not see it even when it is presented to us)
- It supports our point of view as we are not deliberately (but unconsciously) confronted with other views
- We interpret information to favor our point of view

⁴ Cited from: [Feeling validated versus being correct: a meta-analysis of selective exposure to information](#)





- Questioning without reason or by unsupported rationalization (note that **rationalization plays important role** in confirmation bias)
- It might be by **neglecting** or **relativize** the information contradicting our point of view
- As consequence we come with **judgements** that are based on perception and interpretation of obscure reality
 - Such judgement would not lead us to responsible decision and action that is adequate reaction (response) to the situation and thus would not in essence lead to fulfilling our true needs

What to do to avoid confirmation bias:

-  Be aware of the confirmation bias
 - See for example that you take for granted (without assessment) information that confirms your point of view and on the other side what effort you will do to assess and possibly “prove wrong” information that is against your views
-  Asses all information equally
-  Make deliberate effort to look for information (evidence) favoring different perspectives

Fundamental attribution error is when a person attributes someone’s behavior to some feature of the **person’s personality instead of the situation/context** the person is in. Mostly it will be connected with a projection from our side based on our assumptions about the person (so **to confirm our attitude toward the person**).




What to do to avoid fundamental attribution error:

-  Be aware of the Fundamental attribution error bias
 - Do I project my attitude toward the person to explain his/her actions
-  Consider the environment might cause a particular behavior of the person
 - See and understand the situation the person is in first before you interpret his/her actions

Blind spot bias is when we recognize biases in others but fail to see them in your selves. We tend to think that we are less likely to be biased than others⁵.

If you see (or think you see) biases in others but fall short to see your own than **it is more than likely that what you think you see are just your projections and confirmation bias talking.**

What to do to avoid blind spot bias:

-  Acknowledge that we are all (and I am also) biased to some extend
-  It is good to see that and how other people are biased but if you do not see your own biases than your perception of others could be no more than your own biased opinion
 - Understand yourself, we should be primarily reflective of our own behavior
-  Always ask yourself and **understand your perspective on the topic** only than you can see how this is influencing your perception and judgement

⁵ For more about blind spot bias see: [Researchers Find Everyone Has a Bias Blind Spot](#)






Anchoring bias is a tendency to rely too heavily or be influenced by either pre-existing information or the first piece of information or some concept or approach (the anchor). As if the **first information serves as the anchor for our further action**, research. This information is (unconsciously) connected to some initial exciting or tempting idea or connected to my point of view (see confirmation bias).

Note that this may lead us to on a path with either dead end (and we waste lot of energy without relevant outcome) or might with connection of confirmation bias lead into development of “conspiracy theory”. You can imagine a detective obsessively following the one clue that does not lead to anything significant at the end or leads to a false accusation of someone.

From methodological perspective, anchoring could be leaning on an approach (method) that is in principal wrong or not suitable for dealing with the research topic (see Module 3 Designing research).





What to do to avoid anchoring bias:

-  Do not get stick with one evidence. (Try to) see the issue from different perspectives
-  Look up for other evidence and asses the one you have
-  Do not lean on an approach (method) just in principle. See the purpose of the research and use adequate method for it (see Module 3)

Projection bias is to hold an implicit assumption that others think, believe, or know the same as we do. It is about not recognizing the others as individuals with their own personality, values and believes. Projection bias is basically **overestimating or believing in the normality of our beliefs**. It is actually a perception where **we make a “universal” norm out of our current situation, self**.

Projection bias is connected with low empathy. And It is quite interesting that projection bias is also connected with **low empathy to our future self**. That means to tend to believe that we will think, feel, and act the same in the future as we do now. This can be seen in behavior that emphasize importance of something now that does actually have no value in the long run.

What to do to avoid projection bias:

-  Acknowledge that things does not have to be as I have them right or can imagine them right now
-  Work on your emphatic with others
-  Do not project your own toughs and believes as explanation of others action
-  DO NOT make out of your own toughs and believes **universally valid norms** that should be applied to others

Representativeness bias is a tendency to **judge the likelihood of a hypothesis by quantity of the available data** that resembles it.

This is to some extend also done **in scientific journals** particularly in meta-analysis and systemic reviews. Outcome like 8 studies favor the argument A and only two studies favor argument B so the A is correct should not be considered as relevant as we should not vote about the “truth” but we should see the real evidence and if this is really providing coherent explanation (see more in the Module 4) Making sense of information.



What to do to avoid projection bias:

- 🌈 We should not vote about the “truth” by quantity of information or number of articles or experts that favors certain point of view.
 - There should be evidence provided and the evidence should make up coherent explanation
- 🌈 Look for evidence and coherent explanation (see Module 4)

Availability bias is that we are influenced by information that is readily available to us. This is something that we cannot actually avoid as we are all the time exposed to information favoring some point of view. For example see the news about the world and compare it to the real world “out there”.

What to do to avoid projection bias:

- 🌈 Be aware that we are exposed to only certain type of information
- 🌈 Be aware that we always have limited information about the issue
 - Is it enough to formulate responsible decision (see Module 3 about how to collect relevant data and information a Module 4 How to make sense of information)

There are **much more biases** that could be described and we encourage you to further search on your own. But with the above ones we should have a solid basis for our purposes in connection to understand others (Activity 2), designing research (Activity 3) and making sense of data and information (Activity 4).

1.3.2. Debiasing

There has been effort and research looking and assessing possibilities how to deliberately reduce biases. Research⁶ is showing positive impact of specifically designed computer games, videos⁷ or training for debiasing although it is always quite questionable how to actually measure reduction of bias.

Based on one meta-analysis we can summarize motivations to defend our point of view (confirmation bias) and motivation for nonbiased decision making (accuracy motivation):⁸

Motivation for defensive approach (getting hard to avoid confirmation bias):

- **attachment** or loyalty to a view (value-relevant involvement)
- when people who just reported an attitude or belief, or engaged in a behavior, receive **challenging** (vs. supporting) information (this makes people to get into defensive state)
- presence of **apparently high-quality information** that supports their point of view
- personal commitment as feeling highly attached to a view (sacrificing for the view, **dedicating much time or effort to make a decision**, freely choosing the view, explaining the view publicly)
- “**closed-minded** individuals”

⁶ You can see an example here: [How a Video Game Helped People Make Better Decisions](#)

⁷ You can see and use for your purposes the video used in the above research here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNWmnZJnNnE>

⁸ Cited from: [Feeling validated versus being correct: a meta-analysis of selective exposure to information](#)



Motivation for accuracy (nonbiased decision making):

- outcome-relevant involvement (as opposite to value-relevant involvement)
- information utility as the extent to which information can be used to facilitate good decisions

From the practical point of view **for debiasing to be effective** is to:

- receive information about biases (get to know we are prone to them) (in form of training, video game or instructional video)
- know my self – promoting self-reflection and open-mindedness
- invest cognitive resources in making decisions (to overcome biases, investing deliberate effort is necessary) therefore we also call the approach presented as **ACTIVE** (need to be active)
- create an atmosphere and give more room, space and resource, to support seeking and to invest cognitive resources in making decisions
- use “scientific approach” that we could call as formulate and test hypothesis. Do not take your idea or first impression for granted BUT take it as assumption/hypothesis to be further tested (by evidence or experience).

The Toolkit presented in the ACTIVE project with its Methodology and Activities is designed to promote above mentioned predisposition for debiasing.

Some research studies and information that could be found on the internet is for debiasing promoting approaches that we cannot agree with⁹:

- x **Use incentives.** Be beware of trying to try “debiasing” students by motivating students to fulfill a specific action and follow specific norm (eat healthy, condemn what I label as "evil", etc.). This will be only creating new concept and bias towards something.
- x **Use nudge theory** for “debiasing”. Nudge theory “proposes positive reinforcement and indirect suggestions as ways to influence the behavior and decision-making of groups or individuals”¹⁰. If you are going to influence to do something unintentionally that is exactly meaning promoting biased decision making “influenced” (as it is stated) by someone or something. This is opposite of debiasing.

IMPORTANT When we are considering debiasing we can only influence openness and awareness not concrete norms of action! Do not try to persuade someone to certain believe or attraction/aversion to overcome bias. As this would be only biasing the person in certain way.

1.4. Empathetic (nonviolent) communication

“OTHER PEOPLE OR ANYONE ELSE CANNOT MAKE YOU DO ANYTHING. IT IS YOUR CHOICE.”

“We might not always like the choices we have but nobody can make us do anything we don’t choose to do so.” (Marshall Rosenberg)

Nonviolent Communication is an approach developed and propagated by Marshall Rosenberg. Rosenberg received Ph.D. in psychology and he has used the approach of nonviolent communication

⁹ [Debiasing Decisions: Improved Decision Making With a Single Training Intervention](#) or [Wikipedia](#)

¹⁰ Wikipedia: Nudge theory https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nudge_theory



(nowadays sometimes called as “empathetic communication”) as mediator in differing environments as were schools or peace programs in conflict areas (Palestine and Israel, Rwanda, Sri Lanka and others). Till now there are many followers and coaches who are practicing non-violent communication.

1.4.1. Basics of Nonviolent Communication (NVC)

Below we present the basic concepts and approach of Nonviolent communication from the video series [Nonviolent Communication with Marshall Rosenberg](#). As this Methodology will be translated to Czech, Polish, Slovak, German and Italian we also would like to by this form present the ideas of Nonviolent communication to teacher that do not speak English.

The GOAL of Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is *“To get everybody’s needs met. And the need are getting met be people giving willingly (from their heart) not out of any coercive motivation.”*

By **“needs”** are according the NVC met the basic human needs (see below). Fulfilment of this basic human needs is the essential driving factor for our behavior. And the core understanding of NVC is that when we violate basic needs of others it will at the end does not serve any good to us either. As Rosenberg says: **“You can say NO to other’s needs but the other person will most likely react to you in a way that is not in your best interest.** But if you say the need behind the NO that’s less likely to happen.”

“If we do something under fear of punishment everybody pays for it” As we don’t do it willingly and joyfully. If we do something for someone unwillingly we will let the person to “pay for that”. We will hate ourselves for doing it and hat the others that we have to do it for them (and that they show not enough gratitude). **“Giving from heart”** is when we enjoy the giving, the things we do, we enjoy the relationships and in the end we enjoy our life.

“Everything what we do for reward, everybody pays for.

Everything we do to make people to like us, everybody pays for.

Everything we do out of guilt, shame, duty, obligation, everybody pays for.”

Instead of shearing (giving from heart) we play **the game of “who’s right”**, a game where everybody loses”. **“This game involves two of the most devious things human beings have ever come upon. That's punishment as if you are wrong you deserve to suffer”**. This approach NVC argues **created already enough violence** on the planet.

If the **believe is that people are innately evil** than **“you think that the way to bring about change when people are behaving in a way you don’t like is to make people to hate themselves for what they’re doing.”** For this reason was developed language that Rosenberg calls **“jackal language”**. **“This language cuts us off from life and makes it very easy to be violent. Actually creates society where violence is enjoyed”**.

“Jackal language” (language of dominance, promoting violence) is:

- language of **moralistic judgements**, think in terms of who’s right who’s wrong who’s good.
 - Thinking in the concepts of right and wrong, good and bad, normal and abnormal
- e.g. **labeling** someone (as... “idiot”, “uncompetent”...)
- **Language that denies choice and responsibility** for the action



- Amtssprache (amt = office so we can call it bureaucratic language): When German Nazi Adolph Eichmann was during the trial asked, "Was it hard for you to send these tens of thousands of people to their death?" Eichmann replied, "To tell you the truth, it was easy. Our language made it easy. ...it is language that deny responsibility for your actions"
 - "Superior orders, company policy they made me do it. I could not do else".
- Language that teaches (child) that you have to do something
- Language that imply that someone makes you feel... angry, hurt, ...
- Judgments as: "He speaks to much" as we would know, have the right to decide what is the right amount of speaking.

Rosenberg points out that "Nonviolent Communication is not about speaking in a certain way but about speaking from certain point of view."

How to communicate in nonviolent way:

Basically by expressing how we are and what we would like – expressing our needs.

How to communicate about specific thing he/she (they) do and you do not like. Thing of someone who is doing something you do not like, doesn't make your life wonderful.

1. Specify thing that you do not like what "this" person is doing.

- The question is about "concrete behavior what is someone doing - observation".
 - Not an evaluation that implies wrongness (right and wrong). Sometimes we cannot separate Fact and Opinion.
 - **Do not see the other as enemy** - the image of enemy, the wrongness is a barrier for communication. **This obscures reality as we do not see the behavior we see only enemy image. We do not see (just) the person but (our) an image or judgement we have made.**
 - **Do not judge:** "He speaks to much, to little". As if you have the right (you are the only one) to decide what is right, what is too much too little
 - **Need to see the behavior (observation) separated from the judgement**
 - "We tend to thing in the intentions of what is right, what is wrong, what is normal and abnormal, appropriate and inappropriate **and we can't see reality. All we see is our enemy images.**"
 - People get defensive if we mix in these judgements and do not address the actual issue
- Without judgement you will see (hear) that people, "human beings are only ever saying please and thank you".
 - "Harsh judgements, criticism, judgements, blame are simply tragic suicidal expressions of please."
 - "Every evaluation of others that implies wrongness is a tragic expression of an unmet need."
 - Expressions like: "speaks loudly, yelling at me,..". are evaluations



- Rosenberg shows difference between: "Student would not stay seated" (judgement) vs "Student does not stay seated after I tell him to do so" (observation)
- **"Judgement decreases likelihood we get what we want"** (even when we think that way it does not have to be spoken) "and it increases likelihood of violence"
 - "what could be more tragic than expressing ourselves in a way that get in a way of getting what we want"

2. Say (express) your NEED and request for action

- That is how we evaluate in nonviolent communication
- We evaluate from the heart
- We make judgements, but we make **need serving judgements**
 - Judging whether what people are doing is meeting needs or not
 - Judging whether it is serving life or not because our (true) needs are direct connection with life. Needs are the life seeking expression within us. So we evaluate with reference to that.
 - **not moralistically judge** the person for what they did
- Requires two kinds of literacy: **feelings and needs**
 - **Feeling**: How do you feel when the other person does that?
 - Feelings: anger, scared, anxious, impatient, hurt, disappointed (I am disappointed X not You disappointed me), powerless, frustrating,
 - X following are not feelings (Resenberg gives examples): intimidated (it is something you thing other people are doing to you, not a feeling but diagnosis), I feel misunderstood, I feel used, I feel manipulated, I feel judged, I feel betrayed, I feel criticized, I feel ignored, I feel rejected
 - It is how you interpreting other person's behavior
 - X not: "I am thinking..." but what you feel.
- Do not use feelings in violent way (instead in connecting way):
 - X not: "I feel as I do it because of you." or "You make me feel... angry."
 - X Feelings as instrument to use guilt as a way of manipulation people
 - Make people feel guilty to change their behavior
 - As: "It really hurts me when you do not clean up your room" or "it makes me angry when you say that".
- Formulate the request (for action) with connection to your needs



Watch out for "non-feeling" words... It is important to choose words that really are feelings. If you use words like "abandoned" or "mised" or "shunned" we can prevent ourselves from getting to the "REAL" feelings. These "non-feeling" words are more like accusations or judgments than feelings¹¹.

List of feelings¹²

When needs are met

*adventurous – engaged – loving
affectionate – excited – moved
alive – fascinated – peaceful
calm – friendly – playful
confident – glad – relaxed
content – happy – satisfied
curious – hopeful – tender
delighted – interested – thrilled
energetic – joyful – warm*

When needs are not met

*agitated – embarrassed – nervous
alarmed – exasperated – overwhelmed
ambivalent – flustered – protective
angry – grief – sad
annoyed – heartbroken – scared
anxious – helpless – stressed
confused – hopeless – suspicious
despairing – impatient – tense
devastated – irritated – terrified
disconnected – lonely – torn
discouraged – longing – troubled*

¹¹ From: <https://www.nycnvc.org/feelings>

¹² From: <https://www.sociocracyforall.org/nvc-feelings-and-needs-list/> OR you can see more comprehensive list here: <https://www.nycnvc.org/feelings>



Needs inventory presented by The Center For Nonviolent Communication (not exhaustive)¹³

<i>CONNECTION</i>	<i>CONNECTION continued</i>	<i>HONESTY</i>	<i>MEANING</i>
<i>acceptance</i>	<i>safety</i>	<i>authenticity</i>	<i>awareness</i>
<i>affection</i>	<i>security</i>	<i>integrity</i>	<i>celebration of</i>
<i>appreciation</i>	<i>stability</i>	<i>presence</i>	<i>life</i>
<i>belonging</i>	<i>support</i>	<i>PLAY</i>	<i>challenge</i>
<i>cooperation</i>	<i>to know and be known</i>	<i>joy</i>	<i>clarity</i>
<i>communication</i>	<i>to see and be seen</i>	<i>humor</i>	<i>competence</i>
<i>closeness</i>	<i>to understand and</i>	<i>PEACE</i>	<i>consciousness</i>
<i>community</i>	<i>be understood</i>	<i>beauty</i>	<i>contribution</i>
<i>companionship</i>	<i>trust</i>	<i>communion</i>	<i>creativity</i>
<i>compassion</i>	<i>warmth</i>	<i>ease</i>	<i>discovery</i>
<i>consideration</i>	<i>PHYSICAL WELL-BEING</i>	<i>equality</i>	<i>efficacy</i>
<i>consistency</i>	<i>air</i>	<i>harmony</i>	<i>effectiveness</i>
<i>empathy</i>	<i>food</i>	<i>inspiration</i>	<i>growth</i>
<i>inclusion</i>	<i>movement/exercise</i>	<i>order</i>	<i>hope</i>
<i>intimacy</i>	<i>rest/sleep</i>	<i>AUTONOMY</i>	<i>learning</i>
<i>love</i>	<i>sexual expression</i>	<i>choice</i>	<i>mourning</i>
<i>mutuality</i>	<i>safety</i>	<i>freedom</i>	<i>participation</i>
<i>nurturing</i>	<i>shelter</i>	<i>independence</i>	<i>purpose</i>
<i>respect/self-respect</i>	<i>touch</i>	<i>space</i>	<i>self-expression</i>
	<i>water</i>	<i>spontaneity</i>	<i>stimulation</i>
			<i>to matter</i>
			<i>understanding</i>

1.4.2. How to use Nonviolent Communication (NVC)

(SUMMARY) Take into the class The Nonviolent Communication is actually quite hard to master. Try by yourself and you will see how we mix our judgements and evaluations with observations, how hard is it to formulate what we feel (not blaming the others) and to get to our (often not fulfilled) needs that are the underlying factor of our feeling and action. The NVC should be used if we want to create environment where needs of all are met (not to use the language of dominance). But for our purposes we can (before we master it :) use the core concepts to understand others and their point of view and most importantly the underlying needs. **To see the others not as enemies but someone with unmet needs.** **Without understanding and respect to others I cannot expect that they will act in the way that will benefit me.** NVC also gives us very interesting perspective and useful insight about role of feelings and rationalization (See the NVC in nutshell below).

Nonviolent communication **provide us with Why (reason) and How (method/approach) to understand and see others without judgements.** In this way it is actually directly learning us too see and **communicate with others without our biases** (without our projection or fundamental attribution error or need to defend ourselves be confirmation that we are right).

¹³ <https://www.cnvc.org/training/resource/needs-inventory>



The approach of NVC in nutshell:

Nonviolent communication (approach to others):

OBSERVATION (what is happening) → OUR (His/Her) FEELINGS → OUR (His/Her) NEEDS → REQUEST FOR ACTION

“Violent” communication (approach to others):

EVALUATION and JUDGEMENTS (often biased by our point of view) → OUR THINKING (mostly making things up) → OUR STRATEGY → OUR DEMANDS

Feelings give us information about whether my needs are being met. The problem is when I start rating feelings as good and bad. It's just information. We should get comfortable with unpleasant feelings.

The problem is when I start to evaluate the feeling rationally, and start blaming myself or others... "It's so-and-so's fault" "It's your fault" "It's my fault, I'm useless..."

Understanding and connection comes first and then the search for a strategy. „I connect before I correct“.

Feelings should be interpreted in terms of the needs (**Needs**). What needs are not being met in him/her (me) that this causes him/her (me) to feel this way? **What need do I have? Connecting to my needs will give me more options and my strategies will better match those needs.**

Requests as little invitations to make my life more wonderful. If you say Yes I will be delighted, if you say NO I will be fine. "I am throwing a strategy in my request."

The language of dominance:

- **Diagnosis** (I'll tell you what's wrong with you "what is wrong with you and you need to get fixed")
- **Demands** (what you have to do, you have no choice) - power struggle (language: must, have to, should) Gives only two choices: rebel or submit (obey, succumb). When we take away a person's choice, it leads to disconnection
- **Denial of choice** ("I am just doing what I was told to do"), absolving yourself of responsibility

Summary of Nonviolent communication:

- **Objective:** People give willingly, get everybody needs met.
- If someone does **not give willingly** (from the heart) than everyone pays for that. You and the others
- In the **game** “**who is wrong who is right**, reward and punishment, win or lose or controlling by guilt or shame” is a **game where the need are not going to be met**
- **Separate fact and opinion** (wrong/right, enemy image, judgement, moralization)
- Human beings are only ever saying **please and thank you** (not attacking us)
- Our **feeling** gives us information whether our needs are met or not
- **Express your need.** Formulate the request with connection to your needs (that will be fulfilled). Action language: what specific action we want this person to take and why (what my need will be served be that)
- **Request is not a demand.** The request gives freedom to choose.



1.5. Logic, emotions and rationalization

In this chapter we would like to address one common misunderstanding. If someone does some decision we consider (in violent way) “stupid” or in other words not as responsible decision (see above) that it is common to say and think that “it was not rational decision” or “the decision was based on emotions”. The message and **common understanding is that rational decision = the right and correct one.**

But if we look closely we would not see that this is actually the truth. Very good understanding of this was already showed by the Nonviolent communication approach (NVC) (see above). NVC in the opposite of common understanding of “rational decision” is showing that **rationalization that leads to judgements and evaluations that are taken us from understanding the situation** as it is. And thus is the cause of action that would not lead to fulfilment of our needs (something we actually desire).

From other perspective we can see an example by any supporter of any **conspiracy theory** or demagogy / populist politician. See for yourself the “arguments” and the point of view the supporters are presenting. They are **putting up “rational” explanations based on rationalization as a proof that the conspiracy theory or politician is right** (have the truth).

Emotions and feelings although they are different in nature they are actually at the end depicted by same categories. Emotions are based on bodily chemical response to situation (or our perception of the situation) and last (some say) six seconds. Feelings on the other hand last longer. But the psychological response (how we feel) is described in the same terms as emotions (anger as emotion and feeling angry as feeling; joy and feeling joyful).

Rationalization is explaining or justifying action or an opinion with logical reasons, even if these do not have to be appropriate. Behind rationalization is logical (rational) thinking that usually operates with limited and/or biased information. The opinion based on rationalization might be or might not be correct as the evidence available or used actually does not entitle to formulate such conclusion.

Important is to understand (as some argument might go) that this **is NOT about wrong rationality or logic**. Even (paradoxically) when it seems like that and could even show that the decisions are not logical. Why then?

First scenario (biased logic): Because **logic** in principle (in its essence) can work only with the information we have (“posses”). **We cannot do any rational and logical operation with information we do not have.** And as we have explained above (see biases above) if we combine our perception with confirmation bias and other biases than we can understand that the person even does not allow **the information that does not correspond with his/her point of view to enter his mind**. So this information is actually not available for his/her rational thinking (the information was not looked up or has been ignored, but in the person’s mind the information actually does not exist). **So he/she (e.g. follower of conspiracy theory) is actually doing logical operations with the biased set of information.** Not that he/she would not think in “a logical way” for that person it is absolutely logical (corresponding with the information he/she disposes with).

Second scenario (rationalization of the possible consequences of the situation or possible interpretation of the situation): Lets think of what is actually first the feeling or rationalization of the situation that does not happen yet? If something did not happen



yet how we could feel about it something unless we think of or come out with possible (actually imaginary) scenarios. This is actually a rationalization like: What might/would happen if...? It is said that the decision was based on emotion. But what is behind the emotion? If someone is “against” refugees and in principle opposes any policy helping them. It is said he/she is acting like that out of fear and that it is not rational. But where is this fear coming from? **We fear something that does not happen yet because we expect (rationalization) that it might do us harm** (we come out with dangerous scenarios for the situation to possibly happen). So in this case the **emotion is following the “rationalization” of the possible (imaginary) consequences of the situation.**

Third scenario (rationalization of the possible interpretation of the situation): This principle is actually also applied in current situations **when we give the situation (person etc.) meaning based on our interpretation** based on our judgmental thinking (we can also call it projections). E.g. we think in a way “she have done it because she hates me” (even this might not be the case). So then we also tend to have feeling (e.g. anger) based on our thinking. So again thinking before feeling creation no accurate reflection of the situation.

Fourth scenario (rationalization of the cause of our feelings): We tend to rationalize our feelings to find the “cause” or the “villain” responsible for our unpleasant (or possibly pleasant) feelings. Our feeling of fear might be showing us that our need for (let’s say) security is not met (it is actual situation). But then comes the **rationalization and assessment who to blame for**. So our aversion to someone is not because of our feelings but because of our rationalization (finding explanations) to our feeling. Feeling is feeling and there is no blame or assessment in it. This is all rational (“logical”) operations doings. **So the judgements and evaluations are output of rational explanations of something that we perceive or feel.**

EXAMPLE If my favorite politician have strong positive attitude towards him, someone I deeply trust, is charged with possession of illegal materials found at his home, what is “the logical explanation” for this? Surely it was set up and the police slip this evidence to his house to make this allegations. This is (or actually could be) logically correct explanation. So we would argue that **this is logical but the point is that it is not based on any or appropriate evidence to be confident about it.** It is actually deductive thinking (see Module 3) based on wrong assumptions and lead by confirmation and blind spot bias – thinking that all others are biased against my admired politician and that I see his as he truly is (see about biases above).

(SUMMARY) Take into the class From **scientific point of view** (and point of view promoted in this Methodology) it would be actually **perfectly correct approaches to define assumptions** (as this not supported by evidence) BUT knowing that it is just **an assumption that has to be further tested as hypothesis by relevant research approach** (see Module 3).

EXAMPLE To show that this does not have to be limited to “conspiracy theories” let’s see some example from prominent science, actually **whole field of science**. The whole mainstream economy have been based on the assumption that people act rationally. Interesting is that (almost) everyone knows that this is just not corresponding with reality but this did not lead to change the economic mainstream thinking. Even though **psychologist and economist Daniel Kahneman** was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in 2002 based on his empirical research **challenging the human rationality** as the main factor for our decision-making and judgements this thinking, or actually



models based on this wrong assumption are still present in economic thinking. We could associate this with anchoring, availability and representativeness bias – sticking/anchoring to something and being influenced by what we are exposed to and by quantity of information supporting it (see about biases above).

Connection between emotions and thinking has been also described by neuroscientists Mary Helen Immordino-Yang and Antonio Damasio¹⁴. They are based on their research showing that: "There's really no such thing as a thought that doesn't have an emotion attached to it or that doesn't have an emotion that follows it. When we take in the world around us, we have an emotional reaction to that appraisal. That emotional reaction changes the way we think in the next moment and cumulatively, over time."

IMPORTANT But we could also argue that through some practices like meditation you can distance yourself from your thoughts and emotions. So in this case there would not be any emotions attached to that thought. But this does not actually contradict what the neuroscientists have observed. Even yogic masters would point out that thoughts and emotions come together (in some yogic traditions they would even argue that there is not a difference between them and actually fall into the same category). The point is whether we can distance ourselves from them and see that we are not this thoughts and emotions. See also the approach of Nonviolent communication (above) which is pointing to the "problem" and impact of exchanging observation (free of judgments) with thinking and rationalization leading to judgements – not seeing the things as they are (clearly) but the way we interpret them (with our limited information and biases).

IMPORTANT We do not want to say that it is possible to see things objectively – "as they truly are". What that would actually have to look like? Just imagine human and a bird or a snake. All have different perception of the world. Which one is the right, objective one? So it is not about to see "objectively" but to see without judgements whether it is wrong or right. But there will always be our perspective based on our perception limited by our human body (or our equipment) and our experience.

(SUMMARY) Take into the class We do not want to say and are not saying that there is thinking that could be arguably seen as logical or illogical but we wanted to debunk common understanding and believe :) that logical is (always) correct and that irresponsible decisions are irresponsible because they are based on emotions and feelings (illogical). This is would not be relevant understanding and my mislead us to finding solutions that are not working. It is important to understand that rationalization (and actually logic) is also behind irresponsible decisions and conspiracy theory mindset (see also Module 4) and that it is not only (wrong) logic but also inherent aspect of rationality. In this sense rationality without awareness and openness could be and "is blind" to interpret correctly world around us and cause for our irresponsible decisions, not our feelings as is used to say. We do act out of our feeling but how we perceive and interpret (knowingly or unknowingly) those feelings. We are the ones who act not our feelings, we are responsible for our action...

We can also see that rationalization plays crucial role in confirmation biases. We rationalize because we want to confirm/defend (confirmation bias) our stance and point of view (see also chapter about biases above).

¹⁴ See: [Emotions Are the Rudder That Steers Thinking](#)



1.5.1. Intentions

With this topic we should also point out that people are actually acting with “best intentions”, to “do good”. Even if it does not seem or could be interpreted like it by others, people are acting as they do to improve the situation. As it said: **Most horrible things were done with the best intentions**. To take some examples. Even people like Anders Breivik or Islamic state were perusing, “better word” in the name of higher principles, by their own norms.

(SUMMARY) Take into the class It is quite different perspective when we understand that he/she/they are perusing better world even that it could be by our norms considered as wrongdoing. This is not that we have to accept it but it is key when we want to make sense of the action of others. This approach also “forces” us out of our own “truths” and believes and our biases.

1.5.2. Judgements - right and wrong (concept of good and bad)

**“INSTEAD TO BE RIGHT WHY NOT TRY TO BE SENSIBLE
AND DO WHAT IS RELEVANT/NEEDED FOR THE ACTUAL SITUATION”**

As we are talking about seeing the other without **judgements** to be able to understand his/her we should take a look where is this judgements are coming from. When we judge someone we actually **compare his action with our perception (believe) of what is right and what is wrong**.

We will discuss the topic of “right and wrong” in the Modul 6 Evaluation. Let’s for the purposes of this Module summarize that perception of what is good and what is bad is based on our definition of the goals (what should be achieved). Actions lead to certain outcomes and impacts and whether these are perceived as positive (good) or negative (bad) is purely **based on what we want(ed) to achieve**.

Good = corresponding with our goals

Bad = not corresponding/contradicting our goals

So concept of good and bad is a concept based on our goals – what we see as desirable to be achieved. In this sense we can see that **we are the ones who are deciding what is good or bad** and there is no one else. It might sounds terrible and as an inevitable dooms day (everybody is choosing what is right and wrong). But we can see it from opposite perspective. **If anyone claims he/she possess the only one true right to decide (on whatever basis) what is universally wrong and what is good** (for all others) this would be and in history many times have been a real dooms day where lot of people truly suffered.

Only when we **acknowledge that categories of good and bad are actually based on our goals** than we can discuss this and agree on the goals that suits us best (our needs, see Nonviolent communication). And we can change the approach when we find out that the goals did not showed to serve us well or the circumstances changes. We can look at the consequences (the impacts) of our action and make decisions accordingly. And most importantly to be responsible for our decisions and impact of our action.

As this topic might be hard to explain and accept and it will be much better understood after Module 5 and 6 where setting up goals and evaluating impact will be explained, let us show some examples using the presented approach:

EXAMPLE The above does not in any means declare that there might not be a supreme authority. But that it would be hard to argue that we know what to do exactly based on any supreme authority. Even in the religious circles directed by one scripture there are different interpretations and perceptions of



what “is right and what is wrong” (see for example view on gay and lesbian marriage in Catholic Church). The point is that **there is always someone interpreting** what “is right and what is wrong” so the authority in the end is not supreme being but the human or group of humans with the authority. And even if we follow any rules “given by” supreme being it is still us who decides what to do (and enjoy). So it is still our decision (goal). (in some cultures there might even not be gods that anyone would like to follow).

EXAMPLE What about for example smoking: Is **smoking** good or bad/wrong? One might be convinced that it is definitely bad in principle... But actually we can see that there will a reason for these judgement. In other words there will be **assumed or perceived goal** of let’s say: live a healthy life. Then for sure smoking would not be the best strategy to take. But if your goal would be to endanger your body or other goals with higher priority than health than you could be for smoking.

EXAMPLE One of the Ten Commandments (the 8th) says “You shall not steal”. If we are thinking of supreme morals we might also and interestingly consider that in some cultures (like indians and in historic hunting cultures) there was actually no concept of ownership¹⁵. So there was not also any concept of stealing. This example is just shoving that **the “universality” is limited to specific cultural norms** based on specific structure and norms.

EXAMPLE See for example some tragic example as war. We could say that by some supreme moral values that starting a war and killing is wrong. But do we really need some supreme morals to follow such values? Why just do not see that it is something that does not serve people (us) well. And even if we might think that from our perspective we might gain some profit, we will still start to spin the wheel of effects that will back fire at us later on. Let’s use the logic from nonviolent communication that violence is only producing violence, viscous never ending cycle. We can ask if people in Russia would really support the war on Ukraine if they have free choice (and information needed for this free choice to see the real impacts of the war)?

IMPORTANT On one hand we say that there are not any supreme moral standards as there is not any supreme authority to propagate them here and know. But that does not mean that we as a human beings could not agree on standards that would propagate human values, values that ensure that we can fulfill our potential and wellbeing. Arguably some would point out that there is something that transcends us and we can connect to that and formulate such values (in other words we would not live joyfully if we do not follow what is inherent/natural to human beings). But it is still up to us to set and follow such goals and standards and take responsibility for them.

IMPORTANT every decision and action that we will make will most certainly contain some mistake in it (it would not be perfect). By policy decisions there will always by someone to profit more than other from that decision as we have scarce resources. And in some cases aggression can be stopped only with using force. But these are still our decisions and we have responsibility for them.

SUMMARY Take into the class To acknowledge that **what is good or bad is decided by us (that we choose the objectives for us and the society) opens possibility for responsible decision making and action**. Such action can be **assessed and evaluated whether is serves us (our goals)**. When righteousness

¹⁵ Anthropologists call it „demand sharing“ and was operating in following way: if I have something in my possession that I am not currently using and you need or want it, you will demand it from me, and I will give it. They would not even refuse someone from different tribe.



is claimed to be based on some higher principle (coming from outside of us without possibility to question it) than **the one claiming to possess the right** to interpret it has only one way how to achieve this objective and that is to force others, to force others to do something unwillingly rather than to do it willingly and joyfully (see Nonviolent communication above). And you can imagine how the **students will participate if they enjoy what they do** (when it makes sense for them) opposite to situation when they are forced to do something...

From the point of view of understanding different perspectives (topic of this Module). To understand that we are the ones to set the goals (what supposed to be done) and thus what is right and wrong than it **opens possibility for discussion about these goals and impact of our (each of us) action**. Then we might ask if it serves us well, makes us fulfilled? See also **Personality types** to see that **everyone has different needs and is motivated or pursuing different goals** (is fulfilled by different means).

There is also quite **strong connection with biases**. The biases (mainly the confirmation) gives the notion of **confidence** that we are doing or “fighting” for the right think. The important point is that **under the influence of confirmation and other biases (like projection bias) we perceive our action as justified without acknowledging different perspectives and possibly the reality itself (the real impact of our action)...**

1.6. Framing

Framing is an important concept to understand when we want to get deeper into understanding how is the issue communicated.

Framing is how something is presented to the audience (called “the frame”). The way the information/issue is presented than **influences how people perceive and process that information** and what choices/opinions they make out of it. Framing is **not just what about what is said but also about how it is said**.

In framing the **frame represents boundaries of a picture** (e.g. news story) that depicts the topic presented. The picture in the frame (presented topic) is influenced by choice of words, use of metaphors, jargon, vocal devices, etc.

We actually cannot overcome framing when we communicate simply because the means for communication are always only pointing on and interpreting reality (see discussion about the term definition in the Module 0). Every communication tool (text, picture, video, mathematical formula) has its limitations and dimensions. In this sense frames are **abstractions that work to organize or structure meaning**.

The framing is apart from type of communication tool also influenced by expected audience (e.g. children, target group of the media etc.) and purpose of communication. It will be of course **influenced by biases** (with confirmation bias I will present the topic in specific way to support my point of view). The framing is as you can see very **powerful tool to be used for disinformation**.

1.7. Role of social media to consider when trying to understand others

We have already discussed role of social media in Module 1. Let us summarize here some relevant aspects on social media for understanding each other and formulating world view and opinions relevant for Module 2.



Social bubble is representing “our own little world where like-minded people echo each other. It's based on what you like, share, and engage with online and selectively shows you relevant information.”¹⁶

Important is to see that social bubble does not just influence what information we have/obtain (see information gap below) but it influences **the way we perceive** the issue and corresponding information.

Information gap Social media are dividing groups of different perspectives. Each of the group often see absolute different content, evidence and arguments. So these are not able to actually communicate between each other as **the “opposing” groups are dealing with completely different “facts”**. Without understanding not only the respective of the “other” but also the evidence that is basis for this perspective. Without knowing that the evidence that is used for arguments is fabricated we have no chance to find proper arguments.

Social medial are also supporting the confirmation and other **biases** as **more controversial and shocking news are spread much faster**. Unfortunately **fake-news** and **disinformation** are designed to be controversial and shocking and to induce emotions and such are shared and spared faster (false news stories are 70 percent more likely to be retweeted than true stories are)¹⁷.

1.8. Actors and stakeholders

It the Activity 2 we will work with the term actor so we will shortly present the perspective who will be called as an actor in the ACTIVE Methodology and the Activities.

Actors We will in the ACTIVE Methodology and Activities as an actor understand any subject (organization or natural person) that is **involved in the issue/topic** we are exploring. By involved we mean anybody actively or passively influencing the issue (by decision making, action, opinions esc.) and/or is influenced by the issue concerned (target group). In project culture these actors are refered to as **“stakeholders”**.

The actors can be any subject as organization or natural person like (examples):

- government and governmental organizations
- companies
- NGOs
- Research and school institutions
- citizens (natural persons)
- any organized or not organized groups
 - community
 - interest group
 - military
 - indigenous group
 - etc.
- and others...

¹⁶ from: <https://inoculation.science/>

¹⁷ MIT study: [On Twitter, false news travels faster than true stories](#)



The actors may have different **roles** in the issue concerned:

- decision making, setting or binding rules for others (authority)
- action (execution of activity – doing something)
- expert/opinion maker
- influenced by / target group of intervention / users
- interest seeking - influencing decisions
- etc.

The actors have different **motivations** concerning the issue that we are exploring. These motivations might be conscious and unconscious. They can be based on some basic needs or just on some actual opportunity or goal seeking (as is profit, power, control, dominance etc).

Conflict of interest. It is important to be careful not to become “paranoid” to see “**profit gaining motives**” everywhere (**many people are doing it because they believe in it**). AND also we should acknowledge that **seeking profit is actually nothing principally wrong** (in market economy it actually make quite sense). But what we refer to are “accusations/findings” (supported by evidence or not) that someone (researcher, NGO) is doing something because of the money they are receiving. On one hand we should distinguish **conflict of interest** (researcher paid by company producing researched product, politician participating in business that is influenced by the politics, NGO actually working in contract for business interests). And on the other hand source of income that should be considered as “normal” as everyone has to live up and cover the expenses somehow. As in many cases the line might be guide thin we should at the end primary **look at the evidence that these actor are actually providing**. **Instead of having (sometimes reasonable sometimes not) debate who is more objective, we should always examine the relevance of the evidence and coherence of the data and information provided** (see Module 4).



1.9. Summary – how to approach differences

“FIRST UNDERSTAND AND THEN ACT...”

"IF YOU WANT TO COMMUNICATE FIRST YOU SHOULD UNDERSTAND
WHAT THE OTHER IS SAYING AND WHY"

Our action concerning also our approach to information is influenced by mix of factors (see above). To understand each other we should first understand our selves and the other only than we can see what is “behind” the choices, decisions and actions.

So how to use all above mentioned for our purposes? First let’s remind ourselves what the objective is.

OBJECTIVES:

1. **Make responsible decisions** that will lead to fulfilment of our (true) needs (not temporal affections)
2. **Communicate with others** in a way that will lead to fulfilment of our (true) needs (not temporal affections)

IMPORTANT *It is about our action and the environment we can create and “influence” around us. This does not mean that we have to be able to influence others to act in this way. But then we can see and understand that the actions that are not following this objective does not actually serve well to the actor (be it us or someone else).*

3. We want to be able to **deal with differences** (different opinions, believes, attitudes, values and norms) in a way that everyone’s (true) needs are met
 - a. Why? Because if we act in a way that is violating other needs they will (most probably) act in a way that is not in our favor as violence is promoting violence (see Nonviolent communication above)
4. We want **to understand** an issue or topic concerned in a way that we have relevant information (evidence) that is not misleading us

What are the conditions for meeting the above objectives?

Understanding our selves

- Understand your **personality** (e.g. by MBTI typology)
- Self-reflection and understanding of your **values, attitudes, believes and world views**
- Awareness and reflection of your **biases**
- Reflect our **feelings** and communicate our **needs** (see Nonviolent communication approach above)

Understand what is behind our “logic”

- See the **assumptions** that we base our logic on and ask if these assumptions stand or should be further assessed
- Be aware of our **biases** as these will disrupt the collection and interpretation of the evidence



- What **information** and data are we using (collecting and consuming), are those giving the relevant and whole picture about the topic? (see Module 1 chapter Quality of data and information, mainly the criteria of **completeness**)
 - Someone¹⁸ is in this regard distinguishing hunting vs. collecting information
 - **hunting information** = searching for specific information to support my assumptions (connected with **confirmation and other biases**)
 - **collecting information** = collecting relevant information to cover the topic relevant way (following the criteria for completeness)
 - Being aware of what information I consume and how
 - Do I look up information consciously or consume the ones that I am provided by **algorithms of social media**? (see Module 1 for more details)
 - Remember that we have to invest **deliberate effort** to find relevant information
 - This does not mean investing to find “relevant” information supporting our point of view lead by confirmation bias (this was the case for QAnon followers in the US).
- Be aware of **confidence** and **rationalization** (formulating conclusion without evidence)
 - See more in Module 4 Making sense of information
- See the issue from different **perspectives**
 - This is not about relativization, this it is about understanding different perspectives
- Why I made the decisions I made? What information, assumptions, values, norms, believes and goals are behind it?

Understand other's perspective

- Do not base your understanding of other on judgements (**rationalization**)
- Be aware of **projection bias**
 - Do not make out of your own toughs and believes universally valid norms that you use of measure of things (right or wrong)
- **1st understand the other** before making conclusions
 - But do not base this “understanding” on our interpretation or moralistic judgement but based on the perspective of the other (How they express their motivations, needs, values, norms?)
- Understand the other **perspectives** and point of views (What is behind it?)
 - **1st not argument but understanding**
 - **How do you want argue with anyone if you do know what and why he/she is saying what is saying?**
 - **What is this perspective based on?**
 - **motivations, needs, values, norms**
 - What data and **information** are they basing their opinion/perspective upon? (be aware of possible “**information gap**”, see Module 1 for more details)

¹⁸ We have heard it from someone but forget the source and could not find it on the internet retrospectively...



- How is actually by the actors perceived as the “problem” (**problem definition**)
- See the patterns of communication: How is the actor **framing** the issue?
- **We do not have to agree with the other person but we should understand him or her**
- Different perspectives does not mean that all is possible and Truth is relative¹⁹, it is about understanding (What is behind the perspectives?)

¹⁹ Actually to promote this notion is well known strategy for promoting disinformation and confusion (to doubt everything and thing that everything can be possible or lie). This creates space for lie to live on.