



**JFF – Institut für
Medienpädagogik**

Presentation: Activity for Parents and their Children

The aim of this evening activity is to make room for parents and their children to establish a dialogue. A cross-generational approach is only successful, when an atmosphere is created, in which adults and teenagers meet at eye level. To make contact and an open, discursive conversation easier it is recommended to work in small groups or teams of mixed ages – at the best, parents and their children separated from each other.

The following background information sums up all content that is expected to be conveyed at this evening activity. Therefore, it serves as preparation for the activity. Furthermore, it is helpful to find out more about teenagers' favourite websites and apps. In no way it is to claim to know everything about them. Nevertheless, a quick online research is useful. Recent online discussions as well as YouTube tutorials about providers you know of are of enormous help when answering the guests' questions. Moreover, the conversation stimuli and the value cards for the auction have to be printed out. Colour cards (e.g. presentation cards in the colours of pink, yellow, green and blue) and the play money (300 € for every second participant) have to be put on the seats in the event room beforehand and the internet access (especially for using YouTube videos and mindmister.com if necessary) has to be checked. In case of no internet access the first video of the presentation (slide 2: French toilet paper ad) and the work with the online tool for mind maps (slide 6) has to be renounced.

Slide 1: title slide

This activity was developed within the project "ICH WIR IHR im Netz" by JFF – institute for media pedagogics. The whole program lasts 120 minutes. First, general topics of media adoption are picked up. Then, utilisation intensity and questions of consumer protection are made a subject of discussion.

Feel free to allow and answer direct questions right away, put them off when required.

Slide 2: media education

At the beginning an ad is shown: www.youtube.com/watch?v=RRDSj62tlvQ

Not at all is the clip to underline gender stereotypes. However, different people have different preferences and demands no matter if they are adults, children or teenagers.

Even though the clip is about toilet paper it shows vividly some applicable aspects of media education.

1. Media education takes place primarily within the family: Children internalize from birth how their parents and also their older siblings or grandparents use media. School and youth work are also important contacts for media education. The most important authority in this field though remains the family.

2. Like any other education, media education is based on the parents' personal moral concepts. Media education does not just happen. Parents act in all areas of education in the way they think is correct and important.
3. Media education is a negotiation process among parents and parents as well as among parents and children. Especially during puberty media are a nerve-racking topic in many – if not in most – families. Subsequently it is important to highlight media as a topic within the family from an early stage on and not start a dialogue with the child when it has already come to problems.

Slide 3 – 5: Your opinion is asked for!

The following slides serve as introduction into the topic. The aim is to think about three different kinds of questions. In the positioning game there are no right or wrong answers possible. The atmospheric picture rather gives insights in what oneself and other parents think about media specific questions.

In the following, four statements are presented. Every person has got four matching cards (pink, green, blue, yellow). By holding up one card, the participants assign themselves to the statements. There are three rounds.

The individual statements are read out slowly. The participants are given enough time to decide for one statement. Afterwards, all participants hold up their chosen card at the same time. The result of the positioning is commented by the game master, e.g. there are many yellow cards, some pink ones, only two green ones and no blue one. The participants are now asked why they have positioned themselves according to their card. Possible resulting discussions between parents are allowed. The game master however, should not judge the answers at all. Questions are admitted.

Slide 6: Adoption of media

This graphic is visualising the process of the adoption of media. It sums up why children and young people use certain media and contents.

Children and teenagers themselves are of course a crucial factor. According to their level of development, they find different issues exciting. In primary school age, a lot of children love to master small missions in games for example, during puberty communication is what becomes crucial. The level of development is closely connected to the issues that are dealt with: in puberty love, sexuality, the own identity and the demarcation of the parents are issues to deal with for girls and boys. Also gender specific differences can be seen with children and teenagers. There are still less female gamers. The constant communication with others or the topic beauty are however still more relevant for girls than for boys. Eventually, personal interests are important. Teenagers, who are interested in skating, receive or create partly different media and contents than passionate football fans.

Extremely important is the social environment. The younger children are, the more important are their reference persons within the family – parents, siblings and their grandparents. The older the child turns, the more important becomes the peer group: if the members of the peer group own a smartphone, most girls and boys also want one. If there is a class chat on WhatsApp, your child probably wants to join. In most cases it might be put aside that he or she might not yet be 16 years old and is not yet allowed to use WhatsApp. Beside family and

peer group also clubs or youth groups, youth leaders and teachers can be relevant influencers.

Just as crucial is the media offer. Children and teenagers grow into a mediatised world. That means that their everyday life is penetrated by media. Children and teenagers choose from an extremely huge offer of media and media contents. What media and media contents children and teenagers choose is determined by individual preferences. It is also important what she or he wants to do with it (emphasis of activity) and what functions the respective media satisfies/meets. For a presentation for example, teenagers rather look at Wikipedia than on Facebook.

Slides 7 – 8: Values and online media

The internet has become a room by now, in which many are contributing and publishing contents. Especially during puberty teenagers distance themselves from their parents and develop their own identity. A central aspect during this phase is dealing with personal values and attitudes and those of others. Specifically, what do teenagers think about the image of women that is presented in TV formats like “Germany’s Next Topmodel”, what opinions do they have on recent political events or simply how do they assess a classmate sending at least ten selfies a day via Snapchat.

Online contents, journalistically processed (mass media contents), give orientation concerning questions about values and attitudes. Likewise, contents created by other users serve also as orientation (user generated contents), like video blogs on YouTube, “My Story” on Snapchat or group chats on WhatsApp. Teenagers are using those to get informed or to form their own opinion.

Additionally, the internet provides the opportunity of articulating values and attitudes. That can simply begin with a like on Facebook. It can also mean that teenagers participate actively in discussions or initiate them. The social web has therefore quite low-threshold offers. But also media pedagogical projects of active media work, as it was realised in “ICH WIR IHR im Netz”, are a possibility to carry values and attitudes.

The participants can now purchase values at the auction, which are very important to them relating to their online activities. Every team, consisting of two persons, therefore has got (handed out beforehand at best) 300 € game money. Parents and their children should preferably play in separate teams to better guarantee a relaxed atmosphere during the game. The game master holds up one quality after another. If one value-card is purchased (or not), the next one is presented directly afterwards. The bidders do not know the offer beforehand, so they have to decide spontaneously if they want to purchase the quality and how much they want to spend on it. At best the auction becomes very vivid. The game master’s commitment is a crucial factor for the intensity of the game. The number of values can be modified by the game master during the auction. If the auction lasts for too long and / or if the bidders’ motivation decreases, the game should come to an end.

When all qualities are purchased at the auction, the participants are allowed to explain how they felt during the auction and why they purchased their quality(/ies).

The following questions can be useful:

1. Who purchased what? Does anyone want to say something about his or her purchase, which she or he is allowed/wants to enjoy further in the future?

2. Did anyone win more than one auction? Why are those purchases important to that team?
3. Is there anything that was not purchased: Why did no one want to buy these qualities?
4. As a summary: our auction surely was not complete. You might have missed on quality or another. Nevertheless, it has shown to us that to everybody different things are important.

[not in the English presentation: Slides Online Communication (used internet access and on the way applications; slides with specific numbers of the country should be added]

The participants now receive solid information about which accesses to the internet are currently used by teenagers and adults and what mobile apps are relevant at present.

Slides 9 – 10: Utilisation intensity

All those who are present part into small groups of four persons (teenagers and adults mixed, parents and their children separated from each other at best).

Every group is handed out identical key questions. At the beginning they all listen to a radio play together. Then, every group has got 15 minutes time to exchange views. During this period it is important to pay attention to adults and teenagers getting started a conversation. Adults especially tend to talk about and not to teenagers.

Now the different groups have got the opportunity to talk in front of everyone about the central aspects of their discussion and if necessary exchange their views once again (about 10 minutes).

The following questions can be useful:

- Which group wants to tell the others about their discussion?
- Do parents and children behave differently? How does it show?
- How does online communication make everyday life easier – at school, friends, work? Where does it get difficult?

Originating from the work in small groups single aspects are picked up again – as long as they have not been discussed yet.

Being constantly online and therefore staying in contact with others, applies high standards to people:

- It is exhausting to communicate all the time. Being constantly in contact with others finally means continuously receiving information, processing it and to give feedback.
- This is connected with a high standard to constantly have to decide, what information are important or unimportant.
- With regard to school or work performances it is necessary to be conscious that phases of concentration can be interrupted over and over when using the smartphone intensively. Many teenagers but also adults complain about that and have developed coping strategies; they put their smartphone in another room, for example or switch

on the flight mode during certain tasks. In these moments they have negotiated what is more important for themselves: to concentrate specifically on something or not to want to miss anything and be constantly available.

- Periods of tranquillity have to be taken explicitly. When people are very active on their smartphone, they have to put it aside very consciously. The situation is here fundamentally different from other media, like television, where there are concrete transmission times. Having the fear to miss out on something or the fact that friends, employers and family also demand availability, is a particular challenge for many.

Slides 11 – 13: Commercial structure

The currently most popular online services are by companies of the private sector. Often they are big corporate groups like Microsoft, Google or Facebook that own various profitable social networks and messengers.

WhatsApp, Snapchat and Co. are offers which are easy to operate. Their commercial structuring and procedure however, are barely transparent. The companies work with new kinds of business models and practices. A part of it is gathering and analysing of what users (consciously and unconsciously) do online as well as creating comprehensive user profiles.

To put it in a more simplified way, this means that even if using a platform or an app does not cost any money, it is not for free. The users pay with their data. That does not mean (necessarily) that user data is sold, but rather that everything people do online with their own mobile devices (smartphone, tablet PCs, smartwatch etc.) is gathered and analysed.

A video clip is shown to illustrate this: What if the vendor of the bakery suddenly wanted to know who you sent the last message to, where you were yesterday evening or what the telephone numbers of your best friends were? The Danish consumer magazine Taenk investigated these questions – and filmed the customers' reactions with a hidden camera (online on: www.test.de/baecker).

Precisely due to commercial offers being thus non-transparent, it is necessary to use apps consciously. The app Clueful for example (www.cluefulapp.com) helps to understand what data is accessed by which app. Furthermore, it is important to think about possible alternatives. *Stiftung Warentest* for instance, tested 16 messenger apps in July 2015. Thereby the German messenger Hoccer and the Swiss messenger Threema scored best.

Moreover, access authorisation can be restricted. Apps often access unnecessary data: it is reasonable that a photo app accesses the camera of the smartphone. It is unnecessary however, that the railway app accesses the stored contacts. Due to that it is wise to look for tutorials online (explain videos or step by step instructions).

Slide 14: tips for families

There is no perfect solution for media education. Every child is different. Every situation is different. Like every other education, media education is shaped by a constant dialogue with the offspring. Nevertheless, general advices can be phrased, which help to meet those challenges.

1. Media should be neither a taboo nor an issue within the family. It is very important to talk about media and how to deal with it over and over again. Discussions about how much, what and when are thereby completely normal.
2. It is important for parents and children to engage in discussion. Only then parents can support their children in difficult questions. Being in a dialogue means that parents and children discuss openly and family members are seen as equals. It is not about parents constantly controlling their children but being interested in what their child is doing online. The other way round, teenagers must share what they are doing online with their parents in order to let them take part in it.
3. Parents should be approachable and persons of trust for their children. Even though teenagers often assume that their parents have little idea about technical things, they are still the first persons to discuss small and big problems with. That in doing so problems will come up happens in many families. However, it is most important that parents and teenagers figure out what to do together. That means, in turn, that parents should never make decisions without involving their child. As a person of trust it is sensible to enable the child to do something on his or her own, respectively only getting active after having consulted the child.
4. Media are exciting. Children already need the necessary structure while trying out things when they are young. That is why families should determine agreements for the use of media together! Over time children and teenagers need more and more freedom. This indicates that rules have to be discussed and determined over and over again. Thus, rules are a matter of negotiation but not the fact that there are rules. Therefore, parents have to be consequent. However, media should be used neither as a reward nor as punishment. When, for example, the child ignores the rule that the smartphone must be switched off during homework, it makes good sense to punish this failing with media withdrawal. However, a good mark should not be rewarded with a new app or similar and a bad mark should also not be punished with media withdrawal.