



# 10 Golden Rules of Digital Ethics

How can we proficiently live together in the web?

[Placeholder for the 10 Golden Rules of Digital Ethics content]

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How can we proficiently live together in the web?

We live in a digitized world in which we have more freedom but also more responsibility. The way we behave and how we deal with conflicts is a reflection of our ethical attitude. It is time to agree on how a good and successful life in a digital society should look like.

The 10 Golden Rules of Digital Ethics can be understood as guidelines. These 10 Golden Rules should help to appreciate the dignity of everyone, his/her self-determination as well as his/her freedom of action. Let us respect them.

The protection of privacy and anonymity

**1 Disclose as little as possible about yourself.**

Felix is attending a lecture in his university. During the lecture he is bored and takes a selfie of himself yawning instead of paying attention. He then posts this picture on Facebook with the caption: „This is just plain boring. I would rather be in bed right now :-D“ His friends immediately like his post. Friday night Felix is going out, partying with his friends. One day later he posts on Facebook: „I have such a bad hangover, but the party last night was awesome!“

Shortly afterwards he applies for an internship and gets invited to the job interview. Felix is excited about the invitation and prepares for the interview. The job interview goes well until the employer informs Felix that he researches each invited applicant on the Internet. Thus, he saw Felix's posts on Facebook, which conveyed that he does not take university seriously and that he goes to parties very frequently. Felix is really embarrassed and tries to explain that he is a very diligent student. Two days later he receives a rejection letter from the company advertising the internship. Felix is concerned about his posts and the impression he has conveyed about himself. He did not consider the impact public posts could have on his life.



②

The protection of privacy and anonymity

**Be aware, and do not accept, that you are being observed and that your data is being collected.**

Jasmine and her boyfriend Tobi have just arrived in Marseille. Upon her excitement of arriving in France, Jasmine takes a picture of herself and Tobi and posts it on Instagram. Checking her Facebook-Newsfeed the very next day Facebook recommends a couple events in, and around, Marseille that she might find interesting. While navigating to the Parc national des Calanques with the Maps2Go-App multiple online banners for Hop-on-Hop-off city tours and trips to Cassis crowd the screen. Jasmine is annoyed and wonders: „How do they all know where I am?“ „They,“ said Tobi, „know where you are ever since we booked our trip. Additionally, certain algorithms are managing which information is most relevant to you at this very moment.“

○ Jasmine feels like someone is observing and tracking her every move. Moreover, she feels that she is not necessarily making her own decisions. Her boyfriend gives her advice on how to cover up her online footprint. For instance, she should delete her browser's history, log out of Facebook and other social media networks frequently, turn off the location services in her mobile phone or use alternative search engines.

③

The formation of opinion and personalized information

**Do not believe everything you see or read online and keep yourself informed utilizing alternative sources.**

Tom joined the Facebook group of his sports team. A popular topic of discussion in the group is the refugee influx in Europe. Several members express concerns and fears about the arriving refugees. In the group they share a link to an article stating that the German government smuggled refugees from Greece and Turkey into the country at night through multiple German airports.

While eating dinner with his parents, Tom expresses his outrage about the actions of the government. His parents are concerned that Tom may be receptive to unreliable or inaccurate information posted on the Internet. Searching the Internet together, they research their topic of interest and identify some reliable sources. Soon it becomes clear that the article about the smuggling of refugees by the government did not come from a reliable source. The author of this article was a right-wing extremist who wanted to spread rumours and establish a conspiracy theory.

**4** Respect and self-protection  
**Do not condone bullying or hateful behaviour.**

Jonas moved with his family from Oldenburg to Hamburg. In his new class at school it is hard to make new friends despite the fact that he tries to meet new people every day. After some time, and despite his best efforts, he remained friendless. Moreover, Jonas' classmate Marc created a WhatsApp group in which he gossips and makes fun of „The New One“ at school with his classmates. One day by chance Jonas reads several of the insulting text messages on the mobile phone of a classmate.

- After this incident he feels emotionally and psychologically injured which results in a number of adverse physical conditions: He becomes ill and loses weight. As a result, he was committed to a clinic. This outcome gave the class a reality check. After extensive discussions with media scouts, invited by the class teacher, the majority of the class realised the consequences of their hurtful words. After Jonas returns to class, a number of students become friends with him.

**5** Respect and self-protection  
**Respect the dignity of others and remember, even in the world wide web rules are applicable.**

Leonie enthusiastically plays video games. While studying in high school she met with her friends for LAN-Parties, which lasted in to the early morning. Ever since she began talking about the most current game releases on her YouTube channel „Let's Play“, she gained the attention and respect of the community. Several people even asked her for further advice concerning the newly released games. Her strong interest in gaming inspired Leonie to start her own gaming blog. This blog allowed her to share her passion about gaming with interested people. Further, she developed a lively exchange within the online gaming community. One of her blog articles discussed the fact that the figures in video games frequently appeared to be based off of stereotypes and/or were sexist. Soon, Leonie experienced a number of negative postings on her blog. When Leonie reacted to the negative posts defending her position, some of her followers threatened her with violent attacks. Ultimately, she was afraid and experienced real fear. On the other hand, other gamers who shared Leonie's opinion supported her with positive messages. Thus, they began making the negative posters aware that verbal insults and violent threats were not only unacceptable in the real world but also on the Internet. The responses in support of Leonie's views resulted in a decrease of negative comments being posted on her blog. Slowly Leonie regained the feeling that respectful discourse had returned to her online community.

**6**

Respect and self-protection

**Do not trust everyone with whom you only have contact online.**

The fifteen-year-old Philip loves to send pictures and chat with his friends on Snapchat. When Philip recognises that an unknown user added him to his contact list, he writes him a message saying: „Hey, do we know each other?“ Shortly afterwards he receives an answer: „I don't know, but I think your snaps are really cool! :-)" Philip is happy about the compliment and initiates a conversation with the stranger. Soon, he finds out, that his chat partner's name is Kai, that he is 16 years old and that he is a film fan as himself. From now on the two chat nearly every day.

- However, at some point, Kai starts to ask strange questions. For instance, he wants to know if Philip already had sex and what his sexual preferences are. Moreover, Kai shares really personal details about his own sexual experiences. Philip starts to feel uncomfortable with the topic but he does not want to offend Kai. Then, Kai asks him if he wants to talk with him via video chat. Philip hesitates, but then agrees to the video chat and is astounded to see that Kai is not as old as he said he was. In fact, Kai is an middle aged man who used someone else's profile picture and lied to Philip the whole time. Philip is really angry and reports the man to the police.

**7**

Respect and self-protection

**Protect yourself and others from extreme content.**

After school Samira immediately starts her computer at home. Scrolling down her Facebook chronic she became aware of an online article about child soldiers. The comments in the article contained a link to a video. She clicked on the link without hesitation. The video showed multiple people being shot. Several people lie dead or badly injured on the ground. Samira was horrified and closed her computer instantly.

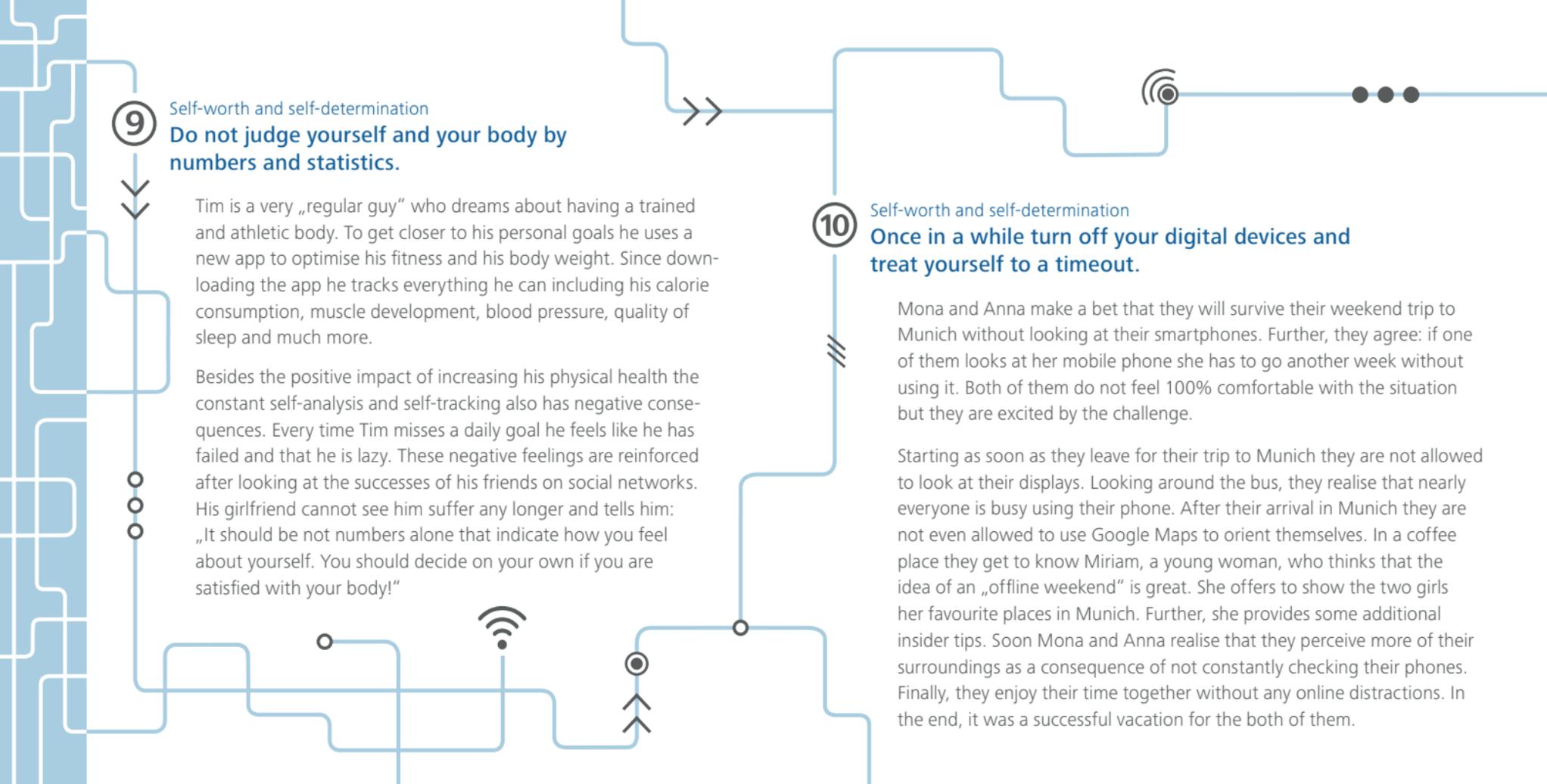
Within the next few days she cannot sleep and she lost her appetite. She was unable to forget the graphic images. Finally, she shared her experience with her best friend. To her surprise, she is not alone with her feelings. Together, with her girlfriend, she decided to be more thoughtful in the future concerning which links she would click on and which ones she would not.

**8**

Self-worth and self-determination

**Do not value your own worth by likes and posts.**

Yesterday Lisa uploaded a new profile picture on Facebook. One day later she checks her friends' reactions to her new picture. Looking at the numbers, she is really disappointed: only 10 likes and no confirming comments. She was not expecting that. She is really sad and instantly feels unpopular and disliked. The pictures of her friend Giulia, showing her on holiday in Gran Canaria, further drop her mood and make her feel even worse. Giulia has a perfect figure, is able to see wonderful white beaches, and experience the perfect holiday. What Lisa does not know is that the „perfect bikini picture“ took Giulia over 30 shots and the beach only looks so beautiful because of an editing filter. Further, Giulia fights with her boyfriend most of the time. These are just a few of the facts that her pictures does not convey.



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Self-worth and self-determination

### **Do not judge yourself and your body by numbers and statistics.**

Tim is a very „regular guy“ who dreams about having a trained and athletic body. To get closer to his personal goals he uses a new app to optimise his fitness and his body weight. Since downloading the app he tracks everything he can including his calorie consumption, muscle development, blood pressure, quality of sleep and much more.

Besides the positive impact of increasing his physical health the constant self-analysis and self-tracking also has negative consequences. Every time Tim misses a daily goal he feels like he has failed and that he is lazy. These negative feelings are reinforced after looking at the successes of his friends on social networks. His girlfriend cannot see him suffer any longer and tells him: „It should be not numbers alone that indicate how you feel about yourself. You should decide on your own if you are satisfied with your body!“

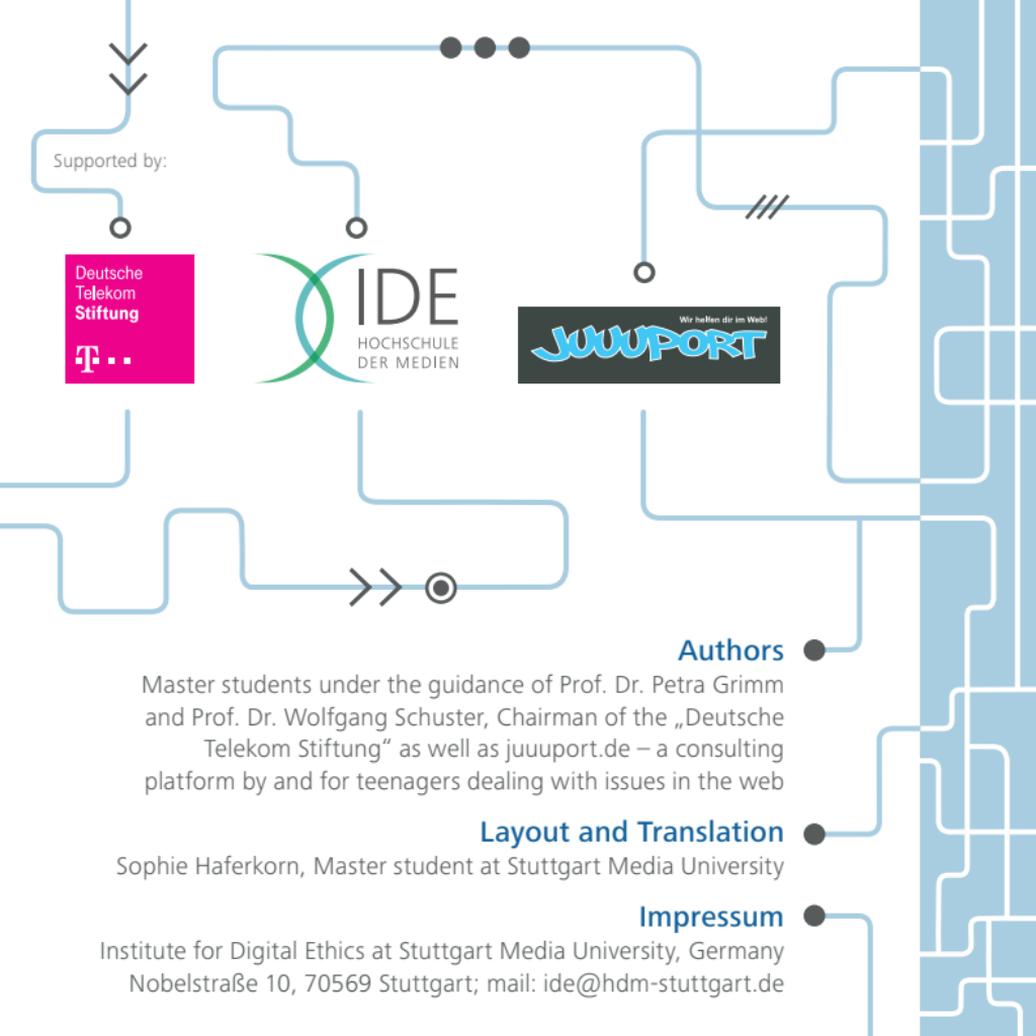
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Self-worth and self-determination

### **Once in a while turn off your digital devices and treat yourself to a timeout.**

Mona and Anna make a bet that they will survive their weekend trip to Munich without looking at their smartphones. Further, they agree: if one of them looks at her mobile phone she has to go another week without using it. Both of them do not feel 100% comfortable with the situation but they are excited by the challenge.

Starting as soon as they leave for their trip to Munich they are not allowed to look at their displays. Looking around the bus, they realise that nearly everyone is busy using their phone. After their arrival in Munich they are not even allowed to use Google Maps to orient themselves. In a coffee place they get to know Miriam, a young woman, who thinks that the idea of an „offline weekend“ is great. She offers to show the two girls her favourite places in Munich. Further, she provides some additional insider tips. Soon Mona and Anna realise that they perceive more of their surroundings as a consequence of not constantly checking their phones. Finally, they enjoy their time together without any online distractions. In the end, it was a successful vacation for the both of them.



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