



Informal Interventions for De-Radicalization

A Guide for Fighting Extremism (Part 3)

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Introduction: Curriculum Objectives

- **Upon completion of this program, participants will understand:**
 - The importance of family, friends, and upstanders in the de-radicalization process
 - When and how to report threats of violence
 - Tools and strategies for responding to extremism in ways that promote de-radicalization
 - The kinds of responses to extremism that are ineffective for de-radicalization
 - How individual and community responses can be combined
 - Some of the (nationwide) community resources for de-radicalization

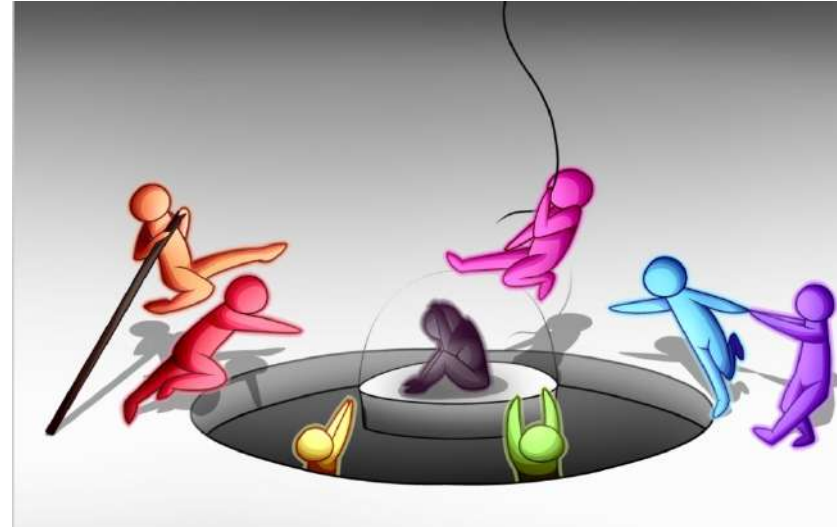
Introduction: Research on De-radicalization

- Research on De-Radicalization
 - After 9/11/2001, ↑ on research on extremism
 - Research on de-radicalization is more recent and focuses on:
 - Psychological/social factors that lead to de-radicalization
 - Formal, institutional counter-radicalization programs
 - The key role of upstanders in de-radicalization (the focus of this presentation)



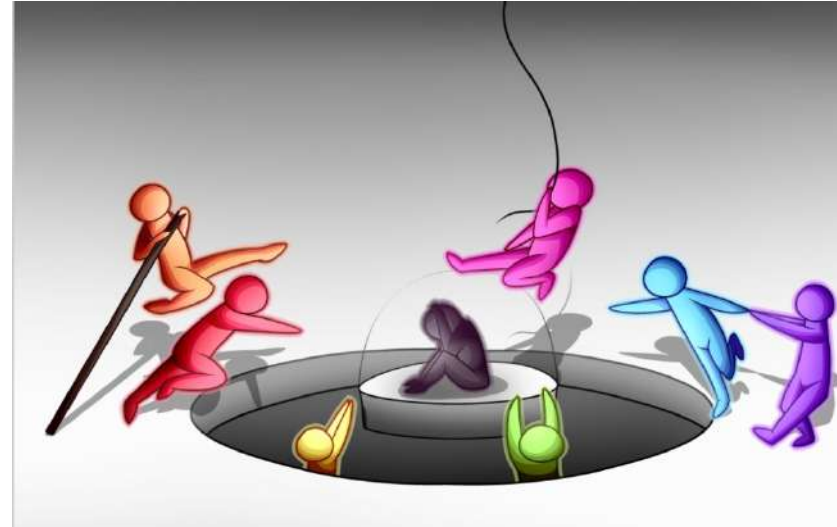
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Introduction: The Importance of Informal Networks in De-Radicalization



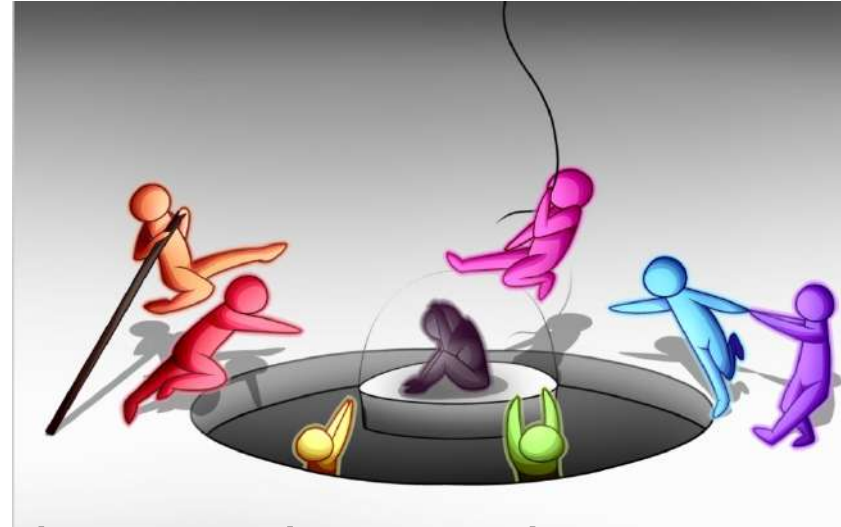
- RAND study (2021) found that others, including acquaintances, partners, family members, other formers or current extremists, friends, journalists, religious leaders, teachers, and therapists, are key in de-radicalization

Introduction: The Importance of Informal Networks in De-Radicalization



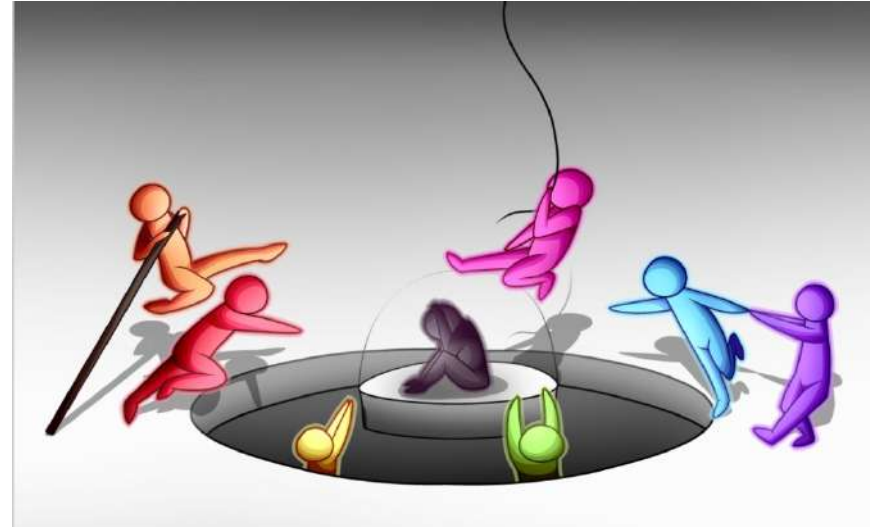
- Kruglanski's 3N model of needs, narratives, and networks
 - Upstanders meet needs for acceptance and status, offer counter and alternative narratives, and serve as networks for de-radicalization

Introduction: The Importance of Informal Networks in De-Radicalization



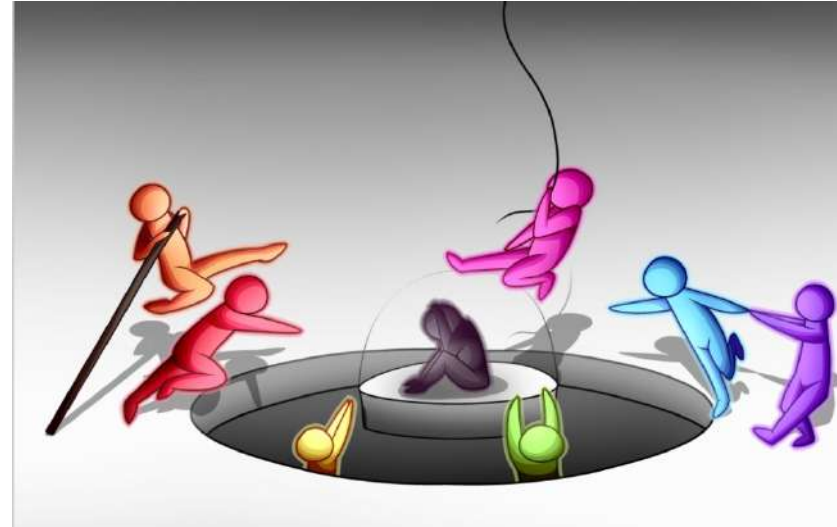
- Kruglanski's 3N model of needs, narratives, and networks
 - Upstanders meet needs for acceptance and status, offer counter and alternative narratives, and serve as networks for de-radicalization
 - Example of Sarah remaining with an extremist group longer than she wanted because she felt she had no alternative

Introduction: The Importance of Informal Networks in De-Radicalization



- 76-80% of lone-wolf terrorists leak their violent intentions to acquaintances

Introduction: The Importance of Informal Networks in De-Radicalization



- Formal, institutional counter-radicalization measures may fail or backfire
 - They entrench radical beliefs
 - Cognitive opening precedes de-radicalization and everyday people are more likely to be present than law enforcement

Responding to Radicalization

- As they begin to radicalize, many extremists display signs of their new views; upstanders should respond to this rather than ignore it



Responding to Radicalization: Providing Support During a Precipitating Event



- Precipitating event → loss of significance → quest for significance (belonging & respect)

Responding to Radicalization: Providing Support During a Precipitating Event



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 - Extremists use the quest for recruiting new members

Responding to Radicalization: Providing Support During a Precipitating Event



- Precipitating event → loss of significance → quest for significance (belonging & respect)
 - Extremists use the quest for recruiting new members
 - Upstanders can support them through the crisis to prevent radicalization

Responding to Radicalization: Providing Support During a Precipitating Event



- Precipitating event → loss of significance → quest for significance (belonging & respect)
 - Extremists use the quest for recruiting new members
 - Upstanders can support them through the crisis to prevent radicalization
 - Emotional support
 - Material support
 - \$
 - Assistance in utilizing community resources (Resources Handout)

Responding to Radicalization: Providing Support During a Precipitating Event



- Precipitating event → loss of significance → quest for significance (belonging & respect)
- Upstanders also need support:
 - <https://perilresearch.com/>
 - <https://www.lifeafterhate.org/> 612-888-EXIT (3984)



Responding to Radicalization: Threats of Violence



- Most mass shooters communicate their intentions



Responding to Radicalization: Threats of Violence



- Most mass shooters communicate their intentions
 - Intimates face barriers to reporting, including:
 - Not taking the threat seriously
 - Fearing authorities will not take the threat seriously
 - Fear of harming the person of concern or their relationship with them
 - Fear of being labeled a snitch or ridiculed



Responding to Radicalization: Threats of Violence



- Most mass shooters communicate their intentions
- All threats should be reported to relevant authorities
 - If you (or others) are in immediate danger, call 911, otherwise, report it to the FBI
 - <https://tips.fbi.gov/home>
 - 1-800-CALLFBI (or 1-800-225-5324)
 - <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices>

Responding to Radicalization: Challenges of Legal/Punitive Responses



- Hate in and of itself is not illegal
- Some argue that punishing offenders based on their motivations violates our right to freedom of belief
- Hate crimes victimize the entire targeted community, not just specific victims
- Law enforcement responses can fail or entrench extremism

Responding to Radicalization: Challenges of Legal/Punitive Responses



- Law enforcement responses can fail or entrench extremism
 - Some extremists see police as the enemy
 - Legal responses may create a precipitating event/grievance for radicalization

Responding to Radicalization: Challenges of Legal/Punitive Responses

- Law enforcement responses can fail or entrench extremism
 - Formal responses and the triggering of de-radicalization
 - Arrest or imprisonment: A personal trauma that creates a cognitive opening to reconsider their current path



Responding to Radicalization: Challenges of Legal/Punitive Responses

- Law enforcement responses can fail or entrench extremism
 - Formal responses and the triggering of de-radicalization
 - Arrest or imprisonment: A personal trauma that creates a cognitive opening to reconsider their current path
 - Imprisonment →
 - Separation from radical network
 - Increased time to reflect
 - Contact with members of targeted group
 - Attention to pain of and obligations to non-radicalized family and friends





Individual Strategies for De-Radicalization: Push and Pull Factors in De-radicalization



- Push + Pull Factors → radicalization and de-radicalization
 - Ex: Triggering event = push, camaraderie = pull to radicalization/de-radicalization



Individual Strategies for De-Radicalization: Push and Pull Factors in De-radicalization



- Push factors are crucial to de-radicalization
 - “Clusters of doubt:”
 - Doubts about the militant ideology
 - The group or its leadership
 - The costs of maintaining an extremist lifestyle



Individual Strategies for De-Radicalization: Push and Pull Factors in De-radicalization



- Push factors are crucial to de-radicalization
 - “Clusters of doubt:”
 - The militant ideology
 - The group or its leadership
 - The costs of maintaining an extremist lifestyle
 - Extremist groups meet an individual’s need for belonging, acceptance, and respect
 - Negative group dynamics → needs not being met
 - Create a cognitive opening by asking questions about the needs the group fills and about group dynamics (rather than confronting the ideology)



SOCRATES.

Individual Strategies for De-Radicalization: Socratic Method

- Use the Socratic method of asking questions during discussions
 - Ask questions that lead the person to self-discover inconsistencies, misinformation, or other problems in the areas of needs, narratives, or networks
 - Self-discovery → cognitive opening (spoon feeding information does not)



SOCRATES.

Individual Strategies for De-Radicalization: Socratic Method

- Use the Socratic method of asking questions during discussions
 - Remain calm, empathic, compassionate, and non-judgmental
 - Scattering seeds that may blossom in the future under the right conditions





Individual Strategies for De-Radicalization: Ineffective Strategies



- Potential frustrations of the upstander: disinformation/falsehoods, beliefs that oppose cherished values, offensive/repulsive ideas, lack of/slow progress, “fash fatigue”
 - Frustrations → normal reactions, but expressing frustration is likely to impede de-radicalization
 - Focus on primary goal (de-radicalization) rather than secondary goals



Individual Strategies for De-Radicalization: Ineffective Strategies

- Putting facts over feelings
 - It is normal, but not helpful, to emphasize facts over feelings
 - Feelings → radicalization and feelings (not facts) → de-radicalization

Individual Strategies for De-Radicalization: Ineffective Strategies



- Ex-Communication or Going No Contact
 - It is normal, but not helpful, to want to avoid contact with offensive/repulsive ideas and beliefs
 - Networks are a pillar of radicalization and de-radicalization



Individual Strategies for De-Radicalization: Ineffective Strategies

- Ex-Communication or Going No Contact
 - It is normal, but not helpful, to want to avoid contact with offensive/repulsive ideas and beliefs
 - Networks are a pillar of radicalization and de-radicalization
 - Contact does not have to be constant; take breaks
 - Set boundaries
 - “I want to discuss this with you, but I cannot tolerate racist language, so if you use it, the conversation will have to end”

Using Community Resources for De-Radicalization



Organizations that provide personal emotional support as well as information and advice

Name	Website	Additional Info
Beyond barriers	https://beyondbarriersusa.org/	Information & support for extremists who want to de-radicalize
Center for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence	https://info-radical.org/en/	You can also call them at 1 (877) 687-7141 #116
Life After Hate	https://www.lifeafterhate.org/	Founded by formers; support for extremists and upstanders
Parents4Peace	https://www.parents4peace.org/ Free helpline (24/7): 1-844-49-PEACE (1-844-497-3223)	Provides resources and support for upstanders

Using Community Resources for De-Radicalization

Organizations that provide research-based information and toolkits



Name	Website	Additional Info
Anti- Defamation League	ADL.org	Has been fighting racism, hatred, and extremism for over 100 years.
AVE: Against Violence and Extremism	https://www.isdglobal.org/against-violent-extremism-ave/#	Multi-disciplinary and multi-pronged approach to fighting violent extremism
CO*RE Bloomington; Community Response to White Nationalism	Corebloomington.org	Provides response guides directed at different audiences
International Centre for Countering Terrorism	https://www.icct.nl/	Policy advice and training to counter terrorism, extremism, and polarization

Using Community Resources for De-Radicalization

Organizations that provide research-based information and toolkits



Name	Website	Additional Info
PERIL	https://perilresearch.com/	Public health approach; toolkits for different types of upstanders
Southern Poverty Law Center	https://www.splcenter.org/	Mission = fighting hate and seeking justice. Information & resources
Western States Schools Toolkit for Fighting White Nationalism in Schools	https://www.westernstatescenter.org/schools	Classroom activities for teachers & toolkit for responding to White nationalism in schools

Using Community Resources for De-Radicalization

National mental health support



Name	Website	Call or text	Additional Info
National Suicide and Crisis Line	988.lifeline.org	988	Dial 988 for immediate support through phone or text 24/7/365; available in Spanish
On-line treatment locator	https://findtreatment.gov/	1-800-662-HELP (4357) or text your zip code & message: 435748 (HELP4U)	Will provide you with information on local support services
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)	https://www.samhsa.gov/	(800) 662-HELP (4357)	Help for mental health or substance abuse
Nacional de Prevención del Suicidio		(888) 628-9454	Crisis line for Spanish speakers

Using Community Resources for De-Radicalization

National support for addiction



Name	Website	Additional Info
Alcoholics Anonymous	aa.org	Help with alcohol and other substance difficulties
Narcotics Anonymous	Na.org	Addiction and substance use support
Gambler's Anonymous	https://www.gamblersanonymous.org/ga/	Support for gambling addiction

Using Community Resources for De-Radicalization

Support for veterans



Name	Website	Call or text	Additional Info
Veterans Crisis Line	https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/	988, then PRESS 1 Text 838255	Provides immediate support for vets on the phone, through text, or online
Veterans Administration (Health Care)	https://www.va.gov/health-care/health-needs-conditions/		VA resources for mental and physical health and substance use

Using Community Resources for De-Radicalization



Support for domestic violence & sexual assault

Name	Website	Call or text	Additional Info
National Domestic Violence Hotline	https://www.thehotline.org/	(800) 799-7233 (SAFE)	Provides information and support for people in abusive relationships
National Sexual Assault Hotline	https://rainn.org	(800) 656-4673 (HOPE)	Provides information as well as online, text, or phone support for victims of sexual assault

Using Community Resources for De-Radicalization



National housing support

Name	Website	Additional Info
Housing and Urban Development	https://www.hud.gov/topics	Among other things, provides rental assistance as well as assistance for homelessness and veterans
Disaster Distress Helpline	https://strenghtafterdisaster.org/peer-support/	Emotional and crisis support for responders and survivors

Preventing and Countering Extremism

- Internet/media literacy and diversity exposure are two techniques that can be initiated informally by upstanders or formally by community organizations
 - Libraries, senior centers, neighborhood groups, religious organizations

Preventing and Countering Extremism

- Diversity Exposure
(in childhood and adulthood)
- U.S. schools began to desegregate racially in 1954 and integration peaked in 1988



Preventing and Countering Extremism



• Diversity Exposure

(in childhood and adulthood)

- U.S. schools began to desegregate racially in 1954 and integration peaked in 1988
- 1990s-current: Schools have re-segregated as mandatory and voluntary de-segregation initiatives were dropped
- Some media outlets and politicians have attacked school DEI efforts

Percent of Public K-12 Students Attending School Where 75 Percent or More of the Students Are of Their Own Race/Ethnicity



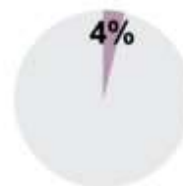
White



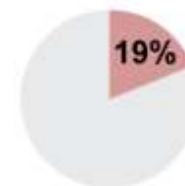
Hispanic



Black



Asian



American Indian/
Alaska Native

Preventing and Countering Extremism

- Diversity Exposure

(in childhood and adulthood)

- Individuals and communities should work to ensure that people of all ages have regular contact with people different from themselves



Preventing and Countering Extremism

- Diversity Exposure

(in childhood and adulthood)

- Individuals and communities should work to ensure that people of all ages have regular contact with people different from themselves
- Extremists having positive contact with members of the group they had hated and scapegoated was often a key factor in their rejection of extremism



Preventing and Countering Extremism

- Internet and Media Literacy
(in childhood and adulthood)
 - Online radicalization is common
 - Those who participated in the January 6 insurrection were, on average, older than other types of extremists
 - Older people may lack internet literacy skills



Preventing and Countering Extremism



- Internet and Media Literacy (in childhood and adulthood)
 - Schools and other organizations (libraries, churches, senior centers) should have programs that teach media literacy
 - People who have these skills should also share them on an informal basis in everyday life
 - Some websites, such as 4Chan, Gab, 8Kun, KiwiFarms and incels.com, among others, exist primarily to spread disinformation
 - Some mainstream websites are poorly moderated

Preventing and Countering Extremism

- Internet and Media Literacy
(in childhood and adulthood)
 - Social media algorithms are designed to get more clicks
 - Support policies and legislation that prevent/counter extremism





Informal Interventions for De-Radicalization: A Guide for Fighting Extremism (Part 3) Outline and Materials

Review: Part 1: Violence motivated by extreme ideologies is increasing and is difficult to combat due to online recruitment, coded messages, and extremism both emerging from mainstream ideologies and being mainstreamed. To counter-radicalization, we must first recognize it. Once recognized, an upstander must understand the push and pull factors that lead to radicalization to effectively encourage de-radicalization. Part 2 addresses factors that can lead to extremism. This presentation (Part 3 of a Guide for Fighting Extremism) discusses strategies of friends, family members, and other community members (“upstanders”) for informally assisting in the de-radicalization process. Part 4 examines the special vulnerabilities of the Latinx community in regard to extremism.

I. Introduction

- A. Curriculum objectives
- B. Research on de-radicalization
- C. The importance of informal networks in de-radicalization

II. Responding to Radicalization

- A. Providing support through a precipitating event and/or grievance
- B. Responding to communications of intent to commit violence
 1. Challenges of legal and punitive responses
 2. Formal responses and the triggering of de-radicalization

III. Individual Strategies for De-Radicalization

- A. Push and Pull Factors in De-radicalization
 1. Using push factors to create a cognitive opening
 2. Creating and exploiting a cognitive opening
- B. Use the socratic method during discussions
 1. Ineffective strategies
- C. Utilizing community resources and formers for de-radicalization

IV. Individual and Community Strategies for Preventing and Countering Radicalization

- A. Diversity Exposure (in childhood and adulthood)
- B. Internet and media literacy (in childhood and adulthood)
- C. Prevention at the policy/legislative level

Materials:

- Facilitator’s notes and references
- Participant handouts (Curriculum Outline and Community Resources)
- PowerPoint presentation (approximately 1 hour)



Informal Interventions for De-Radicalization: A Guide for Fighting Extremism (Part 3) Teacher's Notes

Introduction

This presentation is an empirically-based guide for family, friends, community members, and other upstanders in responding to extremism in people they know. It reviews factors that lead to radicalization and de-radicalization and provides concrete techniques, strategies, and resources for responding to radicalization.

Objectives of this curriculum (Slide 2)

On completion of this program, participants will understand:

The importance of family, friends, and upstanders in the de-radicalization process

When and how to report threats of violence

Tools and strategies for responding to extremism in ways that promote de-radicalization

The kinds of responses to extremism that are ineffective for de-radicalization

How individual and community responses can be combined

Some of the (nationwide) community resources for de-radicalization

Research on De-Radicalization (Slide 3)

After the September 11 attacks in 2001, the research on violent extremism and the pathways to it spiked. Implicit in many psychological “staircase models” of extremism was the assumption that if a person on the path to radicalization could be stopped, violent extremism could be prevented (Jensen et al., 2016; McCauley & Moskalenko, 2017). However, research on how former extremists succeed in the de-radicalization process was scant until very recently (Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2013; Horgan et al., 2016; Ellefsen & Sandberg, 2022). The research that does exist appears to be divided into three general categories: 1) Studies that examine the psychological and social factors that lead to de-radicalization amongst former extremists; 2) practices and policies for promoting de-radicalization in institutional or organizational settings or formal de-radicalization programs, and 3) the role of friends, family members, and informal community ties—what we will call upstanders—in the de-radicalization process. While the research indicates that upstanders are crucial in extraction from extremism, research in this category seems to be the least common (Ellefsen & Sandberg, 2022). This presentation uses the studies in this area that do exist to provide upstanders with knowledge and strategies to assist extremists with de-radicalization.

The Role of Family Members and Significant Others in De-Radicalization (Slides 4-8)

An often-cited study by RAND found that most people who succeed in de-radicalization received help in the process of exiting. Those who assisted had a wide variety of relationships



with the former, including acquaintances, partners, family members, other formers or current extremists, friends, journalists, religious leaders, teachers, and therapists (Brown et al., 2021). In this presentation, we will refer to anyone who can assist someone in avoiding radicalization or de-radicalization as an upstander. Upstanders are essential to extracting from extremism.

Family members and other significant others play a crucial role in de-radicalization efforts (Pressman, 2009; Kruglanski, 2014; Popp, 2020; Brown, 2022). One popular theory of the radicalization/de-radicalization process is Kruglanski et al. (2019)'s Three Pillars/3N model. The 3N's are needs, narratives, and networks and the model asserts that when a person's need for belonging and respect are not met, they may respond by seeking out new narratives to help them make sense of the world and new networks to meet their need for belonging and status. Studies of extremists have found empirical support for Kruglanski's model (Jasko et al., 2020; Jasko et al., 2016; Belanger et al., 2019; Popp et al., 2020) as have similar theories that use somewhat different terms (Smith et al., 2016, Sizoo et al., 2017, Klausen, 2016; Wiktorwicz, 2005). Kruglanski et al. (2019, 2014) argue that the de-radicalization process also involves needs, narratives, and networks. If an extremist's conventional network has distanced itself from the extremist, it lacks an essential pillar necessary for disengagement. In Horgan et al. (2016)'s case study of Sarah, a former White supremacist, she describes how she remained active in her group after she became psychologically ready to disengage because she felt she had no friends or family who would accept her. Other studies (Brown, 2022; Dalgaard-Nielsen, 2013; Ellefsen & Sandberg, 2022) also emphasize the importance of mainstream networks in exiting extremism.

Family, friends, and other potential upstanders may be particularly important in recognizing lone-wolf terrorists. In a review of studies funded by the National Institutes of Justice examining those who attempted to or engaged in ideologically motivated violence, it was found that between 76% and 80% of lone-actor terrorists had made their grievance and/or extremist views known to others and had broadcast their intent to engage in violence (Smith, 2018).

Family and friends are also important to the de-radicalization process because formal, institutional responses to radicalization—especially those involving law enforcement—can fail, or worse, backfire (Brown, 2022). Prior to de-radicalization, extremists must feel some doubt or a “cognitive opening” about their ideology. Formers report that intervention by the right individual who was there at the right time often plays a key role in their de-radicalization. Family and friends are more likely than formal organizations to experience this kind of serendipity.

Responding to Radicalization

Many formers report displaying obvious signs of their radicalization early in the process, such as listening to RAC (Rock Against Communism or hate-oriented music), wearing extremist clothing, or displaying extremist symbols. Ignoring (or not recognizing) these displays can encourage further radicalization in several ways. Silence may be taken as tacit approval and



serve to normalize extreme viewpoints. Additionally, if the radicalizing individual believes that the symbols being displayed are not recognized, it may strengthen their sense of belonging to the extreme group and further alienate them from their pre-radicalization network, which they come to view as outsiders. Finally, in ignoring displays of extremism, friends and family are missing an opportunity to begin challenging extremist views. It is recommended that these kinds of displays be noted and questioned in a non-judgmental fashion.

Providing Support through a Precipitating Event and/or Grievance (Slides 10-15)

In describing how they came to be radicalized, most former extremists tell of a traumatic experience that forced them to re-think all of their old ideas and beliefs; researchers refer to this as a precipitating or triggering event. Kruglanski et al. (2019, 2014)'s model involves a loss of significance or acceptance and respect which are needs we all have. As a result, they experience a quest for significance; they seek to regain status, a sense of belonging, meaning, and purpose. Both in person and online, existing extremists use this quest to recruit new members by offering a radical ideology, narrative, group membership, or network (Winter et al., 2021).

During this kind of identity crisis, upstanders can provide social, emotional, and even material support to disrupt or prevent radicalization. In so doing, upstanders should focus on the needs that the focal person is attempting to meet: acceptance, belonging, respect, meaning, and purpose. By treating the person with dignity, offering friendship, and helping them to interpret the trauma in an honest and conventional way, a person with the potential to radicalize may fail to do so.

People who support others also need to support themselves. Interacting with someone who holds radically different worldviews and values than yourself can be particularly psychologically stressful. In addition to gaining support from your network of friends and professionals, there are several organizations that can provide insight and assistance to upstanders encountering radicalization. A list is available on your "resources" handout, and we will review these later, but two are worthy of mention here.

PERIL is the Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab affiliated with American University that uses scholarly research to create curriculums and interventions for extremist radicalization. PERIL takes a health-oriented perspective rather than a criminal orientation and seeks to prevent radicalization in everyday life. PERIL has created a series of short, engaging toolkits that target specific audiences to educate and prepare them for encountering extremists. They have toolkits for families, faith leaders, small businesses, community members, educators, counselors, and even victims of extremism. You can access these toolkits at: <https://perilresearch.com/>

Another organization that assists both extremists who are seeking to de-radicalize and upstanders is Life After Hate: <https://www.lifeafterhate.org/>. Founded in 2011 by former



extremists, their ExitUSA program trains former extremists to work as peer mentors to assist radicalized individuals to abandon extremism. They also provide support to upstanders. The focus of their program is compassion. When responding to extremists, they recommend asking questions (rather than confronting the ideology directly), listening, recognizing that the person is not merely the ideology they are espousing, and resisting the focal person's attempt to push you away. In addition to providing educational resources on their webpage, you can also contact a social worker through it. You can also call or text members of the Life After Hate team at 612-888-EXIT (3984).

During this phase, the upstander might also provide direct or indirect material support. Not everyone is able or willing to provide direct financial assistance, but they may be able to help the person in other ways. Many people who end up radicalizing have psychological or substance use issues, and an upstander can assist the focal person in using community resources to treat these or other difficulties, such as employment or housing (Brown, 2022). Community-specific resources vary by location; later in this presentation, we will review some organizations with national reach that can provide assistance with these types of issues.

Responding to Communications of Intent to Commit Violence (Slides 16-18)

Threats of violence should always be taken seriously and reported to the relevant authorities. In public mass murders/shootings, and school shootings, in the majority of instances, the perpetrator(s) communicated their intentions prior to the attack (Eisenman et al., 2022). In their study of barriers to reporting threats, Eisenman et al. (2022) found both psychological and structural impediments to reporting. Oftentimes, intimates of the potential perpetrator do not take the threat seriously or are afraid of harming the threat-maker, or their relationship with them. They also fear not being taken seriously by law enforcement or being shamed as a tattletale by their own friends and family. In overcoming psychological barriers, it is important for someone who receives leakage to reflect upon their potential feelings if the threat becomes a reality; they must ask themselves how they would feel if people died as a result of their reticence.

In regards to structural barriers, Eisenman et al. (2022) found that a lack of knowledge about the reporting process, including a lack of knowledge about what is involved in the reporting process, lack of standardization of the reporting process, and simply not knowing how to make a report were significant barriers. In the U.S., if you receive a threat and feel you (or others) are in immediate danger, you should call 911. If you (or others) are not in immediate danger, you should report the threat to the FBI (FBI, n.d.). This can be done online or the phone. To report the threat online, visit <https://tips.fbi.gov/home>. There is a form to fill out at this website in which you should provide as many details as possible about the threat. This can be done anonymously. Alternatively, you can report the tip by calling the FBI's tip line: 1-800-CALLFBI (or 1-800-225-5324). Finally, you can contact your local FBI field office; these are listed on the FBI's webpage at <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices>.

Challenges of Legal and Punitive Responses (Slides 19-22)

As noted, intimates may be hesitant to report threats of violence due to fear of being wrong, not taken seriously, or harming the potential perpetrator or their relationship with them. Another difficulty is in understanding what constitutes legal and criminal behavior. In the U.S., hate, hate speech, and extremism are all legal. Hate crimes are crimes that were already illegal, but starting in the 1990s, began to be counted and receive heavier sentences than crimes that were not motivated by bias (Vergani, 2023). One criticism of hate crimes is that they consider the criminal's conscience in engaging in the crime and thus are associated with notions of thought-police. However, it is not just the specific victims that are affected when a hate crime occurs; the entire community of the targeted group is threatened and victimized. For this reason, heavier sentences for bias-motivated crimes may be justified.

While stiffer sentences for crimes motivated by bias may be justified, it is also true that formal, institutional responses to radicalization—especially highly punitive security reactions—can fail, or worse, backfire (Brown 2022). Many types of extremists are distrustful of police and government authority in general. Intervention by law enforcement in particular, but formal institutions in general, may further convince radicals that they are indeed persecuted. Brown (2022, p.11) notes, “heavy-handed attempts to derail radical activities and groups by intelligence and law enforcement agencies while understandable to protect the public in many cases sometimes deepen ongoing radicalization processes and push potentially salvageable cases to more extreme behaviors and involvement.” For this reason, the FBI cautions threat management teams to always consider the repercussions of their planned intervention to avoid creating additional triggers or grievances. They note that public safety and the well-being of the person of concern are intimately intertwined and that treating the focal person with dignity is important for the safety of the community (Amman et al, 2022).

While authorities should take care to treat persons of concern and perpetrators with dignity and respect, some research has found that contact with law enforcement can be a precipitating event that triggers de-radicalization (Horgan, 2016; Ellefsen & Sandberg; 2022; Ferguson & McCauley, 2020). While Ellefsen & Sandberg (2022) suggest that contact with law enforcement might be more likely to lead to de-radicalization either early in the process or when the person is already considering leaving for other reasons, several aspects can cause interventions by legal authorities to result in de-radicalization. Just as radicalization is often preceded by a precipitating event, so is de-radicalization. Contact with law enforcement, particularly arrest or imprisonment, can serve as a personal trauma that creates a cognitive opening to reconsider their current path. Additionally, in the case of imprisonment, the perpetrator is often physically separated from their extremist network and this loss can result in the extreme group no longer meeting the needs they had been fulfilling. Some extremists also report that in prison, they had more time to reflect on their beliefs and behaviors prompting a decision to reject extremism. In prison, extremists were often housed with members of their target group and positive contact with them could lead to rejection of hateful, dichotomous



ideologies. Finally, arrest and imprisonment could draw the extremist's attention to the pain of and their obligations to their family and friends outside of the radicalized milieu. Thus, while arrest and imprisonment are generally negative events, they are also generally necessary and can result in positive outcomes.

Strategies for De-Radicalization (Slides 23-31)

As research on de-radicalization progresses, both research and outreach programs are developing recommendations to assist upstanders in fomenting the de-radicalization process. As noted by Life After Hate, it is important to act with compassion in your interactions with an extremist, as oftentimes it is the social needs that are being met that drive radicalization rather than anything inherent about the ideology (Pressman, 2009). Below, we review some of the more commonly mentioned strategies.

Push and Pull Factors in De-radicalization (Slides 23-25)

In becoming radicalized, there is usually a combination of push and pull factors. For instance, a precipitating event or trauma may be a factor that pushes someone towards radicalization, while the camaraderie of group membership would be a pull factor. Likewise, research has found that there are a variety of push and pull factors that lead to de-radicalization. Factors that push people out of the extremist group seem to play a particularly important role in the de-radicalization process (Altier et al., 2017; DeMichele et al., 2021; Brown, 2022). Upstanders have little sway over push factors as they are not members of the group, however, by knowing what push factors may occur, they can utilize those to promote de-radicalization while serving as a pulling mechanism for the extremist to exit into.

In some of the earlier research on the push and pull factors that lead to de-radicalization, Dalgaard-Nielsen (2013) framed push factors as “clusters of doubt.” She classified these doubts around three primary issues: doubts about the militant ideology, doubts about the group or its leadership, and doubts about the costs of maintaining an extremist lifestyle. More recent researchers have focused on doubts about the group or its leadership as a particularly strong factor in pushing people away from extremism (Altier et al., 2017; DeMichele et al., 2021; Brown, 2022). Borrowing from Kruglanski (2019)'s 3N model, it is important to remember that a pull towards radicalization is having one's needs for acceptance, belonging, meaning, and purpose met. However, just like any other group, militant groups can include negative group experiences. For instance, jealousy, self-promotion, back-biting, and back-stabbing may be part of the group dynamic and interfere with the need for acceptance to be met. Likewise, poor leadership may fail to provide meaning or purpose. Outreach attempts generally recommend against confronting the ideology itself or countering with facts and instead recommend an approach that involves asking lots of questions (Life After Hate, 2023; SPLC, 2021; Ritzman, 2023; Amman, 2016). Amongst the questions an upstander could ask are questions about the emotional and social needs that the group meets for the focal person, and about the quality of



group relationships and leadership. When group dynamics are challenging, these kinds of questions can magnify doubts about the group and create the cognitive opening necessary to initiate the process of de-radicalization (Pressman, 2009; Wiktorwicz, 2005; Klausen, 2016; McCauley & Mosakalenko, 2017; Kruglanski et al., 2019).

Utilize the Socratic Method (Slides 26-27)

Whether you decide to ask questions about group dynamics or social needs being met or other issues, as much as possible, you should use the Socratic method which involves asking questions to assist the person in discovering inconsistencies, misinformation, or other problems in the areas of needs, narratives, and networks on their own. Science, facts, truth, or traditionally trusted sources, tend to be ineffective in changing a radicalized or radicalizing person's mind. Under these circumstances, feelings are more important than facts. Disparaging the person or ridiculing their beliefs is very likely to backfire and further entrench their commitment to extremism.

It is understandably frustrating when someone espouses ideas or beliefs that contradict your knowledge and values. However, it is essential that upstanders remain calm, empathic, compassionate, and non-judgmental during discussions about extremism (SPLC, 2021; Brown et al., 2021; Life After Hate, 2023; Ritzman, 2023). If put on the defensive, a person will do just that—defend themselves. For a cognitive opening to be created, a person of concern must trust the upstander. While an upstander may also become frustrated with a seeming lack of progress, Ritzman (2023) uses the analogy of scattering seeds that may sprout in the future under the right conditions.

Ineffective Strategies (Slides 28-31)

It is important to discuss some responses to extremism that are very unlikely to work or might backfire because oftentimes our gut instinct is to react in these ways. Although these impulses may be normal and understandable, recognizing that they do not work and evaluating your overall goal can help you avoid these strategies. Most people have multiple goals or agendas when deciding a course of action, and some of these motives may be primary or secondary. As an upstander, your primary goal is to assist the person of concern with rejecting radicalized ideas, beliefs, and behaviors. You may also want to prove you are right, punish them, or make a point, but these goals are inconsistent with actually promoting de-radicalization.

Facts over Feelings (Slide 29)

A paradigm is an over-arching framework for making sense of the world, and since the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment of the 1600s, science has been our paradigm. Thus, a perfectly normal response to encountering misinformation is to assume that if presented with facts on the matter, those espousing falsehoods will change their minds. However, as noted earlier, extremists



tend not to find facts persuasive. Feelings are what drives a person to radicalize and it is feelings that must be given primacy for de-radicalization to occur. If you focus on facts, you will in all likelihood quickly reach an impasse, and both you and the target person will feel frustrated. Focusing on feelings will help an upstander to empathize, to listen rather than lecture, and to ask questions. This in turn will build trust and rapport which will help meet the target's needs for belonging and acceptance thus detracting them from the extremist group meeting such needs.

Ex-communication or Going “No Contact” (Slide 30-31)

It is also very understandable to find the extremist's ideas and behaviors offensive and even repulsive. Extremism is marked by its rejection of cherished mainstream values such as equality and tolerance, thus wanting to avoid contact with what is an affront to your own cherished beliefs is normal. However, to re-integrate back into the community, an extremist must have a community to return to. In some cases, people who are psychologically ready to leave extremism remain active in it because they believe that only extremists will accept them (Horgan et al., 2016). As an upstander, you can serve as a member of the community that supports extremists as they rehabilitate.

While maintaining contact and providing emotional support to someone are important parts of the de-radicalization process, using these strategies does not negate your boundaries. “Fash fatigue” or the mental exhaustion that results from working with extremists/fascists does occur (Cashmere, 2019). You cannot be an effective upstander if you do not take care of your mental health. It is important that you also get support and have a person with whom you can process your feelings about the extremists and your relationship with them (Ritzman, 2023). Additionally, maintaining contact does not mean maintaining constant contact or that your contact can not be constrained by boundaries. It will be necessary to take breaks from interacting with the extremists. Additionally, setting your own boundaries, for instance, telling them “I want to discuss this with you, but I cannot tolerate racist language, so if you use it, the conversation will have to end” is encouraged (Ritzman, 2023).

Utilizing Community Resources and Formers for De-radicalization (Slides 32-39)

There are many organizations that are dedicated to fighting hate, extremism, polarization, and the violence that can result from these issues. All of these sources provide information about radicalization and de-radicalization, but some also provide additional resources, such as toolkits for responding to radicalization, and some offer direct support for extremists who wish to extract from extremism and/or upstanders who wish to assist extremists with de-radicalization. A handout on these resources is available for participants. In what follows, we briefly review these, starting with organizations that are focused on extremism, and then on organizations that could potentially help with other issues.



Some organizations provide personal, emotional support to people struggling with extremism, as well as information and advice. Some of the organizations are as follows (Slide 33):

<i>Name</i>	<i>Website/Phone</i>	<i>Additional Info</i>
		<i>This organization provides information and support to:</i>
Beyond barriers	https://beyondbarriersusa.org/	Extremists who want to de-radicalize
Center for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence	https://info-radical.org/en/ 1 (877) 687-7141 #116	Anyone wanting to understand de-radicalization
Life After Hate	https://www.lifeafterhate.org/	Extremists and upstanders; founded by formers
Parents4Peace	https://www.parents4peace.org/ Free helpline 24/7 at 1-844-49-PEACE (1-844-497-3223)	Upstanders

Several organizations are oriented towards using research to create information for people struggling with extremism, and/or toolkits for upstanders in responding to extremism. Some of these organizations are (Slides 34-35):

<i>Name</i>	<i>Website</i>	<i>Additional Info</i>
Anti-Defamation League	ADL.org	The ADL has been fighting racism, hatred, and extremism for over 100 years. Their website provides information and resources on bigotry.
AVE: Against Violence and Extremism	https://www.isdglobal.org/against-violent-extremism-ave/#	The Institute for Strategic Dialogue’s AVE network takes a multi-disciplinary and multi-pronged approach to fighting violent extremism
CO*RE Bloomington; Community Response to White Nationalism	Corebloomington.org	Provides response guides primarily to White nationalism, but also conspiracy theories and misogyny. Guides are directed at different audiences including family, friends, teachers, and community members
International Centre for Countering Terrorism	https://www.icct.nl/	Provides research, policy advice, and training to counter terrorism, extremism, and polarization through non-security means



<i>Name</i>	<i>Website</i>	<i>Additional Info</i>
PERIL	https://perilresearch.com/	Uses a public health approach and provides toolkits for different types of upstanders
Southern Poverty Law Center	https://www.splcenter.org/	The SPLC’s mission includes fighting hate and seeking justice. They provide information and resources for upstanders who share this mission.
Western States Schools Toolkit for Fighting White Nationalism in Schools	https://www.westernstatescenter.org/schools	Provides a wide array of classroom activities for teachers as well as a toolkit for responding to white nationalism in schools

As noted earlier, many people who are drawn to extremism have experienced a personal trauma or precipitating event that causes them to question their old ways of thinking. These people may need assistance with their mental and physical health, addiction to substance use, or other assistance with things like employment, or housing. The following national resources are available for support in these areas (Slides 36-39).

<i>Type</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Website</i>	<i>Call or text</i>	<i>Additional Info</i>
Mental Health	National Suicide and Crisis Line	988.lifeline.org	988	Dial 988 for immediate support through phone or text 24/7/365; available in Spanish
	On-line treatment locator	https://findtreatment.gov/	1-800-662-HELP (4357) or text your zip code & message: 435748 (HELP4U)	Will provide you with information on local support services
	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)	https://www.samhsa.gov/	(800) 662-HELP (4357)	Help for mental health or substance abuse
	Nacional de Prevención del Suicidio		(888) 628-9454	Crisis line for Spanish speakers



<i>Type</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Website</i>	<i>Call or text</i>	<i>Additional Info</i>
Addiction	Alcoholics Anonymous	aa.org		Help with alcohol and other substance difficulties
	Narcotics Anonymous	Na.org		Addiction and substance use support
	Gambler's Anonymous	https://www.gambleranonymous.org/ga/		Support for gambling addiction
<i>Type</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Website</i>	<i>Call or text</i>	<i>Additional Info</i>
Veterans	Veterans Crisis Line	https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/	988, then PRESS 1 Text 838255	Provides immediate support for vets on the phone, through text, or online
	Veterans Administration (Health Care)	https://www.va.gov/health-care/health-needs-conditions/		VA resources for mental and physical health and substance use
<i>Type</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Website</i>	<i>Call or text</i>	<i>Additional Info</i>
Abuse	National Domestic Violence Hotline	https://www.thehotline.org/	(800) 799-7233 (SAFE)	Provides information and support for people in abusive relationships
	National Sexual Assault Hotline	https://rainn.org	(800) 656-4673 (HOPE)	Provides information as well as online, text, or phone support for victims of sexual assault
<i>Type</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Website</i>	<i>Call or text</i>	<i>Additional Info</i>
Housing	Housing and Urban Development	https://www.hud.gov/topics		Among other things, provides rental assistance as well as assistance for homelessness and veterans
	Disaster Distress Helpline	https://strengthenafterdisaster.org/peer-support/		Emotional and crisis support for responders and survivors



Preventing and Countering Radicalization (Slides 40-47)

The research on de-/radicalization offers several suggestions for preventing and countering radicalization that could take place in a formal, community setting, but also be informally initiated by upstanders. These techniques include exposing children and adults to different types of people and internet media and literacy. Schools and other youth organizations can implement formal programs for teaching tolerance and critical evaluation information. Additionally, various community organizations, including libraries, senior centers, neighborhood groups, religious organizations, and other community groups or organizations, could also offer programs to improve these skills among children and adults.

It is important that people of all ages have contact with people of different backgrounds, experiences, and beliefs. American schools once assisted with this. School segregation was found to be unconstitutional in 1954, and integration of American schools peaked in 1988. Since the 1990s, schools have re-segregated along racial and ethnic lines as a result of several court cases and the rolling back of both mandatory and voluntary desegregation efforts (Nasheed, 2023). As a result, in 2022, nearly half of White American students attend schools where 75% or more of their fellow students are White; and 20-30% of Hispanic, Black, and American Indian students attend schools where 75+% of students are their same race or ethnicity (General Accounting Office [GAO], 2022). Additionally, attempts by educational organizations in their diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives have been attacked by some media outlets and politicians. For both younger and older people it is important to have contact with people of different races, ethnicities, social classes, religions, abilities, and other characteristics both to prevent radicalization in the first place and to counter it when it occurs. If young people cannot achieve this through their schools, then they need to achieve this exposure through other outlets, and again, this can be done on a formal or informal basis. These interactions should not stop at the age of majority, and communities and individuals should work to assure that adults continue to have contact with people of varying statuses. Extremists having positive contact with members of the group they had hated and scapegoated was often a key factor in their rejection of extremism (Horgan et al., 2016; Brown, 2022). Individuals and communities should strive to foster inter-group understanding and interaction in informal, everyday life, and support organizational policies and governmental legislation that support inter-group tolerance and interaction in order to reduce targeted violence.

Increasingly, people have begun the process of radicalization through online exposure to extreme ideologies and communities. Thus, being able to distinguish between objective, accurate, reliable information and sources is an important key to preventing radicalization. While some schools have media literacy programs and courses, it is also important for upstanders to emphasize these skills in everyday life. This is not only important for younger people, but older people as well. In a study of those who participated in the January 6, 2020 riots, the arrestees included in the study had an average age of 40, and two-thirds were over the age of 35 (Pape & Ruby, 2021). Technological advances have exploded in the past 50 years and while older adults



may be able to utilize this technology, they may also lack knowledge of how to evaluate quality information on the internet. Having and sharing these skills with friends, family, and others is important. Additionally, community organizations can offer programs to improve the media literacy of adults and children. Teaching that some websites, such as 4Chan, Gab, 8Kun, KiwiFarms, and incels.com, among others, exist primarily to spread disinformation, while multiple mainstream sites like Reddit, YouTube, TikTok, and others have limited moderation which allows for misuse by radical recruiters is important (SPLC, 2021). Teaching people how to evaluate online information and sources helps them disregard extremist views when they encounter them.

Unfortunately, the way internet algorithms are designed, people who show any curiosity about extremism may quickly find that the internet shows them more and more of this kind of information. Supporting policies and legislation that protect the privacy of our information to limit exposure to lies and hate is also an important part of fighting extremism.



Informal Interventions for De-Radicalization: A Guide for Fighting Extremism (Part 3) Participant Handout

Introduction

Objectives of this curriculum

Research on De-Radicalization

After 9/11/2001, ↑ on research on extremism

Research on de-radicalization is more recent and focuses on

Psychological / social factors that lead to de-radicalization

Formal, institutional counter-radicalization programs

The key role of upstanders in de-radicalization (the focus of this presentation)

The Importance of Informal Networks in De-Radicalization

RAND study (2021) found that others, including acquaintances, partners, family members, other former or current extremists, friends, journalists, religious leaders, teachers, and therapists, are key in de-radicalization

Kruglanski's 3N model of needs, narratives, and networks

Upstanders meet needs for acceptance and status, offer counter and alternative narratives, and serve as networks for de-radicalization

Example of Sarah remaining with an extremist group longer than she wanted because she felt she had no alternative

76-80% of lone wolf terrorists leak their violent intentions to acquaintances

Formal, institutional counter-radicalization measures may fail or backfire

They entrench radical beliefs

Cognitive opening precedes de-radicalization and everyday people are more likely to be present

Responding to Radicalization

As they begin to radicalize, many extremists display signs of their new views; upstanders should respond to this rather than ignore it

Providing support through a precipitating event and/or grievance

Precipitating event: traumatic experience that forced them to re-think all of their old ideas and beliefs

Precipitating event → loss of significance → quest for significance (belonging & respect)

Extremists use the quest for recruiting new members

Upstanders can support them through the crisis to prevent radicalization

Emotional support (friendship, belonging, acceptance, respect)

<https://perilresearch.com/>

<https://www.lifeafterhate.org/> 612-888-EXIT (3984).



Direct or indirect Material support

\$

Referrals for mental health or addiction services or other community resources

Responding to communications of intent to commit violence

Most mass shooters communicate their intentions

Intimates face barriers to reporting, including

Not taking the threat seriously

Fearing authorities will not take the threat seriously

Fear of harming the person of concern or their relationship with them

Fear of being labeled a snitch or ridiculed

All threats should be reported to relevant authorities

<https://tips.fbi.gov/home>.

1-800-CALLFBI (or 1-800-225-5324).

<https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices>

Challenges of legal and punitive responses

Hate in and of itself is not illegal

Some argue that considering motive is a violation of rights to freedom of belief

Hate crimes victimize the entire targeted community, not just specific victims

Law enforcement responses can fail or entrench extremism

Some extremists see police as the enemy

Legal responses may create a precipitating event/ grievance for radicalization

Formal responses and the triggering of de-radicalization

Arrest or imprisonment: a personal trauma that creates a cognitive opening to reconsider their current path

Imprisonment: separation from radical network; increased time to reflect; contact with members of targeted group; attention to pain of and obligations to non-radicalized family and friends

Individual Strategies for De-Radicalization

Push and Pull Factors in De-radicalization

Push + Pull Factors → de-/radicalization

Ex: Triggering event = push, camaraderie = pull to radicalization

Push factors are crucial to de-radicalization

“Clusters of doubt:” Doubts about the militant ideology

the group or its leadership, and/or the costs of maintaining an extremist lifestyle

Extremists groups meet an individual’s need for belonging, acceptance, respect

Negative group dynamics → needs not being met



Create a cognitive opening by asking questions about the needs the group fills and about group dynamics (rather than confronting the ideology)

Use the Socratic method of asking questions during discussions

Ask questions that lead the person to self-discover inconsistencies, misinformation or other problems in the areas of needs, narratives, or networks

Self-discovery → cognitive opening (spoon feeding information does not)

Remain calm, empathic, compassionate, and non-judgmental

Scattering seeds that may blossom in the future under the right conditions

Ineffective strategies

Potential frustrations of the upstander: disinformation / falsehoods, beliefs that oppose cherished values, offensive/repulsive ideas, lack of/slow progress, “fash fatigue”

Frustrations → normal reactions, but reactions that will backfire re: de-radicalization

Focus on primary goal (de-radicalization) rather than secondary goals

Facts over feelings

It is normal, but not helpful, to emphasize facts over feelings

Feelings → radicalization and feelings (not facts) → de-radicalization

Ex-Communication or Going No Contact

It is normal, but not helpful, to want to avoid contact with offensive / repulsive ideas and beliefs

Networks are a pillar of radicalization and de-radicalization

Contact does not have to be constant; take breaks

Set boundaries

“I want to discuss this with you, but I cannot tolerate racist language, so if you use it, the conversation will have to end”

Utilizing community resources and formers for de-radicalization

See “Resources” handout

Individual and Community Strategies for Preventing and Countering Radicalization

Diversity Exposure (in childhood and adulthood)

US schools began to desegregate racially in 1954 and integration peaked in 1988

1990s-current: schools have re-segregated as mandatory and voluntary de-segregation initiatives were dropped

Some media outlets and politicians have attacked school DEI efforts

Individuals and communities should work to ensure that people of all ages have regular contact with people different from themselves



Extremists having positive contact with members of the group they had hated and scapegoated was often a key factor in their rejection of extremism

Internet and media literacy (in childhood and adulthood)

Online radicalization is common

Jan 6. Rioters were older than other extremists

Older people may lack internet literacy skills

Schools and other organizations (libraries, churches, senior centers, etc.) should have programs that teach media literacy

People who have these skills should also share them on an informal basis in everyday life

Some websites, such as 4Chan, Gab, 8Kun, KiwiFarms and incels.com, among others, exist primarily to spread disinformation

Some mainstream websites are poorly moderated (Reddit, TikTok, Youtube)

Social media algorithms are designed to get more clicks

Support policies and legislation that prevent / counter extremism



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