BUILDING RESILIENCE & CONFRONTING RISK IN THE COVID-19 ERA

A PARENTS & CAREGIVERS GUIDE TO ONLINE RADICALIZATION

SPLC Southern Poverty Law Center

Polarization & Extremism Research & Innovation Lab
Center for University Excellence

POLARIZATION AND EXTREMISM RESEARCH AND INNOVATION LAB (PERIL)

PERIL brings the resources and expertise of the university sector to bear on the problem of growing youth polarization and extremist radicalization, through scalable research, intervention, and public education ideas to reduce rising polarization and hate.

SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER

The SPLC seeks to be a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond, working in partnership with communities to dismantle white supremacy, strengthen intersectional movements, and advance the human rights of all people.

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Whether you live with a young person, or now work virtually with youth, radicalization to extremism is something we all should be concerned about. Extremists looking to recruit and convert children are predatory. Like all forms of child exploitation, extremist recruitment drives a wedge between young people and the adults they would normally trust. Radicalization is a problem for our entire society, from the innocent people it victimizes to the family bonds it breaks apart.

PARENT & CAREGIVER GUIDE

Who is this guide for? We wrote this guide with a wide range of caregivers in mind.

Caregivers living with children and young adults. This includes parents, grandparents, foster parents, extended families, and residential counselors who are the guardians and caregivers of children and youth living at home, in group homes, and other residential settings. In the wake of the global pandemic, adults in the home have taken on new responsibilities for homeschooling and are now often the only adults youth interact with on a daily basis. They are on the front lines of recognizing and responding to radicalization in the COVID-19 era.

Caregivers outside the home. This includes teachers, principals, school counselors, coaches, music teachers, religious and youth group leaders, scout troop leaders, employers, social workers, mental health therapists and other adults who continue to engage with youth, even in virtual settings. These adults--who normally form a dense network of trusted adults that interact with young people on a daily basis--still have regular contact with them in online contexts and in-person outside the home in some unique cases. These caregivers are well-placed to recognize warning signs of radicalization. Adults outside the home are also a key network for in-home caregivers and parents to connect with as a resource and sounding board during the pandemic.

Whether you live with a young person, or work virtually with youth, radicalization to extremism is something we all should be concerned about. Extremists looking to recruit and convert children are predatory. Like all forms of child exploitation, extremist recruitment drives a wedge between young people and the adults they would typically trust. The radicalization of young people is a threat to civil society, from the innocent people it victimizes to the family bonds it breaks apart.

In addition to the anxieties of the COVID-19 era, on-going Black Lives Matter protests against the legacy of police brutality and systemic racism, as well as intense polarization around the 2020 presidential election are being exploited by far right extremists. These protests affirm the need to end and to dismantle white supremacy as an essential step to preventing extremist radicalization. Extremists are seeking to co-opt these protests in ways that heighten the risks of violence and online radicalization. This guide will help families, caregivers, and youth recognize and confront new risks posed by far-right extremists during this time. It will also help you build resilience against these risks well beyond this moment.

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WHAT IS ONLINE RADICALIZATION? WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?

Online radicalization occurs when someone's online activities—reading, watching videos, or socializing— help lead them to adopt politically or religiously extremist views. Extremist beliefs say that one group of people is in dire conflict with other groups who don't share the same ethnic, religious or political identity. Extremists believe that this imagined conflict can only be resolved through separation, domination, or violence between groups. This frequently leads to anti-democratic opinions and goals, such as a desire for dictatorship, civil war, or an end to the rule of law.[1]

"Radicalization" simply means any process that leads a person to hold extremist beliefs. These beliefs may or may not lead to overt violence. Just like there are many forms of extremism, there is no single pathway to radicalization. It is a complex process, involving many personal and external influences. Finally, it is important to note that not all 'radical' politics are extremist. Beliefs that challenge established systems of political power are sometimes unfairly labeled this way in order to discredit them. Remember: for someone's political views to be a matter of serious concern, they should match the definition of extremism provided above. Here are some of the most common ways people radicalize online:

Content "Rabbit Holes." People can radicalize by reading or viewing increasingly extreme texts, videos, memes or other content online. Gradual encounters with more and more extreme content—sometimes through automatic recommendations that suggest other videos to watch, books to purchase or articles to read—can open pathways to radicalization for at-risk people. Healthy skepticism of government can develop into views that promote societal breakdown or violent conflict with democratic institutions. For example, an interest in conspiracy theories might lead to antisemitic world views.

Filter Bubbles. Online radicalization is helped by a lack of competing views or challenges to the ideologies people encounter online. Research shows that when someone only spends time with like-minded people, they are more likely to move to extremes.[2]

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Peer Sharing. Sometimes, people are shown extremist content and propaganda by peers and online acquaintances. Often, such content is treated as a dark joke, or "edgy" humor expressed through a playful meme or animated video. But research shows that exposure like this can lead some people to consider extremist positions, preparing them for later radicalization.[3] Jokes, like memes about the Holocaust or slavery, also help to dehumanize entire groups of people, making it easier to rationalize violent action in the future.

Direct contact with extremists online. In the past, extremists were limited in their chances to speak directly with young people. But the internet connects extremists and potential recruits anywhere in the world—including a teen's phone or the family computer. Direct conversations with extremists on social media, online games, and in other online spaces can be a gateway to online radicalization.

This process is not inevitable. Just because a child has encountered extremist content online doesn't mean they are automatically being radicalized. Other vulnerabilities must be present (see DRIVERS). But if a child seems to be enjoying increasingly extreme content, this indicates radicalization may be occurring.

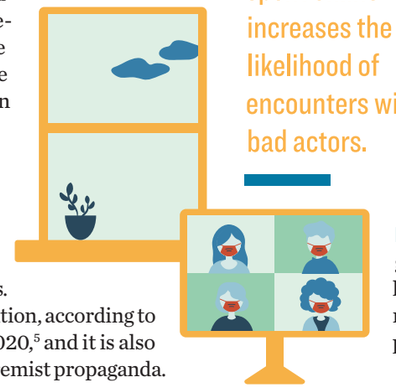
NEW RISKS IN THE COVID-19 ERA

Online radicalization was a concern well before the COVID-19 pandemic began.[4] But the pandemic itself has increased the risks of online radicalization at the same time as it has heightened the vulnerabilities and drivers that make youth susceptible to extremist narratives and predatory recruiters. Here are some reasons why:

Unprecedented time online. Almost 93% of people in households with school-age children reported their children had engaged in some form of distance learning since the outbreak of COVID-19. Nearly 15 million college students have switched to online learning as well. For millions of youth, the hours previously spent at school or in classrooms under the supervision of trusted adults are now largely spent online.

Distracted parents and caregivers. Work has not stopped for most parents and caregivers. Some adults must work online during much or most of the day. Many other adults must continue to go to work outside the home, leaving children's online activities unsupervised. Parents and caregivers are relaxing screen time restrictions in order to find more time for their own work, both in and outside the home.

Risks associated with at-home digital learning. Significant increases in time spent online increase the likelihood of encounters with bad actors. This is the case with child exploitation, according to an FBI warning issued in April 2020,[5] and it is also true for risks of encountering extremist propaganda.



Significant increases in time spent online increases the likelihood of encounters with bad actors.

Reduced social supports from trusted adults. The network of teachers, coaches, and other instructors who can assist parents in spotting changes to a child's behavior may have a harder time doing so in fully or mostly-online contexts.

Isolation from others who might challenge new beliefs. Social restrictions prevent children from accessing the peers and mentors who could discourage and refute emerging extremist attitudes. The sense of belonging to peer groups, sports teams, extracurricular activities and other social groups that provides important resilience to extremist recruitment may be weaker during this time of isolation in ways that create more susceptibility to extremist groups' promises of brotherhood, belonging and a sense of purpose.

Uncertainty and Loss. The COVID-19 era is a time of great uncertainty and loss. Almost every family in the United States will be touched by the loss of life from COVID-19. Young people have also lost their regular network of peer support, the rewards and milestones of the school year (sports, dances, graduation, etc.), and their daily routine and structure. COVID-19's impact on the economy is pushing caregivers into unemployment, promising an ongoing loss of financial stability for all who depend on them. Financial instability, uncertainty and loss are also contributing to an increase in adverse mental health conditions for both young people and adults.[6]

Scapegoating and simplistic answers. Extremist groups exploit tragedy and loss by pushing blame onto scapegoats who they claim are responsible for the virus and its broader impacts. Such groups thrive during times of uncertainty by offering simplistic answers and easy targets to blame.

Broadening support base. Some extremist groups are exploiting COVID-19 as a public relations opportunity, engaging in community service aimed at softening their public image as hate groups.

New extremist content circulating. Extremists have quickly seized on the virus to circulate videos, memes, and other materials that promote racist and xenophobic arguments and conspiracy theories about the virus's origin, its impact on minority communities, and the government's response.[7] Much of this material actively impedes important public health measures, such as vaccinations, mask-wearing, and proper social distancing. Some of this material has circulated widely on mainstream social media channels, increasing the likelihood of encountering hateful or extremist content.

This situation creates a "perfect storm" for individuals to explore extremist spaces and content online, as increased time online meets decreased supervision in a time of uncertainty and upheaval. Extremist groups thrive in situations such as these by exploiting legitimate fears and grievances while preying on vulnerable children and adolescents.

RECOGNIZING WARNING SIGNS

There are some specific warning signs that should send up a red flag about the kind of content a child is being exposed to online. This includes content related to COVID-19 as well as content that was circulating well before the pandemic.

Signs of Radicalization Related to COVID-19

- Blaming immigrants for the spread of COVID-19 or for the severity of its impact.
- Stereotyping ethnic or religious groups as "super spreaders" or believing that social distancing restrictions are not enforced for these groups.
- The belief that COVID-19 is a part of a "globalist elite" and/or Jewish master plan conspiracy.
- Accusing political opponents or racial/ethnic groups of conspiring to engineer and spread COVID-19.
- Looking forward to societal chaos or collapse due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The belief or hope that the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout will help return women to their "proper place" in the home.
- Violent calls to revolution against perceived government tyranny following shelter-in-place orders and/or within demands to "re-open the country."
- Turning to racial stereotypes in order to explain COVID-19's greater impact in minority communities.

Signs of Radicalization Not Only Related to COVID-19

- Belief that the 2020 presidential election was plagued by election and voter fraud.
- Fear of a "Great Replacement" or "White Genocide" in which a white minority is politically oppressed by a nonwhite majority.
- Belief in antisemitic conspiracy theories.
- Belief in the necessity of violent insurrections, in an upcoming second American Civil War (often called by the slang term "boogaloo" or related adaptations, including "big igloo," "blue igloo," or "big luau").
- Belief in male supremacy or expressions of misogyny, including policing the behavior of girls or young women alongside accusations of promiscuity and immorality.
- Belief in the necessity of violence to suppress protests, uprisings against racial injustice, police brutality and/or the Black Lives Matter movement.

Related Causes for Concern

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the appearance of many conspiracy theories and other types of misinformation. Many of these overlap with propaganda being spread by extremist groups and can create a bridge to radicalization. The following kinds of ideas are often used by extremist groups as a gateway for recruitment and should be cause for concern.

- Belief that the COVID-19 global pandemic have been engineered by elites to solidify power in ways that constitute political tyranny.
- Belief that any COVID-19 vaccine is part of a sinister conspiracy related to Bill Gates and/or other "elites" attempting to control populations through medical vaccinations.
- Belief that COVID-19 is a bioweapon created by the United States, Chinese, or Israeli governments.
- Belief that social collapse is part of a larger political/social cycle or religious prophecy.

UNDERSTANDING THE DRIVERS

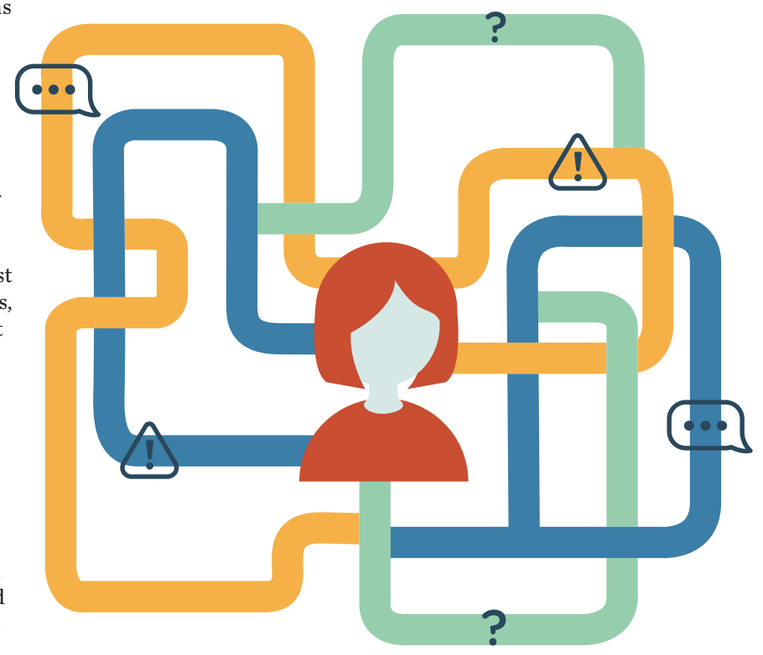
Parents and caregivers can help prevent and interrupt radicalization processes by staying alert to the kinds of vulnerabilities that make youth more susceptible to extremist rhetoric or recruitment. There is no single formula that can explain why one person will be drawn to extremist groups and another one will not, but we do know that most extremists have experienced some combination of the following:

Trauma, Disruption, and Loss. Sudden unwanted changes to our everyday lives can leave people feeling powerless, which makes them more vulnerable to radicalization. Disruptions can be dramatic, like the death of a loved one, a violent assault, or economic hardships. Or they can be seemingly small, like the switch from middle school to high school. Extremists offer a false sense of security and the promise belonging, and the COVID-19 pandemic has upset our most basic sense of security, leaving many feeling dislocated and even traumatized.

Confusion and Uncertainty. The COVID-19 crisis is unprecedented. It has upset every aspect of our normal lives, and no part of society has not been affected. This can leave anyone—but young people in particular—struggling to make sense of it all. Extremists offer simple, false solutions to complex problems, while conspiracy theories offer a sense of control when we feel otherwise powerless.[8]

Anger and Betrayal. When people feel something has unjustly been taken from them, they may turn to extremists for easy answers and a scapegoat to blame. The COVID-19 pandemic is a scary time. Many are unsure of the best way to protect themselves from the virus, and no one knows when our lives might return to normal. This pandemic has taken away our leisure activities, our ability to socialize normally, and for some us, even our jobs. These justified grievances can offer extremists an "open door" to radicalize and recruit. Extremists use conspiracy theories about the origins of COVID-19 to direct that anger and sense of betrayal toward others, including minority groups and organizations involved in relief efforts.

Rebellion and Status. Youthful rebellion can be harmless, or even a healthy part of growing up. And the switch to online classes during this pandemic offers countless new ways for students to rebel, such as by sharing provocative content on their classroom screens. But when adolescents rebel with hateful and extremist content, they can cause real damage to themselves and those around them. Some former extremists report that their radicalization began with sharing "edgy" or shocking material as a joke, a way to shock authority figures, or as a way to impress their peers.[9] But all too often, these attempts to rebel and gain status with peers can evolve into actual extremist beliefs.



Desire for Love and Friendship. Strange as it sounds, many extremists embrace hate hoping it will bring them closer with someone they love.[10] Whether a family member, boyfriend/girlfriend, or close friend, we all want to be in agreement with those we care about. It is sometimes easier to embrace extremism than to reject a loved one and their beliefs. When a loved one is radicalized, it puts everyone around them at risk.

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Isolation and Lack of Belonging. A major driver toward extremist groups is a desire to be a part of something bigger and better than oneself. Youth who are highly isolated or lack a sense of belonging to groups outside their families are at higher risk from groups that offer them purpose, meaning or belonging. Former extremists often mention that extremist groups had become like a family to them, countering their loneliness and isolation.

Curiosity. Boredom and idleness can help spread conspiracies, or lead people to adopt radical ideologies. These beliefs engage a person's curiosity, and give them an emotionally rewarding subject to explore. Shutdowns associated with COVID-19 mean that many regular forms of entertainment, from movie theaters to sporting events, are off-limits. For already vulnerable people, the world of online conspiracy theorists and hate groups can become even more attractive.

Most People Do Not Become Extremists. Even if a child is at risk from one of these factors, it does not mean they will automatically adopt extremist beliefs. However, now is the time pay extra attention to what they say and where they go online. The COVID-19 pandemic has elevated the risk of radicalization for everyone.

ENGAGE AND EMPOWER

The good news is that parents and caregivers are the people in the best position to stop radicalization in its tracks during the COVID-19 pandemic. If you're concerned about a child or young adult you know becoming radicalized, here are some strategies to engage them:

LISTEN to what children are saying. If they begin to repeat themes or vocabulary associated with extremists and conspiracy theories, try not to ridicule or punish them. Ridicule and scolding have actually been shown to strengthen problematic belief systems.[11] Instead, suggest that the people spreading these messages may have their own motives besides the truth and a child's well-being. Then, reach out for help from one of the resources provided at the end this guide.

ASK QUESTIONS about what children are doing online, what they are learning, and what kinds of websites and platforms they spend time on. Approach these questions from a place of curiosity rather than monitoring. Ask open ended questions, like "What values do *you* stand for?" or "What kind of person do *you* want to be?" Asking questions that show genuine interest in a child's activities and hobbies may open up new lines of communication and sharing about what they do online. Ask questions that let them teach you something from their lives, like "How does that game work?" or "How do you think your teachers could be doing better in the transition to online learning?" Teenagers may open up more if you raise questions during casual activities where they are not the only focus of your attention. Talking while driving in the car, folding laundry, or taking a walk can reduce the pressure.[12]

DISCUSS the news with children in an age-appropriate way. Visit sites like the News Literacy Project to learn how you can avoid misinformation and propaganda. Screen content they are watching by looking at the reviews and parent/child ratings on Common Sense Media. Proactively suggest materials published by trustworthy news sources and read an article together each day. Subscribe and listen to a credible current events podcast together. Pay attention to the news sources children favor and ask them how they know the sources of their information are credible. Help direct them toward reliable news sources. Continue to educate yourself on how to identify misinformation and disinformation in the news and elsewhere.

EDUCATE children on the ways that propaganda and misinformation are used to manipulate people. Talk to them about both the styles and strategies of extremist propaganda (such as scapegoating or offering simple solutions to complex problems).[13] Explain that propaganda can be delivered in any medium—writing, video, music, memes, etc.—and can often disguise itself as humor.

ADVISE children to practice good internet safety. They should be cautious about clicking on links they don't recognize and should not click on links sent from people they don't know. Maintaining privacy settings—and updating them regularly—on all apps and social media accounts is important.

ENCOURAGE your children to critically examine messages they receive, and to treat the information they consume as persuasive devices, meant to convince them of a world view. Talk about what they can do if they encounter an extremist message online or in real life (see "Responding to Hate," below). These critical thinking skills and vigilance can help a child spot and overcome radicalizing messages.

Pay attention to the news sources where they are seeking information, and ask them how they know the sources of their information are credible. Help direct them toward reliable news sources.

EXPOSE the way extremists prey on a young person's sense of vulnerability and identity. Demonstrate to children how these messages might even appeal to them. Be honest about a time in the past when you may have been deceived by an individual or group who didn't have your best interests at heart. See the resources provided at the end of this guide to learn more about the experiences of former extremists and share them.

REMIND children that people may not be who they say they are online. The internet allows anyone to wear a mask—especially predators. Sometimes, people who seem popular and successful are really failures. People who seem fun and accepting can be intolerant and even abusive. This is especially true in extremist spaces, where violence and exploitation within groups is quite common.

Preventing online radicalization is about more than just recognizing and avoiding risks. It's also about building resiliency and strengthening a sense of belonging and identity so that youth are less vulnerable or susceptible to extremist rhetoric. Here are some strategies you can use to help strengthen youth resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond:

REASSURE children and share your plan for weathering the COVID-19 pandemic with them. Explain that it is okay to feel uncertain. Point out everyday people—volunteers, community members, neighbors, and charitable organizations—who are helping others during this crisis. Show children safe ways in which they can help, too. This might include taking groceries to an elderly neighbor, reaching out to a classmate who may lack social support, or simply making a sign to thank essential workers and hanging it in a window.

EMPOWER children to take charge. Extremist groups thrive when ordinary people feel their lives are out of control. Find everyday ways a child can exercise control over their environment. Talk to children and try to remember times when they took control of a situation—a sporting or gaming success, a minor emergency they helped solve, an important errand or chore they accomplished. Allow them to plan meals, or to make family TV and movie viewing choices. Where appropriate, ask older adolescents for their opinion in household decisions and show them when you follow their advice.

CHALLENGE harmful gender stereotypes that encourage violence by engaging children in thoughtful discussions around empathy and emotions. Help children develop an understanding and appreciation for gender beyond the binary of boys and girls.

CREATE roots and strengthen children's identity at home, in their family and their broader community. Extremists prey on young people who lack a sense of belonging, and one of the best ways to create resilience to extremist messaging is to strengthen youth's sense of positive identity and belonging. Youth who already have a strong sense of meaning, engagement, and purpose in their lives are less likely to be drawn to the promises of extremist groups who offer it to them. Parents and caregivers can help by sharing family stories, highlighting friends and relatives who have fought for justice against oppression, and reinforcing values about community and caring for others.

SHARE cultural practices and knowledge that are different from your own. Listening to and learning about others' lived experiences is a critical step in anti-racist practice. Exposure and deep engagement with different kinds of people, along with rich cross-cultural experiences, have been shown to create "off-ramps" from extremist movements and ideologies.[14] The more people spend time in like-minded groups, the more likely they are to move toward extremes. Don't stay silent about the history and ongoing injustices of white supremacy and male supremacy. See "How to Get Help" below for resources and where to get started.

MODEL acceptance, kindness, and empathy for others. Individuals who have left extremist movements regularly point to the kindness of others—even in the face of hate and violence—as a driving factor for leaving the movement. Schools who have launched kindness campaigns have reported fewer disciplinary referrals and reduced bullying.[15] Finding concrete ways for children to help others during the COVID-19 pandemic—by gathering donations for a food pantry, delivering groceries to an elderly or immune-compromised neighbor, or sending a card or video to an isolated grandparent—can help forge kindness in ways that make it harder to be drawn to hate.

CONNECT with the broader network of trusted adults in the child's life for additional resources and help. If a child needs deeper understanding of the historical experience of marginalized peoples, hate speech, or extremism, reach out to their teachers and principals and request resources. Religious leaders, therapists, coaches, youth group leaders and other adults in a child's life can be an important sounding board and brainstorming partner for how to better engage with youth or assess warning signs.

REMEMBER that you are not alone. There are dozens of organizations working to prevent and intervene in radicalization pathways. The resource list at the end of this guide offers websites, downloadable guides, and phone numbers to call to seek additional help.

RESPONDING TO HATE

Extremism online affects everyone. The problems of extremism in the COVID-19 era do not just affect those young people whom extremists intend to radicalize. We must always remember and emphasize the impact extremism has on its victims. Children and adolescents belonging to groups targeted for hate and harassment are now also more vulnerable because of increased time online. Here's what to do if a child is the victim of online hate or is targeted with harassing content.

Take it seriously. Hateful or harassing conduct has real-world consequences. Many victims of online harassment curtail their online use, and some stop altogether,[16] but this is not possible when schooling is conducted online. Children and adolescents who experience bias harassment are more likely to experience feelings of isolation, depression, and anxiety.[17] And because these attacks are identity-based, they can affect anyone in a community belonging to that group—not just the direct targets of harassment.

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Create a record. If you are able to file a report with your school or school district, do it. If you cannot, or do not trust that a report will be responded to appropriately, write a detailed email describing the incident and send it to the child's school. Save a copy for yourself some place safe. Remember, even if schools cannot immediately respond to your case, your record will support other victims of bias harassment, and help to create a record of ongoing issues.

Discuss online safety and privacy practices. Make sure your children do not share any identifying information online. This includes their home address, phone number, or those of family and friends. Make sure that social media and email accounts have unique passwords and change them every six months. Consider setting social media accounts to "private," so that only a child's friends can connect with them.

Remind children that extremists are relatively few in number. There are many, many more people of good will, who want to live in a diverse, tolerant nation. But the internet and other media amplify extremists, making them seem more numerous and powerful than they really are.

Get Help. Reporting hate can lead to more responsive and comprehensive tools to combat future incidents. There are a range of advocacy groups who collect reports of witnessed or experienced harassment, hate speech, bullying and violence and can refer you to resources for reporting, pursuing legal action, financial assistance, or support for physical and mental health needs. For example, the Victim Connect Resource Center website offers a list of advocacy groups and resources, including a Victim Connect Hotline that can refer you to services: 1-855-4-VICTIM. See the resource list below as a starting place for reporting and tracking hate.

HOW TO GET HELP

If a child or young adult you know seems to be at risk for radicalization, reach out for help. Find out who your child trusts. If there is a trusted teacher, coach, clergy member, or other adult outside the home who can offer support, speak with them. If you are a caregiver outside the home, look for support within your organization and try to determine if the child has good support at home. Below is a sample list of resources that can help. Extremism is a problem that affects everyone. You do not have to face this problem alone.

Addressing Violent Extremism and Radicalization

• Life After Hate is a compassion-forward organization of former extremists who offer disengagement counseling and ongoing support to people leaving extremism: www.lifeafterhate.org/

• Organization for the Prevention of Violence's EVOLVE Program (Canada) is a professional counseling program providing counseling and social services to both victims of hate crimes and anyone looking to disengage from extremism: https://preventviolence.ca/

• Parents for Peace offers a help line for people concerned that someone close to them is becoming radicalized toward extremism (1-844-49-PEACE): www.parents4peace.org

Styles and Strategies of Extremist Propaganda

• Anti-Defamation League's Hate Symbols Database and its Propaganda, Extremism & Online Recruitment Tactics: http://www.adl.org/hate-symbols www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk/

• "Guide to Radical Right Symbols, Slogans and Slurs," Centre for Analysis on the Radical Right (CARR): www.radicalrightanalysis.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/CARR-A-Guide-to-Online-Radical-Right-Symbols-Slogan-and-Slurs.pdf

• A glossary of male supremacist extremism: https://rationalwiki.org/wiki/Manosphere_glossary

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• The News Literacy Project: https://newslit.org/

Teaching Children about Prejudice and Racism

• No Racism in Schools #1865: https://www.noracismin-schools.org

• Embrace Race, Resources: https://www.embracerace.org/resources

• Telling the Truth About Slavery Is Not Indoctrination by Clint Smith III: https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/09/real-stakes-fight-over-history/616455/

• "How to Talk to Kids About Race and Racism," Parent Toolkit: https://www.parenttoolkit.com/social-and-emotional-development/advice/social-awareness/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-race-and-racism

• The Antiracist Research & Policy Center: https://www.bu.edu/antiracist-center/

• The Western States Center's toolkit on addressing white nationalism in schools: https://www.westernstatescenter.org/schools

• "Anti-Racism Resources for Parents and Kids," Healthline: https://www.healthline.com/health/parenting/anti-racism-resources-for-parents-and-kids

• "Anti-Racism Resources for All Ages," Padlet: https://padlet.com/nicolethelibrarian/nbasekqoazt336co

• Bertelsmann Foundation and PERIL, "The Boogaloo Ballad of Henry Graves: Education Guide." www.bfna.org/democracy/the-boogaloo-ballad-of-henry-graves-2eim66gep6/

• "How to Talk To Your Kids About Anti-Racism," PBS SoCal: https://www.pbssocal.org/education/at-home-learning/talk-kids-anti-racism-list-resources/

• Guide to Allyship: https://guidetoallyship.com/

• "Black Lives Matter at School," NEA EdJustice: https://neaedjustice.org/black-lives-matter-school-resources/

• De Nichols' Deliberate & Unafraid Book Club: https://www.denichols.co/bookclub

• List of local Black Lives Matters chapters: https://blacklivesmatter.com/chapters/

From SPLCs Teaching Tolerance:

- Resources for Confronting White Nationalism: https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/new-resources-for-confronting-white-nationalism

- Learning the Landscape of the Digital World: https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications/learning-the-landscape-of-digital-literacy

- TTs Digital Literacy Framework: https://www.tolerance.org/frameworks/digital-literacy

- Teaching Hard History | American Slavery resources: https://www.tolerance.org/frameworks/teaching-hard-history/american-slavery

- TT Text library (historical, primary docs, fiction): https://www.tolerance.org/classroom-resources/texts

- Let's Talk: Facilitating Critical Conversations: https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications/lets-talk

- "Speak Up At School," SPLCs Teaching Tolerance: https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications/speak-up-at-school

- Speak Up at School | How to Respond: https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications/speak-up-at-school

- Speaking Up Against Hateful Rhetoric in Public Discourse: https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/speak-up-against-hateful-rhetoric

- "Speak Up: Responding to Everyday Bigotry," SPLC: www.splcenter.org/20150125/speak-responding-everyday-bigotry

- "Learning the Landscape of the Digital World," SPLCs Teaching Tolerance: https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications/learning-the-landscape-of-digital-literacy

- "Responding to Hate and Bias at School," SPLCs Teaching Tolerance: www.tolerance.org/magazine/publications/responding-to-hate-and-bias-at-school

Online Safety

- The National Online Safety website, which hosts a variety of guides, webinars, and learning modules for parents, teachers, and caregivers about internet safety, platforms, and online learning: https://nationalonlinesafety.com/

- The Center for Internet and Technology Addiction: https://virtual-addiction.com/

- The National Substance Abuse and Mental Health Helpline: www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline

- "What Parents Need to Know about Tik Tok," National Online Safety: https://nationalonlinesafety.com/guides/what-parents-need-to-know-about-tiktok

- Common Sense Media: www.commonsensemedia.org/

Preventing and Dealing with Extremism

- "Ten Ways to Fight Hate: A Community Response Guide," SPLC: https://www.splcenter.org/20170814/ten-ways-fight-hate-community-response-guide

- "Five Things Educators Can Do to Address Bias in Their Schools," NEA EdJustice: https://neaedjustice.org/2019/10/11/5-things-educators-can-do-to-address-bias-in-their-school/

- "A Teacher's Guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism," United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000244676

- "What if I was Wrong?," an Educator's Book of Activities to Prevent Radicalization: https://indd.adobe.com/view/57aec2f5-a65e-49fb-941f-aa85e600c4f9

- "Radicalization and Violent Extremism: How Do I Talk About It With My Child?": https://info-radical.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/How-do-I-talk-about-it-with-my-child_CPRLV.pdf

- An Information Kit for School Personnel, Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence: https://info-radical.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/INFORMATION-KIT-FOR-SCHOOL-PERSONNEL.pdf

- "The Oxygen of Amplification: Better Practices for Reporting on Extremists, Antagonists, and Manipulators," Data & Society: https://datasociety.net/library/oxygen-of-amplification/

Hate Tracking, Reporting, and Maps in the United States

- SPLCs Hate Map: www.splcenter.org/hate-map

- SPLC Map of White Supremacist Flyering in the U.S.: https://www.splcenter.org/flyering-map

- The "Stop AAPI Hate" Reporting Center from the Asian Pacific Policy and Planning Council: www.asianpacificpolicyandplanningcouncil.org/stop-aapi-hate/

- The Anti-Defamation League's Bias and Discrimination Incident Reporting Site: www.adl.org/reportincident

- Human Rights Campaign Hate Crimes and Violence Against LGBTQ People: www.hrc.org/resources/hate-crimes-and-violence-against-lgbt-people

- Council on American Islamic Relations Incident Reporting Site: www.cair.com/report/

- The U.S. Department of Justice Hate Crimes Reporting: www.justice.gov/hatecrimes/get-help-now

- The Victim Connect Resource Center: https://victimconnect.org/learn/types-of-crime/hate-crimes/

APPENDIX

STAYING ALERT TO SITES, PLATFORMS AND APPS FREQUENTLY EXPLOITED BY EXTREMISTS

Certain applications and online platforms should raise a red flag for parents and caregivers. They can be the starting point for a conversation with youth about why they are using those platforms. Of particular concern are apps and platforms that use a high level of encryption, hide other apps, and applications designed to provide content banned on mainstream sites. This is a constantly evolving space, and new sites and applications are always emerging. The best advice is to ask children about their browser history along with any applications, platforms or sites they use that you don't recognize. As a starting point, look for the following on a child's smartphone, tablet, or computer and web browers.

Toxic online communities

The following sites are known to foster cultures of hate and intolerance, and to seed online campaigns of disinformation and harassment. If you see a child is active on one of these sites, it should be cause for immediate concern.

- 4Chan
- Gab
- 8Kun
- KiwiFarms
- incels.co

Mainstream sites exploited by extremists

The following sites are popular with children and young adults. However, extremists and other harmful actors and predators seek to exploit these sites to prey on vulnerable people. Targeting can take the form of one-on-one grooming or as a place to spread propaganda. If your child uses one of the following sites, talk with them about the fundamentals of internet safety and how to spot extremist activity.

- Reddit
- Discord
- iFunny
- Twitch
- Tik Tok
- YouTube
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Teamspeak (via Steam, Xbox, PS4)
- VKontake (VK)

Apps and sites with limited moderation

These sites and applications employ varying degrees of content moderation that often rely on users to report violations. Extremists seek to exploit such a reliance to spread content and to recruit.

- Minds
- BitChute
- Riot Chat
- Rocket Chat
- Parler
- MeWe
- DLive
- Rumble

Highly encrypted and anonymizing apps and services

The following applications use encryption and other privacy technologies to keep their activities secret. If your child is using one of these applications, find out why and reach out for help.

- Telegram
- Signal
- Wickr
- WIRE
- Jitsi Meet
- PIA VPN
- Nord VPN
- Proton VPN
- Protonmail
- Unseen.is Email
- Tutanota Email
- Tor/Onion Browsers
- Brave Browser
- Threema
- Keybase

ENDNOTES

1 See for example Berger, J.M. 2018. *Extremism.* MIT Press; Mudde, Cas. 2019. *The Far Right Today.* Polity Press.

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4 See, for example, Davey, Jacob, and Julia Ebner. *The Fringe Insurgency: Connectivity, Convergence and Mainstreaming of the Extreme Right.* London: Institute for Strategic Dialogue. 2017. https://www.isdglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/The-Fringe-Insurgency-221017.pdf; Daniels, Jesse. *Cyber-Racism: White Supremacy Online and the New Attack on Civil Rights.* Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009.

5 See "FBI Urges Vigilance During COVID-19 Pandemic." Available at https://www.fbi.gov/coronavirus

6 Unseen risk of COVID-19 and children: Anxiety, depression and suicide." Available at: https://wgntv.com/news/medical-watch/unseen-risk-of-covid-19-and-children-anxiety-depression-and-suicide/

7 For examples of the ways that extremists are exploiting the COVID-19 pandemic, see the State of New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness March 21, 2020 analysis, "Online Extremists Exploit COVID-19 to inspire Supporters." Available at https://www.njhomelandsecurity.gov/analysis/online-extremists-exploit-covid-19-to-inspire-supporters

8 See Rosenblum, Nancy and Russell Muirhead. 2019. *A Lot of People are Saying: The New Conspiracism and the Assault on Democracy.* Princeton: Princeton University Press.

9 Miller-Idriss, Cynthia. 2018. *The Extreme Gone Mainstream: Commercialization and Far Right Youth Culture in Germany.* Princeton University Press.

10 McCauley, Clark and Sophia Moskalenko. 2017. *Friction: How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us.* Oxford University Press.

11 Kent, Stephen A. and Joseph P. Szimhart. 2002. "Exit Counseling and the Decline of Deprogramming," *Cultic Studies Review* Vol. 1(3).

12 For guidance on how to talk to children and teens, see Faber, Adele and Elaine Mazlish's books *How to Talk so Teens will Listen and Listen so Teens will Talk* (Harper Collins 2006) and *How to Talk so Kids will Listen and Listen so Kids will Talk* (Scribner 2012).

13 For more on the strategies of extremist propaganda, see the Anti-Defamation League's discussion, "Propaganda, Extremism and Online Recruitment Tactics," available at https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/table-talk/propaganda-extremism-online-recruitment

14 See Miller-Idriss, Cynthia. 2009. *Blood and Culture.* Duke University Press.

15 See the City of Kindness website at http://cityofkindness.org/portfolio/get-inspired/ for resources. Read more about the story of the city of Anaheim's kindness campaign and its impact on school bullying, disciplinary referrals, and local crime in Humphries, Monica. "One Mayor Transformed His Town Into the 'City of Kindness' — and Inspired Over 1 Million Kind Acts." *Nation Swell,* August 19, 2019, available at https://nationswell.com/anaheim-city-of-kindness/

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17 See the 2009 guide, "Preventing and responding to hate crimes: A resource guide for NGOs in the OSCE region," published by the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights," available at https://www.osce.org/odihr/39821?download=true

CREDITS

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