Prevention first!

AN INFORMATION KIT FOR SOCIAL WORKERS AND COUNSELLORS

Developing a better
understanding of the phenomenon of
radicalization leading to violence



CENTRE FOR THE **PREVENTION**OF RADICALIZATION
LEADING TO VIOLENCE





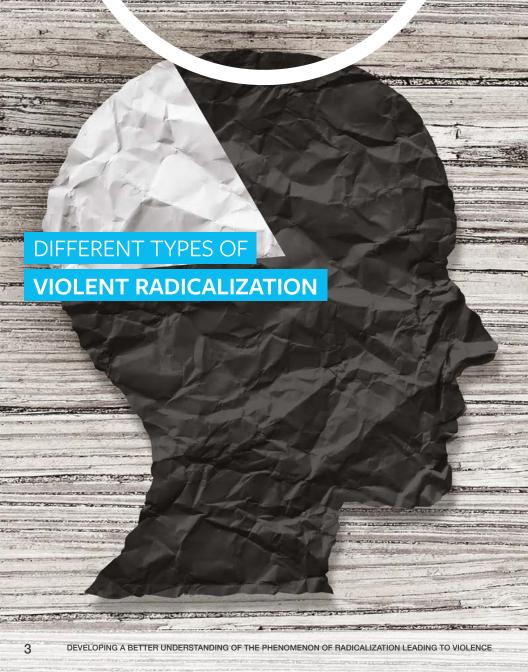


What is radicalization leading to violence?

Radicalization leading to violence is a process whereby people adopt extremist belief systems—including the willingness to use, encourage or facilitate violence—with the aim of promoting an ideology, political project or cause as a means of social transformation.

Radicalization leading to violence is associated with three coexisting phenomena:

- the adoption of an ideology whose rationale becomes a way of life and a framework for meaningful action for the individual;
- the belief in the use of violent means to promote a cause;
- · the merging of ideology and violent action.



Violent right-wing

A form of radicalization associated with fascism, racialism/racism, supremacism, even ultranationalism. Characterized by the violent defence of a racial, ethnic or pseudo-national identity, this form of radicalization is also associated with radical hostility towards state authorities, minorities, immigrants and/or left-wing political groups.

Violent political-religious radicalization

A form of radicalization associated with a political interpretation of religion and the defence, by violent means, of a religious identity perceived to be under attack (international conflicts, foreign policy, social debates, etc.). This violent radicalization can take root in all religions.

Violent left-wing

A form of radicalization focussed mainly on demands linked to anti-capitalism and the transformation of a political system perceived to generate social inequalities, using violent means. This category also includes some radical environmental groups or animal rights groups that use violence to advocate for their cause.

Single-issue violent extremism

A form of radicalization motivated mainly by one main issue. Anti-abortion extremist movements, certain anti-gay/anti-feminist movements, or ultra-individualist and independent extremist movements (Free Men on the Land or Citoyens souverains) belong to this category. Mass killers whose motivations are partially or completely ideological can also be placed in this category.

HOW TO RECOGNIZE VIOLENT RADICALIZATION?

While certain behaviours may be good indicators of radicalization, it is important to point out that there is no standard profile for individuals undergoing radicalization, nor is any factor associated exclusively with this particular phenomenon. Every case of radicalization is unique and is shaped by the particular context and environment of the individual in question.

However, if you are worried by otherwise unexplained behavioural, cognitive or emotional changes in one of your clients, that is reason enough to ask for assistance or advice from professionals who can help you navigate such a complex and delicate situation. Requests for support are first assessed based on the nature and magnitude of the behavioural changes observed. These may include:

- Gradual withdrawal by the individual in question.
- Contact with radical or extremist individuals or networks, either online or in real life.
- Breaking with or distancing from friends and family.
- Abrupt or unexplained loss of interest in professional or school activities, or recurrent absenteeism.



- Repeated expression of feelings of victimization, identity stigmatization, or persecution.
- Difficulty dealing with ambiguity, and adoption of an intransigent worldview.
- Strong preoccupation with conspiracy theories pertaining to institutions, the State or certain international events.
- Virulent attacks on certain groups or individuals based on their origin, skin-colour, gender, sexual orientation, or religion.
- Hateful (xenophobic, anti-Semitic, homophobic, anti-Muslim, misogynist, etc.)
 discourse that leaves no room for dialogue.
- Legitimization of violence designed to promote the victory of a cause, ideology, or militant platform.
- Sudden interest in weapons.



SOME **VULNERABILITY** FACTORS









- Network of contacts in radical circles
- Distancing from circle of friends
- Troubled adolescence or difficult transition to adulthood
- Difficult life events (death of a loved one, job loss, etc.)
- Existential or spiritual crisis (pre- or post-conversion)

- Sustained or selfimposed social isolation
- Identity malaise
- Sense of being stigmatized due to one's beliefs or origin

Some people may exhibit different characteristics or be exposed to a number of environmental factors that make them more vulnerable to discourses of radicalization.



- Psychological frailty or disorders
- Psychological rigidity
- Episodes of psychological distress



- Polarized and polarizing societal debates
- Government positioning on poorly understood national and international issues
- Highly sensationalized public and media discourse
- Extremist discourse and propaganda that is readily accessible





When preliminary assessment of a situation seems to indicate possible violent radicalization, it is vital to act upstream to prevent the individual from endangering his or her own physical and psychological well-being as well as that of the community.

A few recommended intervention strategies:

- Show respect and empathy for the individual, as well as a willingness to listen without any preconceived judgments: this will help create an atmosphere conducive to developing a trusting relationship and meaningful connection.
- Avoid calling the person's values and beliefs into question, or confronting him or her about them; otherwise, you may cause the person to become defensive and completely closed off to your intervention.
- Based on your assessment of your mutual relationship, choose an appropriate time and place for an open and compassionate conversation.
- Adopt a communicative approach to collect the desired information tactfully and sensitively without arousing distrust or causing the individual to withdraw into him- or herself. Do not adopt a policing approach that could cause the individual to feel he or she is under surveillance or suspicion due to his or her behaviour or beliefs

- Weigh the need for support services against the need for protection when dealing
 with a case of radicalization that may lead to violence: the ideal intervention plan
 ensures a balance between security and psychosocial support.
- Draw on the expertise of resources around you to help you better understand the situation and structure your intervention, while respecting basic standards of confidentiality.
- Know and respect your limits and intervention skill-levels to avoid doing things that might aggravate the situation.
- Do not forget that the quality of the contact the individual has with you is crucial to the successful initiation of the intervention process.



Violent radicalization is a complex phenomenon that may have unexpected origins. The professionals at the CPRLV form a multidisciplinary team able to provide you with support, advice and coaching based on your situation and needs.





SOME **PROTECTIVE** FACTORS







- Belonging to a nonviolent social network (physical or virtual)
- Stable relational environment
- Quality relationship with a positive role model
- Strong family connection

- Stable family situation
- Support, guidance and listening during difficult life events
- Positive educational and career prospects

- Stable identity
- Strong sense of social integration and community acceptance
- Strong social bonds (real or perceived)



All individuals have protective factors that are either personal or environmental, constituting levers that can be used by social workers and counsellors to create a safety net around the individual.



- Critical thinking and cognitive moderation
- Emotional and mental resilience against attempted indoctrination by individuals outside their social circle
- Empathy and openness to others
- Emotional self-regulation



- Presence of counter-extremist discourse in general society
- Open societal debates advocating tolerance, respect and integration
- Reinforcement of the principles of shared community
- Collective resilience against hateful ideologies and hate speech



- To express any concerns you may have and to have someone to talk to
- To consult a qualified professional able to help you identify behaviors tied to violent radicalization
- To learn about suggested guidelines for responding to what may often be a complex situation
- To develop a better understanding of the different facets of violent radicalization in terms of intervention
- To receive support, in a personalized, discrete and confidential manner, while providing intervention
- To access tools and training to assist you in interventions.



What happens if I contact the centre?

A specialist from the CPRLV will call you back within 24 to 48 hours. The specialist will talk to you about your concerns and needs regarding the situation, schedule a meeting if you would like one, and set up an intervention plan if required.









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24/7 HELPLINE

Montréal area: 514 687-7141 Elsewhere in Québec : 1 877 687-7141

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