

What is disengagement and how to help

What to do when someone is moving away from violent extremism and reintegrating into the community.

The disengagement process

The consequences of radicalisation towards violent extremism seem obvious to most of us—but walking away from violent extremism is a natural thing to do and most members of extreme political, religious or activist groups do not stay in these movements for life.

Those who have been influenced can be blinded by the positive feelings of belonging to a group that explains why the world seems unfair, says who is to blame and gives permission to exact justice. These individuals do not realise that violence is the least effective way to achieve political, religious or social change.

In fact, most people who radicalise never get to the point of committing acts of violent extremism and make their own choice to leave violent extremism behind.

The most common reason for a person moving away from violent extremism is disillusionment, typically with:

- leadership and internal politics
- hypocritical behaviour of group members, or
- ineffectiveness of violent or illegal methods.

Family, friends and community are very important in assisting people to move away from violent extremism. It's usually a relief when people they care about disengage from violent extremism because the person has chosen a safer and more positive path for their future.

People disengaging from violent extremism often need to deal with psychological or physical health issues that are related to their involvement in violent extremist groups. These issues need to be addressed before they can rebuild their personal and social identity.

How the Australian Government is helping

The government has worked with key stakeholders to develop training materials for those who may be well-placed to identify and understand the signs of radicalisation and how to respond. This includes parents, the general community and more specific training for frontline workers, including school leadership teams, police and health professionals. This training may be delivered as information sessions or as train-the-trainer sessions. These resources are designed to increase awareness and understanding of the process of radicalisation and provide avenues for referral and support.

For further information, visit the [Australian Multicultural Foundation website](https://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/dfat/page/amf.html).

How you can help

A person who has left violent extremism will need support – whether from family and friends, or from social services or other community members.

You can:

- maintain open, honest communication
- reject the negative behaviour but accept the person
- help them to relate to people in a positive way
- help them learn about genuine beliefs and non-hateful ideologies
- help them find constructive and lawful ways to pursue their cause
- help them get professional support for any physical or emotional issues, and
- help them discover who they are and what they identify with.

Your role in helping someone walk away from violent extremism is very important. You may not be able to help them by yourself and may need advice and assistance from local authorities.

More information

For more information please contact livingsafetogether@ag.gov.au