

# I am worried somebody I know is radicalising ... what can I do?

If you are worried somebody you know may be 'radicalising' there is a range of strategies and services that may be of assistance.

## Someone is becoming a radical

When someone begins to separate from their family, friends and community or demonstrates a significant move towards extreme beliefs and attitudes, that person may be in the early stages of the radicalisation process. If that same person begins to advocate or promote the use of violence to achieve an ideological, political or religious goal, they may be radicalising towards violent extremism.

## Open communication

The best way to deal with the problem of radicalisation is to maintain open communication with the person. A positive relationship and open communication can be an effective intervention in itself. Even if someone decides to separate themselves from close friends and family, these people will still be helpful to them in the future.

To help them, listen to their reasons for becoming involved with a radical ideology or group. Try to understand their perspective. It is also important to separate their behaviour from who they are as a person. Even if you disagree with what they are saying, it is important to find some way to let them know they are accepted and that you are there to help them.

## Early intervention

Early intervention is best. However, before you try to intervene, try to fully understand a person's situation and motivation.

A significant event, or a build-up of incidents, can trigger and/or accelerate the radicalisation process. If issues can be dealt with before they become large problems, this may prevent a person from radicalising further.

These issues may include:

- confrontations with family members
- changes in living or employment situation
- exposure to hateful attitudes and actions, either as a victim or as an offender
- overseas events that harm their community, family or friends
- personal issues such as health problems, addiction, anger or social problems
- negative changes in friendships and/or personal relationships
- dropping out of school or university, and
- the experience of discrimination or social unfairness.

You should not assume that any one of these problems will lead a person to radicalise, but intervention and assistance from immediate family and the community to help deal with any of these types of issues can be particularly effective in preventing the radicalisation process.

There is a wide range of social and health services available to all Australians. These include:

- education and employment services
- health services
- housing services
- mental health and counselling
- refugee help services
- religious and cultural centres
- telephone counselling services
- youth community centres.

If you cannot approach a service provider directly, ask a friend, colleague or your local doctor to assist. These services are there to help all Australians deal with issues and become active, contributing members of their community. Once specific issues have been identified and addressed, it may be that no further intervention is required.

However, those who are undergoing the radicalisation process often become increasingly difficult to communicate with. They may refuse many well-intentioned attempts to help them. This can be hurtful but such refusals should not discourage those around them from trying to intervene to help the person.

### What else can I do?

If a person continues to promote the use of violence and other illegal activities to achieve an ideological, religious or political goal, a stronger intervention may be required. The most helpful response involves early action by concerned families, friends and communities, with further assistance from government services where needed, in the three areas of a person's life impacted by radicalisation – social relations, ideology and criminal activity.

#### Social responses

If someone has withdrawn from close friends and family and is spending significant amounts of time with a group that is hostile towards others, a social response may be the most appropriate.

Most people who have been involved with extremist groups say that having a trusted adult to talk to would have made the biggest difference in preventing them becoming involved.

- Connect them with encouraging role models in their life such as respected family members, coaches or teachers.
- Involve local youth or social workers.
- Assist in enrolling them in education, training or employment.
- Try to get them involved in positive social activities with new peers.

### Ideological responses

Searching for meaning and belief is a part of human nature. However, if someone does not have a strong background in the traditions of their beliefs, their incomplete knowledge makes them vulnerable to negative ideas and radicalisation. Proper guidance is important. If an individual is embracing aggressive and hostile attitudes based on ideological (including religious or political) teachings, then an ideological response could help.

- Involve respected leaders to help provide guidance and give solid grounding in their particular religious, political or ideological tradition.
- Find ways to get them involved in constructive community or political activities that enable them to put their values and beliefs into positive action.
- Provide guidance on how to question ideas, texts and leaders respectfully without resorting to violent attitudes.
- Help them interact respectfully with others of different belief systems and to accept difference.
- Provide opportunities for them to participate positively in intellectual, political or philosophical discussions with people from a wide range of beliefs.

### Behavioural responses

Some people become involved in inter-group violence and other illegal activities after becoming socially involved with an extremist group. In other cases, someone already involved with low level crime may adopt ideological or religious reasoning to justify their criminal actions.

Strategies to change the person's actions back to legal and non-violent methods may help in preventing them from becoming radicalised.

- Help them get involved in community actions that peacefully address their political or social justice concerns.
- Connect them to a positive role model or mentor who understands their behaviour and views.
- Involve them in a behavioural program with a trained counsellor.
- Approach community or police multicultural liaison officers to help you find appropriate ways to support the person.
- Help them comply with any existing court appointments or orders.

### Threats of harm

In the event that someone indicates they are going to harm themselves or other people, this should be taken seriously and must be acted upon immediately.

While this level of radicalisation is very rare, it is not helpful to the person or the community to ignore such behaviour.

If you are worried that somebody you know may be radicalising to violent extremism, contact one of the numbers listed below. The identity of callers will be kept confidential.

- Call the National Security Hotline on **1800 123 400** if you are worried somebody you know may be radicalising to the point of violence.
- Contact the police on **000** if someone you know has threatened to harm you or someone else.
- If you do not speak English well, call the Translating and Interpreting Hotline on **13 14 50** and ask them to contact the National Security Hotline or the emergency services and interpret for you.

### You are not alone

Many people and communities in Australia have helped to move people away from radicalisation to violent extremism.

As a friend, family or community member providing assistance, it is important to look after yourself as well. Speak with trusted people in your community or other families who have had similar experiences, or contact a support service such as Lifeline on **13 11 14**.