Building a Resilient Community within a Multicultural Canada

ITVE
INFORMATION TOOLKIT ON VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Together, Forward.

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*In this document, the masculine gender is used as a generic and applies to both men and women.

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Introduction

Now more than ever before, political violence is drawing the attention of Canadians and the international community. In the aftermath of the 9-11, preventing such atrocities has been at the forefront of Canada's National Defense agenda. However, there is nothing to suggest that violent extremism is winding down. Over the past four years, we have witnessed an upsurge of politically or religiously motivated acts of violence; notably the assassination attempt on the former Premier of Quebec in September 2012, the attacks carried out on Ottawa's Parliament and the St-Jean-Sur-Richelieu military base in October 2014, not to mention the Boston Marathon bombings in April 2013, and the multiple shootings in Paris in January and November 2015. This escalation of violence, both in frequency and intensity, compels pre-emptive intervention on all fronts.

Whether a "lone wolf" or a member of a violent organisation, it is shocking to see that the perpetrators are often citizens of the country they attack. Over the past few years, over 130 Canadians have traveled abroad to join the ranks of extremist organisations. Some of them will eventually return to Canada. This brings to the fore the question of radicalization and how it leads to violent extremism. Specifically, what are the psychological and social factors that push men and women to embrace ideologies that distance them from their community and compel them to use violence to further their cause?

Understanding the phenomenon of radicalisation is a prerequisite to prevent violent attacks, but also to reintegrate those who have fallen under the influence of violent groups, who target and exploit youth's vulnerability in search of personal significance. But how can we accomplish this feat? In this Information Toolkit on Violent Extremism (ITVE), we will learn that individuals can disengage from violence for the same reasons they embraced it; an array of constructive and effective methods are presented to help them achieve self-fulfillment.

Who can benefit from this information toolkit?

This information toolkit is intended for members of the public with questions about radicalization and the best way to help people close to them who have embarked in such a process. This document is more specifically intended for parents and teachers who are well-positioned to look for behavioural signs and take positive action when dealing with young people.

Building a Community Resilient to Violent Extremism

The Information Toolkit on Violent Extremism (ITVE) is part of a prevention initiative and its main objective is to build a resilient community, i.e., a community that is aware of the situation and well-equipped to quash emerging political violence, a community that is capable of:

1) helping its members reject violent ideologies; 2) reporting those who promote such ideologies; 3) refusing to succumb to the fear these violent groups attempt to instil;
4) flourishing by respecting everyone's differences;
5) helping its members to find peaceful ways of encouraging sustainable social change.

This approach aims to demystify and define radicalization. Simply put, it is a question of identifying the components that contribute to its emergence as well as the signs thereof, understanding the degrees of personal involvement in an ideology that promotes violence, and explaining the factors that contribute to radicalization as well as those that contribute to deradicalization. Several case studies of Canadians are presented herein in order to illustrate said phenomena.

What is Radicalization?

Distinguishing Radicalization, Fanaticism, and Fundamentalism

Radicalization is commonly mistaken for fanaticism and fundamentalism. However, this misconception is quite simply an unfortunate amalgamation of two separate terms, which ends up muddying our understanding of the phenomenon in question, leading us to believe that radicalization exists only within the sphere of religion. A great many observations contradict this proposition. Several extremist right wing, left wing, environmental or ethnonationalist groups are guided by political ideals rather than religious ones.

Is Radicalization Always Violent?

By associating radicalization with fundamentalism, we infer that radicalization refers to traditional or conservative ideas. However, history is full of examples of situations where so-called “radicals”, working at cross purposes, succeeded in advancing society by using democratic and peaceful methods. Since it is possible to be simultaneously radical and peaceful, it is a mistake to believe that radicalization and violence always go hand in hand.

Definition

Radicalization is a process whereby a person is initiated to an ideological message and encouraged to replace his moderate beliefs with extreme opinions. In this regard, radicalization means adopting beliefs that most people do not. Radicalization itself is neither problematic nor a threat to public safety. On the contrary, throughout history it has often been an important driver for positive social changes. Radicalization only becomes a problem when marginalized beliefs lead to violent behaviour to further a political or religious cause. This is when violent extremism comes into play.

Debunking Myths Concerning Violent Extremism

A Typical Profile

One of the most recurrent questions concerning radicalization is whether or not certain individuals are more inclined than others to fall into the hands of violent extremism. If this is the case, is there a specific profile? Are there demographic characteristics that could help identify at-risk individuals? Following the example of police work with street gangs, many researchers have attempted to answer these questions. Generally, one may rightly conclude that a majority of young men (18–24 years old) are drawn to violent extremism, although a growing number of women seem to be following suit. However, over the years, it has become clear that demographic profiling, such as socioeconomic status, ethnic background, religious affiliation or education, is scientifically unsatisfactory.

Mental Illness

The vast majority of us find it difficult to believe that a person could be willing to die for a cause and leave a trail of dead innocents in his wake. Unsurprisingly, we automatically refer to the individuals having committed such violent acts as “fanatics” or “crazy”. Nonetheless, it is nothing more than an improper use of language that oversimplifies a complex phenomenon rather than an actual observation. In fact, scientific support of the hypothesis that mental illness explains violent extremism is very limited.

At one point or another in their lives, most people adopt more or less extreme beliefs. Radicalization is therefore a normal process and every one of us has the potential to become fully engaged in a cause close to our heart. The radicalization process begins when certain ingredients come together.

The Ingredients of Radicalization

Generally, radicalization (both violent and peaceful) requires the presence of three ingredients: 1) motivation; 2) an ideology; and 3) social networks.

Motivation

For decades now, researchers have been trying to determine exactly what propels individuals to become radicalized and to resort to violence. In order to explain this phenomenon, a wide range of possible motivations have been documented; for example, honour, vengeance, loyalty to a charismatic leader, social injustice, power and the need to belong. These motivations all have one common denominator: the quest for personal significance. The quest for personal significance is the universal need to make a difference, to be someone and to find a purpose. There are two ways to activate the quest for significance: 1) following a loss of significance (actual or potential), or 2) when the person foresees an opportunity for a considerable gain of significance (e.g. going down in history or becoming some sort of hero). A loss of significance brings on severe psychological pain whereas gaining significance is expressed with a deep desire for adventure and risk taking. In both cases, once the quest for significance is activated, a person will begin to search for means to fulfill this motivation.

Ideology

Ideology is a set of beliefs shared by a group. Clearly, not all ideologies promote violence. In fact, certain ideologies are categorically peaceful and prosocial. Therefore, it is not the motivational aspect that encourages violence but rather the ideology itself that dictates what must be done to achieve personal significance.

Unlike peaceful ideologies, those leading to violent extremism combine three ingredients:

1) a grievance (an injustice, an offence) to which the group is subjected (e.g. religious, national, ethnic);
2) a culprit presumed to be responsible for the grievance (e.g. a country, an ethnic group, a religious group);
3) a method, i.e. violent acts aimed at the culprit to eradicate the grievance.

The group who adheres to this ideology perceives its violent acts as “effective” and “morally justifiable” in order to eliminate the grievance, and the group admires those who commit such acts. Consequently, people who adopt a violent ideology believe that committing violent acts will give them a sense of personal accomplishment.

When a person adopts an ideology that advocates violence, they tend to adopt a belief system that dehumanizes (i.e., belittles) others. Progressively, the person’s beliefs become more extreme causing him to become increasingly intolerant towards others who do not share his point of view. This intransigence may bring about many conflicts between the individual and those close to him about political or religious issues.

Social Networks

Social networks are an important factor related to radicalization. They are made up of individuals or groups with whom the person has social interactions (real or virtual). Social networks help promote ideologies (peaceful or violent) which the individual has access to directly within his own environment. They can also influence the individual's motivation; for example, when the community has the same grievance.

In the case of violent extremism, research shows that in more than two-thirds of cases, individuals joined violent groups through a family member, a friend or a member of their entourage that was already associated with a group adhering to a violent ideology. Generally, the groups are informal and not part of a structured and financed organization. This affiliation with other members of the group usually occurs face to face; however, this sense of affiliation can also develop through social media such as YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, chat rooms and forums.

The more time the individual spends with the group, the higher the probability that the individual will take an active role in the organization and commit violent acts. Given that the members of the group share ideas, experiences and a similar collective identity, they are very tightly-knit, so much so that it is quite common for the group to become a surrogate family for its members. This explains why the radicalized individual tends to abandon his friends and activities.

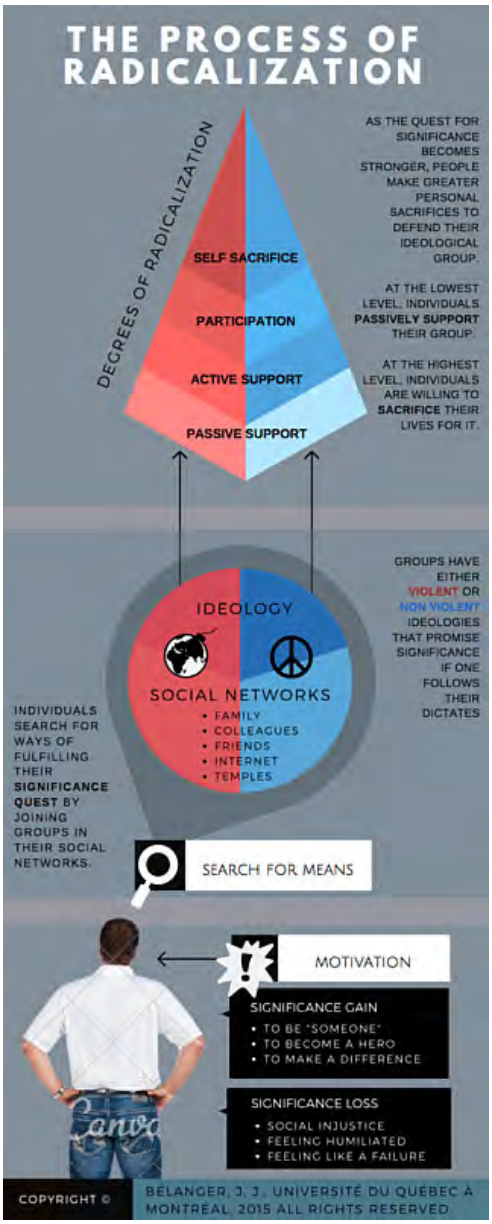
The Radicalization Process

Radicalization (leading to violence or not) does not happen overnight; it is a process. Sometimes, it takes only a few months for the person's identity to completely transform. A person may come across the aforementioned radicalization ingredients in a different order. Consequently, it is important to mention that the radicalization process is different from one person to another; many paths lead to radicalization.

Generally speaking, radicalization begins with motivation, namely the awakening of the quest for personal significance. The individual will then seek out ways to achieve his goal. In order to fulfill this quest for significance, the individual tends to join groups (e.g. athletic, artistic, political, religious, etc.) that form part of his social network, because such groups allow him to shape a positive self-image. Such groups have different ideologies that dictate what members must do in order to be a "valued member" of the group. Should an individual join a group with an ideology that promotes violence, he runs the risk of adopting violent behaviour.

Degrees of Radicalization

Radicalization may be experienced through different degrees of intensity. Firstly, the individual may simply agree with the group's ideology (passive support). The person may then become engaged in a series of behaviours that allow him to show his support (active support). For example, the person may show his support by participating in a fundraising event. At a higher degree of intensity, the individual becomes directly engaged in order to further his cause (participation). In the case of violent extremism, the person may commit crimes such as assault or harassment. When an individual is radicalized at the highest level, he is ready to sacrifice everything, including his own life, to defend his group and his ideology (self-sacrifice). The stronger the quest for significance, the greater the intensity of radicalization.



With the support that his group affords him, the person involved in violent extremism may not even be conscious of all the negative consequences his involvement may entail. Yet, the person sacrifices several important spheres of his life, such as family, health, education and career. With the high level of importance this individual gives to the ideology and to his group, violent extremism becomes a natural and coherent choice. Consequently, the person simply cannot conceive that, in Canada, ideological violence is counterproductive.

Radicalization on the Internet

The Internet is a remarkable communication tool that occupies a huge part of Canadians' daily life. It is a source of information that not only allows us to learn but to be entertained and to exchange ideas with the rest of the world. However, this virtual universe is not risk-free: social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) are conducive platforms for the broadcasting of messages facilitating radicalization leading to violence. More specifically, groups use them to promote hatred through e-magazines, videos and even video games. These messages serve two objectives.

The first objective of violent groups is to facilitate violence. For example, they post videos and instruction manuals showing readers how to build weapons and bombs, and suggest ways to harm others.

The second objective is to get people to feel sympathy for their cause and recruit new followers. In order to achieve this, information on the Web is presented with spectacular and attractive visuals to seduce the target audience and to justify and trivialize the use of violence. Groups who support violence increasingly tend to use interactive content (e.g. chat rooms, forums) in order to create a sense of belonging for potential followers. Some messages may even target specific segments of the population (e.g. women, a specific community) in order to speak to them directly and to make them feel important.

Media Literacy

To prevent violent extremism, it is imperative that citizens, and more specifically youth, develop skills in digital literacy, i.e., they must develop their analytical skills when exposed to content presented on the Internet in order to become informed media consumers. One must be able to identify the target audience of a particular piece of media, to recognize the point of view, to unearth the intention and to determine the level of credibility. In the digital age, parents and teachers can play a leading role when it comes to providing education on media and developing critical thinking. Courses are available to young people so that they may acquire such skills and become informed users of the Web (please refer to p. 19 for further information).

Violent Extremism: Risk Factors

Gender: Being Male

More boys than girls join violent groups. Therefore, gender constitutes a major risk factor, despite the fact that a growing number of women are also joining such groups.

Social Stigma: Feelings of Humiliation, Injustice and Personal Failure

Generally, individuals who are at risk of being radicalized have had psychological experiences that have negatively impacted their self-esteem and cause them to doubt their capabilities, which results in a loss of personal significance. To restore their personal significance, they generally turn to groups (political, religious, athletic, etc.). However, violent groups are generally perceived as an effective way of achieving this goal.

Intolerance in Response to Ambiguity

Individuals who are intolerant to ambiguity or close-minded are a captive audience for ideological discourses (political or religious) that purposely neglect to explain the nuances when preaching their world view.

The simplicity of these ideologies allow them to eliminate any and all ambiguity and to categorize others according to several different stereotypes (e.g. good vs. evil, pure vs. impure), which can lead to the dehumanization of non-members and, eventually, to members tolerating violence against them.

A Social Network Promoting Violence

Whether real or virtual, social networks play a role in the radicalization process. Moderate social networks can help individuals avoid adopting violent belief systems just as easily as those promoting violence can increase the risk of individuals falling into violent extremism.

Criminal Records

For individuals with a pre-existing criminal record, the risks of joining a deviant group and accepting a violent beliefs system are far greater.

Violent Extremism: Protective Factors

Personal Protective Factors

- Tolerance to ambiguity, uncertainty and doubt.
- Personal significance (self-esteem, meaning in life).
- Appropriate management of emotions and conflicts.
- Well-developed moral judgment
- Empathy for others.
- Opportunities to peacefully defend a cause .

Factors Related to Social Networks

- Having a healthy relationship with a revered adult.
- Having healthy relationships with family, teachers and peers.
- Belonging to a social network that refrains from promoting violence.
- Participating in extracurricular activities
- Employment.

Signs of Violent Extremism

To prevent violent extremism, it is crucial that citizens be capable of recognizing behaviour generally observed in individuals having bought into a violent ideology. The behaviours described below are signs suggesting that a person promotes violence; they do not, however, constitute definitive evidence. It is not a list of "symptoms". As many paths lead to violent extremism, an individual may exhibit some or many of the following behaviours:

1) Intolerance: the individual adopts a beliefs system that clearly opposes good from evil. This vision of the world separates the pure from the impure, the bad from the good and, more often than not, generates conflicts between the individual and his family and friends.

2) Transformation of the social network: the individual no longer spends time with the same people; he no longer sees his childhood friends and distances himself from those closest to him. Over time, he adopts very close-knit relationships with a new group of friends who share the same ideology. The individual often hides this new group from his parents and close friends. In certain cases, the individual joins the group after having been put through an initiation.

3) Ideological discourse: the individual expresses his convictions by delivering ideological discourses. He will often repeat memorized clichés. He makes discourses that glorify his own group, dehumanize others and condone violence in order to right a grievance.

4) Media consumption: the individual consumes a large quantity of material promoting hatred and violence. He agrees with and promotes hate messages on social media. When he is surfing the Web, he downloads, saves and shares violent videos with others who share his ideological beliefs.

5) Sacrifice of other spheres of life: the individual's political or religious cause becomes demanding, all-consuming. Consequently, he abandons many of the activities that he used to partake in.

6) Taking action: the individual commits acts (sometimes even misdemeanours) in the hopes of provoking certain members of society or, even, to obtain financing for his group. For example, the individual may vandalize property, shout out offensive slogans or commit a forced entry or hold-up.

Case Studies

As a teenager, Audrey does not have a particular passion but does have an unconditional love of animals. She refuses to pursue a veterinary degree, as she believes the educational techniques require cruelty to animals. A documentary on slaughter houses reinforces her convictions and she joins a protest movement against cruelty to animals. In university, she becomes interested in several local animal advocacy groups and starts to participate in peaceful demonstrations. One day, after attending a conference and hearing a speech, she decides to spend a few months in a gorilla sanctuary. She returns, disgusted by the treatment of animals. She then joins organizations to raise awareness about environmental threats to the Earth. She partakes in a hunger strike, works in animal sanctuaries and distributes information leaflets. However, as her devotion to the animal advocacy cause increases, so does her frustration and despair. She notices that taking action seems to have little impact and she feels powerless and revolted by the damages caused by humans.

She therefore joins another group of ecologists whose ideology consists of protecting animals. Gradually, Audrey begins to participate in their activities. She finally feels useful and is satisfied with being able to actively serve her cause. She eventually falls in love with one of the leaders. Both of them believe that any and all means are acceptable when it comes to protecting wildlife. They burn and sabotage government, research and industrial facilities that, according to them, violate animal rights.

One day, during a fire, she realizes that these crimes have not helped her cause. On the contrary, they were counterproductive and the mentality of the targeted organizations has not changed at all. She can no longer make sense of all her efforts and feels guilty about having bought into the group's ideas. She immediately distances herself from the group. She informs her family that she will be going to work as a veterinary assistant to help heal and free the animals. Audrey finally feels that she is making a real difference for a cause that is so close to her heart. Her family and friends find her admirable and compassionate. Finally, throughout the entire ordeal, Audrey found a way to further her cause and found a moral way to give her life meaning.

Case Studies

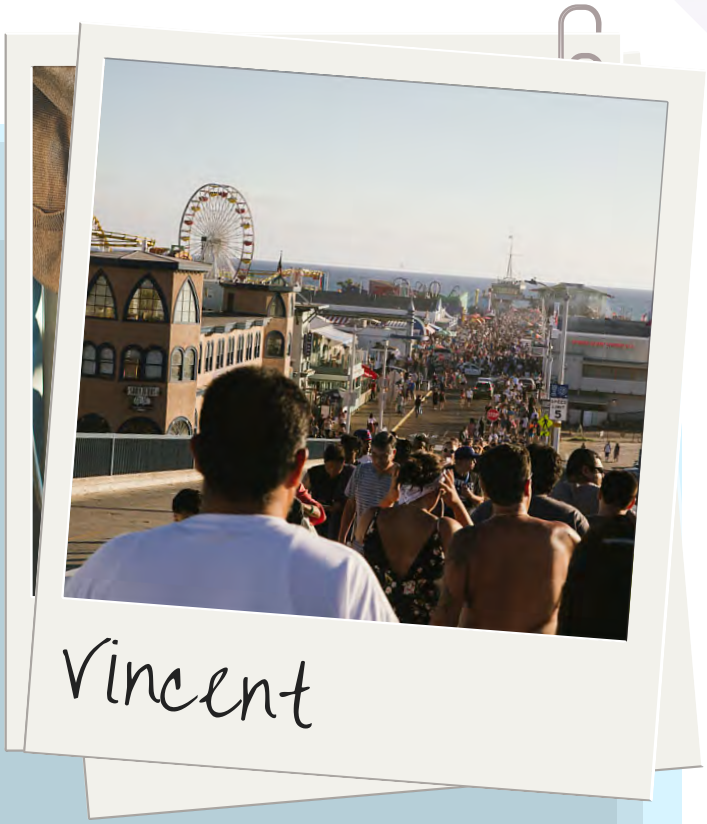
Sam grows up in a deeply religious family. His spiritual convictions sometimes make him feel different from his friends. As a teenager, Sam feels the need to behave just like the other kids his age. He feels torn between what he would like to be and what his household demands of him. He slowly distances himself from his family values. When his family finds out about his “shameless” behaviour, his parents express their strong disapproval. Sam feels guilty and is ashamed of his actions. He wants to right his wrongs, so much so that under the weight of his regret, he feels the need to revert to religion in order to remedy the situation.

Without speaking to his parents, Sam joins a religious association in his neighbourhood. He attends several gatherings hosted by the organization’s leader and makes a lot of friends. As a part of his religious training, the leader invites Sam to read several texts available on the association’s website. Wanting to do the right thing, Sam follows the leader’s recommendations and consults the suggested reading. These readings expose him to a hateful discourse that prompts him to take his own life in order to inflict the greatest possible damage and loss to non-Muslims. Over time, he becomes under the impression that fighting by the sides of his friends for his religion is his ultimate duty. Convinced, he decides to rally other young members of the organization who share his beliefs. Sam spends so much time with these other young people that he sees this group as his new family. One of them even leaves Canada to join a violent group.

Later, Sam finds out that his friend who had gone overseas has killed several women and children, including Muslims. Sam is deeply shocked by the news. He then understands that violence is a lose-lose situation and accomplishes nothing. This triggers an in-depth introspection for Sam. He feels alone and distressed.

He speaks to his father about his worries. His parents bring him to a well-respected imam in the hopes of demystifying the Koran. This spiritual guide helps Sam understand the importance of putting each recited verse back into its original context. The leader of the association with whom Sam spent some time only quoted the verses inciting violence and pushed him to adopt a faulty interpretation of the religious scripture. Sam now shares his experience in high schools to prevent other young people from making the same mistakes.

Case Studies



Vincent has been interested in human beings and philosophy from a very early age. As a teenager, he is constantly looking into the economic, political and ecological issues affecting the country. For him, supporting social programs should be a priority; his father, however, does not share this view. Feeling his father's strong disapproval, Vincent slowly distances himself from his family environment and starts looking for a system of values that is closer to his own. While talking with friends, he decides that certain political decisions are bad for the environment, education and social equality. He is revolted by what he sees. Feeling powerless, Vincent joins an international social protest movement. In the following weeks, he attends several gatherings. He finds himself surrounded by people who share his values regarding equity for and support of the underprivileged. He develops a strong sense of belonging to the movement.

As the months pass, Vincent is under the impression that, despite all his efforts, the vast majority of the population remains sadly ignorant with regards to the issues affecting society. He is discouraged and angry: his group's demands are falling on deaf ears. He is under the impression that participating in peaceful demonstrations is completely useless. With a small group of activists, he concludes that in order for society to change, they must raise the intensity of their actions to the next level. They therefore decide to take it up a notch and demonstrate against the establishment by engaging in violent confrontations with the police. After having successfully defied law and order together, Vincent and his friends develop a strong sense of camaraderie and are feeling reckless.

However, during yet another skirmish with the police, Vincent gets arrested. He is informed that, until his trial, he cannot participate in any of the organization's demonstrations or protests. In the hopes of pursuing his contribution to the cause, Vincent becomes involved with a support group created by and for militants of the movement. As part of his role within the organization, he offers counselling. He can see the well-being he provides for others and realizes that his current actions have more of an impact and are therefore better for his cause than his past methods could have ever been. He continues to participate in demonstrations and, slowly but surely, his beliefs change. He realizes that violence is not how to convey a message. Vincent is now attending university and aiming for his degree in social work so that he may continue helping others.

Abandoning Violent Extremism

In addition to promoting criminal activities, being immersed in violent extremism also entails serious consequences for the individual's family, education and career. It is therefore in everyone's interest to prevent this type of violent involvement. The earlier close friends and the community (teachers, social workers) are able to intervene, the easier it is to help the person abandon violence. Although it is preferable to act before the person commits a crime, it is never too late to help them get out. While the transition may occur without any major problems, it may also require time and perseverance.

Disengagement & Deradicalization

A person who stops believing in violence may nonetheless continue to perpetrate violent acts if the group forces his hand. Inversely, just because the individual puts an end to the violence does not mean that he no longer believes in such methods. Abandoning violent extremism requires a change in attitude and in behaviour. It is appropriate to use the term disengagement when a person ceases to commit violent acts whereas the term deradicalization refers to when the person ceases to believe in violence. In Canada, having extreme thoughts is not a crime. However, it is imperative that the person disengage from violence in order to ensure everyone's safety.

Leaving of One's Own Volition

There are several reasons for individuals to disengage and to deradicalize of their own volition. Disillusionment and dissatisfaction may arise as a reaction to group dynamics. Firstly, the individual may be disappointed with the leader's decisions. His personal quest for significance therefore is no longer satisfied. The individual may also realize that the group's actions are ineffective or contradict the ideology that they are supposed to be defending. Just as a person's quest for significance may be fulfilled by prestige or the approval of his peers, dissatisfaction with his status within the group may cast doubt on his beliefs and behaviour.

Secondly, the person may go through life-changing experiences that render his participation in violent extremism obsolete. A stable job, a loving relationship or the arrival of a new baby are good examples of reasons for an individual to disengage and deradicalize. While in pursuit of different goals, the individual discovers a new way to give meaning to his life.

How to Facilitate Disengagement?

There are several things that you can do to help someone disengage from violent extremism. To facilitate this transition, it is important to recognize his needs in order to determine how to fulfill them. The individual's mentors, such as a students' resident assistant, a social worker or a spiritual guide, are sometimes in the best position to act on certain needs. Ask people you trust for help.

The Person's Needs	What You Can Do
A stable emotional environment that is in no way associated with the violent group	**Maintain positive relationships:** • Listen and try to understand why the person is involved in violent extremism; • Spend time with the person; • Partake in recreational and social activities together.
An alternate world view	**Maintain open and honest lines of communication:** • Reject his discourses and behaviour all the while making him feel accepted; • Encourage him to adopt a discourse that is respectful toward people with different beliefs; • Expose him to different points of view.
A peaceful way to achieve his ideals	**Find alternate ways:** • Help him find activities that promote his beliefs in a peaceful way, such as community or political activities; • Expose him to peaceful ideologies.
Professional help	**Ask for help:** • Seek out trustworthy members of your entourage and ask them for help; • Call the Centre de Prévention de la Radicalisation Menant à la Violence (please refer to p. 19 for further information).

Summary

Radicalization IS a phenomenon …

- Experienced in varying degrees by everyone at a certain stage in our lives;
- Brought on by a loss of significance (e.g. feelings of humiliation, feelings of injustice); or by the desire to gain significance (e.g. becoming a hero, someone important);
- Leading to the adoption of beliefs shared by a only small part of the population;
- Fuelled by social networks (real and virtual);
- That responds to personal, political and social questions (e.g. giving meaning to life, restoring a sense of justice).

Radicalization IS NOT …

- Necessarily associated with violence;
- A mental illness (e.g. being a psychopath, being depressed or losing touch with reality);
- Associated with a specific profile (e.g. personality type, socioeconomic class, level of education, ethnic background, culture, religion, political party).

Violent extremism …

- Arises when a person adheres to an ideology that promotes violence;
- Can be fostered through the Internet or in person;
- Can occur even if the person is not necessarily part of a group;
- Is less likely to occur among informed media consumers (digital literacy);
- May be detected by the person's entourage thanks to certain signs.

Disengagement and deradicalization …

- Can occur in cases of disillusionment or following life-changing experiences;
- Can be facilitated with the support of family and close friends;
- Can be facilitated with the help of professionals at the Centre de Prévention de la Radicalisation Menant à la Violence.

Useful Contacts

Centre de Prévention de la Radicalisation Menant à la Violence (CPRMV) (Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization leading to Violence)

A non-profit organization with the following objectives: ensuring prevention of violent extremism and providing support to families dealing with a loved-one that supports violence. The centre offers professional and psychosocial case management by taking on individuals and proceeding with the deconstruction of ideologies leading to violence.
Telephone: 514 687-7141, 1 877 687-7141. Your call is confidential.
E-mail: info@cprmv.quebec

Media Smarts: http://mediasmarts.ca/

A Canadian not-for-profit charitable organization working toward digital and media literacy. Its objective is to ensure that children and teens develop critical thinking to use media as active and informed digital citizens.

Ordre des psychologues du Québec: https://www.ordrepsy.qc.ca/en/index.sn

Struggling with a psychological issue can happen to anyone. It is important to see a psychologist when such issues affect your work, family life and personal well-being. The Ordre des psychologues du Québec can help you find a professional.
Telephone: 514 738-1223, 1 800 561-1223

Information Toolkit on Violent Extremism (ITVE)

To download the ITVE in French, go to the following web address: trev.uqam.ca

Glossary

Community: a group of people who share common characteristics or interests, for example, goals, values, areas of interest, social relationships or geographical location.

Deradicalization: a process during which a person no longer believes that violence is justified in the furtherance of a political or religious ideology. Once deradicalized, a person may nonetheless continue committing violent acts when subjected to pressure by the group.

Disengagement: the state of a person who no longer commits violent acts and no longer promotes violence for political or religious purposes. Once disengaged, a person may nonetheless continue believing that violence is justified.

Ethnonationalism: the idea that a nation is founded on ethnicity, language, religion and traditions.

Violent extremism: a set of behaviours and beliefs that promote and justify resorting to violence (including threats) in order to achieve a political or religious goal. Violent extremism is generally motivated by the loss of personal significance (attached to a grievance or complaint) or the appeal of a gain of significance (e.g. to become a hero).

Ideology: a set of ideas or beliefs that influence one's goals, expectations and behaviours as well as one's understanding of events and facts.

Motivation: something that triggers the desire to partake in an activity or to achieve a goal. It pushes us toward objectives by providing us with a certain level of energy or strength to persevere until such objectives are met.

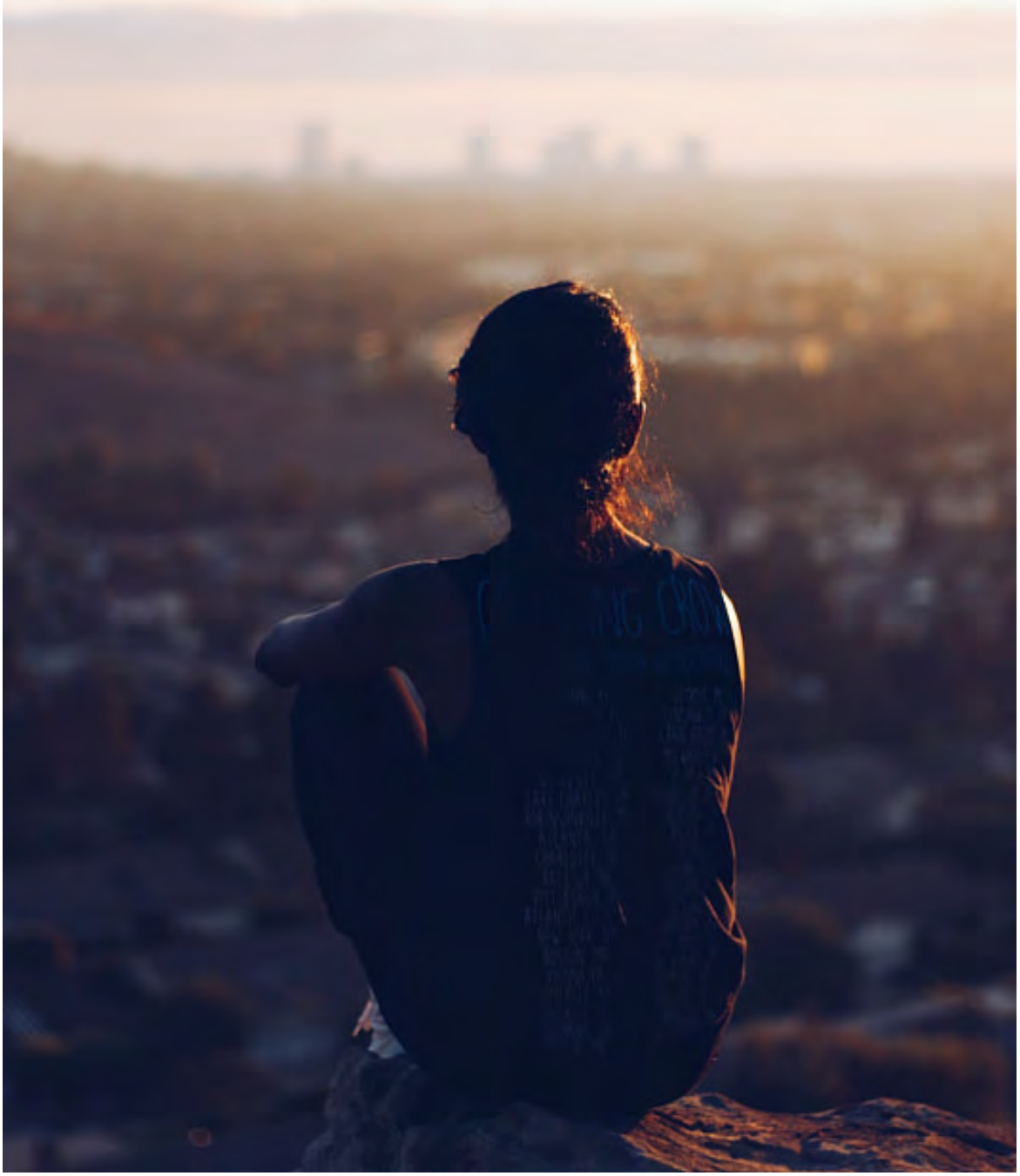
Radicalization: a process during which a person is initiated to an ideological message and is encouraged to replace his moderate and generally accepted beliefs by extreme opinions.

Social networks: individuals or groups (friends, family, colleagues, teammates, etc.) who are involved in a person's life, including those on the Internet.

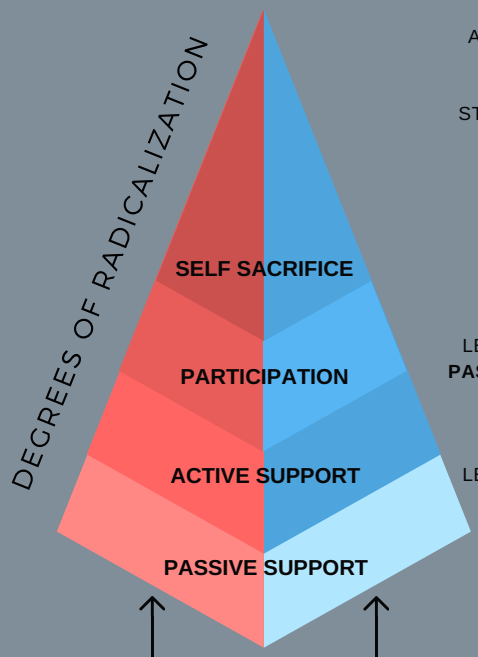
Resilience: society's ability to reject violent ideologies, to report those who promote such ideologies and to refuse to succumb to fear and to the threats made by violent groups. It is also its ability to quickly recover from violent acts against its members.

Conclusion

Violent extremism is a social issue for which we can find solutions. With collective understanding and awareness, it is possible to build a community resilient to violent extremism. A resilient community is a community who rejects violent ideologies and refuses to succumb to fear. It is also a community where respecting everyone's differences is commonplace. Together, we can understand the emergence of this phenomenon in order to intervene early on and head off violence.



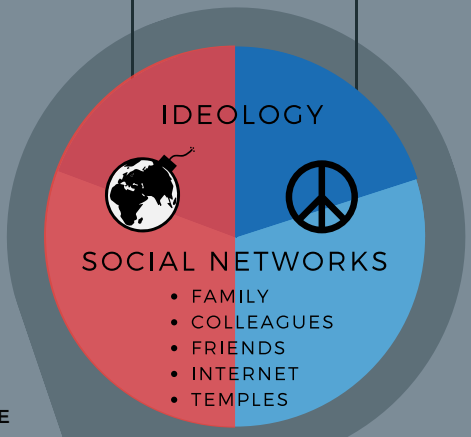
THE PROCESS OF RADICALIZATION



AS THE QUEST FOR SIGNIFICANCE BECOMES STRONGER, PEOPLE MAKE GREATER PERSONAL SACRIFICES TO DEFEND THEIR IDEOLOGICAL GROUP.

AT THE LOWEST LEVEL, INDIVIDUALS **PASSIVELY SUPPORT** THEIR GROUP.

AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL, INDIVIDUALS ARE WILLING TO **SACRIFICE** THEIR LIVES FOR IT.



GROUPS HAVE EITHER **VIOLENT** OR **NON VIOLENT** IDEOLOGIES THAT PROMISE SIGNIFICANCE IF ONE FOLLOWS THEIR DICTATES

INDIVIDUALS SEARCH FOR WAYS OF FULFILLING THEIR **SIGNIFICANCE QUEST** BY JOINING GROUPS IN THEIR SOCIAL NETWORKS.

SEARCH FOR MEANS

MOTIVATION

SIGNIFICANCE GAIN

- TO BE "SOMEONE"
- TO BECOME A HERO
- TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

SIGNIFICANCE LOSS

- SOCIAL INJUSTICE
- FEELING HUMILIATED
- FEELING LIKE A FAILURE

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