Building Networks & Addressing Harm: A Community Guide to Online Youth Radicalization

Resources for Trusted Adults, Mentors & Community Leaders

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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Definitions

Disinformation
Any untrue factual claim made to deceive, manipulate and/or harm others. Disinformation usually refers to political or cultural messages, but false commercial advertising is also a form of disinformation. Disinformation is similar to—but distinct from—misinformation (untrue claims spread without intent to deceive, manipulate or harm) and malinformation (true claims spread with the intent to deceive, manipulate or harm).

Extremism
Beliefs claiming that people of different racial or ethnic, gender or sexual, religious or political identities are in direct and unresolveable conflict. Extremists believe that this conflict between groups is inevitable and can only be resolved through separation, domination or violence. Extremism as it's defined here is the central tenet of all hate groups, "an organization or collection of individuals that attack or malign an entire class of people, typically for their immutable characteristics."[1]

Grooming
Pursuing a relationship with a vulnerable person in order to prey on them. While this term is commonly used to describe patterns of child sexual abuse or gang membership, it can also be applied to manipulation and pressure to adopt extremist attitudes. Though grooming can take many forms, it typically follows a pattern: a groomer approaches their potential victim and gradually introduces the victim to a harmful ideology. Then, they gradually entice the victim into fully adopting these attitudes, with an end goal of full participation in an extremist movement.[2] In recent years, the term "groomer" has been politicized to harm LGBTQIA+ individuals and stifle inclusive and accurate education. This manipulation causes injury to LGBTQIA+ communities and hides the impact of real grooming practices.

Misogyny
Consists of engaging in or supporting bullying, harassment, domination, threats and/or infliction of violence against girls or women. These attacks especially tend to target girls and women who step outside of or challenge patriarchal social order (that is, a society or culture that treats men as more worthy of power and privileges and those of other sexes and genders as inferior.)[3]

Moral Disengagement
The process of abandoning the ethical and moral standards that normally guide a person's life. Such disengagement can contribute to the belief that violence is valid and necessary. Moral disengagement goes hand in hand with dehumanization, denying and demeaning the humanity and dignity of the "other."[4]

Propaganda
Any manipulative message distributed with the intent of affecting political or social outcomes. This distinguishes propaganda from, for example, manipulative advertising. It can be delivered in any medium — writing, video, music, memes, etc. — and can often be disguised as humor, irony or sarcasm.

Radicalization
Any process that leads a person to hold extremist beliefs. These beliefs may or may not lead to overt violence. Just as there are many forms of extremism, there is no single pathway to radicalization. It is a complex process involving many personal and external influences.

Social cohesion
This term describes the bonds within and across groups in a community or society. Strong social cohesion means that a society enjoys unity, equity, inclusion and a sense of common good. A society with low social cohesion is low in trust and has high levels of inequality and cultural conflict.

Supremacist ideologies
Any attitude or viewpoint that proposes the inherent superiority of one group over others, including the right of that group to dominate or exterminate those it views as beneath it. Characteristics such as gender, gender identity, gender expression, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and disability can be used by extremists — falsely and unfairly — to malign entire classes of people as "inferior."

Purpose of the Guide: Who is this for?

This guide is for the trusted adults who are not a child's parent or primary caregiver but are part of their broader social network inside and outside the home.

This guide offers those adults effective strategies to help young people become less susceptible to recruitment by hate groups and extremists and can be used to support and engage young people who display warning signs of radicalization.

These challenges require a "whole community" response. Often, we focus on youth in danger of radicalization at the expense of potential victims and targeted communities. To create healthier communities that are more resilient to hate and discrimination, we must prepare networks of caregivers and trusted adults to support those who have been harmed by hate and extremism, as well as young people who are susceptible to such beliefs. This guide provides resources for trusted adults to support and respond to the needs of all young people who have been influenced, targeted, or harmed by hate and discrimination.

Each young person's inner circle, as well as their close and extended support networks, will look different. However, everyone in a young person's support network can help to shape their growth and development positively—and avoid the manipulations of supremacist ideologies, misinformation, disinformation, propaganda, misogyny, and moral disengagement. Trusted, respected adults who are not parents or guardians play a critical role in helping to raise a new generation committed to inclusion, unity, and free, diverse, democratic societies.

A young person's **inner circle** of support typically includes direct or extended family members, such as aunts, uncles, grandparents, older brothers, sisters, or cousins. These caregivers can also include youth mentors, coaches, guidance counselors, and mental health professionals. All of these people can play a key role in the lives of young people, whether the mentoring is inside or outside the home, formally structured or not.

Outside a young person's inner circle, their **close support network** consists of trusted adults whom young people confide in and rely on for support and guidance. This group typically includes community members such as coaches, tutors, academic advisors, school counselors, mental health professionals, friends' parents and religious leaders or religious community members.

A young person's **extended support network** is a group of trusted adults that typically includes after-school caregivers, religious community members or adults in charge of extracurricular school activities. While these individuals may not always have frequent contact with young people, they still play a significant role in helping shape their developing identities, choices, thoughts, and beliefs.

Introduction to Youth Radicalization

Caregivers, trusted community members and other adults in a young person's support network are at the forefront of building community resilience and preventing radicalization.

There is no clear or uniform process by which someone becomes radicalized. Many dynamics influence a young person's susceptibility to radicalization and gradual uptake of harmful attitudes **(See Drivers of Youth Susceptibility to Extremist Radicalization)**.

Remember, not all 'radical' politics are extremist. Beliefs that challenge established systems of political power are sometimes unfairly labeled this way to discredit them. For someone's political views to be a matter of serious concern, they should match the definition of extremism provided in our "Definitions" section.

Here are some common ways that individuals can become radicalized:

Direct Contact with Extremists
Extremists' ability to connect and communicate with youth has greatly expanded thanks to social media, online gaming, chats and other private online spaces. While contact with extremists and the risk of grooming are uncommon, both are increasingly possible due to the integration of online and offline social interactions. One common warning sign of grooming is when a young person begins to isolate themselves, even from previously trusted caregivers and community members.[5]

Unmoderated and Undermoderated Environments
Without adequate oversight, toxic ideas thrive both online and off. When established norms are broken without intervention by some 'moderator,' or person responsible for maintaining order, any environment can become a space for unchecked radicalization. Coaches on sports teams, mentors in after-school programs and at-home tutors can all play a part in moderating offline environments. Online, this problem occurs in private threads, channels and chat rooms used for gaming or on social media. These spaces can be used to validate or test increasingly extreme viewpoints and often facilitate a culture of bullying. [6]

Echo Chambers and Filter Bubbles
An absence of competing beliefs or views — both offline and online — can allow harmful ideologies, narratives and rhetoric to go unchecked and unchallenged. At home, a parent or family member who already holds extremist beliefs can increase the likelihood of a young person adopting those beliefs.[7] Online, young people might spend time in spaces where disagreement is punished, creating ideological echo chambers. When individuals

> **RADICALIZATION** is any process that leads a person to adopt supremacist ideologies, violent conspiracy theories or to pursue moral disengagement — the belief that ethical and moral standards don't apply to oneself.

spend time only engaging with like-minded people, they are more likely to move to extremes.[8]

Extremists will often hide their persuasive techniques to attract young people via "foot-in-the-door" techniques.[9] This is done by slowly grooming their audience, exposing young people to increasingly hateful and manipulative content. In time, this can lead to decreased sensitivity to violent words and images, and to support for extremist beliefs.

Spreading Hateful Content

Hateful and toxic content thrives on social media, groups chats, message boards and in other online spaces. Harmful content often "migrates" from one platform or website to others, circulating throughout the internet and increasing the chances that young people will encounter it. Young people may also show one another objectionable content in person on their mobile devices.

Extremism can spread easily in the guise of humor. Jokes such as those about the Holocaust, slavery or gender roles typically dehumanize entire groups of people. This supports processes of moral disengagement, which make it easier for radicalizing individuals to justify harmful or even violent actions. Often, individuals who may be

radicalizing treat such content 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 radicalization later. [10]

Content "Rabbit" Holes

Many online media platforms use algorithmic recommendations to suggest new content for their users to enjoy. By now, many studies have shown that these automated recommendations can facilitate radicalization. This is especially true for the people most susceptible to being radicalized and for those seeking out transgressive material. As they pursue this material, the algorithmic recommendations present them with more of it, exposing them to previously unknown extremist ideas and facilitating radicalization.

PERSUASIVE TECHNIQUES:

The strategies and tactics used to convince someone to adopt an attitude, set of beliefs or course of action. Propaganda uses manipulative persuasive techniques to make people believe things that aren't true, feel emotions they otherwise might not have or do things that contradict their moral principles. This includes the use of untrue factual claims (disinformation), true factual claims that are selectively presented (malinformation), narratives (stories that help audiences imagine themselves as heroes, villains, victors or victims) and rhetoric (emotionally-stirring language, image and sounds).

Drivers of Youth Susceptibility to Extremist Radicalization

Many factors can help to drive a person toward hate. These drivers are frequently related to a sense of grievance, social exclusion or experiences of trauma. Some young people may show subtle risks for radicalization that should be addressed gently, while others may demonstrate more severe signs that require immediate and focused attention. Here are some of the most common sources of youth susceptibility to radicalization:

Grievances and feelings of victimization can contribute to a young person's vulnerability to radicalization.[11] Supremacist ideologies and false conspiracy theories provide easy answers and ready scapegoats that can appeal to the feeling of having been wronged.[12] Hateful, supremacist and conspiratorial worldviews offer an outlet to express feelings of anger.[13]

The need to belong impacts how young people perceive themselves and their place in the world. If young people do not feel that they belong in their community, they may seek validation from untrustworthy sources that promise to fulfill that need.[14] Bad actors such as hate groups falsely promise to affirm and validate emotions such as these.[15]

Traumatic experiences can make a young person more susceptible to radicalization. This risk factor is related to a dynamic called "compensatory control."[16] This simply means that when our lives feel out of control, we seek to compensate through activities and beliefs that promise certainty and power. Some young people will try to regain a sense of power and control following traumatic experience by embracing conspiracy culture and supremacist ideology. Similarly, in recent years, the self-help community has become a fertile recruiting ground for extremists. While searching for insight into their traumas, vulnerable individuals may encounter bad actors who present extremist attitudes as solutions to emotional pain or as sources of personal growth and self-empowerment.

Warning Signs of Youth Radicalization

The warning signs of radicalization are different for everyone. Each individual's risk for radicalization differs, as do their degrees of exposure to radicalizing material. This means there is no one-size-fits-all approach to preventing radicalization. However, remaining watchful for warning signs can help prevent young people from radicalizing further, stop them from spreading harmful content to others, and can divert them from harming themselves or others.

Some beliefs to watch for

Belief in a "Great Replacement" or "White Genocide" in which a white minority is politically oppressed by a non-white majority.

- This fear stems from the false belief that people of color will populate to the point that the white race becomes a minority, faces persecution or even goes extinct. Those adopting this fear often blame Jews, "globalists" or "elites" for plotting such vast conspiracies.

- Attitudes that view immigrants as dirty, disease-carrying, criminal or taking more than their fair share indicate someone is being exposed to a radicalizing influence. Immigrants are common scapegoats for people who feel that they've been denied something they were entitled to — money and social status, in particular.

- Because this false conspiracy theory is premised on the perception of white population decline, it often mani-

fests alongside male supremacist and anti-LGBTQIA+ conspiracies, which are used to justify control over people's gender identities, sexual orientations and/or reproductive freedom.

Belief in antisemitic conspiracy theories. A broad range of these false theories exists. Sometimes, antisemitism is disguised as ironic belief in more outlandish conspiracy theories (e.g., narratives that Jews are shape-shifting aliens). This can act as another radicalization pathway to more insidious antisemitic views.

- Western States Center: "My Child Is Sharing Conspiracy Theories and Racist Memes. What Do I Say?": westernstatescenter.medium.com/my-child-is-sharing-conspiracy-theories-and-racist-memes-what-do-i-say-ea1c8916d064

Sharing concepts associated with scientific racism — that is, using rhetoric that abuses the sciences of genetics, evolution and psychology to support racist stereotypes and justify racial hierarchies. This commonly takes the form of anti-Black and anti-Hispanic racism, rationalizing old stereotypes using new, pseudo-scientific jargon.

- Such false concepts can involve claims that Black or Brown people are less intelligent and more violent than white people, while Jewish people and Asian people are biologically smarter but less creative and honest.

- Narratives about the need to protect the perceived beauty and purity of the white race, particularly white women, provide a justification for racist and misogynistic violence often connected with false conspiracy theories about white replacement.

Belief in male supremacy or expressions of misogyny, such as policing the behavior of girls or young women. Radicalization of this type often includes a view of history in which feminism fatally ruined the stability of American society. At another extreme, male supremacy can take the form of sexual nihilism. This nihilism treats sex and romance as either worthless or unattainable. It blames women and/or feminism for this state of affairs and therefore deserving of punishment, even violence.

- Inceldom 101 & How You Can Help: www.depts.ttu.edu/rise/RISE_Peer_Educator_Blog/inceldom101_howtohelp.php

- A Glossary of Male Supremacist Extremism: rationalwiki.org/wiki/Manosphere_glossary

Beliefs in homophobic, transphobic or other anti-LGBTQIA+ attitudes. Homophobia can be defined as "The fear and hatred of or discomfort with people who are attracted to members of the same sex" (HRC). Transphobia can be defined as "Hatred or fear of those who are perceived to break or blur stereotypical gender roles, often expressed as stereotyping, discrimination, harassment and/or violence" (GLSEN). Supremacist attitudes of this type often depict LGBTQIA+ persons and their desire for equality as undermining or even a grave threat to society, families, and young people.

- Repeating false conspiracies that describe LGBTQIA+ persons as sexual predators, as a threat to children and families, or as "groomers" is a sign that a young person is internalizing harmful ideas.

- Conspiracies that label parents "child abusers" for supporting their child's nonconforming gender expression is a sign of transphobic radicalization. Likewise, describing young people who are questioning, exploring or expressing an unassigned gender as a "victim of abuse" should be cause for concern.

- Sharing beliefs that describe LGBTQIA+ persons, friendships and romantic relationships as unnatural and therefore deserving of hate or even violence is a warning sign.

- False narratives that nonconforming sexual orientation and gender expression are the result of peer pressure or "social contagion" can often precede more radical anti-LGBTQIA+ attitudes.

- Human Rights Campaign: "Glossary of Terms": www.hrc.org/resources/glossary-of-terms

- GLSEN: "Key Concepts and Terms": www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/2020-04/GLSEN%20Terms%20and%20Concepts%20Thematic.pdf

- GLSEN: "The Breakdown: Exploring Transphobia and Genderism": www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/The%20Breakdown.pdf

Belief in the need for violence to achieve a societal collapse or suppress movements for social justice.

- Familiarize yourself with slogans such as "there is no political solution" or "accelerate the collapse." These likely indicate that a young person is hoping for a new civil war, "race war," purge of hated minorities or the end of human civilization itself.

- Be aware of related signs that a young person shows admiration for violent events, such as the January 6, 2021, Capitol insurrection or pogroms against Jewish people and other historically marginalized and targeted groups.

- In recent years, medical facilities that provide services and care to people who are questioning, exploring or expressing a gender or sex other than the one assigned to them at birth have become targets for harassment and even bomb threats. If a young person has expressed agreement with or approval of such actions, this is a warning sign and should be addressed.

- Similarly, facilities providing reproductive health care continue to be targets of violence. Political attacks on the freedom to make choices about one's own body, health and life have likewise expanded further into the mainstream. Control over the bodies of people who can become pregnant is a core component of male supremacist ideologies. Calls for this kind of violence and control should be understood as a serious warning sign.

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There is no one-size-fits-all approach.

Some behaviors to watch for

Isolating from friends and family. Investigate when a young person disengages from activities they once enjoyed or isolates from established friends or family. This can indicate trauma, depression or other risk factors associated with the potential for radicalization.

Becoming explicitly sympathetic to extremist views. There are many ways a young person can become sympathetic, but online behaviors and clothing can be some of the most evident indicators. Young people may change their online profiles to represent their newfound ideas, which increases the likelihood of encountering radicalizing content and extremist recruiters. Publicly wearing clothing that contains hate speech, racism, symbols or identifiers from the far-right strongly indicates that a young person has begun identifying with extremist ideas. Sometimes, these signs are subtle. Musical groups, memes or even brands with no clear connection to political movements can act as a way of signaling extremist sympathies.

- Free Speech vs Hate Speech on College Campuses | Above the Noise: **wosu.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/free-speech-kqed/free-speech-vs-hate-speech-on-college-campuses-above-the-noise/**

- Anti-Defamation League's Hate on Display Hate Symbols Database: **www.adl.org/resources/hate-symbols/search**

Support for young people who are susceptible to radicalization or are actively radicalizing

Take it seriously. If you recognize a young person showing warning signs of radicalization — either in person or online — take steps to address the issue appropriately. If warning signs are not recognized and adequately dealt with, individuals may further retreat into isolation, become more entrenched in their views or pursue activities that are damaging to themselves or others.

Step in. Adults should step in when young people feel overwhelmed, threatened or uncomfortable, especially as the result of others' hateful or supremacist behavior. Stay calm and stop all activities to address the situation.

If necessary, speak in private by "calling in" those who may be expressing harmful behaviors or rhetoric. Shaming or embarrassing someone in a group setting may cause them to dig in their heels and further commit to radicalizing influences. Help young people set standards that prioritize inclusivity to better ensure that further harm does not come to members of historically marginalized groups.

Create a record. File a report or, if that is not possible, reach out to administrators and leadership you believe should be aware of the situation and who may be able to work towards a solution. This will help educators, coaches, mental health professionals and/or others in positions of responsibility understand the child's experience and determine the best ways to support them. This can also help create a paper trail of ongoing issues, creating a foundation for improving outcomes and increasing accountability.

Connect. Young people who may be radicalizing or espousing hateful ideologies can be isolated and disconnected from the broader community. If you and other participants decide it is safe, work to involve them in after-school activities and reach out to community leaders and mentors whom they admire. Building a healthy identity and sense of belonging and purpose is critical to insulate youth against supremacist beliefs, conspiracy theories, moral disengagement and other harmful

behaviors. Young people who are already embedded in communities where supremacist and/or conspiratorial attitudes are common need to connect outside their communities. Volunteer work and community service as well as multifaith and intercollegiate activities are great ways for caregivers to help connect young people with others from different backgrounds.

Get help. Again, there is only so much one person can do. More intensive support for radicalizing individuals is particularly limited. When efforts to prevent radicalization fail, there are trustworthy groups below that can connect you with resources to help:

- 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 victims and those disengaging from extremism:
  evolveprogram.ca

"CALLING-IN" invites someone into a conversation about how and why their words or behavior may have been biased and harmful. It provides people the space to understand their impact even if their intention was not to cause harm. Below are resources that can help you to better understand calling-in versus calling-out:

Harvard Diversity Inclusion & Belonging: Calling In and Calling Out Guide:
https://edib.harvard.edu/files/dib/files/calling_in_and_calling_out_guide_v4.pdf?m=1625683246

WBUR On Point: "Why Scholar Loretta Ross is 'Calling In' Callout Culture":
https://www.wbur.org/onpoint/2020/12/03/feminist-scholar-loretta-ross-is-calling-out-cancel-culture

Responding to Hate, Discrimination, Extremist Rhetoric & Violence

As we work to reduce these risks in our community, victim-survivors and potential targets of hate-fueled attacks must be our central concern. This is both a matter of justice and practicality. Radicalization comes with heavy consequences, but it also depends on the choices and free will of the radicalizing individual. Young people belonging to identities that have been targeted and marginalized do not have the luxury of choosing whether or not to experience these problems, and they are especially susceptible to the traumas and ongoing stress of supremacist activity.[17] As with radicalization, every victim-survivor's experience is different. Here are some best practices you can use to support anyone targeted by hate-fueled individuals.

Support young people who have been harmed or targeted by radicalized individuals

Take it seriously. Exposure to hate is a growing reality for everyone, not just young people and not just those at risk for radicalization.[18] If a young person has been targeted by — or merely exposed to — hateful content or activity, address it immediately. When incidents are not dealt with, targeted young people commonly see a decline in academic performance, increased social isolation and potentially suicidal behavior or ideation.[19] These incidents should be dealt with on a "whole community" level — from school to home to extracurriculars.

Create a record. File a report (e.g., with the school district) that addresses the harms that have occurred. If that is not possible, or no sufficient action is taken, reach out to those in leadership. Make them aware and advocate to work toward a solution that centers the victim or victims. This will help educators and administrators, coaches, mental health professionals or others understand the child's or children's experiences and determine the best ways to support them. Filing a report creates a paper trail for leadership that can also hold them accountable for ongoing issues and improving outcomes. **(See Get Help, below, for more.)**

Connect. Young people who experience hate and discrimination are more likely to experience feelings of isolation, depression and anxiety. They are more likely to hide or suppress whichever aspect of their identity was targeted for hate, threats or denigration. By simply working to determine their needs, you can make a supportive emotional connection that will help them heal.

Support. Targeted and potentially targeted young people may feel unsafe in certain environments. Provide them with the support and space they need to feel safe again. This might include — if requested — helping the targeted individual move away from the aggressor to a different sports team or class schedule. For perpetrators, other ideas include stricter consequences for hateful behavior. To accommodate victims, consider accepting absences without threatening detention or truancy. To further support youth who are marginalized you may serve as volunteer sponsor or advisor for a club or cause that champions the experiences and voices of youth who are marginalized, promote interactions across faith groups or create activities addressing social justice, diversity and inclusiveness.

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> **Advocate for policies recognizing and respecting young people's preferred pronouns and push for regular cultural competency training.**

Advocate. Policies such as dress codes have become largely normalized but often have harmful and discriminatory impacts on girls, young women, nonbinary and transgender students as well as students whose clothing symbolizes important aspects of their religious faith and ethnic heritage. Advocate against such policies to ensure that young people's access to equitable education and social interactions is not undermined by policies that value a young person's appearance over their personality, abilities and individuality. Further, advocate for policies recognizing and respecting young people's preferred pronouns and push for regular cultural competency training for coaches, counselors, mentors,

educators and other trusted adults. Help one another understand the positive difference that such advocacy makes for everyone, not just young people, and the hurt that can be caused otherwise.

- SPLCs Learning for Justice "Inclusive Education Benefits All Children": **www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/fall-2022/ inclusive-education-benefits-all-children**

Get help. There is only so much one person can do alone. Some advocacy groups (see below) collect reports of harassment, hate speech, bullying and violence. 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. Groups such as these can refer you to resources for reporting, pursuing legal action, financial assistance or support for physical and mental health needs.[20]

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

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

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

- Asian Americans Advancing Justice: **www.advancingjustice-aajc.org/**

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

- The Trevor Project: Supporting Black LGBTQ Mental Health: **www.thetrevorproject.org/blog/ supporting-black-lgbtq-youth-mental-health/**

- National Center for Transgender Equality: **transequality.org/**

- Investing in Native Communities Funding Map: **nativephilanthropy.candid.org/funding-map/**

- Center for Native American Youth: **www.cnay.org/**

- Survivors' Agenda: **survivorsagenda.org/**

- What is Historical Trauma?
  www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWmK314NVrs

- The NAACP:
  naacp.org/contact

- Anti-Violence Project:
  avp.org/get-help/

- Resources for Victims and Survivors of Gun Violence
  everytownsupportfund.org/everytown-survi-vor-network/resources-for-victims-and-survi-vors-of-gun-violence/

- From Healing to Action: A Toolkit for Gun Violence Survivors and Allies
  giffords.org/toolkit/from-healing-to-action-a-tool-kit-for-gun-violence-survivors-and-allies/

- Office for Victims of Crime: Directory of Crime Victims Services
  ovc.ojp.gov/directory-crime-victim-services/search

Involve law enforcement as a last resort. Incarceration and other law enforcement-based solutions have little to no positive effect on reducing radicalization and involvement with extremist groups. However, potentially criminal behavior such as making direct threats or stockpiling weapons do require law enforcement intervention. Before contacting law enforcement, ask anyone harmed by the hateful incident if they are comfortable with law enforcement responding to the incident and with speaking to them. Given the high levels of anti-Black, anti-Hispanic, anti-Indigenous, anti-LGBTQIA+ and anti-disability discrimination from security officers in schools, many students may not feel safe in the presence of law enforcement or those serving in security-related roles.[21]

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

Strategies for Prevention & Resilience Building

A young person's support network is key to giving those most susceptible to radicalization the preventative support they need while helping them feel accepted and constructively engaged in their community.[22] Here are some of the ways that caregivers in a young person's support network can prevent risks associated with radicalization.
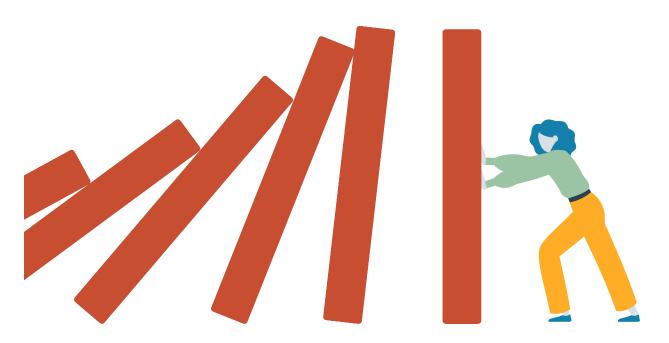
Initial Considerations

Think. Consider the unique role you play in a young person's life. Young people may be more open-minded to the opinions and advice of an adult confidant than a parent or guardian.

Educate. Teach young people about the risks of being online and best practices for online safety. Young people should know not to share their personal information, such as their full name, address, phone number and Social Security number or those of family and friends. Learning not to open emails from unknown senders or click on links of unknown origins without clearing the content with an adult is another crucial way young people can stay safe online. Advise them to set social media accounts to "private" and change passwords every six months. Start a dialogue about internet safety, which will make it easier to address problems if they arise later.

- Internet Safety Tips:
  www.nationalcac.org/internet-safety-tips/

Stay realistic. Keep in mind that preventing exposure to extremist content in a youth's day-to-day life is nearly impossible. Instead, focus on helping young people build awareness of how bad actors exploit and manipulate through propaganda and disinformation. You can begin by teaching young people about digital literacy and recognizing trusted sources.

- Digital and Civic Literacy Skills from SPLCs Learning for Justice:
  www.learningforjustice.org/frameworks/digital-literacy

- News Literacy Project:
  newslit.org/

- Decoding Propaganda:
  propagandacritic.com/index.php/how-to-decode-propaganda/what-is-propaganda-analysis/

Remember. The drivers of youth radicalization are different for everyone. Prevention and intervention activities should address all the ways that youth interact with their community environment.[23]

General Strategies & Recommendations

Reach out. Connect young people to other trusted caregivers and community members. If a young person seems to be disengaging or isolating, that may be a sign that something is wrong **(See Drivers of Youth Susceptibility to Extremist Radicalization)**. Connecting young people to a wider community or other trusted adults offers the opportunity to challenge potentially harmful beliefs with diverse perspectives and experiences.

Inspire. Try to create a feeling of communal belonging in young people and encourage civic participation. Strong bonds between an individual and the broader community — especially among individuals from diverse backgrounds — will help build a more resilient community and reduce the risk of extremist violence.[24]

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Connecting young people to a wider community offers the opportunity to challenge potentially harmful beliefs with diverse perspectives and experiences.

Make space. Encourage dialogue so that young people can discuss difficult topics. Set constructive, safe boundaries so that they can trust one another not to judge and can feel comfortable asking questions and exploring differences of opinion. Ensure that participants feel like they have an equal voice in dialogue so that no one harbors feelings of alienation or feels left out.[25] Follow up afterward with participants to check in on how they're feeling. Use their input to improve future discussions.

- GLSENs Pronoun Form for Educators:
  www.glsen.org/activity/pronoun-form-educators

- 10 Ways to Talk to Students About Sensitive Issues in the News:
  archive.nytimes.com/learning.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/03/23/10-ways-to-talk-to-students-about-sensitive-issues-in-the-news/

- Difficult Conversations Require Dialogue, Not Discussion or Debate:
  www.higheredjobs.com/Articles/articleDisplay.cfm?ID=1747

- SPLCs Learning for Justice "Teaching Hard History: American Slavery":
  www.learningforjustice.org/frameworks/teaching-hard-history/american-slavery

Stay informed. Keep up with events in your community and stay educated on issues related to extremism. Facilitate information-sharing with other community members and practitioners whenever possible. A more informed community will be better equipped to prevent the spread of supremacist ideologies, conspiracy theories and mis- and disinformation before they lead to harmful or traumatizing events.

- Protecting Immigrant Students' Rights to a Public Education:
  www.splcenter.org/plyler

Strategies & Recommendations for Specific Caregivers

Inner circle of youth support

Extended Family Members

Extended family members may enjoy some of the highest levels of trust, support and interaction with a young person. This can especially be the case for older brothers and sisters. If a young person in your family is in danger of radicalizing, reach out to extended family members to determine who might be the best individual to intervene.

Extended family members who are close to a young person will have a better sense of their physical and emotional well-being. This can help to assess the extent to which they may be isolating themselves, and to what extent changing behaviors could point to radicalization. Communicate within your extended family and to the young person's extended network of support to address these questions and determine if concerning changes have taken place.

- Building Resilience in Troubled Times: A Guide for Parents: cssp.org/building-resilience-in-troubled-times-a-guide-for-parents/

Build on the strengths of these family relationships to find suitable activities in your community. Find shared interests and actively model healthy behavior. A trusted family member — who is not a parent or guardian — may be in the best position to suggest therapy or help connect a young person to another type of behavioral and/or mental health support.

Open communication is the key to understanding what motivates a young person to seek out toxic content and communities. Ask questions from a place of curiosity, appeal to young people's values and provide access to information on digital literacy and civic education to help them avoid radicalization.

- Western States Center: "Confronting Conspiracies and Organized Bigotry at Home: A Guide for Parents and Caregivers": www.westernstatescenter.org/caregivers

Youth mentors

Mentors have a unique relationship with the young people in their care. Young people often do not think of them as authority figures in the same way as parents or teachers.[26] This gives young people more leeway to speak honestly and exhibit vulnerability with mentors. Mentors should appreciate the great responsibility this places on them. Listen carefully when young people speak, paying attention to what may still be going unsaid.

Due to the ways that many programs match mentors and mentees, these trusted adults may have more in common with young people than other caregivers. These mentors can help young people develop a sense of purpose and inclusive, community-oriented values by modeling those values themselves.[27]

A mentor should set expectations for appropriate behavior; harsh and punitive correction works against the mentor/youth bond. When this bond is strong, a mentor's opinions will hold significant sway, and might even receive more consideration than the opinions of other caregivers in a young person's life.

Close support network

Coaches

Coaches have the ability to shape a social environment through their words and actions. Since coaches can influence athletes' cognitive, emotional and behavioral development in significant and lifelong ways, they are poised to help young athletes develop resilient and inclusive values along with hard work and endurance.

Coaches should advocate for league policies that are inclusive and protective of all young athletes, including explicit support for trans athletes, those wearing religious or culturally specific clothing or hair, and athletes with disabilities.

Coaches may spend long hours with young athletes, which profoundly affect their motivation and sports experience.[28] The camaraderie of team sports and the emotional ups and downs associated with wins and losses provide coaches with unique inroads to discussing respect, healthy relationships and harmful gender stereotypes such as hypermasculinity.

Inclusive and positively oriented teams are more effective in accomplishing their collective goals than those where exclusion and dominance are allowed to thrive.[29] By investing in an inclusive team spirit, coaches will see return benefits in the form of happier, more dedicated and more genuinely disciplined athletes.[30]

- Preventing Violent Extremism Through Sport: Technical Guide:
  www.unodc.org/documents/dohadeclaration/ Sports/PVE/PVE_TechnicalGuide_EN.pdf

- The Role of Sports in Violent Right-Wing Extremist Radicalisation and P/CVE:
  home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-04/ ran_role_of_sports_in_violent_right-wing_ extremist_radica_pcve_2021_en.pdf

- GLSENs Game Plan for Coaches: Creating Safe and Inclusive Teams for LGBTQ+ Athletes:
  www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/ctg/GLSEN _CTG2021_Coaches_Guide.pdf

- National Women's Law Center's Title IX and Athletics: Advancing Gender Equity for Girls, Women and

  LGBTQI+ Student Athletes:
  nwlc.org/resource/title-ix-athletics/

- Tips for Including Athletes with Disabilities:
  appliedsportpsych.org resources/resources -for-coaches/tips-for-including-athletes -with-disabilities/

Extracurricular advisors

Extracurricular advisors such as art teachers, theater directors, debate team coaches, club leaders, student organization advisors and others directly engage with students in creative projects. This presents opportunities to explore differences in constructive and inclusive ways. The first step is assembling a diverse group of young people and helping them positively experience new and diverse ideas and people.[31]

Extracurricular projects can encourage critical thought and introspection while also offering opportunities

to build more diverse and inclusive spaces. Advisors should learn to develop such opportunities and encourage young people to think about and engage with the experiences of others in their community and beyond.

Spaces for extracurricular activities can be valuable centers for building resilience to adversity and healing from trauma. Group participation can enhance communal bonds and feelings of positivity.[32] Celebrating even small goals and congratulating young people on minor achievements can raise their sense of self-esteem.[33] Like sports, these spaces can offer opportunities to experience structure and routine, as well as support measures that help young people build resilience against extremism.[34]

School Guidance Counselors

Counselors spend extended periods of time around young people in situations where they are studying and socializing. Counselors can use their role to step in, for example, when they hear students repeating extremist talking points.[35] Counselors may notice changes to friend groups and other social/personal developments which are out of the ordinary. For example, a student who stops interacting with their long-time friend group may be isolating, or a group of friends who adopt concerning behaviors may be radicalizing together.

- SPLCs Learning for Justice "Speak Up at School": www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/publications/speak-up-at-school

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

> **"**
> **Coaches should advocate for league policies that are inclusive and protective of all young athletes.**

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

Counselors can engage with students directly in small groups or one-on-one settings. Teachers don't always have the time, space or capacity to engage in such ways. By engaging in these smaller settings, school counselors can help young people process difficult issues, while introducing students to a range of diverse perspectives.[36]

School counselors can work with teachers and parents/caregivers to develop individualized strategies to increase a student's engagement at home, at school and in the classroom. Across these settings, counselors can reinforce resilience-building and safe methods for discussing difficult topics, as well as help parents/caregivers bring up these topics at home.

School guidance counselors are well positioned to build networks of teachers, parents/caregivers, and mental health professionals in a child's life. When a child shows signs of radicalization, counselors can lead coordinated intervention in positive ways that balance consideration for the child and their peers, as well as the classroom and school.[37]

School counselors can employ resilience-based approaches to support young people going through difficult social and emotional changes. Counselors can help young people identify adverse social and environmental conditions contributing to behavioral difficulties, and develop a supportive and observant network of parents, caregivers and educators. This response will foreground the young person's well-being, focus on effective communication skills, help them cultivate healthy social interactions and learn to regulate their emotions.[38]

Extended Support Network

After-School Caregivers (e.g., babysitters, tutors, camp counselors)

These caregivers are often closer in age to a young person than other trusted adults. Therefore, they may be uniquely suited to communicate with young people in more casual, age-appropriate ways.

Camp counselors have the ability to introduce young people to many new activities, sports and hobbies in a short period of time. Cultivating interests like these can help engage young people in their communities and diversify the network of trusted individuals in their lives. Positive reinforcement can enhance a young person's well-being and extend even further into a community.

The individualized learning environment in which tutors interact with young people presents an opportunity to integrate lessons on empathy and inclusivity. Tutors can connect young people with supplemental learning and strengthen interests in academic and extracurricular topics that promote resilience and personal growth.

> **Intervening with youth who are becoming radicalized also means offering support to the family and/or social networks that the youth is part of. You can't address extremism in the individual without addressing the circumstances that make the ideology seem appealing.**

Babysitters are well-positioned to identify emerging problems in a young person's home-life. They are also well-positioned to spot a young person's good or bad interests and encourage positive new ones.

Religious Community Members

Religious leaders can speak to some of the deepest needs a young person may have: the desire for purpose, meaning in life and place in the larger world. Extremist groups falsely claim to address these needs, too. If a faith leader understands how these false promises can lead young people to make terrible mistakes, they will be more able to prevent it from happening.

Religious leaders are often the first people community members look to after national tragedies or local controversies. Faith leaders can put these events in social and historical context and inspire an ongoing community project of inclusion and resilience.

Involvement with multicultural and multi-faith communities can help prevent extremism.[39] By engaging in communities where different beliefs and perspectives are respected and acknowledged, a young person can understand the value in diverse perspectives and gain a sense of belonging among groups of individuals who have different backgrounds but who hold similar values.

Mental Health Professionals

Mental health professionals have the ability to develop innovative, positive interventions and prevention methods.[40] Thanks to their education and training, mental health professionals can recognize signs of trauma, acute stress, mental illness and the ways in which these factors might create vulnerabilities to radicalization.

Therapists can provide tools and skills for processing negative emotions and difficult life experiences in healthy and productive ways. This helps young people resist efforts to radicalize them into extremist ideologies.

Mental health professionals can coordinate care outside of the therapeutic setting and keep youth engaged in the community by suggesting activities based on their treatment strategy. Identifying deficits in youth socialization and helping them to build strong relationships can be a buffer to radicalization.

It is important for mental health professionals to educate themselves specifically on warning signs of radicalization and how to address extremist ideology in their practices.[41] Mental health professionals can educate themselves by reviewing radicalization pathways as well as ways to "off-ramp" youth exhibiting signs of radicalization.

- Center for Strategic & International Studies: "Youth violence prevention in the United States: Examining international terrorists, domestic terrorists, school shooters, and gang members": **csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/ publication/190925_ISP_YouthViolence_WEB_ v3.pdf**

- Psychology Today: "'Profiling' school shooters: Can we tell who will be the next to kill?": **www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/when-disaster-strikes-inside-disaster-psychology/201803/ profiling-school-shooters**

- Forensic Digest: "School shooters: The warning signs": **schoolshooters.info/sites/default/files/ reading_between_the_lines_1.0.pdf**

- Anti-Defamation League: "Extreme measures: How to help young people counter extremist recruitment — a toolkit for educators, parents and families": **www.adl.org/sites/default/files/extreme-measures-toolkit.pdf**

For young people who are susceptible to — or who may already be radicalizing into — extremist ideologies, mental health prevention and intervention activities should be present on multiple levels (e.g., peers, family, school support staff) and based within different environments youth occupy (e.g., home, school, their neighborhood).[42]

It is important to help people at every stage of radicalization. This calls for a broad range of experts: from counselors to treat the at-risk to trustworthy peer support networks who can assist in deradicalization.

Strengths-based approaches build on positive influences and abilities, which foster individual-level support, empowerment and resilience for young people.[43] In contrast to a deficits-based perspective, which focuses on eliminating risk factors and shaming or punishing youth, strengths-based approaches aim to build

community resilience in ways that align with a "whole community" model.

As of now, there is no valid or reliable screening instrument to identify individuals who may be radicalizing into violent extremism.[44] But School-Wide Positive Behavior Supports (SWPBS) can provide a basis on which to build additional supports and interventions for those who need them.

Intervening with youth who are becoming radicalized also means offering support to the family and/or system that the youth is part of. You can't address extremism in the individual without addressing the circumstances that make the ideology seem appealing.

Examine the parent-child relationship and explore any childhood trauma or adverse life experiences that may have disrupted a young person's attachments. Extremist groups often function as abusive relationships: they simultaneously provide group members with safety/security and threat/danger. Violence, sexual abuse and other forms of exploitation are rampant in extremist scenes.

Examine the current social environment. Does the young person have any close friends? Membership in extremist groups promises community and "friendship for free," a social network, people to socialize with and a sense of purpose. Off-ramping, or steering a young person away from radicalizing influences, requires meeting the needs which extremist groups promise to fulfill.

Mental health professionals must prepare before engaging with clients on issues of extremism. Ask yourself: are you open to and/or capable of working with clients who express openly racist/sexist/prejudicial beliefs? Therapists should develop their own racial literacy and understand their own perspective before they build rapport and learn about the client's context and motivations.[45]

Additional Resources & Support

Compiled below are the resources noted throughout this guide along with other helpful sources and supplements. This is not an exhaustive list, but it can help you to continue to learn and address risks safely.

General Resources for All Caregivers

- Center for the Study of Social Policy: "Building Resilience in Troubled Times: A Guide for Parents": cssp.org/building-resilience-in-troubled-times-a-guide-for-parents/

- GLSENs Pronoun Form for Educators: www.glsen.org/activity/pronoun-form-educators

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

- SPLCs Learning for Justice: "A Care Plan for Honest History and Difficult Conversations": www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/fall-2022/a-care-plan-for-honest-history-and-difficult-conversations

For School-Based Caregivers

- National Education Association: "How Educators Can Prevent Student Radicalization": www.nea.org/advocating-for-change/new-from-nea/how-educators-can-prevent-student-radicalization

- World Bank: "Role of Education in the Prevention of Violent Extremism": documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/448221510079762554/120997-WP-revised-PUBLIC-Role-of-Education-in-Prevention-of-Violence-Extremism-Final.pdf

- SPLCs Learning for Justice: "Speak Up At School": www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/publications/speak-up-at-school

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

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

- SPLCs Learning for Justice: "To Counter Racist Violence, Teach Honest History": www.learningforjustice.org/magazine/to-counter-racist-violence-teach-honest-history

- SPLCs Learning For Justice: "Toolkit: The Foundations of Restorative Justice": lfj.pub/restorative-justice-toolkit

- Black Lives Matter at School: www.blacklivesmatteratschool.com/

For Sports Coaches

- UNODC: "Preventing Violent Extremism Through Sport: Technical Guide": www.unodc.org/documents/dohadeclaration/Sports/PVE/PVE_TechnicalGuide_EN.pdf

- Radicalization Awareness Network: "The Role of Sports in Violent Right-Wing Extremist Radicalisation and P/CVE": home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-04/ran_role_of_sports_in_violent_right-wing_extremist_radica_pcve_2021_en.pdf

- Futures Without Violence: "Coaching Boys into Men": www.futureswithoutviolence.org/engaging-men/coaching-boys-into-men/

- GLSEN: "Game Plan for Coaches: Creating Safe and Inclusive Teams for LGBTQ+ Athletes": www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/ctg/GLSEN_CTG2021_Coaches_Guide.pdf

- National Women's Law Center: "Title IX and Athletics: Advancing Gender Equity for Girls, Women, and

LGBTQI+ Student Athletes":
nwlc.org/resource/title-ix-athletics/

- Association for Applied Sport Psychology: "Tips for Including Athletes with Disabilities":
appliedsportpsych.org/
resources/resources-for-coaches/
tips-for-including-athletes-with-disabilities/

- Texas Tech Risk Intervention & Safety Education: Inceldom 101 & How You Can Help":
www.depts.ttu.edu/rise/RISE_Peer_Educator_
Blog/inceldom101_howtohelp.php

Difficult Conversations & Building Dialogue:

- New York Times: "10 Ways to Talk to Students About Sensitive Issues in the News":
archive.nytimes.com/learning.blogs.nytimes.
com/2012/03/23/10-ways-to-talk-to-students-
about-sensitive-issues-in-the-news/

- Higher Ed Jobs: "Difficult Conversations Require Dialogue, Not Discussion or Debate":
www.higheredjobs.com/Articles/articleDisplay.
cfm?ID=1747

- University of Minnesota: "What is Historical Trauma?":
www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWmK314NVrs

- PBS: "Free Speech vs Hate Speech on College Campuses | Above the Noise":
wosu.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/free-
speech-kqed/free-speech-vs-hate-speech-on-col-
lege-campuses-above-the-noise/

For Victims and Survivors of Gun Violence:

- Everytown for Gun Safety Support Fund: "Resources for Victims and Survivors of Gun Violence":
everytownsupportfund.org/everytown-survi-
vor-network/resources-for-victims-and-survi-
vors-of-gun-violence/

- Giffords: "From Healing to Action: A Toolkit for Gun Violence Survivors and Allies":
giffords.org/toolkit/from-healing-to-action-a-
toolkit-for-gun-violence-survivors-and-allies/

- Office for Victims of Crime: "Directory of Crime Victims Services":
ovc.ojp.gov/directory-crime-victim-services/search

Building Digital & Information Literacy:

- Digital and Civic Literacy Skills from SPLCs Learning for Justice:
www.learningforjustice.org/frameworks/
digital-literacy

- News Literacy Project:
newslit.org/

- Newsroom Transparency Tracker:
www.newsroomtransparencytracker.
com/#tracker

- Civic Online Reasoning resources from Stanford University:
cor.stanford.edu/videos/

- Decoding Propaganda:
propagandacritic.com/index.php/
how-to-decode-propaganda/what-is-
propaganda-analysis/

- Western States Center: "My Child Is Sharing Conspiracy Theories and Racist Memes. What Do I Say?":
westernstatescenter.medium.com/my-child-is-
sharing-conspiracy-theories-and-racist-memes-
what-do-i-say-ea1c8916d064

Appendix

Specific applications and online platforms should raise red flags for community caregivers. They can be the starting point for a conversation with young people about why they choose to interact on those platforms. You should be most concerned about applications and platforms designed to provide content banned on mainstream sites or by major service and equipment providers like Apple and Google. Also of concern are apps and platforms that hide other apps, as well as apps and platforms that use high levels of encryption to make information accessible to only a small group of authorized parties. 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 and any applications, platforms or sites they use that you don't recognize. As a starting point, look for the following sites and applications on a child's smartphone, tablet, computer and web browsers, and play an active role in moderating their lives online.

Toxic online communities of immediate concern:
- 4Chan
- Gab
- 8Kun
- KiwiFarms
- Incels.is
- Cozy.tv

Sites that can be exploited by extremists without proper internet safety and digital and medi literacy:
- TikTok
- Reddit
- Discord
- iFunny
- Twitch
- YouTube
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- Teamspeak via Steam, Xbox, PS4
- VKontakte (VK)
- Venmo
- Yubo

Apps & sites with limited or inconsistent moderation:
- Minds
- BitChute
- Riot Chat
- Rocket Chat
- Odysee/Lbry
- Parler
- MeWe
- DLive
- Rumble
- Patriots.win

Highly encrypted & anonymizing apps & services that should elicit questions from trusted adults:
- 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

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Credits