

Top tips to help parents discuss radicalisation and extremism with young people

Understand the risks that are prevalent online

Extremist groups use the internet and social media to spread their ideology and recruit vulnerable young people.

As part of their recruitment strategy, these groups work to undermine the authority of parents by using sophisticated methods to trigger feelings of anger, injustice and shame towards a parent.

Remember, even young children may be exposed to extremism online.

Resource

— educateagainsthate.com/parents/online-radicalisation

Keep your child safe online

Talking about the possible risks online should not be a daunting conversation.

Extremist groups are known to use the internet and social media to communicate with vulnerable young people and spread their radical messages, aiming to gain more recruits.

Of course, when the internet is used safely and responsibly, there are lots of positive opportunities for children and young people to learn. You can open the conversation with your child by asking them to show you their favourite things to do online.

Many children are happy to talk about social media use and their favourite online games. This even provides a good opportunity to learn more about your child and to remind them about the risks online and how to keep safe.

Children often see people they've encountered on social media or through online games as 'online friends' rather than strangers. It's important to remind your child that it's easy for people to lie about themselves online.

Trying to stop your child using the internet and mobile devices won't keep them safe. Instead, teach them to understand that just because something appears on a website doesn't mean it's factually correct.

There are some great websites to help you learn more about child online safety, such as [Internet Matters](#), [Safer Internet](#) and [Childnet](#). If you are concerned about something, you can call the NSPCC's online safety helpline on 0808 800 5002.

Resources

- educateagainsthate.com/parents/online-radicalisation
- childnet.com/resources/supporting-young-people-online

Trust your instinct if you are worried about changes in behaviour

You know your child better than anyone else so talking to them is a good way to gauge if your instincts are correct.

If only there were a fool proof checklist for parents to spot the signs of radicalisation – but the truth is, such a checklist just does not exist. Young people are individuals in their own right and teenage years are a time of great change where young people often begin to prefer greater space and can become temperamental and distrustful of authority.

Advice is available on the government's **Educate Against Hate** website, which may help you consider some of the changes that might indicate radicalisation. For examples changes in friendship groups and appearance, children becoming more argumentative and unwilling to listen to other peoples' points of views or even becoming susceptible to conspiracy theories.

Parents usually have good instincts, however, there is no harm in discussing issues further with a professional such as a teacher or GP if needed.

If you're worried about your child, there are other people and organisations you can talk to such as:

- Your child's teacher. They will have access to specialists who can help.
- Your local authority safeguarding officer.
- The **NSPCC** offers free advice on their website — and a helpline, 0808 800 5000.
- **FAST** (Families Against Stress and Trauma) is a supportive organisation based in the UK for vulnerable families and individuals.

Resource

- educateagainsthate.com/parents/what-should-i-do-if-i-think-my-child-has-been-exposed-to-extremism-or-radicalisation

Talking about terrorism is better than avoiding it

It's never easy to start a serious conversation with a child. Choose a place your child feels at ease and make it a time when you're unlikely to be interrupted. A good time to raise the subject is when it's relevant, perhaps when you both see something on TV about extremism.

- Make the conversation relevant.
- Ask their opinion.
- Find out how much they know about the subject.
- Take care to listen.
- Ask them questions that don't result in a yes or no answer.
- Let them talk without interrupting.
- Encourage them to ask questions.
- Talk about your own views on extremism.

The NSPCC has produced some top tips and a video on talking about terrorism with your child.

Resources

- nspcc.org.uk/what-you-can-do
- educateagainsthate.com/parents/how-to-talk-to-your-child-about-extremism
- bbc.co.uk/news/education-40011787
- parentinfo.org/article/preventing-far-right-extremism-a-guide-for-parents

Encourage your child to be respectful of people from all beliefs and backgrounds

Parents naturally have a big influence on their children's views so it's important to encourage children to see and respect different points of view.

Children are also influenced by the behaviour of those around them so try to provide opportunities for your child to have positive interactions with other young people from different backgrounds. For example, you could encourage them to join local clubs and community groups.

Resources

- educateagainsthate.com/parents
- www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/ignl/health__social_care/children_and_family_care/keeping_children_safe.aspx

Equip your child with the skills and know-how to challenge extremism for themselves

Everyday discussions with your children about current issues can help them develop skills to question extremist ideologies they may encounter. For example, you could try to open discussions with your child about false news stories you have seen online, how we can tell which sources are reliable, the difference between fact and opinion, and common techniques used in persuasion.

Extremist groups can have very persuasive narratives that attempt to influence potential new recruits. They often deliberately mix fact and opinion, and appeal to people's emotions. Whenever you come across 'facts' that seem suspicious — in adverts, news articles, or online — work with your child to find out more information. If the claim turns out to be misleading, discuss the possible motives for presenting it in this way.

Resources

- educateagainsthate.com/parents/what-can-i-do-to-protect-my-child
- educateagainsthate.com/parents/why-is-extremism-relevant-to-me
- parentzone.org.uk/advice/parent-guides
- parentzone.org.uk/article/preventing-violent-extremism-what-parents-can-do