

Confronting



Parents' Resource Guide

PREPARED BY:

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Author of *Walking Away from Hate: Our Journey through Extremism*

Drawn Into Extremism—A Case Study

It wasn't until my daughter Lauren and I began writing our memoir *Walking Away from Hate: Our journey through extremism* (Tidewater Press, 2021) that we really began to talk, honestly questioning each other about the years Lauren was involved in extremism. That was when I really began to understand what she'd experienced.

Lauren was sixteen when her father—her best friend—passed away. I put her frequent bouts of anger down to grief, as did the psychologist we saw when her rages became too much for her younger brother and me. For a time, things calmed down, leading me to believe we'd get through our loss together, but that fall, I started seeing changes in Lauren: radical shifts in her personality that included swearing, outright defiance, skipping classes and the violent slamming of doors. She began spending hours at our shared computer, black metal music screaming from her stereo. Our evening hours, when I was home from work, were filled with arguments about anything and everything. I tried reasoning with her, yelling, bargaining and threatening; the more I tried, the less she tried until things came to a head weeks after her eighteenth birthday. “Your friends or your family. You choose.”

I felt like the worst parent in history when she slammed the door and walked away and yet, in hindsight, despite many tortured months of wondering if she was alive or dead, Lauren's leaving home was the best thing for all of us.

I didn't understand what she was into and was unable to find resources online. Fortunately, a friend emailed Lauren, asking her to get in touch with me. I received a brief message from her. Stilted, unemotional, and filled with racist content, it was nevertheless a beginning for us, a door through which we could communicate once more.



With the words ‘keep the door open’ ringing in my head, I vowed to do things differently this time, to take whatever small victories I could. When she eventually came home, we drew up a list of house rules we could all live with, beginning with “No white power rhetoric in our home.” It was rocky but it was a start.

Back then, I wish I'd known the difference between teenage angst, grief and indoctrination. I wish I'd understood the ideology, the ‘us vs. them’ mentality and the ease with which she was recruited. But most of all, I wish I'd realized how many events and issues in her life had factored into Lauren's indoctrination, her search to belong and have an identity. Perhaps, too, if I'd known the right questions to ask or had taken a different approach, we might not have suffered the pain of extremism.

Extremism in Canada

We aren't born hating one another. We learn to hate. And what lies behind hate is fear.

Canada is a world leader in online hate. We may think we're accepting, respectful, multi-cultural and tolerant but, per capita, Canada has as many hate groups as the United States, a number that currently hovers around 300.

Hate and racism usually insinuate themselves into someone's life because of fear. Fear of unknowns such as different dress, language or customs. Fear that another race will 'take over' the white population, pushing us out of our 'territory.' Fear of changes to our religious customs or challenges to our laws. We fear the dark because it's unknown; therefore, we may fear people from other races, religions and countries, simply because we know too little about them.

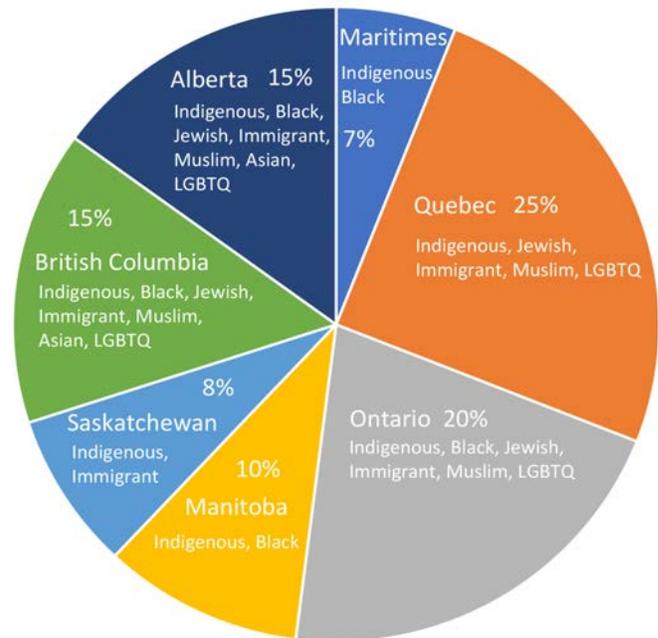
In June 2020, the United Kingdom's Institute for Strategic Dialogue linked more than 6,600 right-wing extremist social media pages, channels and accounts to Canadians. In fact, some 6,352 Canadian users were "closely connected" to extremist accounts on Twitter.

The same report found that Canadians are "highly active" on international forums associated with white supremacy. Canada ranked third behind the US and the UK in the number of postings on extremist message boards. A significant number of those messages met the legal standard for hate speech and many endorsed violence. So it seems we're not as polite as we would like to believe.

Hate and extremism have exploded in recent years. An Ipsos [survey](#) conducted in May of 2019 found that 30 percent of Canadians age 18-34 had personally experienced racism. By July 2020 that number had risen to 40 percent.

The same [survey](#) found that 44 percent of young people agreed that "people of different races are fundamentally different from each other;" 24 percent believe

The State of Hate in Canada



The approximate proportion of hate groups by province showing groups primarily targeted. (Source: Dr. Barbara Perry)

"it's perfectly normal to be prejudiced against people of other races."

On a more positive note, and somewhat paradoxically, young Canadians were the most likely (70 percent) to see racism as a serious problem. Parents, law enforcement, schools, government, private groups and researchers need to work together to take advantage of this concern to educate young children and youth. If we're to stop indoctrination and radicalization, we need to discuss racism and intolerance so they're no longer considered 'normal' or acceptable. And our children need to be taught to think critically about what's on their screens.

According to a 2019 [survey](#) conducted for the Association for Canadian Studies, 60 percent of Canadian adults had viewed hate speech on social media. Media Smarts, a Canadian organization that promotes digital and media literacy, published a [study](#) that found that a similar number of Canadian youths had witnessed prejudice online, while just under half had *engaged* in prejudiced speech online. It also noted that young Canadians comprise the largest group of perpetrators of hate crimes offline.

Who Are These Extremists?

It is much more difficult to spot extremists in a climate that considers extreme thinking 'normal' and accepts it as a social trend among our youth.

As hate becomes normalized in media and politics, it becomes much harder to define. Far-right groups are piggybacking on grassroots organizations focused on challenges such as the Covid pandemic, job losses, anti-masking and lockdowns. In an effort to raise their numbers and status, QAnon supporters, anti-vaxxers and others are deliberately co-opting other causes. The Yellow Vest movement is a case in point—what started out in France as a protest against economic inequality morphed into anti-immigrant rallies in Canada. Socially conservative organizations that might once have been merely uncomfortable with other ethnicities are increasingly being run by those whose stance is unforgiving and rigid.

Extremism is a departure from fairness and equality, a black-and-white perspective that appeals to people searching for identity and ready-made belief systems.

Today's teens are looking for answers about their place in the world, their identity, faith and values at a time when hate has become acceptable within society. In the Ipsos [survey](#) of May 2019, 35 percent of Canadians age 18-34 agreed they felt "freer than I used to about being able to express views about people of other religions or ethnicities." More than ever, disaffected youth looking for direction and a sense of belonging are building their self-esteem by de-valuing others.

So, who is susceptible to extremism?

Historically, extremists targeted troubled kids with low self-esteem. Now, according to Dr. Barbara Perry, Professor and Director of the Centre for Hate, Bias and Extremism, the changing demographic of hate includes young people from loving homes who've grown up knowing privilege and comfort, along with older, well-educated, employed individuals. Professionals



Dr. Barbara Perry is a Professor in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology who specializes in the study of right wing extremism.

with careers and families of their own are also becoming radicalized.

Recruiters will target anyone who is struggling with identity or sense of self. Someone who is distancing themselves from their cultural or religious background, questioning their place in society, struggling with family issues or has experienced racism or discrimination themselves. Individuals who have difficulty interacting socially, perhaps lacking empathy, and who find it hard to understand the consequences of their actions or may already have a criminal background. They could be unduly influenced by their social network, have grievances, feel perceived threats or have an inclination towards violence.

Teens without a solid sense of their own value are most susceptible to recruiters, who are quick to establish contact, embrace them in a social context and develop 'deep' interpersonal relationships. They will often engage youth by asking about their lives, the issues or problems they're facing, then offer friendship and a place in their 'select' group where they'll initially focus on strength and pride of culture, rather than violence or hate. Parents and educators have consistently underestimated the power of this approach.

Dr. Perry says susceptible young women often see themselves as rebels (I did this to get back at my family), while young men are attracted to a place where they can be 'real men.'

Young women tend to join extremism as a way of rebelling against strong parents, feeling the ideology sets them apart. Young men tend to join for the brotherhood, the toxic masculinity and violence.

Ready access to social media has helped spread hate. It's easy to share and promote ideology, to express racist views and to solidify the notion of 'brotherhood' in an environment that supports anonymity and false identities. Social media and gaming platforms connect our children to others around the world, but they also leave them vulnerable, especially now that Covid 19 has ensured our children are and have been online for much of their school day, in addition to their downtime.

Gamers can chat with each other using text, voice or video chat software but beware—most of these do not come with parental control tools. Some safety tools are available to protect youth against abuse and explicit content but do not protect them from online bullying and other damaging behaviour. Because there are few restrictions in gaming, extremist recruiters are frequent visitors to these platforms.

And don't forget about music. My daughter's introduction to extremism came through black metal music forums. While searching for music to help ease her grief and rage, she inadvertently became the target of a recruiter who introduced her to National Socialist Black Metal, a form of music espousing white power beliefs

and rhetoric. Even though she didn't understand the lyrics, the pulsing beat of the music, combined with its frenetic anger, drew her in.

When asked how youth can avoid that trap, she says, "They should be taught to look at a band's page first, paying close attention to the lyrics and messages posted. Are they racist? Prejudiced against another culture? Filled with anger? If so, avoid them at all costs. There are black metal bands out there who are just as good musically, but not associated with extremism."

In July 2015, the National Institute of Justice, a division of the US Department of Justice, published a [study](#) comparing extremism in Canada, the UK and the US. It found that, among the many factors likely to facilitate radicalization, virtual and social connections to violent extremists, identity issues, social grievances and group dynamics were most prevalent. Given this complexity, it is critical to identify at-risk children and adults before they can become radicalized.

Which extreme viewpoint a vulnerable youth adopts depends upon who he/she come in contact with and what social scene they're into. According to a report by the Toronto Police Hate Crimes Unit, in 2020, the most frequently victimized groups in the city included the Jewish, Black, LGBTQ and Asian/Chinese communities, in that order.

The Toronto Police Hate Crimes Unit defines hate crime as bias, prejudice or hate, based on race, national or ethnic origin, language, colour, religion, sex/gender, age, mental or physical disability, sexual orientation and

WHAT IS VIOLENT EXTREMISM?

Extremism is when someone takes a position – on identity, culture, society, religion or politics – which is extreme compared to the usual spectrum of beliefs in a society. Such extremism becomes violent when violent means are used to defend or promote this position. Violent extremism includes terrorism, but also every other act of divisive or violent hatred driven by ideological motivations.

WHAT IS TERRORISM?

Terrorism describes a strategy of violent acts designed to sow terror, intimidate people or pressure a government in order to draw attention to political, ideological, cultural, religious or social demands. Terrorism is an indicator and ultimate outcome of violent extremism; it is often organized and promoted by extremist groups in order to force a society or government to make decisions or adopt orientations that they would not otherwise choose to implement.

TO PUT IT SIMPLY

Violent extremism is when a person supports and defends extreme opinions that are counter to the best interests of the community as a whole. In many cases, such persons also encourage or use violence to impose their ideas.

Terrorism is an act of intimidation, of creating fear by using violence to impose ideas and beliefs by attacking the way of life and freedoms of innocent people.

The diagram illustrates a progression: **RADICALIZATION** (Gradual adoption of extreme beliefs) leads to **VIOLENT EXTREMISM** (Violence as a means of expression), which leads to **TERRORISM** (A form of expression of violent extremism). Each stage is represented by a gear icon.

Source: [Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence](#). Reprinted with permission.

gender orientation or expression. They point out that hate speech itself is a crime. The spread of misinformation, discrimination and hostility can incite violence and have long-term, devastating impacts on its victims. Online cyber-hate and real-time hate speech, especially that of white supremacists, often targets anyone who is 'different,' who doesn't fit the stereotypical 'norm.'

There are commonalities in all extremist ideologies and practices, whether it's white supremacy, Black supremacy, Sikh extremism, ISIS, Islamic extremism, anti-Semitism or even sex slavery. The mindset is often apocalyptic and dualistic. All or nothing. Black or white. Us or them. Other characteristics include:

- a power or control element
- a victim/offender mindset that targets either individuals or an entire group
- some sort of 'glue' or belief system that binds the group together
- specific rhetoric that maintains a new recruit's hopes

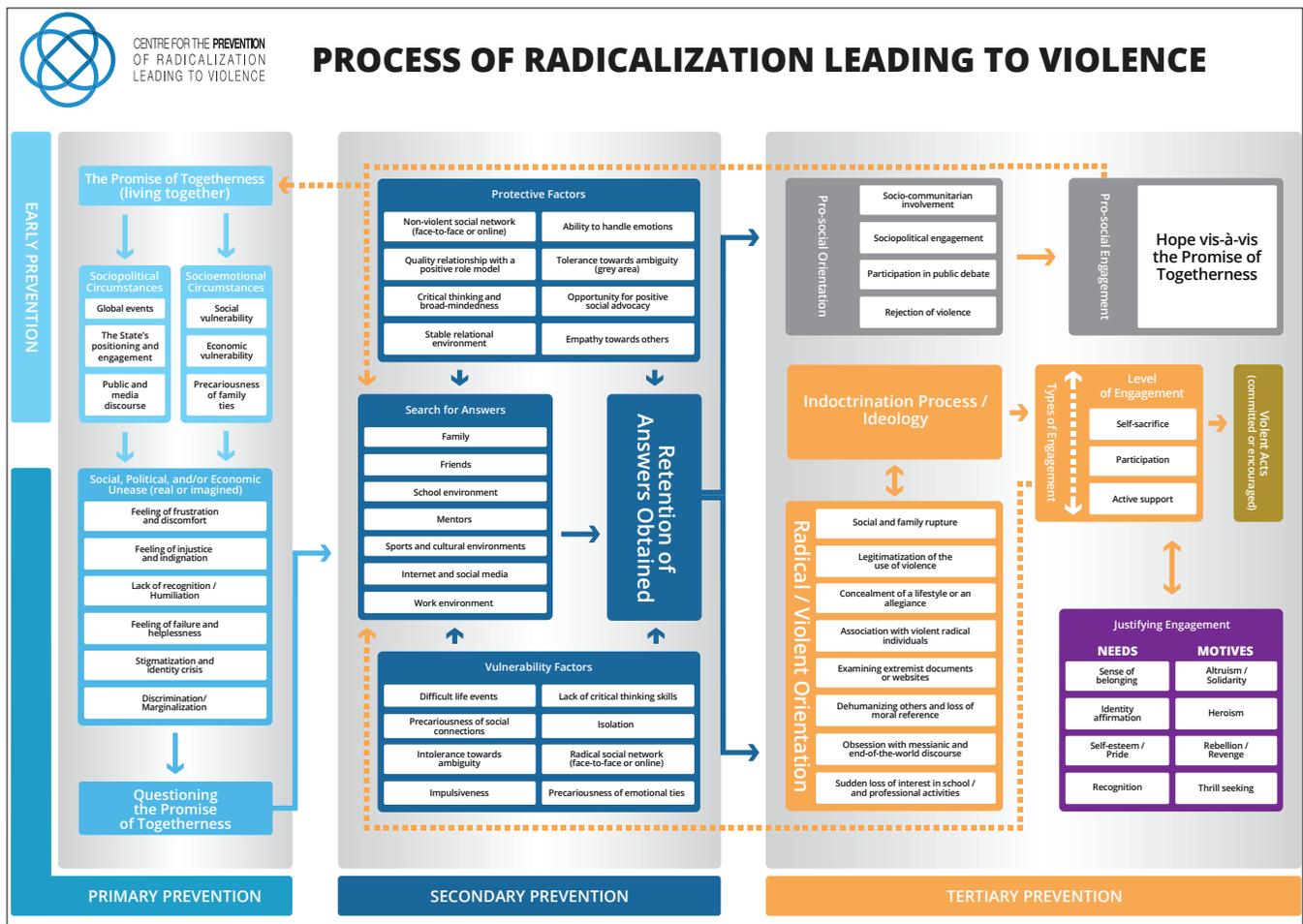
and fears

- a sense of superiority, a feeling they've been chosen, combined with a denigration or belittling of other races or groups
- deliberate separateness (unwillingness to mix with other groups)

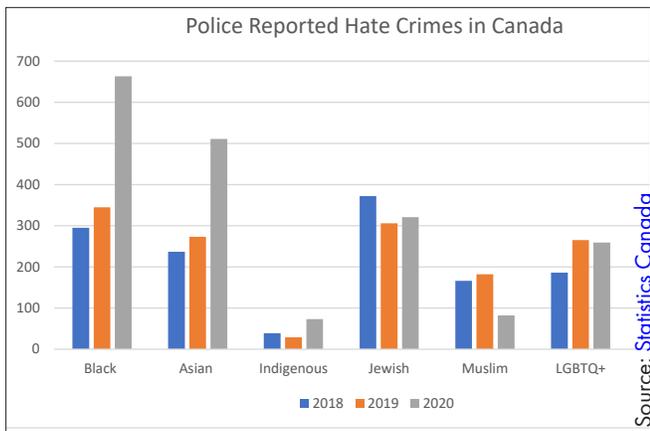
When given "one answer, one truth and one world-view" the recruit no longer needs to think for him or herself.

- a sense of victimization (others are conspiring against us)

Recruiters will use proven methods to convince new recruits their beliefs are the right ones—the chief one being that violence is justified. They will use hateful words against other races, genders, religions or ethnic



Source: [Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence](#). Reprinted with permission.



groups. They may try to isolate the recruit, encourage them to leave home and family by promising a better life, and convince them that anyone with a different opinion is trying to trick them. They may misuse religious passages to justify their hatred and violence, and they may talk about ‘free speech,’ ‘our race,’ ‘taking a stand’ or ‘destroying those in our way.’

Once their needs are met by whichever extremist group they’ve joined, an individual is highly likely to adopt the ideology of the group. Their entire identity will be reshaped in the image of the group, impacting everything from the way they speak to the foods they will/won’t eat, the music they listen to and the people they surround themselves with. They may create a new self-image or take strong steps to cement their adopted

ideology by getting racist tattoos, ostracizing individuals who might be a positive influence, burning bridges with family and friends or committing crimes.

Preventing Radicalization

Young people must understand the appeal of extremist ideology and beliefs if they are to resist recruiters.

It is important to recognize that extremism can happen in any family, to any child, regardless of income, family dynamics, placement in society, education or background. In most cases, a child who becomes involved in hate is no more a reflection on their parents than one who becomes Prime Minister or scales Mount Everest.

We can combat hate by educating ourselves and teaching our children to overcome their doubts, do their own research and form their own opinions based on sound reasoning and real data. They need to learn to recognize their own biases, so they’ll understand how unconscious bias affects those they’re in contact with. Education surrounding differences is key.

No one should be judged. There needs to be a clear distinction between behaviours and/or attitudes, which should be challenged, and the child we’re trying to engage. Youth who come forward with extremist rhetoric they’ve encountered shouldn’t be admonished or dis-

Striking the Right Balance

Parents must strike a delicate balance: if they are too rigid, kids will rebel; too soft, and they’re looking elsewhere for structure. The best time to start is early, well before your child can become swept up in hate.

- Talk about what they see or hear while in school, on the news or elsewhere. The Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence has an excellent [guide](#) that will help you discuss these topics with children of all ages. MediaSmarts, Canada’s centre for digital and media literacy, also offers excellent [resources](#) for parents.
- Set clear, consistent boundaries. While it is appropriate to allow some negotiation (as long as safety is not a concern), boundaries that are too flexible soon turn into guidelines that children don’t respect.
- Teach your child that everyone is unique, that there are no ‘typical’ girls and boys. Include discussions of gender identity, ethnic and religious differences, family types and cultural practices.
- Be particularly diligent about setting digital boundaries, including time online and approved sites. Explain why other sites are not appropriate and remind them not to share personal information on gaming sites, chat forums, etc.

missed—they are the ones most in need of honest, open conversation.

A [study](#) published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* found that empathy—the action of understanding and vicariously experiencing other people's feelings and thoughts—together with perspective, is effective in reducing prejudice and stereotyping. Good communication and interpersonal skills will help young people handle dialogue and disagreements. Key among these is the practice of active listening.

How we listen is just as important—perhaps more important—than the act of listening itself. When you listen actively, you're in the moment with your child, paying full attention to their words and understanding their meaning. This method of listening allows your child to feel empowered; it validates their emotions, worries and fears. It offers them a partnership, a connection. Discounting their opinions, dismissing their feelings or trying to get in the last word, on the other hand, robs your child of the right to make their own choices, to feel like they matter.

Joining extremism is not a scientific or logical process. It is purely emotional.

While writing *Walking Away from Hate* I had the opportunity to converse with a former extremist, one of the founding members of Life After Hate, a non-profit organization that specializes in helping former extremists disengage and deradicalize. She explained how and why she turned to extremism as a teenager.

Tips for Active Listening

Be **present**, in the moment by:

- paying attention and making eye contact
- ignoring other conversations or distractions
- putting your own thoughts on hold; resist planning what you want to say
- nodding or smiling to let them know you're with them
- paraphrasing or repeating important points
- asking questions if more information is needed
- avoiding interrupting while they're speaking
- once they're finished, responding with honest answers or opinions

Hear with your ears:

- what is your child really saying?
- don't assume you know what they're trying to say

Listen with your heart:

- remain engaged at all times
- extend empathy by reflecting on what they say
- acknowledge their hurt, pain, unhappiness and anger even if you don't agree

Pay attention with your **eyes**:

- notice their expression and body language—what are those saying?

“As an adolescent, I did not feel that I had any adults in my life who understood me. Whether this was perceived, true, or a combination, I can't say for certain, but I do believe it was a mixture of the two. In many ways, it seems like the delivery of information and the



Source: [Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence](#). Reprinted with permission.

tone of conversations between young people and adults should also be considered. I, for instance, felt talked down to and talked at, not like I was actively engaged in a conversation where my thoughts and feelings were respected, even if not understood. In many ways, this, in addition to typical adolescent rebelliousness, contributed to an inability to have healthy communication about serious topics.”

How, I asked, can we keep our loved ones out of hate? How can we change their views if they are already entrenched?

“We can humanize people by talking about others who look different, live differently, worship differently, and love differently than we do, to name a few examples. We need to have discussions where we talk about the tough stuff such as genocide, intolerance, history and the lessons we still clearly haven’t learned from it. Some of us need to risk being ostracized for letting our vulnerability shine through; this is how we make real human connections with one another.”

She finished by saying, “Parents should ask their children about their beliefs and why they have those beliefs. It takes more than asking, though; parents also need to listen and remember that hatred, bigotry, and aggression aren’t inherent human characteristics, they are taught.”

Intervention

You can’t reason with anyone on the fringe of extremism; they welcome the challenge of ‘teaching’ non-believers.

It can be easy to confuse normal adolescent behaviour with the early signs of radicalization. Wanting to spend more time with friends than family, being quick to anger, a defiant or distant attitude, and increased use of communication devices and social media are all part of growing up. Common signs that may signal the beginnings of indoctrination or radicalization include:

- the influence or control of a new group of friends
- becoming secretive; deliberate distancing from old friends and family
- spending increasing amounts of time online, accessing or sharing extreme views on social media
- changing their online ID or profile or creating more than one profile
- a refusal to participate in activities they once enjoyed
- increasing absence from school
- using different language—words and phrases that aren’t commonly repeated at home or in school
- argumentative behaviour that includes refusing to

Encouraging Critical Thinking

Recruiters often take advantage of news events to merge far-right beliefs with popular issues, so helping teens think for themselves is vital.

- Teach them to read and consider articles rather than just skimming headlines.
- Show them how to verify online information. Encourage them to research facts for themselves.
- Point out the importance of researching the author and platform as well as the article.
- Discuss the unreliability of ‘click bait’—paid-for promotions and sponsored ads may not be truthful
- Remind them that just because something is trending doesn’t make it true. Knowing the source of information, be it an official site or a stranger’s Twitter account, can help them recognize what’s real and what’s fake.
- Identify propaganda with them. Cartoons or photos that might seem funny to them may be damaging and should not be forwarded or shared.
- Remind them that all news sources have a specific point of view that can lead to bias.
- Life After Hate, a non-profit organization dedicated to deradicalization, offers an excellent [guide](#) suggesting what to do if your child sides with white supremacists

listen to differing points of view or to engage with people who differ from themselves

- an obsessive or angry desire for change, for ‘something to be done’
- thinking that becomes increasingly dogmatic; this might include conspiracy theories, religious teachings and dismissal of the holocaust or historical events
- a dramatic change in appearance
- an increased interest in weapons

If you suspect your child is becoming involved in extremism, don't wait—act. Intervention in the beginning stages of radicalization is difficult but may yield better results than in later stages when he or she is fully committed to their ideologies. At the same time, it is important to stay calm and avoid overreacting to any resistance you may encounter. Recognize this is a gradual process that will take time.

Recruits are generally taught to distrust outside influences—family, society, government—so recognizing extremist arguments in their early stages can prevent youth from being drawn into violent extremism. Toronto's Yorktown Family Services recommend speaking to your child in a quiet place, where you can have an open dialogue. Take the conversation in any direction that seems appropriate, other than their ideology. Help your child focus on the parts of their lives, such as jobs,

Questions to Ask

- Where did you learn these new beliefs?
- How do you know your source is credible?
- Why do you trust them?
- What draws you to this lifestyle?
- What or who has hurt you in the past?
- Are you looking for love, acceptance, identity?
- Do you feel as if you don't matter?
- What are your new beliefs providing for you?

school or activities, that may previously have been enjoyable or positive.

Invite them to discuss what they've been viewing online, recognizing that what they're facing may be entirely different from your experience. Use simple counter-narratives to help them see the truth or falsehoods. Be prepared with your own research so that you can suggest another viewpoint without pressure. The idea is to allow your child to speak freely. Your job is to think like a journalist, trying to unearth proof with engaging questions.

Can we get them to admit they're wrong? No. But we can converse openly and challenge their newfound beliefs through meaningful questions. Redirecting them to other sources of 'fact' and information will help them

Hate Crime in Canada by the Numbers

Type of motivation	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
	Number				
Total police-reported hate crime	1,409	2,073	1,817	1,951	2,669
Race or ethnicity	666	878	793	884	1,594
Religion	460	842	657	613	515
Sexual orientation	176	204	186	265	259
Language	13	23	14	25	38
Disability	11	10	9	3	9
Sex	24	32	54	56	46
Age	5	4	9	8	4
Other similar factor ²	35	48	73	58	92
Unknown motivation	19	32	22	39	112

Source: [Statistics Canada](#)

come to their own conclusions and see holes in their new theories. This is especially helpful if they aren't yet committed to the ideology; it's easier to pick holes in theories if they are in it for the brotherhood or sense of belonging, rather than the cause itself.

It's crucial to remain non-confrontational, to speak calmly and to suspend judgement. Getting angry will only push them further into their extremist mindset,

For an intervention, disengagement or deradicalization to be successful, it must not only solve the current conflict but also provide communication, a relationship and conflict resolution resources so our youth can re-enter society without their learned prejudices and/or violence.

that 'us against them' perspective, and away from their family and/or peers. Avoid humiliating them by speaking down to them—they need to know you're willing to listen and understand. In order to change their behaviour, you must be willing to offer a relationship with them, to discuss their ideology without pressuring them to leave it behind. Encourage them to share their opinions and views respectfully, leaving out any racist or foul language. But draw boundaries when it comes to justifying their actions. Rather than allowing your child to lay the blame for his or her actions at someone else's feet, have them discuss their actions and reasons for engaging.

Help them explore whatever experiences have caused them to see themselves as victims, many of which foster violent extremism or the risk of radicalization. Most of these events fall into recurring and identifiable patterns such as disintegration of family, personal disappointments or lack of acceptance by society. Offer new perspectives to help them see that they are loved and valued. Extremism offers transactional relationships—ones that are conditional and exploitive—while families can offer mutual relationships based on shared experiences, understanding and genuine concern for each other's happiness. The key is to remind them you still love them and that the door will always be open for them to return.

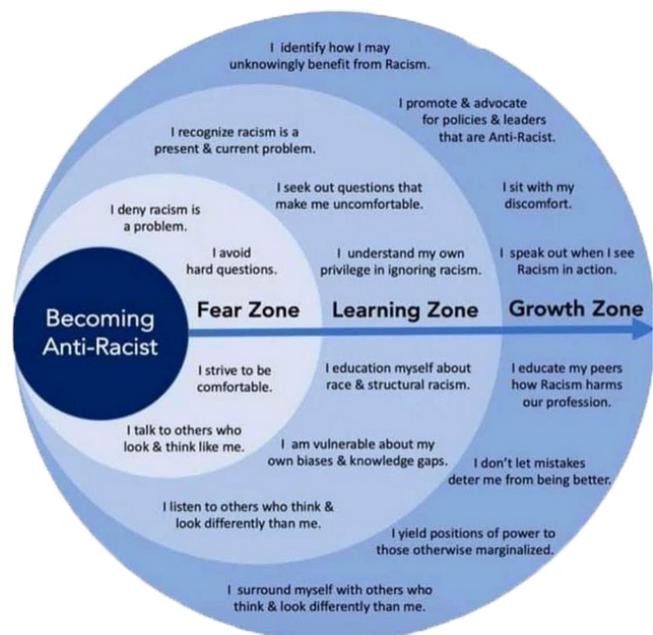
Deradicalization can be stalled if your child is not motivated to break away from their beliefs. My ques-

tion for the former extremist at Life After Hate was this: What do extremists face when trying to disengage?

"Hate is like an addiction," she said. "Desistance from hate can produce physiological reactions, akin to withdrawal for individuals addicted to substances. That doesn't mean it is impossible to disengage and deradicalize, but it is something that one must work toward. And it isn't necessarily a linear process. It is different for every individual and dependent on several things such as how long a person was involved in violent extremism, to what extent they were involved, what kind of personal development they are engaged in during/after disengaging—making amends, taking responsibility for their words and actions, and so on."

She went on to say, "Yet another obstacle is that if they do not identify and work on whatever drove them into violent extremism in the first place, they are likely to continue making similar negative choices. For instance, for individuals who don't take the time to work on themselves, it is extremely common for them to bounce from one type of violent extremist ideology to another, group to group, bad behaviour to bad behaviour; right to left and left to right. We strongly encourage those going through the process of disengagement to spend as much time as needed working on themselves as individuals."

The Process of Deradicalization



Source: [Andrew Ibrahim](#). Reprinted with permission

Back in high school, one of Lauren's teachers assigned his students an essay in response to the gun control debate. Lauren's paper stated that banning guns was only a band-aid solution, that the issues prompting their use needed to be addressed. "Guns are intended to have the trigger pulled," she wrote. "People kill people. We aren't addressing where the illegal weapons come from nor the core beliefs that lead someone to violence."

The teacher looked at her first sentence and, as the class listened, said, "What? Lauren, really?" His voice and manner were both condescending, reminiscent of her grandfather's tone and therefore particularly wounding. She felt she wasn't being listened to; that, because her opinion differed from his, she was somehow wrong.

This pattern of being 'talked to' as opposed to 'talked with,' one her father and I—and perhaps most of the adults in her life—unconsciously mirrored, did little to help her through school and life. Certainly, none of us thought to teach her to think critically, which seemed to reaffirm her belief that her opinion wasn't valued, that she wasn't important enough to be listened to, that she couldn't make her own decisions.

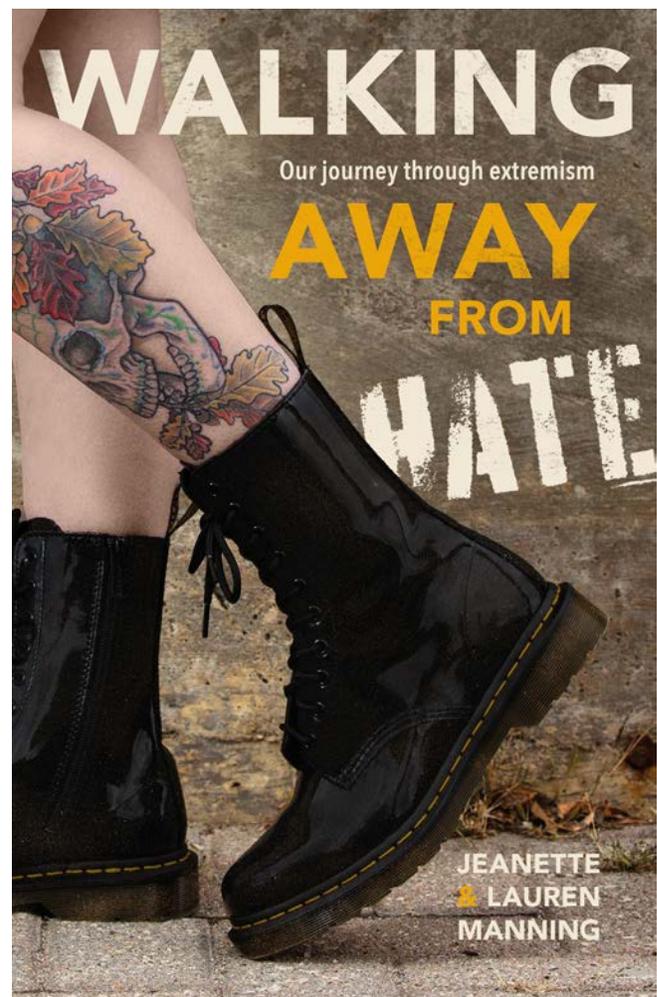
I wish I'd been more aware of Lauren's mindset back then. I wish I'd spent more time talking with her teachers and helping her speak her truths at home. Hindsight not being an option, the next best thing I can do is try to help other parents recognize the signs I missed so their children and teens won't fall prey to extremism in the way Lauren did.

Above all else, I'd encourage you to keep the door open. Keep the lines of communication open, show your child you care and ensure they know that your love isn't conditional. If met with resistance, don't reinforce their choice to push you away. It's important to remember that each small test is another opportunity to show them they will always have a family.

For More Information

I welcome your questions and comments. Please feel free to get in touch at walkingawayfromhate.2021@gmail.com or via our [Facebook](#) page.

If you are interested in knowing more about my experience and Lauren's, our book is available through booksellers nationwide or through the publisher, [Tidewater Press](#).



Negotiating a Family Contract

During the period of deradicalization, there will probably be many times when you will need to set boundaries. These are more likely to be successful if your child has participated in the process, however grudgingly. Instead of unilaterally exercising your parental authority, consider your relationship as a contract—one with many clauses that need to be negotiated individually. What follows is a simplified example of how you might want to approach such a discussion.

- State a common objective, or at least one your child is unlikely to disagree with. Whenever the discussion seems to be getting off track, use this as a reminder for both of you.

“I want us to get along better.”
- Engage your child by asking them to share their opinions. It is important that they speak first.

“What do you think I could do to improve the situation?”
- This is unlikely to elicit any helpful suggestions or genuine engagement. But it may give you a starting point. If the response is, “You can just shut up and leave me alone,” you can set some boundaries and still encourage them to take the lead.

“You’re my child and I love you, so I’m not going to just leave you alone. But I’d like to hear what you think I should shut up about.”
- This may lead to a long list of grievances. Remember that this as a good thing—at least your child is communicating. Do your best to remain calm while you listen carefully. Try to identify the simplest problem to solve. Don’t respond until your child runs out of things to say. First acknowledge that you have really heard them. Then state your position, being careful to stick to your own perspective. No matter how hard you try, any sentence that starts with ‘you’ is likely to sound like an accusation.

“Okay, I can see you’re angry. But so am I. I feel like everything I say leads to an argument.”
- The next step is to negotiate a solution to that issue. Again, ask your child for suggestions, realizing they may not be helpful. If you have an idea, share it after he/she has spoken. If nothing occurs to you in the moment, disengage. But make it clear that the discussion is not over.

“You’ve given me a lot to think about. I’m going to need a couple of days to try and figure something out.”
- Before you reconvene, establish a clear objective. What specific behaviour are you hoping to see? What are you prepared to give up in return? How will you encourage compliance? When you are ready, start by restating the objective. Then make your proposal.

“Remember, we’re both trying to figure out a way to get along better. If I stop criticizing your friends, will you stop swearing around your family?”
- Be prepared for several rounds of discussions before you reach agreement. Continue to acknowledge your child’s feelings and confine your comments to your own perspective. Be as flexible as possible without changing your objective. Once you have reached agreement, establish penalties for noncompliance that will be binding on both parties. These should be both clear and equitable.

“Every time I criticize your friends, you get an additional 15 minutes of screen time. But you give up 15 minutes for every F-bomb.”
- Make sure you enforce the ‘contract,’ but also look for opportunities to informally acknowledge improvements. Catch them doing something good.

“That family dinner was great. Thanks for making the effort.”

Educational Resources

Below is a list of online resources that include slideshows, videos and games for children and youth, as well as lesson plans and tip sheets for parents and teachers. We've also listed several organizations offering practical solutions, intervention and deradicalization for those already caught up in extremism.

<https://cpnprev.ca/tools/>

A Canadian site that includes a massive amount of information as well as links to global organizations dealing with educating and preventing hate.

<https://educateagainsthate.com/>

According to the site's homepage, Educate Against Hate uses "government advice and trusted resources for schools to safeguard kids from radicalization, build resistance to all types of extremism and promote shared values." It includes classroom resources and training for staff, as well as a wealth of promotional and educational materials for parents.

<https://rootsofempathy.org/>

Based in the United States but available globally, this site offers ways to develop empathy in children aged three to five (Seeds of Empathy) and five to eighteen (Roots of Empathy), teaching children to be socially competent. In 1996 Ontario embraced the program and is now home to their international offices.

<https://www.common sense.org/education/app/who-am-i-race-awareness-game>

A free online game platform that gets kids talking honestly and responsibly about diversity. Great for teachers and parents who'd like to open discussions with children Grades 1 to 12.

<https://mediasmarts.ca/digital-media-literacy/educational-games>

Media Smarts uses educational games to help introduce kids to digital and media literacy. The site also includes lesson plans, tips and resources for a wide variety of issues, like speaking to kids about racial stereotypes.

<https://en.unesco.org/preventingviolentextremismthrougheducation>

UNESCO offers global citizenship education through their GCED website, including resources for educators, including "A Teacher's Guide on the Prevention of Violent Extremism."

<https://extremedialogue.org/educational-resources>

A European-based website that offers to help teachers, parents and youth how to speak comfortably, answer questions about and challenge hate and extremism. Resources include written handouts and video series' as well as training workshops.

<https://www.hoursagainsthate.com/>

A small, Milwaukee-based website offering classroom and workplace resources to "promote respect and dismantle bigotry." They offer a particularly useful classroom questionnaire.

<https://info-radical.org/en/prevention-en/preventing-radicalization/>

The Montreal-based Centre for the Prevention of Radicalization Leading to Violence website provides many useful guides and tools, including comic books, educator's guides and real-time assistance.

<https://www.kent.ac.uk/social-policy-sociology-social-research/centre-for-child-protection/training-simulations/zak>

Through video simulations, the University of Kent's Centre for Child Protection website offers instruction in recognizing radicalization and training to help keep kids safe online.

<https://projectsomeone.ca/resources/>

Project Someone (Social Media Education Every Day) builds awareness to combat online hate and discrimination. Resources include short videos, workbooks for educators, online courses and webinars, podcasts, etc.

<https://wwb.org/activities/?filter=category&value=Publications>

Women Without Borders is a Vienna-based non-profit organization that focuses on female leadership; they offer several great publications on preventing extremism.

<https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/ntnl-strtg-cntrng-rdclztn-vlnc/index-en.aspx>

The Government of Canada, under Public Safety Canada, has begun to research and invest in prevention-based initiatives to counter extremist involvement and violence. They've produced a pdf entitled "National Strategy on Countering Radicalization to Violence" which is available for download.

<https://www.antihate.ca/>

The Canadian Anti-Hate Network is a non-profit organization dedicated to researching, monitoring and countering hate groups by providing information and education to law enforcement, the public, media, researchers, etc.

<https://www.adl.org/>

The Anti-defamation League, first founded in 1913, is dedicated to stopping the defamation of Jewish people and securing justice and fair treatment for everyone. ADL's website contains an excellent educational database of research and tools.

<https://www.adl.org/education/resources/tools-and-strategies/rosalinds-classroom-conversations>

A great resource from the Anti-defamation League featuring classroom conversations centering around bullying, biased comments in the classroom, uncovering bias and power in dress codes, etc.

<https://socialscienceandhumanities.ontariotechu.ca/centre-on-hate-bias-and-extremism/index.php>

The Centre for Hate, Bias and Extremism, led by Dr. Barbara Perry, focuses on education, research and intervention through the Ontario Tech University in Oshawa, Ontario. It provides research that will inform evidence-based policies and practices to promote equity for all.

<https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/public-safety-alerts/community-safety-programs/focus-toronto/>

Focus – Furthering our Community by Uniting Services, under the umbrella of Toronto Police Services, is just one of many pilot projects in Canada directed at intervention. Others include MERIT (Ottawa Police), the Edmonton Resiliency Project (in partnership with the Edmonton Police Service, City of Edmonton and OPV) and Calgary Re-direct (Calgary Police, City of Calgary, Community and Neighbourhood Services).

<https://avp.international/>

Alternatives to Violence Project is an international training program that teaches participants to deal with conflict and violence.

<https://dangerousspeech.org/guide/>

You'll find information on hate speech on the Dangerous Speech Project website, including what's defined as dangerous and how to reduce it both online and in life.

<https://www.hedayahcenter.org/programs/>

Based in the United Arab Emirates, Hedayah Center offers programs, education and resources for all, including families of violent extremists.

<https://internationalhatestudies.com/>

The International Network for Hate Studies, based in the UK, provides an accessible forum for anyone wishing to study hate and hate crime.

<https://moonshotteam.com/work/>

Moonshot CVE's primary work lies in redirecting at-risk people away from online extremist content while giving them positive options, but they offer many useful resources and articles as well.

<https://www.common sense media.org/>

A comprehensive site offering information on a wide variety of social media platforms, games and sites.

<https://www.saferinternet.org.uk/>

The UK Safer Internet Centre is another wonderful resource site for online safety.

<https://www.betterinternetforkids.eu/en-GB/resources>

A great European site offering videos, tips, resources and activities in various languages, to keep children safe.

<https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

This British website offers online safety resources for parents, caregivers, youth and children and professionals.

<https://www.stories that move.org/en/>

"Stories that move: A toolbox for antidiscrimination" is a series of real-life stories about diversity and discrimination, aimed at 13 to 17 year-olds.

<https://www.campuspride.org/stop-the-hate/train-the-trainer-program/>

Based in the US, this website is meant primarily for college/university campuses but offers training and resources, mainly for the LGBTQ community.

<https://www.grabellaw.com/preventing-hate-crimes.html>

This US website offers several fact sheets (downloadable pdfs) for teachers, parents and students, regarding the prevention of hate crime.

<https://www.safehome.org/resources/hate-on-social-media/>

Safehome.org studies "the hateful state of social media in the United States," including how Twitter and Facebook are used to spread hate, who is being targeted and where that hate originates.

<https://www.hopenothate.org.uk/>

One of the largest and most successful political action groups in the UK, HOPE not hate was founded in 2004 "to provide a positive antidote to the politics of hate." This website offers in-depth articles and research on the state of hate in the British political realm.

<https://stopracism.ca/>

Canadian Anti-racism Education and Research Society, based in Burnaby, BC, bills itself as "an independent voice for civil, political and economic rights." Their site offers information, research, case studies and various links to news items relating to extremism and racism.

<https://www.stophateuk.org/>

Stop Hate UK challenges hate crime and discrimination. It offers confidential reporting and support for victims and witnesses of hate crimes as well as training and crime awareness.

<https://www.report-it.org.uk/>

A UK based website, True Vision offers information on a wide variety of criminal activity related to hate, as well as providing a venue for reporting hate crimes.

<https://www.inach.net/new-and-improved-training/>

Great interactive training videos from this Amsterdam-based group, aimed at countering online hate speech.

Deradicalization Resources

<https://violence-prevention-network.de/?lang=en>

A German site offering tools and resources to those who are overcoming extremism, it also includes helpful information for anyone looking to learn more about extremism, recruitment, interventions, etc.

<https://www.yorktownfamilyservices.com/>

A community service agency in Toronto, providing a wide range of services to families and youth; they now offer intervention and disengagement/deradicalization to those caught in extremism.

<https://johnhoward.on.ca/ottawa/>

A not-for-profit, charitable organization supporting those in the Ottawa area who are at risk of conflict with the law. They offer a variety of prevention and intervention services.

<https://preventviolence.ca/>

Based in Alberta, OPV is a community- and expert-led, non-government organization specializing in understanding and preventing hate-motivated violence and assisting formers, mainly in Canada, to disengage and deradicalize.

<https://www.lifeafterhate.org/>

Chicago-based Life After Hate is dedicated to helping people leave the far-right behind so they can lead compassionate lives. Their flagship program, Exit USA, has counterparts in several other countries: Exit Sweden (<http://www.congress-intercultural.eu/en/initiative/109-exit-sweden.html>) and Exit Germany (<https://www.exit-deutschland.de/english/>).

<https://ankkuritoiminta.fi/en/anchor-work-in-finland>

An early intervention group based in Finland, Anchor (Ankkuri) aims to prevent adolescent crime in the early stages.