

Radicalisation

What is radicalisation?

Violent extremists are people and groups of people who threaten violence, use violence, or encourage others to use violence, to support their beliefs. These beliefs are usually hateful towards a particular group (often another ethnicity).

Radicalisation, or being radicalised, is the process of being drawn into violent extremist beliefs.

Autistic people are not any more vulnerable to radicalisation than non-autistic people.

People are often more vulnerable to radicalisation if several of the following things are true:

- They are lonely, isolated, or don't have a support network.
- They are frequently bullied.
- They have a strong interest in a hobby like guns or military tactics, that a violent extremist group could find useful.
- They have low self-esteem, or low self-confidence.
- They often have difficulty identifying when they are being manipulated, or when someone is not being genuine towards them.
- They are unemployed and not in any sort of school or training.
- They spend a lot of time online.

None of these things make someone a bad person, and none of them on their own make a person more vulnerable. Nobody needs to change their hobbies or force themselves to make friends or spend less time online if they don't want to. What you can do if you recognise yourself in a few of the things on this list is make sure you have a trusted person you can talk to if you think you may have been approached by an extremist, or if something that happens online makes you uncomfortable. This could be a friend, someone in your family or whānau, a support worker, or anyone else you feel safe with.

Someone around you might be being radicalised if:

- They start talking a lot about being the victim of injustice or unfairness (especially if what they're claiming doesn't seem to be true).
- They suddenly seem more fearful or anxious for no reason, particularly if they are anxious about a particular group of people.
- They start spending a lot more time online than they usually would.
- They start talking about people or groups they hate, particularly ethnic minorities, immigrants, or LGBT+ people.

Someone might be trying to radicalise you if:

- They find ways to blame all your problems on a particular group (this might be women, immigrants, another ethnicity, or another minority group, like LGBT+ people).
- They encourage you to spend all your time with them, and to cut out your other friends and family.
- They are only your friend as long as you share their beliefs; they become very upset or angry if you question what they tell you.
- Spending time with them makes you anxious, upset, and/or angry. (It can help to write down how you feel at the end of every day, and then compare days when you spent time with this person with days you didn't.)
- You notice that you're becoming more anxious or fearful in general, especially if you're becoming more scared of a particular group of people.

If you are concerned about someone you know, or if you think someone is trying to radicalise you, talk to a person you trust.