Tip sheet 10:
Talking about violent extremism



10.1 Why this matters

- Young people are still figuring out who they are and where they belong. This can make them more likely to be influenced by external factors, including people and content online.
- Radicalisation is not a sudden event. It's a slow process where a young person is led toward extreme views over time.
- Having deep passions is a normal part of growing up. Most young people who care about a cause aren't being radicalised. It only becomes a risk when it turns toward hate or violence.
- App settings (algorithms) are designed to keep people watching. They can quickly push a young person from a simple video to extreme or hateful content.
- Extreme content often targets young people by:
  - telling them that other groups are the cause of all their problems
  - promoting alpha/beta labels (the Manosphere) and saying dominance or violence equals power
  - taking a young person's need for purpose and turning it into resentment toward others
  - making harassment or graphic violence seem cool, funny or normal.
- Support from a trusted adult can reduce isolation and prevent things from getting worse.
- People do leave extremist groups. Feeling cared for by a supportive adult outside the group makes it easier to walk away.

10.2 What you might notice

You may notice a young person:

- withdrawing from friends, family or activities
- using us vs them or other black-and-white language
- becoming secretive about online activity or spending time in online echo chambers (spaces where they only hear one side of a story, making extreme ideas seem normal)
- suddenly changing how they talk about women or gender, such as using alpha/beta labels or saying equality is a threat
- using slurs or aggressive political labels
- talking about violence as a solution or idolising violent groups
- sharing or creating concerning, violent or illegal content.

These signs don't always mean a young person is becoming an extremist. Often, they're looking for belonging, certainty or a sense of power.

10.3 What helps

Focusing on connection	Your relationship is the strongest protective factor. You can say: 'You don't have to work this out alone. I'm here to understand, not judge.'
Listening to understand	Use TED prompts like: *'Tell me more…', 'Explain that to me…',* and *'Describe how it affects you…'*
Validating feelings, not violence	You can say: 'It makes sense you want to feel heard. But hurting others is never OK.'
Encouraging critical thinking	You can ask questions like: *'Who is trying to make you angry, and why? What do they gain from you feeling this way?'*
Finding positive outlets	Help them find safe ways to act on their passions (e.g. volunteering or youth groups).
Reporting illegal content	If a young person sees or shares restricted or graphic content, you can report it to eSafety.

For more information, see **Support services for adults** from the Trusted Adult Guide.

10.4 What to avoid

Labelling or profiling	It can increase secrecy and make the young person more defensive.
'The debate'	If you try to prove their ideas are wrong, they may stop talking to you and turn back to the group that gets them. Focus on the relationship, not the argument.
Shaming	Humiliation can make young people withdraw and trust the extremist group more.
Treating curiosity as a crime	Most exploration is a part of growing up, not a criminal act.
Isolating them further	Cutting young people off from support can increase risk.
Spying	Checking their phone in secret can destroy trust. If you're worried, tell them why. Be the safe person they can come to when they feel confused.

10.5 Quick responses

These are suggestions. Use your own words and adapt them to suit you and the young person.

If the young person says…	You can say or do…
'Violence is the only way to be heard.'	*'I hear your anger, but violence harms people. Let's explore safer ways to make a change.'*
'They're the only ones who get me.'	*'Feeling understood matters. I'm here for you, too. Let's talk more.'*
'People like us are under attack.'	'It sounds like you feel you need to protect yourself. Let's look at who's telling you that you're under attack.'
'I'm just sharing memes.'	*'Memes can hide a lot of hate behind a joke. Can you explain why you find this one funny? I want to understand what it means to you.'*
'I'm angry all the time.'	*'Anger is a signal that something needs attention. I'm here to help you figure it out.'*

If you are worried about a young person's safety or extreme views, stay calm and follow the steps in **How to respond: The 6-step-framework**. Don't do this alone. Reach out to a professional or Step Together. **If there is an immediate threat of violence, call the Police on 000 or 131 444.**

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(unless Excluded Material)