

**Lesson 3: Factors in becoming
involved in
violent extreme
radical actions
and terrorism**



Lesson Outline

Target Group

Prison Senior Management Team (PSMT)

Correctional Officers (COs)

Prison Support Staff (PSS) (Teachers, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrist, Non-Governmental Organisations/Voluntary Organisations personnel)

Suggested Number of participants

14

Duration

3 hours

Equipment

- ✓ Whiteboard
- ✓ Laptop
- ✓ Data Projector
- ✓ Flipchart
- ✓ Sound projections
- ✓ (Or large TV screen)

Aim

By the end of this session participants should be in a position to understand factors that may transform an inmate into a radicalised one, potentially acting violently on extreme ideas.

Learning Outcomes

Knowledge

Participants will know:

- The difference between the soft sciences and the hard science, and the reliability of prediction
- The factors that may lead one to become a radicalised person, possibly ending up in acting in a violent manner
- The difficulty in actually knowing what may lead to such action
- The combination of various factors, including a criminal background, a dysfunctional family, a lack of identity

Skills

Participants will be to:

- Identify possible behaviours and social backgrounds that may lead one to become radicalised and possibly act in a violent manner

Attitudes

Participants will develop an attitude of understanding from where radicalisation possibly starts and works on such factors such as belonging, identity and critical thinking.

Introduction to lesson

Wouldn't it be nice if we had a checklist that could predict violent extremist actions?

If one ticks a number of boxes then the probability that someone is an extremist is there. The more one ticks, the bigger the probability.

Wouldn't it be nicer if one can prevent those tick boxes beforehand, avoiding catastrophic results of violent extreme action?

Doesn't this thinking remind one of weather predictions: the more clouds, wind and change in barometric pressure you have, the more likely it will rain.

The question that we will deal with in this session is on whether identifying a potential violent extremist is that simple? Or keeping in mind the chaotic nature of the atmosphere, it may be as difficult as precise prediction of weather change.

Development

Introductory level

Step 1: The Attractions of Science

Most persons are attracted to science because of its ability to predict. This is based on observation: if one notices that a piece of metal expands, one can predict that if it is a hot day tomorrow, the metal will expand as it did today. Not only that, but through science we can actually calculate the expansion of metal in relation to the increase in heat. We even have a formula to calculate that:

When an object is heated or cooled, its length changes by an amount proportional to the original length and the change in temperature. The linear thermal expansion - the change in length - of an object can be expressed as:

$$dL = L_0 \alpha (t_1 - t_0) \quad (1)$$

where

dL = change in object length (m, inches)

L_0 = initial length of object (m, inches)

α = linear expansion coefficient (m/m°C, in/in°F)

t_0 = initial temperature (°C, °F)

t_1 = final temperature (°C, °F)

The final length of the object can be calculated as

$$\begin{aligned} L_1 &= L_0 + dL \\ &= L_0 + L_0 \alpha (t_1 - t_0) \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

where

L_1 = final length of object (m, inches)

Wouldn't it be nice to have such a formula to predict who of us is a potential violent extremist?

Step 2: The Social Sciences

The social sciences are termed as soft sciences. The hard sciences are the ones mentioned above, where prediction is basically 100% sure unless proven otherwise.

Prediction through the soft sciences is not so strong, but it too depends on observation. Examples of soft sciences are psychology, anthropology and criminology.

Prediction and Understanding Why

There are scientists who argue that if we can understand what turns a normal human being into a radicalised one, and eventually into one who acts in a violent manner on his/her ideas, then we can predict who among us is a potential terrorist. That can help us prevent such acts, mainly through the incapacitation of the individual before the act. There have been attempts in identifying factors that turn someone into a terrorists. These are called theories - and they are precisely that - ideas - most of them in competition with other ideas - of what turns someone into a terrorist. Let's see a few of these:

Step 3: Why do some people (and not others) become Violent Extremist?

First of all one has to keep in mind that the process of radicalisation, particularly that which leads to violent extreme action does not happen from one day to the next: it is a process.

This process is related to a search for

- Identity;
- meaning; and
- a place in a community

In order to understand these three concepts, let us take ourselves and speak a bit about our

- identity - WHO AM I?
- meaning and - WHAT AM I DOING HERE?
- a place in a community - WHERE DO I BELONG?

Step 4: First Phase: Attitude

The first stage encompasses an attitudinal journey, where an individual begins to hold extremist views.

During this stage, the concerned person is exposed to radicalised ideology and becomes himself or herself radicalised. The path leads to an 'extremist' position.

There are three occurrences in such a phase:

- a. A vulnerable state of mind: factors such as troubled family, past criminal behaviour, unstable background
- b. Outside influences and experiences such as friends, family, the media, and internet chat rooms etc...
- c. A psychological need: the need to belong, to have a status, to have a meaning (see step 3 above).

Step 5: Second Phase: Change in behaviour, possibly leading to violent action

Here one can notice a deeper commitment.

The Push Factors and The Pull Factors: factors that can push someone into taking extreme action or pull him or her towards such actions. The following is a summary:

Push factors:

- Sense of grievance, injustice
- Need for identity, meaning, belonging/comradeship
- Desire for excitement, challenge, adventure
- Need for status, significance
- Criminality
- Attraction to authoritarian ideologies
- Certain mental health problems

Pull factors

- Ideology provides a diagnostic function
- Identification with a noble cause, accessing a proxy family, social capital
- Access to excitement, challenge, adventure
- Empowered by extremist identity
- Outlet for criminal capability
- Opportunity to be an authoritarian leader or follower
- Extremist ideologies can make sense of a confusing world

Step 6:

Ask the following questions in class. Use the handout as a revision answer to these following a discussion. (Handout: Introduction to Radicalisation)

- What sort of person becomes a terrorist?
- What factors can result in an individual becoming an Islamist terrorist?
- What factors can result in an individual becoming a political terrorist?
- What kind of individual may be vulnerable to radicalisation?
- Are people who suffer from mental health issues more vulnerable to becoming Terrorists?
- How important is the influence of ideology in the radicalisation process?
- What is the influence of online propaganda?

(See Notes at the end of the lesson for answers)

Give out handout as revision: **Introduction to Radicalisation**



Also at this stage read:

Why Do People Become Violent Extremists? — FBI

Step 7: See and discuss the following video:

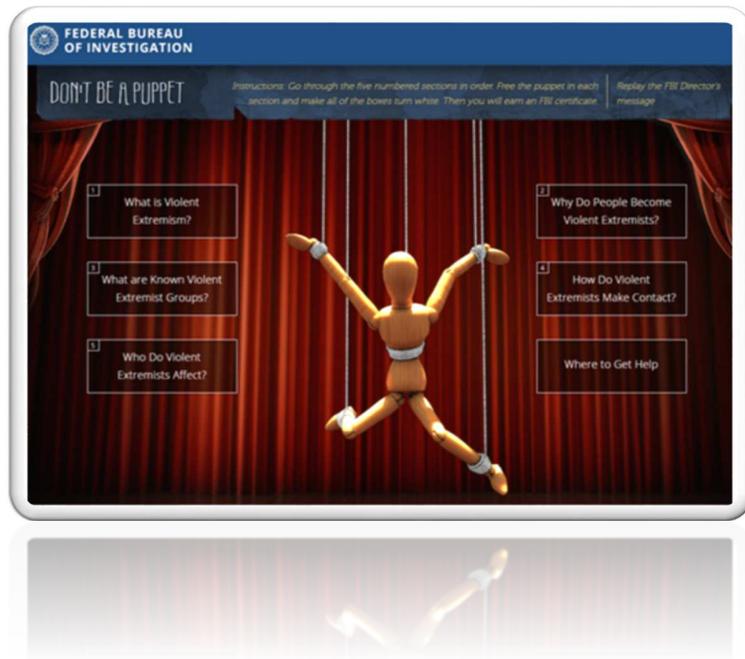


Why do some people become terrorists?

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oYuZLHkUD04>

Step 8: Don't Be a Puppet

Violent extremists often target those who are lonely, anxious, frustrated, bored, angry, or confused. Don't be a puppet. Recognize that violent extremists don't have the answers you need. They just want to use or control you. This is a slogan of the FBI.



How do you think we can support incarcerated inmates to empower themselves not to become puppets in the hands of others whose agenda is to radicalise them.

Advanced Level

Step 9: In this section of the lesson plan the focus is on why some young people become Jihadist.

The bases for the discussion of this topic is The Guardian Article:



Why do some young people become jihadist? Psychiatry offers the answer by Kamran Ahmed.

The article is read in class and discussed vis-a-vis the realities of the partner countries.

Step 10: In this section of the lesson, we go deeper into the issue discussed in Step 1, above.

The focus in this section is on dealing with persons who left their country to join the Islamic State and came back. How does one deal with such persons?

A discussion based on the following video is held in class:

 'Why I went to live with Islamic State' - BBC News

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fen7TTooi4o>

Step 11:

Video class discussion activity: Helping people to think for themselves!



How Do People Become Radicalised Terrorists? | Last Leg: The Correspondents

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_rsIEjA17yk

Conclusion

List the reasons why you think ordinary average persons decide to become terrorists.

(Note to facilitator: See the article: *Why average people decide to become terrorists. Jennifer Williams Jun 14, 2016*

Evaluation

The class is given the following question and answer taken from one of the readings:

When foreign fighters return to Europe should they be treated as criminals or do we need to think more about rehabilitation?

There isn't one size fits all model in this case. This is because European policies, justice system and governing style differs in most of European countries. There are several approaches across Europe. Some countries use the criminal justice system to severely punish returnees. These countries are on the one hand motivated by their desire to show they are doing something against extremists and foreign fighters who are returning. Harsh punishment is also used as a tool to deter would-be fighters while others see the action of foreign fighters as purely criminal in nature. The rehabilitation model is intended to reform and reintegrate returning fighters but the model is unpopular and it's

difficult to achieve full rehabilitation. Probably we need a clever mix of both models to deal with the problem.

Why do people join terrorist organisations? | European Institute of Peace 11/09/2018

Do you think that the rehabilitation model works? Is there a role for such an approach in prison? Give reasons for your answer.



Reading Material

Introductory level

Compulsory reading:

Introduction to Radicalisation

Why do people join terrorist organisations? | *European Institute of Peace* 11/09/2018

Why average people decide to become terrorists. Jennifer Williams Jun 14, 2016

Supplementary reading:

The key reason why some people with radicalised views become terrorists is humiliation, expert claim. By Phoebe Weston. Mailonline. 6th April 2017

Advanced Level

Compulsory reading:

Kamran Ahmed: Why do some young people become jihadis? Psychiatry offers answers. The Guardian 26th May 2017.

Supplementary reading:

'Radicalisation' has become a redundant concept' by Kenan Malik. The Guardian

Why Do People Become Terrorists? A Prosecutor's Experiences Armando Spataro. *Journal of International Criminal Justice* 6 (2008), 507-524.

Anatomy of terror: What makes normal people become extremists? *New Scientist*. 16 August 2017.

Information for the Facilitator

The following are in brief the answers to the above identified questions (Step 6)

Q&A

What sort of person becomes a terrorist?

Government and academic research has consistently indicated that there is no single socio-demographic profile of a terrorist in the UK, and no single pathway leading to involvement in extremism. Terrorists come from a variety of backgrounds and appear to become involved in different ways and for differing reasons.

What factors can result in an individual becoming an Islamist terrorist?

No single factor is enough to cause someone to join a terrorist movement. Instead, several factors together – a 'perfect storm' – create the conditions under which radicalisation to terrorism can occur. With the right interventions it is possible to prevent an individual from becoming radicalised in the first stage, and to prevent those already holding extremist views from acting violently.

What kind of individual may be vulnerable to radicalisation?

Again, there is no single archetype of an individual vulnerable to radicalisation, but there are certain common factors, specifically individuals with a vulnerable state of mind, who find themselves exposed to an extremist ideology, and who lack the protective factors (which would include strong family and community networks) that would otherwise help insulate them from radicalisation.

How important is the influence of ideology in the radicalisation process?

Whilst ideology remains central to radicalisation, it needs to be addressed in tandem with psychological needs and vulnerabilities. Often terrorist propaganda appeals to these psychological needs, such as the desire for status or excitement. Ideology acts as a 'pull' factor, providing a framework that fulfils a need for identity, and a diagnostic by which to make sense of one's feelings of grievance or injustice.