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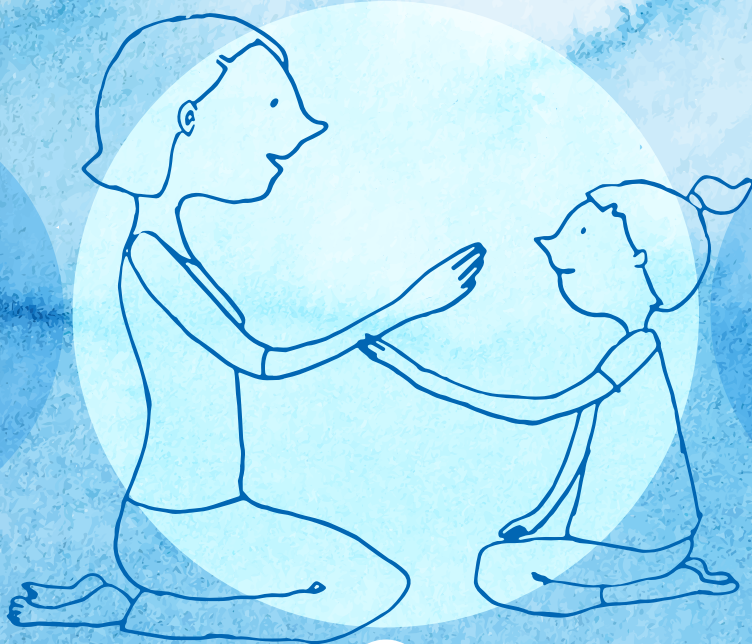


Save the Children

unicef 

for every child

Parents and their role in protecting their children from extremist ideologies and radicalization



Brochure for
parents

Preface

The Albanian Nation is founded on democratic values and the tradition of religious coexistence. Our joint vision is to cultivate a society that is reliant upon the respect we share about human rights, the rule of law, equality and fundamental freedoms. Peace, stability and prosperity in the entire region are also of strategic importance for Albania. It is in the best interest of Albania to encourage good relations with its neighbors, on the basis of common belief and inclusion, in which inter-ethnic and inter-religious harmony prevails¹.

In the last decade, the understanding of the ways, forms and reasons why individuals engage in violent extremism and terrorism has evolved as determined by the place, time, external and internal factors. Similarly, the means and responses to prevent threats have evolved. In response to these new dynamics, and through decision no. 930, dated 18.11.2015 “On the Approval Of the National Strategy on the War Against Violent Extremism and Action Plan”, the Albanian government considers war against violent extremism as one of the fundamental priorities of its policy program and states its commitment in preserving the values of tolerance and religious harmony, protecting human rights, the rule of law and democracy, as well as safeguarding Albanian society from violent extremism.

The Center Against Violent Extremism is the main public institution responsible for the war against Violent Extremism and it operates

1 Based on the National Strategy Against Violent Extremism

under the dependency of the Prime Minister's Office of Albania, established by decision No. 737 of the Council of Ministers, dated 13.12.2017. The Center's mission is to harmonize and coordinate the efforts of different state or non-state stakeholders and to build capacities of different stakeholders against violent extremism. The center leads the efforts in implementing the National Strategy and its Action Plan, which is a very important document that organizes the work for the implementation of the Strategy.

Owing to these efforts, Save the Children in collaboration with the Coordination Center Against Violent Extremism in Albania and with the financial support of UNICEF Albania will implement the project "Preventing radicalization and violent extremism in schools and communities as a means to guaranteeing children's rights." This project aims to strengthen the capacities of the school staff and educational authorities to support the reintegration of children and youth who have returned from conflict zones.

The relationships between parents and children are fundamental to keep their children safe and protected, which also helps in their social development and their educational progress.

Parenting is a challenging duty and exactly for this reason keeping positive relationships that ensure support and love help their children's good upbringing and development throughout different life cycles.

This brochure outlines the necessary information to help parents keep their children safe from dangers stemming from radicalization and violent extremism. It also shows where they can ask for support or address a problem or concern related to these issues.





● Chapter I

Mbrojtja e fëmijëve dhe të rinjve nga radikalizimi dhe ekstremizmi i dhunshëm është një e drejtë.

The school should be a democratic and friendly environment, a safe place for students and educational workers.

The school setting should be appealing and it should collaborate closely with parents and the community, to promote student achievement in every field, to encourage them toward success and above all make them decent global citizens.

Every child should receive quality education, have all his/her rights respected and be part of a friendly, inclusive and collaborative environment.

Parents and teachers should work together so that all children can feel free to address their problems; think in an independent way; know and appreciate basic democratic principles; respect each-other's physical, spiritual, material and intellectual etc., diversity.

Parents should collaborate with the school to prevent various extremist behaviors, such as bullying or violence, to avoid negative behavior and actions and make them be capable to believe in a democratic society, in a peacemaking society, in a society where everyone understands the other; a society without hate language and discrimination, and also with other stakeholders promoting these values.



Terms and definitions

Violence - “All physical and/or emotional forms of maltreatment, sexual exploitation, neglect or neglecting treatment, commercial exploitation or any kind of exploitation that has as a result the probable or real harm of the health, survival, development or dignity of the child as far as responsibility, faith or force is concerned” (according to WHO)

Violence - includes but is not limited to purposeful acts or actions committed towards another person, such as: physical violence; psychological pressure; any action causing or threatening to cause physical or psychological pain; causing a sense of fear, personal danger, invasion of dignity; physical assault without taking into consideration the consequences; offending, insulting, calling somebody offensive names and other ways of concern; constant repetitive behaviors aiming to belittle the other person; putting the other person on the spot so he/she fears for his/her physical, emotional and economic condition.

Extremism² - In the strict sense the word implies the “belief and support for ideas far from what most people consider as correct or reasonable.” Thus, “Extremism” refers to attitudes and behaviors considered to be at odds with the general ones.

Violent Extremism - refers to the beliefs and actions of the people who support or resort to violence to achieve their ideological, religious or political purposes. This includes terrorism and other types of politically motivated violence or motivated by different sects.

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2 Definitions related to extremism and radicalization as used by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

In particular, “violent extremism” identifies an enemy or enemies, which are subject to violence and hate. The main concept of violent extremism is that it is an ideologically motivated means for using violence, usually based on conspiracy theories.

Radicalization - Likewise the term “extremism”, the term “radicalization” is also used in the context of violent extremism. The concern is that the term may serve to justify the limitations of free speech. Actually, the term “radical” in certain contexts, has the meaning of “someone who wants to bring about political changes”. Amid the efforts to prevent violent extremism, “radicalization” is usually used to describe the processes through which a person has certain points of views or uses extreme practices, going as far as to legitimize violence use. The Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism, dated 16 May 2005, does not define the term “radicalization”, but it does provide for the definition of “public provocation to commit a terrorist offense” under article 5, which means: “the distribution, or otherwise making available, of a message to the public, with the intent to incite the commission of a terrorist offense, where such conduct, whether or not directly advocating terrorist offenses, causes a danger that one or more such offenses may be committed.” The Convention also defines “recruitment for terrorism” (Article 6), which means: “to solicit another person to commit or participate in the commission of a terrorist offense, or to join an association or group, for the purpose of contributing to the commission of one or more terrorist offenses by the association or the group.”

Deradicalization - Activities undertaken to change the mentality of a radicalized individual regarding the acceptance or approval of a violent extremist ideology, aiming to refrain him/her from making violent acts in the future.



● Chapter II

The parent's role in preventing extremism and radicalization

Parents are important factors in preventing violent extremism, radicalization and the best partners in the deradicalization process.

Parents should be an active part of the Ethics and Conduct Committee in the educational institution; of the educational institution Board; Parent's Council of the education institution and the class Parent's Council.

Both in and out of these bodies, parent should provide support for the school; the collaboration with other stakeholders for concrete solutions to different concerns; collaboration in preventing radicalization from appearing in schools and contributing to the reintegration of radicalized students.

Parents should constantly supervise their children's behaviors, who they befriend, how much time do they spend on social media, etc.; create a quiet family environment for them; respect their thoughts and accept debate; encourage tendencies and talent; make them be an active part of cultural and sport activities; be attentive to the problems of their age; discuss extremism, radicalization and the dangers stemming from them.

Parents should collaborate with the school to address changes in behavior and the children's problems by asking for advice from education workers, school directory and the psychologist/social worker for specific cases.

The role of parents and carers should not be underestimated and best practice would see them working closely with schools and others to protect their children.

The wide community can also be a protective factor. For example, if the child has religious faith, then having close relationships with

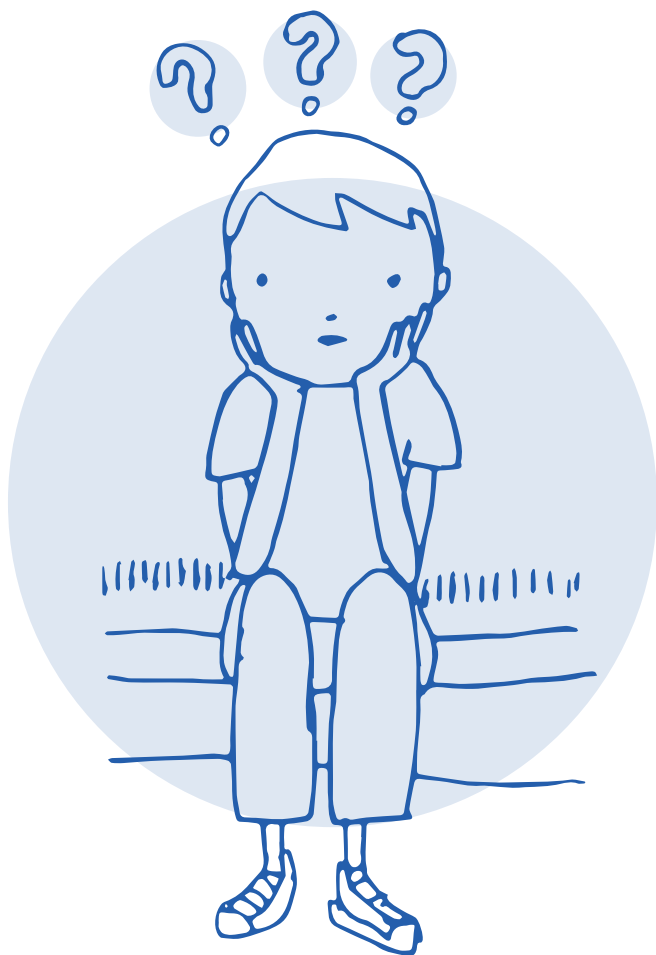
members of that faith can help divert them away from the hateful and discredited version pushed by groups like Al-Qaida and ISIS.

Alternatively, if they are interested in politics then they might be encouraged to join a Youth Parliament or Council to make them aware of how they can influence society and affect positive change in a safe and effective manner.

The online community should also be taken into consideration. We have almost unlimited and unfiltered access to materials online that espouse extremist views. Whilst the big tech companies have gotten better at automatically detecting and removing illegal extremist content, there is still a vast amount of it online that is shared by supported of these violent extremist/terrorist organizations.

Parental control of the Internet is one of the ways to tackle with what youth are exposed to. Parents/carers might also put on conditions of where their child can use the internet- for example in a family room and not alone in their bedroom.

There should also be education taking place about e-safety, including how to fact-check and report concerning online content. A child who has been radicalized needs to develop their critical literacy so that they don't fall for propaganda.



● Chapter III

What should parents know?

A radical profile

Extremist groups attract vulnerable individuals pExtremist groups attract vulnerable individuals through the propagandizing of collective/social grievances on social relations in fulfilling personal needs, isolating them from their family and society, aiming to encourage ideological devotion to become members in action that get more and more violent.

These mechanisms are used by the recruiters for encouraging individuals aiming to cross the psychological barriers of violence and go from simple violence observer to an active participant in violence. Therefore, violent behaviors are learned behaviors and are produced within social environments in which violence is both allowed and encouraged. Terrorist groups consider violence against enemies as imperative for the greater good of the society. We have to highlight the fact that terrorist narratives aim at justifying violence as moral and fair, as an acceptable factor of society and a response to the enemy.

We also have to highlight that terrorist ideologies aim to overcome psychological barriers for using violence, so that their followers lose the sense of guilt when harming others. They use several methods to achieve the moral detachment and other moral and psychological mechanisms for reducing and removing the sense of guilt when harming others.

These individuals showcase the following signs and attitudes:

- They take an attitude against the democratic system/institutions/schools and systematically argue against ideas different from his/hers.
- They take an exclusionary attitude and consider as exclusionary anyone who doesn't think like him/her.

- They take an exclusionary attitude toward different political sects or currents.
- They support the activity of individuals sentenced for terrorist acts in the country or abroad.
- They continue to communicate and support Albanians which are part of terrorist groups, such as ISIS in Syria.
- They support terrorist attacks in Europe and beyond.

Which are the factors that attract a child/youth toward extremist ideologies

- They could have been looking for answers on questions related to their identity, faith or belonging;
- They can be attracted by the desire for “adventure” or enthusiasm;
- They could be guided by the need to build self-confidence and be promoted and accepted among their peers.
- They could be attracted by a group or individuals that provide support and participation in social media;
- They could be influenced by events happening in the world or other concerns which can instill the need to make a change.

What are the signs of child extremism?

- Sudden and out of nature change of the child in clothing, behavior and in relation to their peers;
- Suspicious and secret behaviors;
- Unexpected loss of interest toward previous activities and friends;
- Demonstrating interest and sympathy toward extremist issues;
- Upholding and praising violent acts;
- Keeping and reading extremist literature;
- Using messages similar to illegal terrorist or extremist organizations.

How can we keep children safe from radicalization?

Children today are growing up in an information age. With so many sources of information readily available (but not always accurate!) it can be overwhelming for young people to make sense of the world around them. These simple tips are designed to help parents think about how best to support children in developing their knowledge and understanding of issues they care about. By following this guide you can help your child stay safe online and can give them skills to work out what is reliable information.

Thinking about and making sense of current affairs, as well as sensitive and controversial issues, is a key part of children's education and development. Children are interested in understanding society and its changes, but they need support and guidance from trusted and respected adults in order to do so.

Which are some of the issues:

Theme #1: EMOTION

Social and political issues often create strong feelings and emotions in ourselves and our communities. We all have emotional reactions to sensitive social and politic stories and the techniques the media use to report on these issues can often serve to heighten these emotions. Children pick up on feeling of anger, anxiety and enthusiasm.

It can be useful to address these emotions even and why we might feel this way before we start exploring the issues ourselves. A good place to start when supporting children in this process is to get an understanding about how your child feels about a particular issue. Are they feeling confused, curious, angry etc.? (See the step-by-step guide for tips on how to do this)

Issue #2: EVIDENCE

When talking to your children it is important to start from where they are at in terms of knowledge and understanding. What do they know, think or

understand on an issue? It is not important that as a parent you are an expert (very few people are!). Instead it is important to support children to think critically about the stories we see and hear. This could involve:

Looking up different viewpoints on any given issue

Checking the sources of information e.g. WWWDOT approach (see useful links section)

Encouraging your children to adopt a “questioning” stance to information

Not always expecting to find the perfect answer. Some issues are too complicated for a simple conclusion and this is an important lesson for children to know.

Issue #3: EMPOWERMENT

We are often concerned or feel strongly about big issues in society, but we can also feel powerless and ‘out of control’. As adults we can help children understand that we can make the difference to issues we care about. This could include considering the following questions



When addressing a controversial or sensitive issue,

Consider the following steps:

- 1. Address the emotion-feelings first
- 2. What do we know? What evidence is there?
- 3. What do we want to do about it?

Dealing with the issue-Step-by-step guidance for children activities

Activity 1. Choose a news story:

This could be one that the young person is interested in, or one that you would like to discuss with them.

Ask them how they feel about the story-one way to do this is with Emotion Card like the ones below:

<i>How does this make you feel?</i>		
Confused	Curious	Calm
Angry	Anxious	Indifferent
Interested	excited	Other

Activity 2. Research it together:

This could be from a source they found or it could be one you have chosen (or even better, both!)

Consider the following questions when looking at the sources:

- Who wrote the information? Are they credible and what evidence do they have?
- When was it written? Is the information up to date?
- Why was it written? Is there an agenda? Is the author biased?
- Where else can you check the information?

Activity 3. Talk about it:

Share what you have found and discuss your reaction to it.

Engaging in this process (and showing you are willing) is crucial.

Have either of you changed your views on the story? How? Why?

Take the time to discuss what your next steps should be—the Empowerment section on page 2 can provide some initial ideas for you to explore with your child.

Also consider exploring the approach to improving children's critical evaluation of websites:

Questions to discuss:

1. **Who** wrote this and what credentials do they have??
2. **Why** was it written?
3. **When** was it written?
4. **Does** it help meet my needs?
5. **Organization** on the site?
6. **To-do** list for the future.

How can parents help children be safe?

- Always know where your child is and who is he with by controlling on your own
- Know who are their friends and their friends' families
- Keep an open communication, listen and talk to the child on their interests.
- Encourage them to undertake and organize activities with a group in which you trust.
- Talk with your children on the information provided in the media, TV or the Internet and explain that what they see is not the full picture of what is happening.
- Allow and encourage debate and questions on the events happening in your area or in the world by helping them gain a different point of view.
- Encourage your child to have interest in the area community and show respect towards the faith, origin or social status of other people.
- Help your children understand the danger of getting involved in a

situation on which they don't have full knowledge of.

- Teach them that expressing views forcefully and trying to change things for good is a good thing, but they shouldn't undertake violent actions toward others or support those who commit violent actions.
- Be careful with your child's online activity. Become literate with technological development, online media.
- Be careful of the social media your child uses. Remind your children that the people that may contact them on the Internet can present themselves with an identity other than the real one and tell them things which are not true.
- Explain them that if someone asks them to keep secrets from their parents, family or teachers, it is very likely that that someone is trying to harm them or put them in danger.

What should the parents do if their child has been radicalized?

Ask for help!

- If you think or suspect your child or any other child or youth is in danger of becoming radicalized, **Let the Police know,**

Phone No: **129**

Call these numbers

Anti-Terror Phone No: 112

Social services Phone No:

Tel: 355 04 4 541 821 / +355 04 4 541 822

- If you are concerned or you suspect that your child has been influenced by others, ask for help, address yourself to the school and talk to the teachers. You can also talk to someone who you trust, a family member, cousin, friend, religious figure, and your child's friends.
- If you feel that there is a danger that your child leaves the country, take precautions to stop this journey from happening. E.g. By locking his/her passport somewhere safe.
- You need to be certain that your child won't withdraw money from the bank account, your savings or receive cash as a gift.

How can you help your child!

Dos!

- ✓ Learn about Internet safety!
You can ask for information or attend a course in order to get professionally skilled on Internet safety and its use.
- ✓ Understand that your experiences are not necessarily similar to the experiences of your child!
- ✓ Develop the abilities to tell stories opposing to the ones terrorist groups propagandize!
- ✓ Speak slowly and calmly!
- ✓ Try to understand why does your child uphold and unfold these ideas
- ✓ Ask help from his/her friends or other adults he/she respects!
- ✓ Ask the child's teachers/school for help!
- ✓ Keep documents and the child's passport in a safe place if you suspect they want to leave the country!

Don'ts!

- ✗ Don't try to stop him/her to use their smart phone, phone or the Internet! Prohibition is not a long term solution. They will look for other ways to stay in touch.
- ✗ Don't give them the impression as if you are "following" or "watching them"!
- ✗ Develop the abilities to tell stories opposing to the ones terrorist groups propagandize!
- ✗ Speak slowly and calmly!
- ✗ Try to understand why does your child uphold and unfold these ideas
- ✗ Ask help from his/her friends or other adults he/she respects!
- ✗ Ask the child's teachers/schools for help!
- ✗ Keep documents and the child's passport in a safe place if you suspect they want to leave the country!



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