

The Digital Dimension

Social media algorithms are designed to maximise screen time, not safety. By prioritising retention, these systems feed attention-grabbing content that can trap vulnerable users in toxic propaganda and harmful communities. A digital rabbit hole can reshape a person's worldview in a very short space of time. For vulnerable users, a simple curiosity can quickly spiral into an addictive cycle, trapping them inside extremist echo chambers.

Key Dynamics:

Algorithmic Rabbit Holes



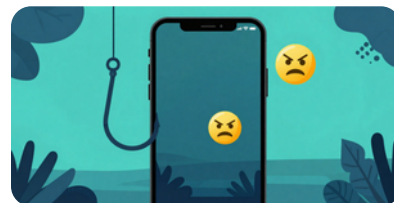
Platforms track behaviour to suggest increasingly extreme content. Automated recommendations transition users from mainstream interests into spaces dominated by disinformation.

Echo Chambers



In isolated digital spaces, fringe ideas appear mainstream. Constant exposure creates a distorted perception that radical views are widely accepted.

Tactical Engagement



Creators use 'ragebait' to trigger high-arousal emotions. Extremist recruiters exploit these intense feelings to push urgent, harmful messaging.

Artificial Urgency



Tactics like 'watch before this is banned' bypass critical thinking, triggering impulsive action on perceived threats rather than logical analysis.

Gradual Normalisation



Radicalisation is rarely instant. It often begins with edgy memes or jokes that gradually desensitise people to actual hate speech and violence.

Understanding these dynamics helps highlight that radicalisation is often gradual, subtle, and reinforced by both online and offline influences. Early recognition and support can make a significant difference.

Warning Signs

- Sudden secrecy about online activity
- Using new, unfamiliar platforms or apps
- Sharing extremist memes or 'jokes'
- Expressing us-vs-them worldviews
- Withdrawing from family and friends
- Glorifying violence or 'martyrdom'
- Dehumanising language about groups
- Obsessive consumption of one source

What You Can Do

- Have open, non-judgmental conversations
- Recognise the warning signs of online radicalisation
- Build critical thinking skills and media literacy
- Monitor screen time and platform use
- Report concerning content to platforms
- Encourage diverse friendships offline
- Model healthy online behaviour
- Get early advice from the local Prevent team via 101