

Responding to Hate via One-to-One Conversations

What is this? This resource sheet uses a Scale of Expression rating system, developed by a research team from the UCLA Luskin Center for History and Policy, which categorizes five types of activity that capture different points on the path of radicalization.

What is the goal: Use empathetic questioning in one-to-one conversations to learn 1) as much about what the person is thinking as possible, 2) where exposure is taking place, 3) the degree to which the person is identifying with the content, and 4) the intentions underlying the expression.

- 1. Accidental Absorption:** Looks like posting memes on social media, or jokes that call liberals snowflakes. There may be no real investment in the content in any serious way.
 - Where did this image (or joke) come from? Are there others like it? Can you show me?
 - What makes it funny?
 - What is the goal of sharing (or saying) it?
 - Do you care if it hurts someone's feelings? Why or why not?
- 2. Social or edgy transgression:** Looks like creating a swastika while playing a beer game. The investment is in playing with social taboos without intent to cause real harm.
 - Where did you learn of this?
 - How familiar are you with the symbols here? What do you think they mean?
 - Of all the things you could choose, why choose this one? What is the goal?
 - Do you care if it offends people? Why or why not?
- 3. Political provocation:** Looks like a wide-ranging spectrum of content that may not be explicitly racist, but includes dog whistles that scapegoat specific groups. For example, raising posters at a high school football game that say "build that wall" specifically when the competition is a team composed of mostly Latinx students. Given the context, this is a racially weaponized form of a mainstream conservative talking point intended to send a message of exclusion.
 - What is the message you are trying to send?
 - What is the difference between sending a political message and racial targeting?
 - What happens when a political message makes people feel targeted?
- 4. Overt hate:** Looks like images, symbols and speech clearly in line with white nationalist ideology or hate groups. May indicate serious adoption of white supremacists/nationalist ideology.
 - Attempt to build a stronger relationship. – Pull in. Do not push away.
 - What does this mean? Can you tell me more about this?
 - What does it mean to you?
 - What would happen if everyone adopted this perspective? What is the end goal?
 - Is that a result you would like to see happen?
- 5. Calls for violence:** Looks like threats of violence shared on discussion boards, in videos, or via memes. Proceed with extreme caution. Direct questioning may backfire.
 - Attempt to build relationship slowly over time. – Pull in. Do not push away.
 - Consult with a team to determine a coordinated response.
 - Who has the closest relationship with this person?
 - Who is the best person most likely to draw out what is going on?

The Scale of Expression draws from a presentation of UCLA Luskin Center research team on October 23, 2019. The Luskin Center plans to release a paper on the subject in the coming months.

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