Safety and Wellbeing for Researchers and Practitioners

A handbook for preventing and countering violent extremism safely while protecting your wellbeing

# Introduction

## Intention and Purpose of Guide

Welcome to this handbook on safety and wellbeing for researchers and practitioners preventing and countering violent extremism. In the challenging landscape of this field, where researchers and practitioners grapple with risks to both psychological and physical safety, this guide aims to be an introduction to crucial aspects to ensure the security, safety, and resilience of individuals involved in such critical work.

The first section of the handbook “Safety and Wellbeing” frames the problems that researchers and practitioners face and then details the published, evidence-based approaches that have been established.

As this field is still developing, evidence is not available for all the approaches that researchers use. As a result, this should be considered as a guide of inspiring practices to draw from. In addition, we have tried to identify and recognize gaps in the existing evidence base to inform future research.

This handbook was developed in consultation with the members of the [Eradicate Hate Global Summit](https://eradicatehatesummit.org/) working group “Protecting the Protectors.” The working group was established in 2023 with the purpose of drawing on the lived experiences of P/CVE researchers and practitioners to fill gaps in the field related to understanding mental, physical, and digital well-being while undertaking P/CVE work.

## How to use the guide

This guide is intended to be a wide collection of resources for the reader to tailor to their unique needs. The reader is encouraged to use this guide as an encyclopedic resource, jumping to relevant sections as needed. The sections are broken down as per the Table of Contents below:

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## Important Bookmarks

🚨 P.18 - Immediate resources for swatting, doxxing, or other forms of online harassment

# Safety and Wellbeing

## *Framing the problem:* Risks to digital, psychological and physical safety when performing this work

*This section of the handbook collates the research conducted into these risks and seeks to frame the problems facing researchers and practitioners to spread awareness of the risks as a first step in supporting our community to manage the risks effectively.*

Individuals working in preventing and countering violent extremism (hereafter, ‘P/CVE’) are a vast cohort. Traditional career pathways towards this field including in securitized and law enforcement spaces remain, but the field has largely expanded to include researchers, practitioners at all levels of prevention, social workers, educators, policymakers, healthcare workers, content moderators, investigators, and more. Preventing violent extremism is a whole of society effort, and thus requires a whole of society response.

Resultingly, however, the types of harm that can come to individuals working in the P/CVE space have expanded exponentially. Those working to prevent extremism and terrorism in any capacity face unique risks. These include facing psychological harm through repeated exposure to graphic and traumatic content; risking doxxing, trolling, or material threats by the groups or individuals being researched; or facing physical risks as a practitioner who works directly with clients.

These risks and the extent of the harm they cause can be amplified depending on the identity factors of the researchers or practitioners. Marginalized identities are at significantly higher risk of being targeted and harmed through this work. Engaging in research and implementing programs aimed at preventing violence and hate demands sustained commitment and resilience from individual researchers and practitioners. Many researchers and practitioners navigate these endeavors with scarce resources and insufficient institutional recognition. This lack of support can contribute to burnout, anxiety, depression, or even PTSD among individuals tackling these complex and emotionally taxing issues, exacerbated by repeated exposure to traumatic content and the constant threat of online and offline attacks from extremist groups or actors.

So why does this matter? If you are an individual working in this field, you already know one answer to this question: you want to avoid harm for yourself and others. People in all professions deserve to be equipped with the knowledge, resources, and institutional support needed to perform their work to the best of their ability, and to do so without fear of coming to harm. At a broader level, this also matters because we cannot afford to lose critical resources, information, or evidence that could improve the work of this field because an individual was not adequately protected. The field of P/CVE is very young and relatively small, and experts are not interchangeable or expendable. It is our duty to protect the people doing this critical work and learning important lessons to help us all grow our evidence and practice.

*Suggested Additional Reading:*

* [The Existential Crisis Plaguing Online Extremism Researchers](https://www.wired.com/story/existential-crisis-plaguing-online-extremism-researchers/)
* [I Watched ISIS Videos, and Felt My Soul Diminished.](https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2019/09/the-mental-toll-of-graphic-imagery/598663/)
* [REASSURE: The Researcher Security, Safety and Resilience project](https://modus-zad.de/projekte/reassure/)
* [Who’s Protecting the Researchers? REASSURE report findings on identity and harms for online extremism and terrorism researchers | International Centre for Counter-Terrorism](https://www.icct.nl/publication/whos-protecting-researchers-reassure-report-findings-identity-and-harms-online)
* [Online Extremism and Terrorism Researchers’ Security, Safety, and Resilience: Findings from the Field](https://voxpol.eu/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Online-Extremism-and-Terrorism-Researchers-Security-Safety-Resilience.pdf)
* ‘[It Gets To You.’ Extremism Researchers Confront The Unseen Toll Of Their Work](https://www.npr.org/2019/09/20/762430305/it-gets-to-you-extremism-researchers-confront-the-unseen-toll-of-their-work)
* [Impact of Traumatic Material on Professionals](https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11896-022-09532-8)
* [Secondary Traumatic Stress, Compassion Fatigue, and Counselor Spirituality: Implications for Counselors Working with Trauma](https://www.counseling.org/resources/library/Selected%20Topics/Crisis/Simpson.htm)
* [The Psychological Well-Being of Content Moderators](https://crowd.cs.vt.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/CHI21_final__The_Psychological_Well_Being_of_Content_Moderators-2.pdf)
* [Repeated and Extensive Exposure to Online Terrorist Content: Counter-Terrorism Internet Referral Unit Perceived Stressors and Strategies](https://dspace.lib.cranfield.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/1826/16584/Repeated_and_extensive_exposure_to_online_terrorist_content-2021.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)
* [Impact of Traumatic Material on Professionals in Analytical and Secondary](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-022-09532-8)
* [Individual Responses to Threat](https://holistic-security.tacticaltech.org/chapters/prepare/1-2-individual-responses-to-threat.html)
* [Democracy Protection Network](https://democracyprotectionnetwork.org/)
* [Risks, Dangers, and Threat Models: Evaluating Security Analysis for Conflict Practitioners](https://www.academia.edu/51441242/_2021_Risks_Dangers_and_Threat_Models_Evaluating_Security_Analysis_for_Conflict_Practitioners)
* [Resources for Swatting and Hoax Threats | Homeland Security](https://www.dhs.gov/publication/resources-swatting-and-hoax-threats)
* [Hoax Threats are Crimes — FBI](https://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/hoax-threats-awareness-100518#:~:text=If%20you%20are%20a%20target%20of%20an%20online,submit%20a%20tip%20to%20the%20FBI%20at%20tips.fbi.gov.)
* [What To Do if You Get Doxxed: A Complete Guide - Digital Defense Hub: Resources for Sextortion and Online Blackmail Victims](https://www.digitalforensics.com/blog/harassment/what-to-do-if-you-get-doxxed/)
* Integrate Daniel Barretto’s handbooks
* [Security in a Box: Protect Against Physical Threats](https://securityinabox.org/en/phones-and-computers/physical-security/)
* [Vision-Change-Win: Community Safety Training Series](https://visionchangewin.org/training-series/)
* [Personal Security Considerations Action Guide](https://www.cisa.gov/resources-tools/resources/personal-security-considerations-action-guide)
* [Targeted Violence Prevention and Mitigation for Schools](https://www.schoolsafety.gov/targeted-violence)
* [Workbook on Security: Practical Steps for Human Rights Defenders at Risk](https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/resource-publication/workbook-security-practical-steps-human-rights-defenders-risk)

## Developing a Framework for Security and Safety

In this field, maintaining safety and security as you conduct your research is paramount. The types of risk that you may face will depend on various factors, including the milieu in which you work, the type of work that you do, and your own identity, Researchers or practitioners online need to navigate the potential sharing of data that can expose identities or create risks that can threaten their physical and mental health. Those working directly with clients are required to balance serving the clients’ needs with their own physical safety and security. Even policymakers, who frequently do not deal with P/CVE material directly, are susceptible to secondhand trauma or psychological harm from reading research or hearing from experts on sensitive topics.

These risks are dynamic in nature, shifting as fast as the online eco-system and as fast as the violence that we seek to prevent. To protect ourselves, it is important to know how to develop an appropriate framework before starting a project which might expose you to harm. A good framework will allow you to “understand security and risk, and as a result, [facilitate] the development of a sustained, adaptable security posture and risk balance." ([Loadenthal, 2021](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354506971_Risks_Dangers_and_Threat_Models_Evaluating_Security_Analysis_for_Conflict_Practitioners))

This section will outline how to develop such a security framework and present several examples of professionals developing them in different contexts.

#### Step 1: Prepare

Before researching or engaging in a project, step one involves laying the foundation for your security strategy. This may include the following steps:

Map out your existing security practices

Consider what, if any, security practices you already employ, and how they might be applicable to this new project. Make a note of any gaps you may need to fill if you are aware of them at this stage.

*✨ Helpful resources:*[*Reflecting on Existing Security Practices*](https://holistic-security.tacticaltech.org/exercises/prepare/1-1-reflecting-on-existing-security-practices.html)

[*What is holistic security?*](https://holistic-security.tacticaltech.org/chapters/prepare/chapter-1-1-what-is-holistic-security.html)

Inventory what you need to protect.

Consider what is at risk without an appropriate framework. This could be as simple as “my psychological wellbeing,” but may also include things like your privacy, personal information, physical safety, family, children, finances, pets, spiritual beliefs, or otherwise. A comprehensive list of what needs to be protected will make it easier to develop an appropriate safety response.

*✨ Helpful resources:*

[*Overall framework for context analysis*](https://holistic-security.tacticaltech.org/chapters/explore/2-1-overall-framework-for-context-analysis.html)

Consider how much time, effort, and expense you’re willing and able to spend.

The best laid security plan will be useless to you if you do not have the resources, time, or capacity to implement it. Consider your capacity, and do your best to work within it. Always remember that some security is better than none, so do what you can to keep yourself safe.

#### Step 2: Explore the Threats

Now that you have mapped out your environment, assets, existing security measures and capacity to respond, it’s time to explore what kind of threats you may be facing as you do this work.

Consider the operational environment and understand the threats you are facing

Although environments often intersect, it may be helpful to consider your operational environment through the lens of digital, physical, and psychological categories. These will help organize the different threats that you may be facing as you undertake your project.

If you will potentially face digital threats, consider the following questions:

* How visible am I online? Do I need to remove any identifiable information?
* (If using sock puppet accounts) is there any way these accounts could be traced back to me?
* Have I set up a virtual machine or VPN to be used when necessary?
* Have I adjusted the settings on my browser to make sure that I am not exposed to sound, images, or other graphic content without my consent?
* What resources, if any, does my institution offer to help protect my activity online?

If you will potentially face physical threats, consider the following questions:

* How might the size of my community change the risks associated with this work? Consider that in a smaller community, your work may make you more visible.
* Am I aware of any groups, movements, or individuals that may pose a risk to my wellbeing?
* Is my address, workplace, or information about my loved ones easily accessible online?
* What resources are available to me in my community in the event that I need help? In addition to law enforcement, consider community organizations and your employer.
* When I am working directly with clients or individuals involved in violent extremism, do I have a safe space in which to meet them? Am I in contact with organizations, including law enforcement, that may be interacting with them?
* What resources, if any, does my institution offer to help protect my physical safety?

If the threats you may face are psychological, consider the following questions:

* Have I designated appropriate and sustainable working hours and spaces?
* Do I have rituals to help me disengage from traumatic content?
* Do I have a therapist, a mentor, a supervisor, or someone else that I can talk to if this work is affecting my wellbeing?

*✨ Helpful resource:*

[*Situational monitoring: a quick PESTLE analysis*](https://holistic-security.tacticaltech.org/exercises/explore/situational-monitoring-a-quick-pestle-analysis.html)

#### Strategize

Now it is time to identify how to match the capabilities you have to the risks you face, and identify any key gaps. To start, map out how your existing strategies meet the potential threats you have identified, and identify any gaps that you may need to fill. Once these gaps are identified, you will need to find practices that you would like to build in order to cover these areas.

*✨ Helpful resources:*

[*Responding to Threats*](https://holistic-security.tacticaltech.org/chapters/strategise/3-1-responding-to-threats.html)

#### Act

You have covered your bases and identified ways to mitigate potential threats. You’re now ready to start your work, but be mindful - in this work, threats and risks are constantly evolving. Throughout the work, be ready to return to this process and adapt your strategy as new threats arise. Preparing, exploring, and strategizing is an active cycle that you should be continually evaluating to ensure you are adequately protected.

To see this process in action, see below for case study examples involving different individuals and their unique roles.

### 

### Safety Framework Examples

#### CSAM researcher

Profile:

Task:

* + Prepare
  + Explore the Threats
  + Strategize
  + Act
  + Follow Up

#### Government policy analyst

Profile: Micah works for a policy division in their federal government structure, and does not have any experience researching harmful content. Recently, they have been tasked with learning about child sexual abuse material online in order to contribute to draft policy legislation. This research is done primarily via secondary sources (i.e., reading research papers and news articles), but Micah knows that this material, even through a research lens, can cause psychological harm. Here are some steps that Micah can take to protect their wellbeing in a government setting as they take on this work.

Prepare

* + Micah discusses the tasking with their manager and clarifies the expected scope, depth, and detail of the material that is needed for the work.
  + Micah clarifies the timeline of the task, and how many hours per day or week they are expected to handle this information.
  + Micah also creates a plan with their manager to alert them if they are feeling overwhelmed by the work or need to step back. Part of this plan includes identifying another colleague to help support Micah or take over the file if they are unable to continue work. Establishing this plan ahead of time means that they are less likely to feel hesitant to approach their manager if they need support.

Explore the Threats

* + Before diving into this research, Micah takes some time to consider how this content could negatively affect them. They consider their own personal experiences, as well as those of people they know and love, their identity factors, and try to identify any unique triggers or stressors that they may encounter. Here, Micah can decide how and whether to engage with specific material that may negatively affect them. If certain topics or types of content are off limits, Micah can work with their manager to identify a different team member that may be able to take this on.
  + Micah also considers that they may not yet be aware of how this content will affect them, and creates a safety plan in case they find themselves overwhelmed by their research. This plan may include reaching out to colleagues or their manager for support; making use of employee assistance or support resources; scheduling therapy appointments in advance of the work; or planning to engage in an activity that brings them joy or relaxation.
* Strategize
  + Armed with knowledge about expectations, types of content, and scope of this task, Micah is able to map out their workday or workweek to budget a certain amount of time spent working on this research.
  + During these blocks of time, Micah adopts certain rituals to signal to their nervous system the beginning and end of this specific work. These may include putting on a particular ‘uniform’, while they are researching (for instance, a lab coat or a certain t-shirt or hat) working in a specific spot that is separate from their usual workspace; or engaging in a specific activity (i.e., stomping feet, jumping up and down, getting a coffee, etc.) to begin and end their block of research time.[[1]](#footnote-0)
  + Since Micah works from home, they also make sure that they never engage in this work in spaces that are otherwise reserved for relaxation or safety (for example, their couch or bed). Their workspace is defined to maintain mental hygiene.
* Act
  + Micah does their best to follow their plan while undertaking the work, while recognizing that it may not always be possible. Some weeks, they are required to put in more time than budgeted for this research, and they do their best to balance these unexpected surges in work with dedicated time to other tasks when they are able.

Follow Up

* After a few weeks of this research, Micah becomes aware that it is beginning to impact them outside of work. They notice that they are less emotionally regulated than usual, frequently snapping at friends and family, crying more easily, and feeling a sense of dread before logging on to work for the day. They are also having trouble engaging in activities that previously brought them joy, and finding themselves procrastinating and avoiding certain tasks at work, which contributes to a feeling of low self-esteem. After speaking with their therapist, Micah recognizes these patterns as consistent with exposure to difficult material and experiencing prolonged stress. In this “follow up” phase, Micah has two options moving forward:

1. They can revisit their security framework and make adjustments that may help alleviate the stress of this work. This may involve reducing time spent on this material, increasing therapy appointments or check-ins with managers or colleagues, or scheduling days off from work. It may also involve putting in place increased measures to protect their mental hygiene.
2. If the above does sufficiently reduce the harm they are experiencing, Micah can speak to their manager to request being removed from this project, or to request support from other colleagues in order to lessen the amount of content that they need to consume.

***💡Remember:*** *You are the expert on your own wellbeing! It can feel difficult to advocate for yourself, but it is important to normalize that this work is not easy, both for yourself and others.*

Wildcards!

* + - When things go wrong:
    - I am insecure in my position, what do I do?
    - My manager is not supportive of my distress

#### Academic researcher

**Academic researcher**

Profile: A university-based researcher working on a project on violent misogyny with potentially hostile research subjects. She plans to conduct data collection, analysis, and dissemination. She knows that this content can cause not only psychological harm but poses risks to cyber and physical security as well. Here are some steps that she can take to safeguard her psychological and physical wellbeing.

1. **Prepare:**

Identify institutional supports – the researcher begins with an environmental scan of existing supports at her institution. This includes her office of risk and safety, security, union (if applicable) and university-provided mental health supports.

Helpful questions to ask:

* **Risk and safety** - What insurance does my university provide in the case of a lawsuit or physical harm (to person or property)? Will I need extra coverage? Who will pay for additional coverage (e.g., researcher’s grant funding, Faculty funding, or University funding)
* **Security** - What are the on-campus security protocols in place? Is there a secure space in which the researcher can do her work? What is the University’s relationship with local law enforcement? If there is a threat, what does the existing chain of reporting look like?
* **Union** - what experience does the union have in supporting researchers targeted by research subjects or the public? What is the culture of academic freedom on campus, and more broadly freedom of expression (Canada) or freedom of speech (US) in the community?
* **Mental health** - What mental health supports are available? Do they allow for leaves of absences in the case of research-related injury or harm? Are there faith-based or community supports on campus?

She pays attention to notable gaps in the support provided and seeks out external support when necessary. Further, she gathers confirmation of these supports in writing whenever possible.

1. **Explore the Threats**

She spends time exploring the threats associated with her proposed research. She knows that this process will vary depending on the researcher’s identity, where she conducts her research, and her plans for public-facing work.

Helpful questions to ask:

* **Research subjects** – based on previous research or news reports, how do the subjects in question respond to academic researchers? Do they have a history of antagonistic behaviour or preoccupation with post-secondary institutions (e.g., claims of indoctrination, “woke-ism,” or Critical Race Theory)? Have they engaged with other academics in the past?
* **Positionality** – The researcher should reflect on the aspects of her identity that make her vulnerable to the harms her research may entail. How might her identity amplify antagonistic practices and harm (e.g., make her more of a target)? How will exposure to specific kinds of hate harm her (e.g., reading misogynistic content online)?
* **Geographic location** – The researcher should also consider where she conducts her research. Will she conduct her research locally? Do local groups have a history of antagonistic behaviour or protesting at the university?
* **Public presence** – Academic researchers are increasingly expected to maintain a public profile on- and offline. It is vital that publicly funded research is made available to the public. What are the expectations of her academic superiors (e.g., department chairs, deans) and funding agencies? Does she need public social media accounts? Is she expected to give in-person? How accessible is her university office and classroom (e.g., listed on university website)? What supports will the university provide for off campus events?

1. **Strategize**

Based on the answers to the above questions, she then alerts appropriate supervisors (e.g., department chairs, deans) of her research plans and works with them to develop a comprehensive safety plan (see Developing a Framework for Security and Safety) as well as a public scholarship communication plan.

1. **Act**

Putting her safety and communication plan into practice, she:

* Conducts her research on campus in a lab that requires a passcode to enter. The computers are set up with necessary cybersecurity features (e.g., VPN). This setup ensures that she is physically safe while conducting her research. This also allows her to keep her work “at work” and not blur the boundaries of work/life balance.
* Develops a work schedule that includes task switching, taking breaks, and physical activity (e.g., accessing campus recreational facilities). This allows her to decompress during periods of heavy data collection.
* Meets with her department chair once a month and her dean once a semester to touch base on her research experience and reassess any supports or emerging risks. She also joined a fellowship program at an external center for subject-specific peer support as her department does not conduct similar research.
* Sees her therapist monthly and volunteers with the campus women’s center and queer students club. Both provide her with emotional support and a reminder that her research has a meaningful impact.
* Sets up public social media accounts and turns her personal accounts private. She also works with another scholar to her social media pages for inappropriate comments. She has found that it is easier to receive negative or hostile feedback when it is filtered through a trusted colleague, and she returns this favour.
* Works with the university’s public relations team when the university reports on her research or publicizes a community event. This allows her to prepare for possible public commentary.
* Works with institutional supports to develop a framework and policy for future scholars to follow when doing harmful research.

1. **Follow Up**

Based on the timeline given to her by the funding agency, the researcher must also consider what “leaving the field” or ending data collection means for her. While she may not continue to collect data long term and experience psychological harm through that, she will continue to analyze the data, which can be a secondary source of trauma or harm, and disseminate her findings. As a result, her safety plan and communication plan must extend beyond the life cycle of the research project. Further, as parts of her research will be publicly available, these plans must also include the possibility that a hostile actor will find the resources after the project has concluded.

1. **Things to consider for precarious positions**

While the researcher has the protection of tenure and union, she recognizes that her trainees (e.g., students, postdoctoral fellows, research assistants) do not. She notes that students should also consider how their positionality, location, and subject matter may impact their psychological wellbeing. It is also vital that she discuss with her students the limitations of institutional protection for students when planning their research projects. As a result, the safety plans and communication strategies that she develops with her students respond to the following questions:

* **Risk and Safety** - What institutional supports are currently available to students (e.g., graduate students may be unionized; undergraduate students may not have professional protections)? What legal and insurance-based protections are in place? What lab spaces are available for student use?
* **Mental Health** - Do they have appropriate cyber and/or physical security protections? Are there university-provided mental health supports specifically for students? Are there campus groups or peer support systems?
* **Union/Department** - Are there union supports for students? What responsibility does the department or faculty have for the wellbeing of students? What supports can they provide if the supervisor is unable to fulfil her role?

Importantly: How long will these protections be in place? Will the student be able to access these resources after graduation?

Based on the answers to the above questions, she and her students may modify research activities (e.g., not doing interviews) or research subjects (e.g., focusing on less harmful content). She and her students will also discuss public speaking events and authorship recognition. While it is important to recognize student contributions and to develop their dissemination skills, this must be weighed against the possible long-term harm that may come from public facing research. The researcher records these decisions in writing so that all parties are clear on expectations and risks.

* Follow Up

Profile:

Task:

* Prepare
* Explore the Threats
* Strategize
* Act
* Follow Up

#### NGO researcher

Profile: A. works for a non-profit organization that focuses on reviewing and researching a range of extremist movements. A. is tasked with reviewing primary and secondary source materials from groups and individuals. These tasks account for approximately 15-20 hours of their work week. Review of these materials includes image- and video-based propaganda that includes violent acts and calls to violence. This propaganda also includes rhetoric and imagery aimed at intimidating individuals with whom A. shares a portion of their identity. Portions of the secondary research responsibilities also brings A into contact with passages, imagery and narratives that are similarly challenging. A. begins to have trouble sleeping well and recognizes that they are experiencing feelings of numbness towards others they are close to and activities they have long enjoyed; some outside of work tell A. that they feel like A. seems frustrated and has been self-isolating. A. tells others outside of work and two colleagues who hold the same level of research position that they are feeling increasingly exhausting, and that they feel burdened by a sense of hopelessness about the state of the world. They also share that they are beginning to feel that their research work ultimately makes no positive difference. A.’s colleagues encourage them to share this with A.’s manager and department leadership, and that as colleagues they are willing to help elevate these concerns and even attend some support meetings, etc., related to existing and accessible systems of support that already exist within their organization.

Proactively Prepare

* Organization should build an operation, administrative and collegial culture that addresses the lifecycle of researcher needs re: to wellness and well-being, including physical safety and emotional safety. This mean being prepared to initiate learning and training efforts during on-boarding and sustaining them through the lifecycle of employees time at an organization.
* Onboarding in research department extends from other department’s capacities leading initial phases of onboarding. Managers and supervisors work to extend supports, resources, tools introduced during on-boarding into culture of the department.
* Manager and dept director hold meeting with A. as a new hire, in part, to help normalize expectations and support re: to working with harmful content and elevating personal concerns and needs whenever they emerge. Create clarification on this process.
* A. discusses the research material tasking with their manager in their earliest 1:1s. Manager clarifies the expected scope, depth, and detail of the material that is needed to sustain A.’s workflow. This provides A. with clarity on the timelines of the tasks, and how many hours per day or week they are expected to handle research endeavors that may or will present harmful materials.
* A.’s manager also provides the template for a individual care plan, and A. and their manager begin to create that care plan. Such a plan will help A. understand how to alert their manager if they are feeling overwhelmed by the work or need to step back. Establishing this plan now at the beginning of A.’s employment will help A. feel less hesitant and, in turn, more proactive about approaching their manager if they need support.
* The topic of wellness and well-being becomes a set, mandated component of their weekly to bi-weekly 1:1 check-ins as they evolve over tim. Ideally, this component is addressed at the beginning or very early in those check-ins, so that time crunches and other discussions do not absorb time and prohibit A. from discussing emerging needs or issues, especially if A. feels they need to address and/or trigger portions of their care plan later.

Explore & Document the Threats

* Before diving into this research, A. takes some time to consider how this content could negatively affect them. They consider their own personal experiences, as well as those of people they know and love, and try to identify any unique triggers or stressors that they may encounter. Here, A. can decide how and whether to engage with specific material that may negatively affect them. If certain topics or types of content are off limits, A. can work with their manager to identify a different team member that may be able to take this on, and how best to balance hours spent with this material versus other assigned duty and tasks.
* A. also considers that they may not yet be aware of how this content will affect them, and creates a safety plan with the support of their manager and HR department in case they find themselves overwhelmed by their research. As per department protocols, A. preserves and/or shares with their manager specific examples of content that A. finds personally harmful. Following from learning offered and trainings scheduled during on-boarding, A. knows this plan may include reaching out to colleagues or their manager for support; making use of their organization’s employee assistance or support resources; scheduling therapy appointments in advance of the work; or planning to engage in an activity that brings them joy or relaxation. And, crucially, that A.’s needs may vary over time.
* In 1:1s, A. and their manager continue to discuss if available resources, tools, support, and learning opportunities that the organization has in place to help mitigate and recognize harms are clear, still accessible and/or are functioning correctly. Both also commit to following up in future 1:1s or otherwise when new needs arise.

Strategize & Continue to Act Proactively

* Armed with an awareness of support, resources and tools re: to wellness and being, and clarity expectations, types of content, and scope of this task, A. is able to map out their workday or workweek to budget a certain amount of time spent working on this research.
* During these blocks of time, A. adopts certain rituals to signal to their nervous system the beginning and end of this specific work. These may include putting on a particular ‘uniform’ while they are researching; working in a specific spot that is separate from their usual workspace; or engaging in a specific activity (i.e., stomping feet, jumping up and down, doing ground exercises, stretching and/or going for short walks, etc.) to begin and end their block of research time.[[2]](#footnote-1) This also includes pausing work flows if tools employed to mitigate the visual potency of materials (e.g., browser plug-ins and settings, et al.) are not functioning properly or are broken, flagging this for their manager and following requisite protocols with colleagues in IT or other departments to restore functionality, and potentially pivoting to other duties and tasks before A. returns to this portion of their workflow.
* Since A. works from home, they also make sure that they never engage in this work in spaces that are otherwise reserved for relaxation or safety (e.g., their couch or bed). Their workspace is defined to maintain mental hygiene. A. learns that simple things like closing doors to home work spaces and not returning to them out of work hours can help contribute to this maintenance of mental hygiene. A. also learns to begin cultivating awareness of how, why, when and for how long they discuss work outside of office hours.
* A. also begins attending peer-to-peer support and process groups within their organization and across some others to share out these experiences, learn from others about their experience and the solutions that worked for them. A. shares these solutions with their manager and other colleagues while also maintaining any confidentiality necessary per groups’ codes of conduct.
* A. and their manager stay closely synchronized, continuing to utilize the earliest portions of their 1:1s to discuss how A is feeling, how existing resources, support and tools are working for them, and what gaps for support or resources may be emerging.
* A. and their manager also look out over the following four-to-six weeks during each 1:1 (or at a regular cadence each month) to plan workflow components, ensuring best practices for varying duties and tasks and utilizing resources and supports remain in place. During these moments, A. and their manager remain proactive about planning time off for A. A’s manager also commits to continue researching new and alternative resources and supports for A., in the case the efficacy of existing supports, resources, and tools is degrading or if gaps have been identified.
* A. and their manager also shares these resources, supports, and tools with other managers in their department, their HR department, and other stakeholders within their organization, so that these resources, supports, and tools can permeate other spaces. Doing so can help sustain a continuum of solid operations and administrative culture related to dimensions of wellness and well-being within their organization.
* A. does their best to follow their plan while undertaking the work, while recognizing that it may not always be possible. Some weeks, they are required to put in more time than budgeted for this research, and they do their best to elevate success and concerns during 1:1s and other spaces.

Follow Up

* A.’s and their manager continue to center any challenges intentionally in 1:1s, discussing the efficacy of any solutions and resources that A. is utilizing.
* A.’s manager also ensures that A. has access to the organization’s policies covering the creation of accommodations related to officially diagnosed medical conditions, and that A. understands how to engage in the organization's processes and systems related to those policies.
* Beyond A.’s needs and requests, A.’s manager works with other managers, the organization’s HR department, and with any other departments tasked with sustaining healthy workplace culture and practices. This cohort works to identify, review and approve trainings, materials and other supports for research staff and other staff who may benefit from learning more about wellness and well-being, including how to recognize and respond empathetically and skillfully to any trauma being experienced by employees.
* This cohort works to establish and implement organizational and departmental calendars scheduling the delivery of new and existing trainings, new materials and existing ones, and other supports.
* This cohort also designs and implements audits of these resources and calendars on a regular cadence (e.g., annual or bi-annual).
* HR departments and any other departments tasked with sustaining healthy workplace culture and practices ensure that managers are receiving a range of relevant trainings for supporting colleagues in relation to wellness and well-being, surveying managers about the efficacy of existing trainings and resources while also working to identify gaps and address them.
* These capacities should also work to help ensure that managers themselves feel supported and safe to elevate their own concerns about wellness and well-being.

# 3. Toolkits and resources for digital, physical, and psychological security

This section dives deeper into the measures that you and your team can take to ensure your safety in the digital, physical, and psychological aspects of this work. All of these measures can be incorporated into building your own unique safety framework as discussed in the previous section.

## Guide: Digital Safety Toolkit

If you are working online or some of your work involves the digital sphere, it is important to be aware of the tools that are available to you to do this work safely. This section outlines some of the digital risks you face while doing this work, and the most common options to keep yourself safe online.

#### The Risks: Doxxing, Abuse and Harassment

Unfortunately, there is a constant threat to researchers and practitioners with an online presence of doxxing, abuse, and coordinated harassment. **Doxxing** involves the malicious act of publicly revealing personal information about an individual, such as their home address, phone number, family members' details, or other identifying information. Related to this is a tactic known as **swatting**, in which malicious actors submit fake tips to law enforcement to trigger a security response targeting the victim (i.e., sending a SWAT team to their residence or place of work). Other forms of online abuse may include targeted harassment or blackmail.

For anybody working in this space, exposure through doxxing or other forms of abuse can lead to harassment, threats, or even physical harm from extremist groups or individuals opposed to their work. It can also result in professional repercussions, such as damage to reputation or career disruption. Researchers may become targets of campaigns as a means to intimidate, discredit, or silence their work, making it crucial for them to adopt stringent security measures to protect their personal information and maintain their safety online.

##### Quick Reads: I Need Help Now

* [What To Do if You Get Doxxed: A Complete Guide](https://www.digitalforensics.com/blog/harassment/what-to-do-if-you-get-doxxed/)
* [Digital Forensics Corp: Help for victims of sextortion and blackmail](https://www.digitalforensics.com/help-with-online-blackmail)
* [Pirth.org](http://pirth.org/)
* [Access Now Digital Security Helpline](https://www.accessnow.org/help/)
* [So You've Been Doxed: A Guide to Best Practices](https://www.crashoverridenetwork.com/soyouvebeendoxed.html)
* [Digital First Aid Kit](https://digitalfirstaid.org/)
* [How to remove your personal information from Google search](https://money.yahoo.com/how-to-remove-your-personal-information-from-google-search-193956170.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly9vbmxpbmVoYXJhc3NtZW50ZmllbGRtYW51YWwucGVuLm9yZy8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAJOVLS4nG8RD4OZczrG-7TyjShH8D56oP8wDIYfPM2mnpgOhNYZBIcMHXTfyB1nrEwB1PTZbhNNxrRtD9731H3YNJwhhsdujiVrL3w3iovUPqIkkjcgeR0JFIyVPz54Asd3YZB_TXOZQQ5laqVD3g1BEuzG0vLpKdzGEetSuOWsn)
* [Crash Override's Automated Cybersecurity Helper (COACH)](https://www.crashoverridenetwork.com/coach.html)
* [Cyber Civil Rights Initiative Safety Center](https://cybercivilrights.org/ccri-safety-center/)
* [Cyber Civil Rights Initiative International Resources](https://cybercivilrights.org/intl-victim-resources/)
* [Democracy Protection Network](https://can01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdemocracyprotectionnetwork.org%2F&data=05%7C02%7CJillian.Hunchak%40ps-sp.gc.ca%7Cdb9c4ebfb17e47b14c1b08dd5d0512a2%7C2d28dd40a4f24317a351bc709c183c85%7C0%7C0%7C638768998617424983%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJFbXB0eU1hcGkiOnRydWUsIlYiOiIwLjAuMDAwMCIsIlAiOiJXaW4zMiIsIkFOIjoiTWFpbCIsIldUIjoyfQ%3D%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Y3%2Bo5OVtMXpWJdKAcfaiUZXzawZP3IkET2dOFft68lA%3D&reserved=0)
* [DHS - Resources for Individuals on the Threat Of Doxing](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2024-01/24_0117_ope_resources-for-individuals-on-the-threat-of-doxing-508.pdf)
* [The Cybersmile Foundation - Resources on Swatting](https://www.cybersmile.org/help-center/swatting/)
* [Crash Override Network - tools for dealing with online abuse](http://www.crashoverridenetwork.com/resources.html)
* [Games Hotline: Responding to Blackmail](https://gameshotline.org/responding-to-blackmail/)
* [PEN America: Online Harassment Field Manual](https://onlineharassmentfieldmanual.pen.org/)

Being Proactive: Intermediate Knowledge Resources

* [NGO ISAC](https://www.ngoisac.org/)
* [Democracy Security Project](https://democracysecurityproject.org/)
* [Crash Override Network](https://www.crashoverridenetwork.com/index.html)
* [Researcher Welfare 1: Privacy and Security](https://voxpol.eu/researcher-welfare-1-privacy/)
* [Digital safety guide for LGBTQ+ activists in Africa](https://www.accessnow.org/guide/africa-digital-safety-guide/)
* [Managing your online footprint and protecting from doxing](https://onlineharassmentfieldmanual.pen.org/protecting-information-from-doxing/)
* [Electronic Frontier Foundation: Surveilland Self Defense](https://ssd.eff.org/)
* [Electronic Frontier Foundation: Tools from EFFs Tech Team](https://www.eff.org/pages/tools)
* [PEN America: Preparing for Online](https://onlineharassmentfieldmanual.pen.org/prepare-for-online-harassment/) Harassment
* [Games Hotline Digital Safety Guide](https://gameshotline.org/online-free-safety-guide/)
* [Games Hotline Hate Raids Guide](https://gameshotline.org/hateraids/)
* [Travel & Flight Security | Digital Security Checklists for Activists](https://activistchecklist.org/travel/)
* [Advice on how to stay secure online from the UK's National Cyber Security Centre](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/cyberaware/home)
* [NCSC - Cybersecurity for Individuals](https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/section/infographics/individuals))

Advanced: Growing my Security

* [How to be a Woman Online](https://www.bloomsbury.com/ca/how-to-be-a-woman-online-9781350267589/)
* [Security in a Box: Digital Security Tools and Tactics](https://securityinabox.org/en/)
* [Surveillance Self Defense](https://ssd.eff.org/)
* [Security Education Companion: A Free Resource for Digital Security Educators](https://www.securityeducationcompanion.org/)
* [Social Media Security and Privacy Checklists](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ud1ILFkIG0BeLX9jlzJMxCPm8-cSeqPjU60nkhUPYA8/edit?tab=t.0)
* [Mitigating Cyber Threats with Limited Resources: Guidance for Civil Society](https://www.cisa.gov/resources-tools/resources/mitigating-cyber-threats-limited-resources-guidance-civil-society)
* [Cybersecurity for Schools](https://www.schoolsafety.gov/cybersecurity)
* [Internet Research: Ethical Guidelines 3.0](https://aoir.org/reports/ethics3.pdf)

#### Getting Started: Basic Digital Security Measures

Regardless of the work you are doing, it is important to keep your online presence secure at all times to prevent doxxing, harassment, or other forms of digital harm. This involves making use of secure passwords, two-factor identification, and regular monitoring of your online presence to ensure your personal information is not available for malicious actors to abuse. Tools like [LastPass](https://www.lastpass.com/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=19546987156&utm_term=lastpass&utm_content=146499740633&gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAw5W-BhAhEiwApv4goCQ5zGZj_gQVRfo5o8GM7cu5vbpwHmtUWPcsOcJoiuI6aUQEVCvqkhoCbUQQAvD_BwE) and [TwoFactorAuth.org](http://twofactorauth.org/) can help get you started on improving your security. It is also recommended that you conduct regular searches of your own name and any account handles you use on search engines, social media, or other relevant fora to ensure that your presence online is within your preferred parameters.

##### Basic Measure: Pubic data removal & social media lockdown

Regularly audit and remove public data from online platforms especially social media profiles to limit personal information visibility. If you don’t know where to start or how much information you want to have online, this [Online Harassment Field Manual](https://onlineharassmentfieldmanual.pen.org/protecting-information-from-doxing/) is a helpful guide to managing your privacy online. Tools like [DeleteMe](https://www.abine.com/deleteme/) (use DeleteMe International if you are outside of the US), [Optery](https://github.com/tgthorley/Safety-and-Wellbeing-for-Researchers-and-Practitioners/blob/main/docs/optery.com), [Incogni](https://incogni.com/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=SEARCH-CA-BRAND-EXT&utm_content=Incogni%20-%20exact&utm_term=incogni&matchtype=e&device=c&GeoLoc=9001299&placement=&network=g&campaign_id=21479888107&adset_id=165711053940&ad_id=708100058775&gad_source=1&gclid=CjwKCAiAw5W-BhAhEiwApv4goG62-AHSz4qhi7sT7K5ok-Ekqyn3sipfUXm-Y-afsI0zxtdo45ddExoCrPQQAvD_BwE), or [Kanary](https://www.kanary.com/#kanary-copilot) can assist in removing personal data from public databases. DeleteMe has also compiled a list of [Opt-Out Guides](https://international.joindeleteme.com/) for manual data removal if that is your preference.

##### Basic Measure: Use Secure Browsers

Use privacy-focused browsers like [Brave](https://brave.com/) or [Mozilla Firefox](https://www.mozilla.org/firefox/) with extensions such as [uBlock Origin](https://ublockorigin.com/) for ad-blocking, [Privacy Badger](https://privacybadger.org/) to decrease tracking, and [HTTPS Everywhere](https://www.eff.org/https-everywhere) for secure browsing. How your browser appears online can be highly unique but you can alter this fingerprint using add-ons such as [User-Agent Switcher](https://addons.mozilla.org/en-US/firefox/addon/user-agent-switcher-revived/).

#### Intermediate: Growing your digital security

##### Intermediate Measure: Virtual Private Networks

Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) encrypt your internet connection, making it harder for third parties to track your online activities. It also masks your IP address, enhancing anonymity. [NordVPN and ExpressVPN](https://www.comparitech.com/blog/vpn-privacy/expressvpn-vs-nordvpn/) are popular choices.?”e to appear to be connecting from a different region (be sure to update timezones and language packs on your device or virtual machine to match if an illusion is important!).

*When should I use a VPN?*

VPNs are especially important to use when you are engaging with primary source materials (i.e., websites, forums) or individuals online. As a researcher or practitioner, you never want to offer any way for malicious actors to identify you or your location. This is particularly applicable for researchers who have been granted ethics approval to engage with individuals online or practitioners who are communicating with their clients digitally.

***❗Remember: never engage directly with groups or individuals unless you have gone through appropriate training and received all necessary approvals to do so.***

*✨ Helpful resources:*

[*Using a VPN: Two good options*](https://www.comparitech.com/blog/vpn-privacy/expressvpn-vs-nordvpn/)

##### Intermediate Measure: TOR

[TOR, short for The Onion Router](https://www.torproject.org/), is a free and open-source software that enables anonymous communication over the internet. It directs internet traffic through a worldwide volunteer network of servers to conceal a user's location and usage from anyone conducting network surveillance or traffic analysis. TOR is often used to access websites on the dark web or to bypass censorship. TOR can easily be utilized by [downloading the Tor Browser](https://www.torproject.org/download/) or the ‘private window with Tor’ function in [Brave](https://brave.com/).

*When should I use TOR?*

Similarly to a VPN, TOR is a useful tool when you are engaging in research to find primary source materials or visit potentially harmful websites. Pairing the TOR browser with a VPN on your device can enhance your anonymity and safety online.

##### Intermediate Measure: Encryption

Encrypt sensitive data and communications using tools like [Signal](https://signal.org/) for messaging and [VeraCrypt](https://www.veracrypt.fr/) for file encryption. There are a variety of end-to-end encrypted messaging and chat applications you can use within your teams, organizations, and projects including [Keybase](https://keybase.io/), [Wire](https://wire.com/en), [Threema](https://threema.ch/en), [Session](https://getsession.org/) and [Briar](https://briarproject.org/).

*When should I encrypt my data?*

Encryption is useful in cases of transmitting sensitive data or information about clients or research subjects. Using apps like Signal to talk about this type of work is good practice in general.

#### Intermediate Measure: Device separation

Use separate devices for personal and research purposes to minimize the risk of cross-contamination of data and potential security breaches. Within those separate devices, use distinct tools for the task at hand. For example, on your work laptop you may only do research using the Brave browser with your NordVPN VPN enabled, while on your personal laptop you utilize Google Chrome often without a VPN.

#### Intermediate Measure: Cloud storage

Utilize encrypted cloud storage services like [Google Drive](https://www.google.com/drive/) with two-factor authentication enabled, or secure (i.e., ‘zero knowledge’) alternatives like [Tresorit](https://tresorit.com/) or [SpiderOak](https://spideroak.com/). The benefit to the latter is the service providers’ inability to read your data.

#### Advanced: Maximizing your Safety Online

##### Advanced Measure: Virtual Machines

Using Virtual Machines (VMs) is a one strategy strategy for device separation. VMs create isolated environments on your computer where you can conduct research activities without risking your primary operating system's integrity. They allow you to experiment with potentially malicious software or visit risky websites while minimizing the risk of compromising your personal data or system. Tools like [VMware](https://www.vmware.com/) (Windows, Linux), [VirtualBox](https://www.virtualbox.org/) (Windows, Linux, older Mac/Intel), and [UTM](https://mac.getutm.app/) (Mac) offer robust VM solutions that can be configured with different operating systems and security settings. Organizations like Trace Labs provide resources and challenges that can help hone your skills in using VMs effectively. They also have an initiative to build an [OSINT VM](https://www.tracelabs.org/initiatives/osint-vm) which is a quick way to get started and have access to the most popular OSINT tools and scripts all neatly packaged under one roof.

##### Advanced Measure: Identity separation

Create separate identities, personas, or [sock puppets](https://ztrkouzhan.medium.com/the-mega-sock-puppets-tutorial-for-osint-af3bd29dd5fc) for research activities. This can involve using different email addresses, usernames, and pseudonyms to protect your real identity. When creating different online identities, ensure that there is no common identifier associated with two or more accounts. Do not use a personal phone number or email address to create these accounts as they can be traced back to you. You can create a second phone number using digital solutions such as [Burner App](https://www.burnerapp.com/), or [MySudo](https://mysudo.com/), or simply purchasing a second [pay-as-you-go](https://www.wikihow.com/Understand-Pay-as-You-Go-Cell-Phone-Plans) phone. Consider creating a list of personas and their characteristics (age, DoB, ethnicity, religion, ideologies, etc.) and the accounts they own. The use of a VPN can enhance a persona as it can give the illusion of the user coming from a particular region. Different browsers are also helpful in creating the identity of a sock puppet account.

### Guide: Physical Safety Toolkit

If you work directly with clients involved in violent extremist movements, conduct “on the ground” research, or are a visible practitioner in this space, it is important to consider your physical security. While research and resources on this topic specifically for P/CVE practitioners is scarce, we have compiled a number of resources drawn from other fields that may be helpful in keeping you safe.

#### Working with Clients

As a prevention practitioner, you may be required to work directly with clients or individuals who are involved in violent extremist groups or movements. While these individuals are not inherently dangerous, physical proximity while discussing difficult topics can open you up to unique risks. While you should always follow your organization’s frameworks for your specific circumstances, some good practices when working directly with clients include:

* Always using a work phone or email to communicate with clients, and never your personal devices;
* Where possible, liaise with local law enforcement if the client has been involved with the judicial system. This minimizes the chance that you will not be caught in the middle of an arrest or other police intervention while you are meeting with your client.
* Where possible, try to meet clients at your workplace or a third location, and never at your home.
* Avoid divulging personal details to clients, including where you live, details about family members, your schedule, or other pieces of identifiable information.
* When meeting with clients, always ensure that your supervisor or colleagues are aware of your location and time frame of the meeting. Putting a safety plan in place in the event that your meeting does not run as scheduled will help support your wellbeing.

#### Working in your community

If you do not work directly with clients but do conduct research, engage in community events, or provide trainings in your community, these activities may also open you up to risk of physical harm from individuals who oppose your work. Proper assessment of your environment is key to understanding what risks you may face and how to mitigate them. For instance, living and working in a small or rural communities is more likely to make you a visible figure,

# Guide: Mental and Spiritual Health Toolkit

# Inspiring Practices - Moving Forward

## Guides to Psychological Wellbeing

*While evidence for the interventions and mitigations that practitioners can put in place is limited, there are some initial studies and frameworks that have been developed to enable researchers and practitioners to protect themselves and develop effective risk management approaches and we can draw on parallel fields such as the* [*TRAUMA & JOURNALISM*](https://dartcenter.org/sites/default/files/DCE_JournoTraumaHandbook.pdf) *Guide For Journalists, Editors & Managers provides details in the appendices about how to manage the psychological impacts of researching and covering war and conflict.*

*This section details these initial frameworks and highlights in-progress work in this area.*

### Overviews

* [OSINT and managing mental health, with extremist media consultant Peter King | Janes](https://podcast.janes.com/public/68/The-World-of-Intelligence-50487d09/e53d9bd8)
* [Vicarious trauma and OSINT – a practical guide – We will always be OSINTCurio.us](https://www.osintcurio.us/2020/06/08/vicarious-trauma-and-osint-a-practical-guide/)
* [How to Maintain Mental Hygiene as an Open Source Researcher](https://www.bellingcat.com/resources/2022/11/23/how-to-maintain-mental-hygiene-as-an-open-source-researcher/)
* [Handling Traumatic Imagery: Developing a Standard Operating Procedure](https://dartcenter.org/resources/handling-traumatic-imagery-developing-standard-operating-procedure)
* [Tips for recognizing, and managing secondary traumatic stress in yourself | AAP News | American Academy of Pediatrics](https://publications.aap.org/aapnews/news/14395)
* [How to Prevent, Identify, and Address Vicarious Trauma — While Conducting Open Source Investigations in the Middle East](https://www.bellingcat.com/resources/how-tos/2018/10/18/prevent-identify-address-vicarious-trauma-conducting-open-source-investigations-middle-east/)
* [How to Maintain Mental Hygiene as an Open Source Researcher](https://www.bellingcat.com/resources/2022/11/23/how-to-maintain-mental-hygiene-as-an-open-source-researcher/)
* [Researcher Welfare 2: Mental and Emotional Well-being and Self Care - VOX - Pol](https://voxpol.eu/researcher-welfare-2-wellbeing/)
* [Building Resilience for Terrorism Researchers](https://www.voxpol.eu/building-resilience-for-terrorism-researchers/)
* [TRAUMA & JOURNALISM - A Guide For Journalists, Editors & Managers](https://dartcenter.org/sites/default/files/DCE_JournoTraumaHandbook.pdf)
* [Tips for Viewing and Verifying Potentially Distressing Open-source Information](https://citizenevidence.org/2019/12/10/tips-for-viewing-and-verifying-potentially-distressing-open-source-information/)
* [Recognising Sexual and Gender-Based Violence as an Open Source Researcher](https://www.bellingcat.com/resources/2023/03/03/sexual-and-gender-based-violence-open-source-researche-osint-digital/)

While the impacts of researching terrorism and violent extremism have not been extensively studied, we can draw on other fields to understand the risk and potential ways to improve our wellbeing as we carry out our work.

## 

### Understand what you are dealing with.

By understanding the material we are exposing ourselves to, the impacts that it has, and how to manage those impacts we can be more prepared to deal with the challenges it presents and maintain our wellbeing.

### Structure Your Work.

By structuring our work we both prepare mentally for the exposure or potential exposure and put in place mechanisms to make sure we recognize and interrupt stress as it builds.

#### Plan your work

So that you can set aside work, not consume extremist material/propaganda after early evening (in particular, avoid working with distressing images just before going to sleep.) and keep to normal working hours wherever possible.

#### **Take frequent screen breaks**.

Look at something pleasing, walk around, stretch, or seek out contact with nature (such as greenery and fresh air, etc.). All of these can help dampen the body’s distress responses. Try setting a Pomodoro timer to remind you to step away from your screen.

* [DailyBot](https://www.dailybot.com/) has a Pomodoro timer built in.

#### [Pattern Interrupts](https://chopra.com/articles/deconditioning-how-to-create-pattern-interrupts-and-learn-new-behaviors)

If you find you’ve adopted unhealthy behavior patterns with your work, the first step to identify what the pattern is. The second step is to observe yourself while you’re running the pattern closely enough that you can pinpoint the precise moment where you derail. This is a critical piece because it’s at that moment when you need to now install a new behavior. Then, you need to practice it diligently—over and over again—until it becomes a new habit”

### Eliminate needless repeat exposure

By managing how we are exposed to TVEC and minimizing that exposure we can manage the impact on our wellbeing.

#### Be organized

Review your sorting and tagging procedures, and how you organize digital files and folders, among other procedures, to reduce unnecessary viewing. When verifying footage by cross-referencing images from a wide variety of sources, taking written notes of distinctive features may help to minimize how often you need to recheck against an original image. For larger collections use indexing and hashing to identify similar files automatically rather than having to review multiple variants. (And never pass the material onto a co-worker without some warning as to what the files contain.)

[Data Organization Best Practices | Research Data Management @Harvard](https://researchdatamanagement.harvard.edu/best-practices-organizing-documenting-research-data)

#### Build distance into how you view images

Researchers report benefits from the use of tools such as [CleanView by ActiveFence](https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/cleanview-by-activefence/jhicfboifemagnlehpcificopmkehdcp?hl=en) to avoid looking at images that are not essential. If you have to view harmful material, some people find concentrating on certain details, for instance, clothes, and avoiding others (such as faces) helps. Reducing the size of the window or adjusting the screen’s brightness or resolution is also reported to lessen the perceived impact. Try turning the sound off when you can as researchers report that it is often the most affecting part. Develop workarounds that help you and work for you.

### Destress with other activities

Activities that take you away from a traumatic experience and produce serotonin can help disengage from traumatic experiences.

Go for a walk, watch bad TV, play with pets, read non-work related material like fiction, engage in gardening, go to the beach, swim, play games, and do puzzles. Whatever the activity is that you can engage in that centers you in a positive feeling physically and emotionally, do that. If you begin to become aware that you are tired of engaging in activities and others that you normally enjoy, trust yourself and reach out to others for more help.

[15 minute CALMING YOGA for Stress Relief and Anxiety](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nw2oBIrQGLo)

[Yoga at Your Desk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tAUf7aajBWE)

### Seek out Social Interactions

How can you have a social interaction today that doesn’t focus on traumatic content?

* Meet up with friends
* Have a water cooler chat with colleagues and/or get of the office for lunch, coffee or tea if you work in-person
* Spend time with family
* Say “Hi” to a neighbor

When we are experiencing secondary or vicarious trauma, researchers report that interacting with others can help reduce feelings of isolation, intrusive thoughts, and spiraling thought patterns.

### Have a Self Care Plan

If we don‘t have a plan for how we build the above into our lives we get busy and overwhelmed and self-care gets squeezed out. Understandably, self care has become a “pop-concept” of sorts, one that is sometimes misconstrued or even employed to manipulative ends. That said, a true self care plan can be crucial for helping sustain your own well-being. These plans are also crucial for reflecting on when you may need more help from others, professionally or otherwise.

* [Why you need a self-care plan (and 5 ways to get started)](https://www.betterup.com/blog/self-care-plan)
* [How to create your own self-care plan | Calmer](https://www.thisiscalmer.com/blog/how-to-create-self-care-plan-guide)
* [Self-Care - Active Minds](https://www.activeminds.org/about-mental-health/self-care/)
* [Self Care Template](https://d3pg1c2bhy6429.cloudfront.net/109603/85MWT6h-z3Ep9M0bfXmjE1JushSoKUpJUzH4Akwd/story_content/external_files/Self-Care%20Template_R.PDF)
* [Toolkits - Rated R](https://sites.google.com/view/ratedr/toolkits?authuser=0)
* [Everything Is Awful and I'm Not Okay: questions to ask before giving up](http://www.aimeemaxwell.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/everything-is-awful-and-im-not-ok.pdf)

## Care frameworks for organizations

*Promising Practices for Organizational Responsibility*

1. *Rather than teach practitioners special means of protecting themselves (e.g., device hardening, defensive driving), organizations should aim to teach reasoned, analytical thinking, focused on threat mapping and risk mitigation so that individuals can be active agents in establishing their personal and organizational security postures.*
2. *Security should be planned for prior to a practitioner’s deployment, at the ‘design’ stage, and not understood as a burdensome feature to be added in at the end.*
3. *Practitioners should engage routinely with the formal practice of threat modeling and risk analysis, guided by leaders in the field, and following the example of communities engaged in digital security.*
4. *Security management plans should aim to mitigate risks while also acknowledging their ever-present and unavoidable nature (i.e., harm reduction approach).*
5. *Planning for security must take into account situational contexts, local realities, the individual positionalities and identities of practitioners, and the inherently intersectional nature of threat environments and attack vectors.*
6. *Any analysis, prediction, and planning should be understood as temporary—a snapshot in time—and as such, security planning should prioritize those approaches that are agile, adaptable, and suited to persistent refinement and adaptation.*
7. *Digital operational security (e.g., secure communications, anti/counter-surveillance) must feature as a central componentment of any skills-based training, with the acknowledgment that any specific mitigations and technological solutions are temporary fixes in an ever-present, ongoing, electronic arms race.*
8. *A standardized set of tools can help form the basis of a first-stage analysis to be used in identifying risks, dangers, and insecurities. Such a toolkit should include standard approaches (e.g., mind maps, SWOT analyses, risk matrices), as well as more closely-tailored tools, such as those driven by user archetype, motive, and capability assessment.*

Organizations employing researchers and practitioners in this field must prioritize a comprehensive approach to ensure their safety, security, and wellbeing. This begins with robust training, awareness, and education initiatives. Providing Mental Health First Aid and Wellness Training equips staff with essential skills to recognize and respond to mental health crises effectively. Resources such as crisis lines and helplines offer immediate support avenues. Mental health awareness and education programs promote a deeper understanding and resilience against secondary trauma and PTSD. Incorporating wellbeing resources such as Headspace and fostering a voluntary buddy system enhances peer support and shared experiences. Regular counseling support and access to healthcare with comprehensive mental health coverage underscore a commitment to staff's overall health. By encouraging a healthy work-life balance and nurturing a supportive, inclusive environment, organizations can empower researchers and practitioners to thrive professionally and personally. This approach also ensures sustainable professional performance, reduces burnout, and lowers costs. Resources and suggestions below are not exhaustive but can help form a core of best practices.

### Training, Awareness, and Education

* Provide Mental Health First Aid and Wellness Training for staff
  + Mental Health First Aid
    - [Mental Health First Aid](https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org/)
      * [MHFA Resources](https://d3pg1c2bhy6429.cloudfront.net/109603/85MWT6h-z3Ep9M0bfXmjE1JushSoKUpJUzH4Akwd/story_content/external_files/mental-health-first-aid-resources%20(1)_R.PDF)
      * Crisis Lines
        + [Veterans Crisis Line](https://www.veteranscrisisline.net/)
        + [SAMHSA’s National Helpline](https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline)
        + [Disaster Distress Helpline: Get Immediate Crisis Counseling and Support | SAMHSA](https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/disaster-distress-helpline)
        + [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](https://988lifeline.org/)
        + [Crisis Text Line](https://www.crisistextline.org/)
        + [National Domestic Violence Hotline](https://www.thehotline.org)
        + [The National Sexual Assault Online Hotline](https://hotline.rainn.org/online)
    - [Psychological First Aid](https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/pfa_field_operations_guide.pdf)
  + Mental Health Awareness and Education
    - [Mind](https://www.mind.org.uk/)
    - [CredibleMind](https://wbt.crediblemind.com/)
    - [Resources - Headington Institute](https://www.headington-institute.org/resources/)
    - [Resource Library - Self-Reg](https://self-reg.ca/resource-library/)
    - [Stamp Out Stigma | Resource](https://www.stampoutstigma.com/resources/)
    - [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/trauma-violence)
    - Secondary Trauma
      * [Secondary Traumatic Stress, Compassion Fatigue and Counselor Spirituality: Implications for Counselors Working with Trauma](https://www.counseling.org/resources/library/Selected%20Topics/Crisis/Simpson.htm)
      * [Tips for recognizing, managing secondary traumatic stress in yourself | AAP News | American Academy of Pediatrics](https://publications.aap.org/aapnews/news/14395)
      * [Resource Guide for Coping with Secondhand Trauma](https://socialworklicensemap.com/blog/coping-with-secondary-trauma/)
    - PTSD
      * [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) - HelpGuide.org](https://www.helpguide.org/articles/ptsd-trauma/ptsd-symptoms-self-help-treatment.htm)
      * [Causes of PTSD - Mind](https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd-and-complex-ptsd/causes/)
  + Other resources
    - [IbexMind](https://ibexmind.com/)
    - [Pathways](https://www.pathways.com/pathways-at-work)

### Provide wellbeing resources

* + [Headspace](https://my.headspace.com/)
  + [The Tapping Solution (EFT)](https://www.thetappingsolution.com/)

### Support a voluntary buddy system

* + [Everything is Better with Two: The Volunteering Buddy System - Project Helping](https://projecthelping.org/buddy-system/)

### Provide opportunities for shared experiences

* + [29 Virtual Wellness Activities & Ideas For Remote Employees](https://teambuilding.com/blog/virtual-wellness)

### Have a regular support group of other researchers to talk to

* + [On-Site Therapy & Corporate Wellness](https://startmywellness.com/corporate-wellness/)
  + [Corporate Psychotherapy](https://www.theacpgroup.com/)

## 

### Provide counseling support as needed

* + [Talkspace](https://try.talkspace.com/online-therapy)
  + [Growtherapy](https://growtherapy.com/)
  + [Betterhelp](https://www.betterhelp.com/)

### Ensure healthcare/insurance covers mental health

* + And provides appropriate resources wherever staff are
  + [Society for Human Resources Management](https://www.shrm.org/enterprise-solutions/insights/advanced-mental-health-benefits-at-work-guide)
  + [American Psychological Association](https://updates.apaservices.org/new-policies-affecting-access-to-mental-health-care) and [here](https://www.apa.org/topics/managed-care-insurance/parity-guide)
  + [National Alliance on Mental Illness](https://www.nami.org/health-care-coverage/tips-for-getting-an-insurer-to-cover-mental-health-treatment/)
  + [Mental Health America](https://mhanational.org/learning-hub/ensure-health-plans-meet-workers-needs/)
  + [National Conference of State Legislatures](https://www.ncsl.org/labor-and-employment/mental-health-matters-policy-framework-on-workforce-mental-health)

### Encourage a healthy work-life balance for researchers

* + Create leadership cultures that model best practices, keep systems center on colleague’s lived experiences, and that lives the values of your organizations.
  + [American Psychological Association](https://www.apaservices.org/practice/ce/self-care/balance)
  + [Mental Health America](https://mhanational.org/resources/work-life-balance/)
  + [Better Up](https://www.betterup.com/blog/how-to-have-good-work-life-balance)
  + [PromiseCare](https://promisecare.com/achieving-a-healthy-work-life-balance-tips-and-strategies/)

### Foster a supportive and inclusive work environment for researchers

* + Again, create leadership cultures that model best practices, keep systems center on colleague’s lived experiences, and that lives the values of your organizations.
  + [American Psychological Association](https://www.apa.org/members/content/trauma-informed-series)
  + [National Sexual Violence Resource Center](https://www.nsvrc.org/blogs/saam/how-create-trauma-informed-workplace)
  + [Workplaces Respond](https://workplacesrespond.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/4R-White-Paper-FINAL.pdf)
  + [National Fund for Workforce Solutions](https://nationalfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/A-Trauma-Informed-Approach-to-Workforce.pdf)
  + [Lyra Health](https://www.lyrahealth.com/blog/trauma-informed-workplace/)
  + [Workplace Options](https://www.workplaceoptions.com/blog/building-a-trauma-informed-workplace-6-steps-for-leaders/)
  + [The Women’s Consortium](https://training.womensconsortium.org/building-trauma-informed-practices-and-organizations?utm_term=&utm_campaign=Traffic+%7C+Guide+to+Behavioral+Health+Training&utm_source=adwords&utm_medium=ppc&hsa_acc=8652799729&hsa_cam=17624284271&hsa_grp=171073480066&hsa_ad=724017627964&hsa_src=g&hsa_tgt=dsa-2378378110300&hsa_kw=&hsa_mt=&hsa_net=adwords&hsa_ver=3&gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=17624284271&gbraid=0AAAAABKTX8929hfErLWTHxgYmryFAnPG2&gclid=CjwKCAjw2brFBhBOEiwAVJX5GIlfXUxAzLSV84g17QrSMDqCKIXMTN5oOzC648CLf94XJLRF362RiBoCAOkQAvD_BwE)

## Care frameworks for gatherings (conferences etc.)

### Codes of conduct

For both virtual and in-person gatherings of researchers and practitioners in this field, providing a clear and well-defined code of conduct is crucial: One only need review finding in the American Psychological Association’s [“Work in America” survey](https://www.apa.org/pubs/reports/work-in-america/2023-workplace-health-well-being) to understand the high value workers place on psychological and emotional health and well-being, or how common experiences with trauma are and the negative outcomes such experiences may contribute to, as evidenced by years of research, like that of [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/trauma-violence) in the United States[[3]](#footnote-2). This document outlines expected behavior and sets a standard for professionalism, respect, and inclusivity within the community. Here’s why developing a code of conduct is important:

* **Establishing Expectations:** A code of conduct clarifies what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior, ensuring all participants understand the boundaries and norms of interaction. This fosters a safer and more welcoming environment for everyone involved.
* **Promoting Inclusivity and Diversity**: By explicitly stating values such as respect for diversity, inclusion, and zero tolerance for discrimination, a code of conduct encourages a diverse range of participants to feel valued and respected. This is essential for creating a supportive community where all feel welcome.
* **Addressing Harassment and Misconduct**: The code of conduct should clearly outline procedures for reporting harassment or misconduct. This empowers participants to speak up if they experience or witness inappropriate behavior, ensuring swift and appropriate action can be taken by organizers.
* **Ensuring Professionalism**: Researchers and practitioners often collaborate closely, either in person or virtually. A code of conduct reinforces professional conduct, maintaining focus on the primary goals of the gathering and promoting productive interactions.
* **Enhancing Safety and Wellbeing:** Feeling safe and respected is essential for participants' wellbeing. A code of conduct contributes to a supportive environment where researchers can focus on their work without distraction or concern for their personal safety.
* **Setting a Positive Tone:** Organizers can use the code of conduct to set a positive tone for the gathering, emphasizing shared values and goals. This encourages constructive engagement and contributes to a positive reputation for the event and the community as a whole.

Developing a code of conduct involves input from organizers and ideally, consultation with participants to ensure it addresses relevant concerns and reflects community values. It should be prominently displayed, easily accessible, and communicated effectively to all attendees prior to and during the event. Regular reviews and updates based on feedback and evolving needs also help maintain its effectiveness over time. Consider consulting legal resources or professionals specializing in privacy and ethics, as codes of conduct may also need to comply with legal standards and ethical guidelines specific to your jurisdiction.

Here are some resources and examples to aid developing a code of conduct for your events and communities:

1. **Tech Conferences and Community Guidelines**: Many tech conferences and communities publish their own code of conduct that can serve as a good starting point. Examples include the codes of conduct from conferences like [DEF CON, Black Hat](https://defcon.org/html/links/dc-code-of-conduct.html), [TrustCon](https://www.trustcon.net/trustcon2024/code-of-conduct).
2. **Online Resources and Templates**: Websites like the [Citizen Code of Conduct](http://citizencodeofconduct.org/) offer templates and guidelines specifically tailored for communities and events as do [Geek Feminism](https://geekfeminism.fandom.com/wiki/Conference_anti-harassment)

### Spaces for decompression

Creating spaces for decompression during events where challenging topics that can trigger trauma are discussed is crucial for the wellbeing of participants. Here are some effective organizations can employ:

* **Designated Break Areas** Allocate specific areas within the event venue (whether virtual or in-person) where participants can retreat for quiet reflection or relaxation. These areas should be equipped with comfortable seating and calming activities. Resources for setting up calming spaces can be found through mindfulness and relaxation guides such as those provided by [Mindful.org](https://www.mindful.org/).
* **Scheduled Breaks:** Incorporate regular breaks into the event schedule. Encourage participants to use this time for self-care activities such as walking, stretching, or mindfulness exercises. Resources for mindfulness exercises can be found on platforms like [Headspace](https://www.headspace.com/) and [Calm](https://www.calm.com/).
* **Mindfulness or Relaxation Sessions:** Offer optional sessions dedicated to mindfulness, meditation, or relaxation techniques. These sessions can help participants manage stress and process difficult emotions. Resources for mindfulness and meditation practices can be found on websites like [Greater Good in Action](https://ggia.berkeley.edu/).
* **Peer Support Groups:** Organize small, voluntary peer support groups where participants can openly discuss their reactions to challenging topics in a supportive environment. These groups can provide validation, empathy, and shared coping strategies. Resources on setting up peer support groups can be found through organizations like [NAMI](https://www.nami.org/).

### Physical security considerations

When organizing in-person events such as conferences where researchers have been investigating potentially dangerous groups and individuals, it's essential to prioritize physical security to ensure the safety of all participants. Here are some considerations and measures organizers should consider:

* **Security Assessment:** Conduct a thorough security assessment using guidelines from organizations like the [International Association of Professional Security Consultants (IAPSC)](https://iapsc.org/rfp-portal/rfp-examples/)
* **Emergency Plans:** Develop emergency response plans. Templates and guides for emergency plans can be found on websites such as [Make A Plan | Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov/plan)
* **Collaboration with Authorities:** Establish communication with local law enforcement. Guidelines for collaborating with law enforcement here [Liaising with Local Law Enforcement for Events](https://www.agsprotect.com/blog/liaising-law-enforcement-events). See a full list of FBI field offices and contact information here: [Alphabetical List of Field Offices - FBI](https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices/@@castle.cms.querylisting/6bd7cedb14f545e3a984775195ea3d30)

## Approaches for Funders of Research and Practitioners

Philanthropic organizations aiming to expand into preventing targeted violence often grapple with how to discern impactful interventions and ensure they're evidence-informed. In response to these challenges, a guide has been crafted to assist these organizations in navigating violence prevention and identifying effective practices.

[Prevention Practitioners Network - Framework-for-Philanthropic-Investment-in-Prevention](https://www.mccaininstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Framework-for-Philanthropic-Investment-in-Prevention.pdf)

### Require effective wellbeing support measures for researchers

Funders for work that will require research and exposure to graphic content or other work that risks secondary trauma should consider including language in grant applications making support for researchers for example:

To be eligible for this grant, applicants must demonstrate the implementation of effective wellbeing support measures for researchers. It is essential that the grantee prioritizes the mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing of their researchers, considering the potential risks of secondary or vicarious trauma resulting from exposure to harmful and graphic content. Ensuring a safe and supportive work environment is crucial for the sustainable and healthy engagement of researchers\_and\_to mitigate potential negative impacts on researchers' mental and emotional wellbeing.

Examples of wellbeing support for researchers include:

* Mental Health Resources: The grantee should provide access to mental health services, such as counseling or therapy, to support researchers in managing work-related stress, burnout, and emotional challenges. This could include partnerships with mental health professionals or providing resources for employees to seek external support.
* Work-Life Balance: The grantee should encourage a healthy work-life balance for researchers. This may involve implementing flexible working hours, promoting breaks, and discouraging excessive overtime. Encouraging hobbies, self-care practices, and time off are important aspects of supporting wellbeing.
* Training and Education: researchers should receive comprehensive training on topics such as stress management, resilience, and recognizing the signs of burnout. The grantee should provide ongoing education and resources to help researchers build coping mechanisms and develop skills to maintain their wellbeing.
* Supportive Work Environment: The grantee should foster a supportive and inclusive work environment for researchers. This could include promoting open communication, providing opportunities for collaboration and peer support, and implementing policies against harassment or discrimination.
* Physical Health Support: It is important to prioritize physical health alongside mental wellbeing. The grantee should provide resources for maintaining a healthy lifestyle, such as access to gym facilities, ergonomic workstations, or wellness programs that promote exercise, healthy eating, and regular medical check-ups.
* Regular Check-ins and Feedback: The grantee should establish regular check-ins with researchers to monitor their wellbeing, provide support, and address any concerns. Encouraging open dialogue and feedback mechanisms can help identify areas where additional support may be needed.
* Recognition and Rewards: Recognizing the efforts and achievements of researchers is crucial for their motivation and overall wellbeing. The grantee should establish mechanisms for acknowledging and rewarding their contributions, such as performance-based incentives, public recognition, or professional development opportunities.

*Note: The examples provided are not exhaustive, and the foundation/grantor may have specific requirements or preferences. Applicants should tailor their wellbeing support measures based on the needs of their researchers while aligning with the guidelines provided by the foundation.*

# Gaps in the Research

The importance of further research to address the issues researchers and practitioners face everyday and provide an evidence base for the inspiring practices we all conduct cannot be overstated.

[insert background on age of field, interdisciplinary fields with insights to offer but that do not address whole picture.

Researchers and practitioners constantly engage with sensitive subjects and materials, where navigating ethical dilemmas and mitigating safety concerns are paramount. Understanding how identity factors—such as gender, race, age, and religion—affect researcher safety, and how to navigate these factors responsibly, is essential for fostering inclusive and secure research environments. Moreover, meaningful engagement with victims/survivors of violence and terrorism requires nuanced approaches to avoid re-traumatization and exploitation, while promoting their empowerment and inclusion in eradicating hate- based violence.

Furthermore, the ethical inclusion and care of former extremists in research processes are critical for rehabilitation and societal reintegration, necessitating robust frameworks that balance transparency with privacy concerns. Equally important is advocating for legal protections and navigating the complexities of compensation and trauma management in safeguarding researchers' and practitioners’ rights and wellbeing.

We aim to advance knowledge, inform policy, and enhance practices that contribute to a safer, more inclusive society. We highlight these research gaps with the hope that new frontiers in research and practice can , ensure ethical standards and practical solutions that benefit researchers, practitioners and the communities they serve.

## Research Objectives

### 1. Influence of Identity Factors on Researcher and Practitioner Safety

* Research Question 1: How do identity factors such as gender, race, and religion influence the safety and security of researchers and practitioners in different geographic and socio-political contexts?
  + Existing Research: [Challenging the Gatekeepers: the Experiences of Women of Colour Researchers in the Terrorism Studies Field – GNET](https://gnet-research.org/2022/11/28/challenging-the-gatekeepers-the-experiences-of-women-of-colour-researchers-in-the-terrorism-studies-field/); [One of the Boys: On Researching the Far Right as a Woman](https://www-tandfonline-com.proxy.library.georgetown.edu/doi/full/10.1080/1057610X.2024.2361953?src=exp-la)
* Research Question 2: How can the community better support emerging and student researchers?
  + Existing Research/Resource: (Mattheis -- reaching out)

### 2. Intersectional Identities and Risk in Research and Practice

* Research Question: To what extent do intersectional identities affect the level of risk and support needed for researchers and practitioners engaging with extremist or radicalized groups?

### 3. Tailoring Safety Protocols for Diverse Identities in Research and Practice

* Research Question: How can organizations tailor safety protocols and support mechanisms to accommodate diverse identities among researchers and practitioners?

### 4. Ethical Engagement with Victims/Survivors of Hate Crimes in Research and Practice

* Research Question: What ethical guidelines and methodologies can researchers adopt to effectively engage with victims/survivors of hate crimes or violence in OSINT investigations, ensuring their experiences are respected and not re-traumatized?

### 5. Balancing Information Accuracy and Victim/Survivor Wellbeing in Research and Practice

* Research Question: How can researchers and practitioners balance the imperative to gather accurate information with the need to protect the emotional wellbeing and privacy of victims/survivors?

### 6. Long-term Support Strategies for Victims/Survivors in research and practice

* Research Question: What are effective strategies for maintaining ongoing support and ethical engagement with victims/survivors after their initial involvement in research and practice?

### 7. Inclusive Practices for Victims/Survivors in P/CVE Initiatives

* Research Question: How can P/CVE initiatives meaningfully include victims/survivors of terrorism in decision-making processes and program design to ensure their voices are heard and needs addressed?
* Existing Research: [Inspiring Practices for the Meaningful Inclusion of Victims/Survivors of Terrorism in P/CVE Work](https://home-affairs.ec.europa.eu/document/download/ba3f54a5-8534-40cd-9249-3ce5b8b38ef6_en?filename=ran_ad-hoc%20paper_involving_victims_in_pcve_122023_en.pdf)

### 8. Collaborative Models with Victims/Survivors in P/CVE Efforts

* Research Question: What are effective models of collaboration between researchers and practitioners and victims/survivors of terrorism that promote empowerment and agency without exploitation?

### 9. Cultural Influences on Inclusion Efforts in Global P/CVE Settings

* Research Question: How do cultural and contextual factors influence the reception and effectiveness of inclusion efforts for victims/survivors of terrorism in diverse global settings?

### 10. Ethical Frameworks for Engaging with Former Extremists in research and practice

* Research Question: What are ethical frameworks for engaging with former extremists in research and practice, ensuring their rehabilitation and reintegration while safeguarding against potential risks?

### 11. Collaboration with Mental Health Professionals in research and practice

* Research Question: How can researchers and practitioners collaborate with mental health professionals to support the wellbeing and ethical inclusion of former extremists in research processes?

### 12. Privacy Protection for Former Extremists in research and practice

* Research Question: What are effective strategies for protecting the privacy and safety of former extremists who contribute to research and practice, balancing transparency with security concerns?

### 13. Advocacy and Legal Protections for researchers and practitioners

* Research Question: How can researchers and practitioners navigate legal frameworks to advocate for their rights, including compensation for traumatic work and protections against legal repercussions?

### 14. Negotiating Consent and Confidentiality in Research and Practice

* Research Question: What are effective strategies for negotiating consent and confidentiality agreements with research subjects in investigations involving sensitive or legally ambiguous information?

### 15. Supporting Researchers in Legal Challenges in research and practice

* Research Question: How can organizations support researchers in navigating legal challenges related to conducting research and practice, including defamation risks and privacy concerns?

## Eligibility Criteria

Proposals would be welcome from academic researchers, nonprofit organizations and independent scholars. Collaborative proposals involving multiple institutions or disciplines are encouraged to address the complex multifaceted nature of the field.

There are any geographical restrictions or preferences for the research scope, however, preference will be given to research groups representing the diversity and complexity of the research topic.

## Proposal Requirements

**Title and Abstract:** Please provide a concise and informative title that reflects the essence of your proposed research. Follow this with an abstract (maximum 300 words) that summarizes the objectives, methodology, expected outcomes, and significance of your study. The abstract should clearly outline the problem or research question, methods used, and the potential impact of your research on the field of OSINT and sensitive topics.

**Research Plan:** Your proposal should include a detailed research plan that outlines the following:

* **Introduction**: Provide context for your research, including a clear statement of the problem or research questions being addressed.
* **Initial Literature Review**: Summarize relevant literature that informs your study and positions it within existing research.
* **Methodology**: Describe your approach to data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Specify any OSINT methodologies employed and justify their suitability.
* **Expected Timeline**: Outline the proposed timeline for each phase of the research, including data collection, analysis, and writing.
* **Budget Justification**: If applicable, provide a brief justification for any budgetary requests related to the research.

**Ethical Considerations:** Include a dedicated section addressing ethical considerations associated with your research. This should cover:

* **Participant Protection**: Detail how you will ensure the safety, anonymity, and confidentiality of research participants, especially when engaging with sensitive topics or vulnerable populations.
* **Data Management**: Describe how you will collect, store, and handle data to ensure compliance with ethical standards and data protection regulations.
* Any other ethical or security concerns or considerations

**Expected Outcomes:** Specify the anticipated outcomes and contributions of your research. Highlight the potential impact of your findings on advancing knowledge, informing policy, or enhancing practices related to this field. Clearly articulate how your research addresses the objectives outlined above.

**Proposal Length and Formatting:**

* **Page Limit**: Proposals should not exceed 10 pages, excluding references or appendices.
* **Formatting**: All pages should be numbered consecutively, and text should be single-spaced.
* **Appendices**: Include any necessary appendices (e.g., CVs, budget details) beyond the page limit, clearly labeled and relevant to the proposal.

## Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following criteria:

* Clarity and significance of the research problem or question.
* Methodological rigor and appropriateness of the research plan.
* Potential impact and contributions to preventing hate and violence and protecting the protectors.
* Feasibility of the proposed timeline and budget.
* Ethical considerations and protections for participants and data

## Submission Process

* Proposals must be submitted electronically as a single PDF file to [Email Address] by [Submission Deadline].
* Include the project title in the subject line of the email.
* Ensure all proposal components are clearly labeled and organized according to the structure outlined above.

**Contact Information:** For inquiries regarding this research, please contact [Contact Person] at [Contact Email].

SURVEY FOR FEEDBACK

1. These rituals can feel silly in the moment, but are backed by research. They play an important role in signaling to your brain that you are ‘stepping in’ and ‘stepping out’ of this potentially harmful work, ensuring that it does not bleed into other areas of your work or day. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. These rituals can feel silly in the moment, but they play an important role in signaling to your brain that you are ‘stepping in’ and ‘stepping out’ of this potentially harmful work, ensuring that it does not bleed into other areas of your work or day. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. For more examples, see also https://[nationalfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/A-Trauma-Informed-Approach-to-Workforce.pdf](http://nationalfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/A-Trauma-Informed-Approach-to-Workforce.pdf) and <https://workplacesrespond.org/> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)