



Theory of Change

Significance Quest Theory (SQT)

Significance Quest Theory (SQT) posits that the root cause of violence stems from a universal human need for significance, encompassing feelings of worthiness and belonging. According to SQT, individuals who feel insignificant or marginalized may turn to violence as a means of gaining attention, power, or a sense of identity. This theory suggests that violence is often a misguided attempt to fulfill the deep-seated need for recognition and respect. By addressing this fundamental need, the "You Belong Here" curriculum aims to prevent violence and harmful behaviors by providing students with healthier, constructive ways to meet their needs for significance.

The curriculum focuses on fostering a strong sense of belonging and self-worth among students, which are key elements in satisfying their quest for significance. Through a variety of strategies, including community-building activities, mindfulness practices, civic reasoning, and opportunities for positive social engagement, the curriculum helps students find their place within the school community without resorting to negative or violent actions. Research shows that when students feel valued and understood, they are less likely to engage in violence as a means of achieving significance (1). By promoting a supportive environment where every student feels they matter, the curriculum addresses the root causes of violence and creates pathways for students to meet their needs in positive, non-destructive ways (2).

Supporting Sources:

¹ Kruglanski, A. W., Chen, X., Dechesne, M., Fishman, S., & Orehek, E. (2009). Fully Committed: Suicide Bombers' Motivation and the Quest for Personal Significance. *Political Psychology*, 30(3), 331-357. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9221.2009.00698.x

² Kruglanski, A. W., Gelfand, M. J., Bélanger, J. J., Sheveland, A., Hetiarachchi, M., & Gunaratna, R. (2014). The Psychology of Radicalization and Deradicalization: How Significance Quest Impacts Violent Extremism. *Political Psychology*, 35(S1), 69-93. doi:10.1111/pops.12163