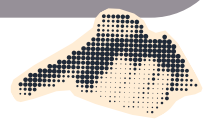


Ask yourself:

- What exactly am I being told to fear?
- Is the threat clearly defined?
- Does the evidence match the emotional intensity?
- Who benefits if I panic?



- Something changed.
- Therefore, someone must be dangerous

Moral panics often turn complicated problems into an easy formula:



simplified, and weaponized. panic begins when the story becomes exaggerated. The concern may begin with something real. The that matches the level of outrage). major threat to society (often without evidence behavior, or cultural change is presented as a moral panic happens when a person, group,

WHAT IS A MORAL PANIC?

IS THIS A MORAL PANIC?

A POCKET GUIDE TO FEAR, OUTRAGE, AND THINKING BEFORE REACTING

When a story insists that society is collapsing, children are in danger, and one group is to blame, pause.

You may be looking at a moral panic.

Fear spreads fast. Facts usually need a minute.

HOW A MORAL PANIC SPREADS

Moral panics usually follow a familiar pattern:

1. A threat is announced
A person, identity, trend, book, technology, or behavior is labeled dangerous.

2. A villain is created
A whole group becomes responsible for a complicated social problem.

3. Extreme examples become "proof"
One shocking story is treated as evidence of a widespread pattern.

4. Urgency replaces accuracy
People are pressured to act before facts can be checked.

5. Punishment becomes the solution
Bans, surveillance, censorship, exclusion, or criminalization are presented as common sense.

Question:
Are we solving a measurable problem or punishing a symbolic enemy?

THE MORAL PANIC CHECKLIST

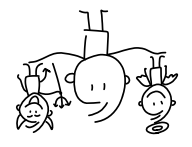
Check each statement that applies:

- ☐ The story uses words like epidemic, invasion, grooming, corruption, or crisis without clear data
- ☐ A few examples are used to describe an entire group
- ☐ Children are invoked to shut down questions or debate
- ☐ The alleged threat is difficult to define or measure
- ☐ Statistics are missing, vague, outdated, or stripped of context
- ☐ Experts are dismissed as biased, corrupt, or part of the threat
- ☐ The proposed response is harsher than the documented harm
- ☐ People are pressured to choose a side immediately
- ☐ The story focuses on identity more than actual behavior
- ☐ Fear of social change is presented as concern for safety

Scores:
0-2: Keep reading critically.
3-5: Slow down and verify.
6 or more: You are probably being sold a panic.

WHO BECOMES THE "THREAT"?

Moral panics rarely target the most powerful people in society. They tend to target groups that are already misunderstood, stigmatized, or politically vulnerable.



- The public is encouraged to see these people as:
- dangerous
 - contagious
 - deceptive
 - immoral
 - harmful to children
 - responsible for social decline

FOLLOW THE EVIDENCE, NOT THE ADRENALINE

Strong emotion is not proof that a claim is true. Before sharing, supporting, or reacting, investigate.

Start with the original claim
Find out where the story began. Don't rely only on screenshots, commentary videos, headlines, or reposts.

Look for measurable language
Words like *many*, *rising*, *dangerous*, and *widespread* require numbers.

- Ask:
- How many?
 - Compared with what?
 - Over what period?
 - Out of what total population?



Check what the source actually proves
A source can be real and still be misrepresented, and a study about correlation doesn't automatically prove causation. A police report proves that something was reported (not necessarily that every allegation was verified).

Reminder:
A citation isn't decoration. *Read it.*

HOW TO THINK CRITICALLY

Before deciding what you believe:

- Separate the claim from the reaction**
- What happened?
 - What are people claiming it means?
 - Those are not always the same thing.



Search beyond the viral wording
Use neutral search terms. Avoid copying emotionally loaded language directly into the search bar.

Compare multiple reliable sources
Look for agreement on basic facts, not identical opinions.

Check the date
Old stories are frequently recirculated as current events.

Notice missing context
What happened before the clip began? What happened afterward? Who was interviewed? Who was ignored?

Test the argument
Ask:
What evidence would prove this claim wrong?
If the answer is "nothing," it's a belief protecting itself.

