

Stoneman Douglas High School

A single simple answer does not exist...

As we struggle to comprehend the events of the past 24 hours with the horrible shooting and deaths of 17 innocent people at the hands of an individual bent on destruction, we are left with the inevitable debate. This was not an isolated event; it was the twelfth school shooting this year. The year is only 7 weeks old! We all ask ourselves, when will this stop? I find myself asking the same thing each of us ask...why?

We need to finally put our collective grief together to find a way to effectively stop this from ever happening again! We need to focus on the victims and the impact on their families, not the shooter. As far as I'm concerned we shouldn't even know the shooter's name or background. Knowing this information has done little to stem future events. Apparently this individual had been posting disturbing images on social media and no alarm was set off. If someone is already feeling marginalized and isolated, what better way to make a name for oneself than to create complete and utter mayhem and destruction. Even though the individual may feel some degree of guilt and shame after the event, that momentary anger was easily and immediately satisfied by creating a sensational media event that gives them that sense of control and power.

The trauma and injuries on these families will be long lasting. While physical injuries may heal over time, the psychological trauma can last a lifetime. We have highly sophisticated Level One Trauma centers everywhere to treat physical trauma but there is no Level One Trauma center for psychological trauma. We need to be able to provide first responders quickly with assistance for mental health intervention.

The first responders are brave men and women who are running toward the danger, it can and should be the same for individuals available to provide support for the after effect and long range impact of the psychological trauma.

Further, it would be easy to simply say, the shooter had to have been "insane" which conveniently places him in a marginalized and easily dismissed class of individual who is then associated with other people dealing with mental illness on a daily basis who are no more likely to commit such a heinous act as anyone else. It also stops the conversation about a real solution to the problem which is multifaceted. We know for example that the majority of mass shootings have been carried on by individuals who had no diagnosis or were identified as being mentally ill. We need to be better at identifying the conditions that proceed these events and do a better job of intervening early enough to change this trajectory of behavior. The Broward Sheriff, Scott Israel has said that we all have a role to play in helping prevent future tragedies, if you see something, say something is something we all can do.

The fact that this individual easily purchased a highly deadly weapon is another concern that needs to be addressed and fixed. Is there a place in our modern society for such a weapon? If so, what place is that? Is it simply because of a perceived protection under the second amendment? If it is, then perhaps it's time to change that. Imagine if these individuals had no access to such weapons, we would be having a much different conversation today.

The Behavioral Health Community of Broward has already stepped up and is providing much needed counseling to everyone affected by this tragedy. The Broward Behavioral Health Coalition and Henderson Behavioral Health Center have mobilized Mobile Crisis Teams to the people in need. I am grateful to be part of a community that cares so much and is always prepared to help. Other partners have offered their assistance and stand by, ready to help.

Finally, if nothing else, take time to express your love and appreciation for your family and loved ones every day. As I dropped my son off today for school as a 9th grader, I gave him an extra hug and let him know that I loved him. We all could use more of that, it costs us nothing to say and it can go a long way to help create acceptance in what may seem to be an often harsh world full of peril and danger. This does not have to be our legacy to our children and this generation. Remind your children that they can talk to you any time about anything, it may be the single most important thing we do for our children and our future.

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