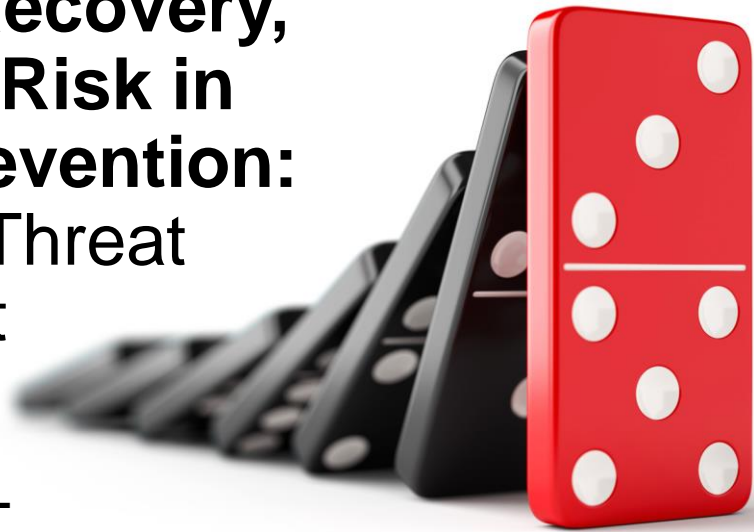


Balancing Recovery, Rights, and Risk in Violence Prevention: The Role of Threat Management



Jack Rozel, MD, MSL
Rob Ambrosini, PsyD
Southwestern Pennsylvania Threat Hub

1

Disclosures

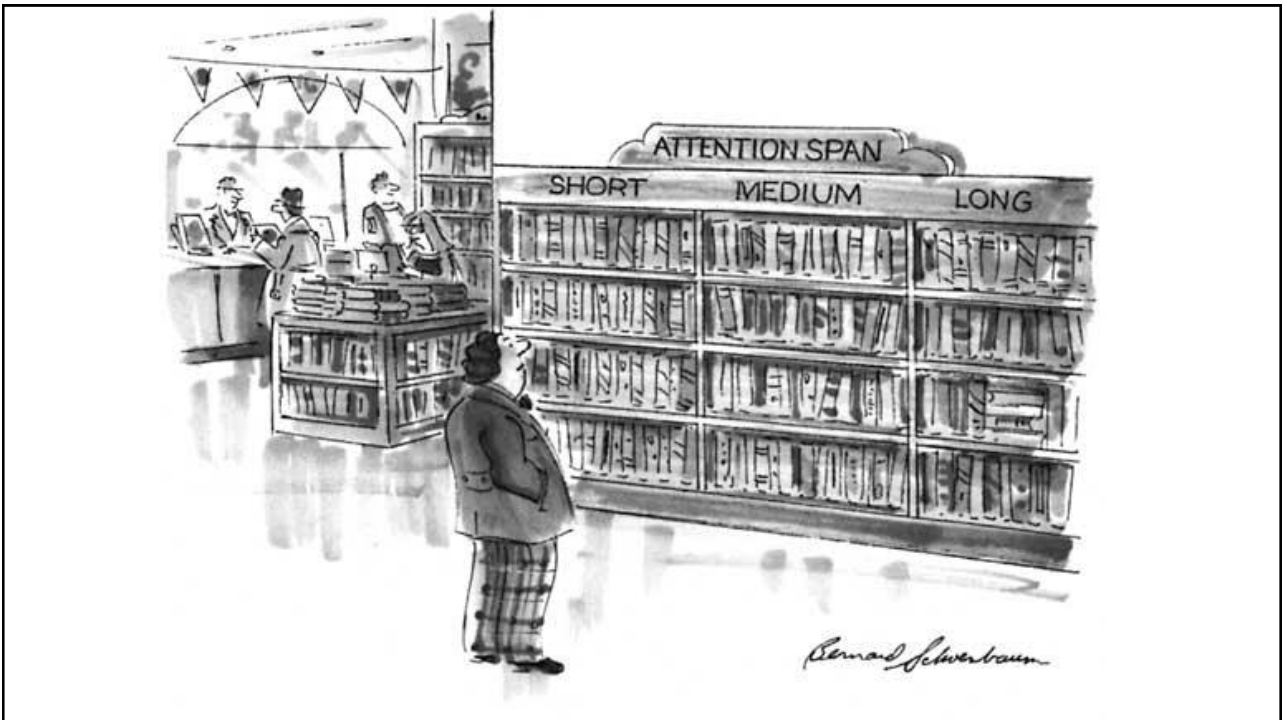


- No payments or gifts from pharma, industry, or other ACCME-defined commercial interests
- We both receive funding from US DHS Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships and Pennsylvania Commission on Crime & Delinquency

2




3




4

**ENHANCING SCHOOL SAFETY
USING A THREAT ASSESSMENT MODEL**

An Operational Guide for
Preventing Targeted School Violence






U.S. Department of
Homeland Security

**United States
Secret Service**

National Threat Assessment Center
July 2018

**PROTECTING AMERICA'S SCHOOLS
A U.S. SECRET SERVICE ANALYSIS
OF TARGETED SCHOOL VIOLENCE**



2019

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
UNITED STATES SECRET SERVICE
National Threat Assessment Center

5


SAN FRANCISCO · THOUSAND OAKS · SAN YSIDRO · SEAL BEACH ·
NATIONAL COUNCIL · MEDICAL DIRECTOR INSTITUTE · LOUISVILLE · SA
JICSON · MIAMI · SAN DIEGO · M
GE · DENVER · SAN BERNARDINO · SQUIRREL HILL ·
CAMDEN · EDMOND
OMAHA · RED LAKE
KINSTON · SANTA FE
ATLANTA · KILLEEN
NCHESTER · ISLE VISTA
OMATTOX · SEATTLE ·
VADDELL · TUCSON
KES-BARRE · BINGHAM
GILROY · COLUMBINE · ORLANDO · FORT HOOD ·
E · SANDY HOOK · VIRGINIA BEACH · PARKLAND · T
CHARLESTON · LAS VEGAS · WASHINGTON, D.C. ·
CHARLOTTE · ROSEBURG · B
LAND SPRINGS · CARTHAGE · SA
BY · ANNAPOLIS · SCOTTSDALE ·
ND · VIRGINIA TECH · AURORA · JACKSONVILLE · SAN
OBBS · TRENTON · EL PASO · SAN BRU
CHICAGO · YOUNTVILLE · PITTSBURGH · LITTLE ROCK
ON · DAYTON · HOUSTON · CH
BRING · PARISH · ALEXANDRIA

MASS
VIOLENCE
IN
AMERICA

CAUSES, IMPACTS
AND
SOLUTIONS

AUGUST 2019

NATIONAL COUNCIL
FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH



Special Council on Gun Violence

Report of Findings, Recommendations & Action Steps

March 2020

6



7

Will more effective mental health screening and treatment reduce mass shootings?

(Enter a yes/no or very short answer in the comments)

A large crowd of people, seen from a high angle, is arranged to form the outline of the United States map. The people are diverse in color and are standing on a white background.

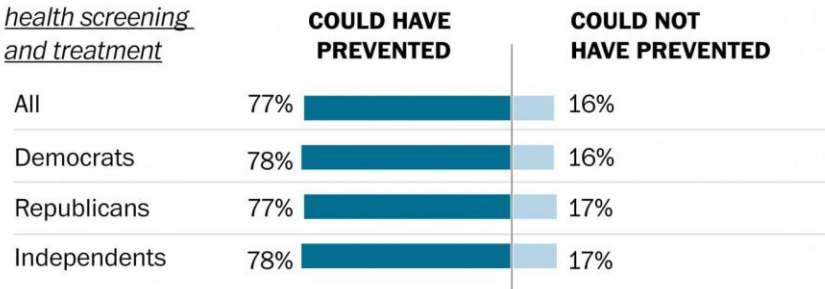
8

POLL Washington Post-ABC News Poll

Most say mental health efforts, stricter gun laws could have prevented mass shooting at Parkland, Fla., school

Q: You may have heard about the mass shooting at a high school in Parkland, Fla. Do you think this event could or could not have been prevented by...

More effective mental health screening and treatment



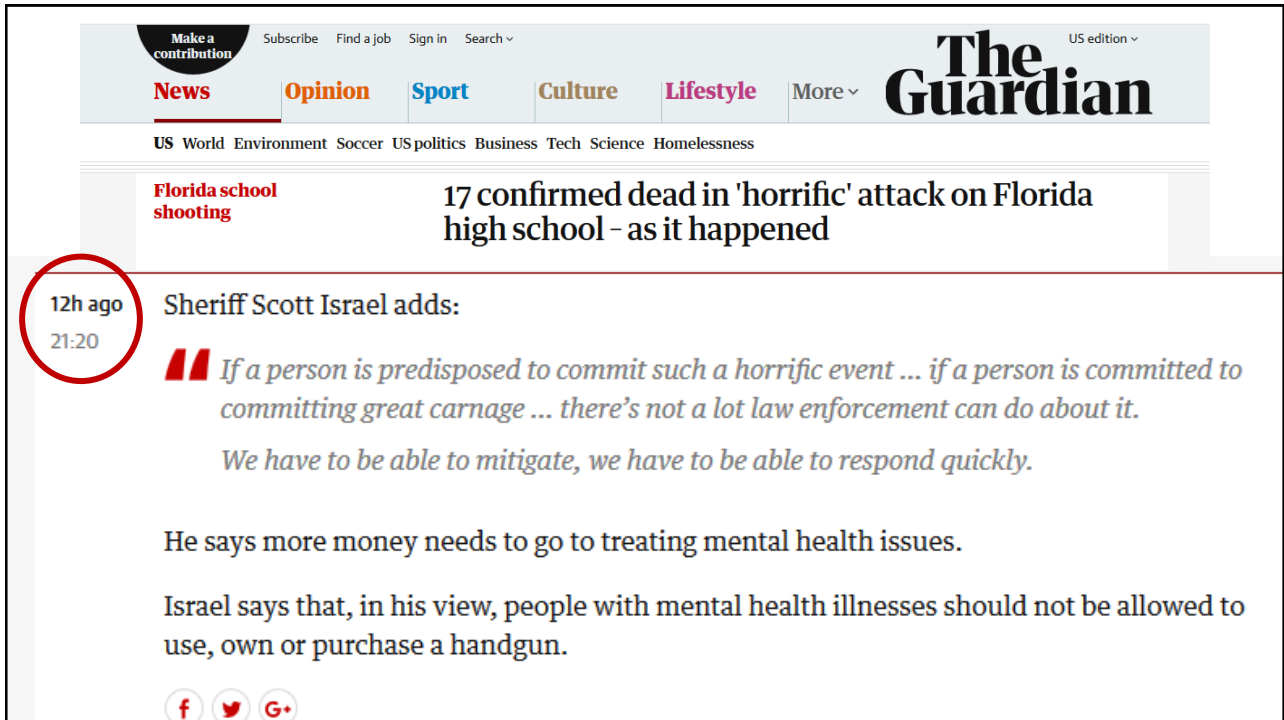
9

MSD Highschool / Parkland, Florida (2/14/2018)

- 17 killed, 14 injured
- Longstanding fixation on weapons
- Posted “I’m going to be a professional school shooter”
- Known history of animal cruelty, threatening behavior, violence in romantic relationships
- Expelled for threatening behavior
- Many personal losses
- Hx of outpt MH tx ~1 year prior



10



The screenshot shows a news article from The Guardian. The main headline is "17 confirmed dead in 'horrific' attack on Florida high school - as it happened". A sub-headline reads "Florida school shooting". The article is dated "12h ago" and "21:20". The author is "Sheriff Scott Israel adds:". The main text of the article is a quote: "If a person is predisposed to commit such a horrific event ... if a person is committed to committing great carnage ... there's not a lot law enforcement can do about it. We have to be able to mitigate, we have to be able to respond quickly." Below the quote, it says "He says more money needs to go to treating mental health issues." and "Israel says that, in his view, people with mental health illnesses should not be allowed to use, own or purchase a handgun." There are social media sharing icons for Facebook, Twitter, and Google+ at the bottom.

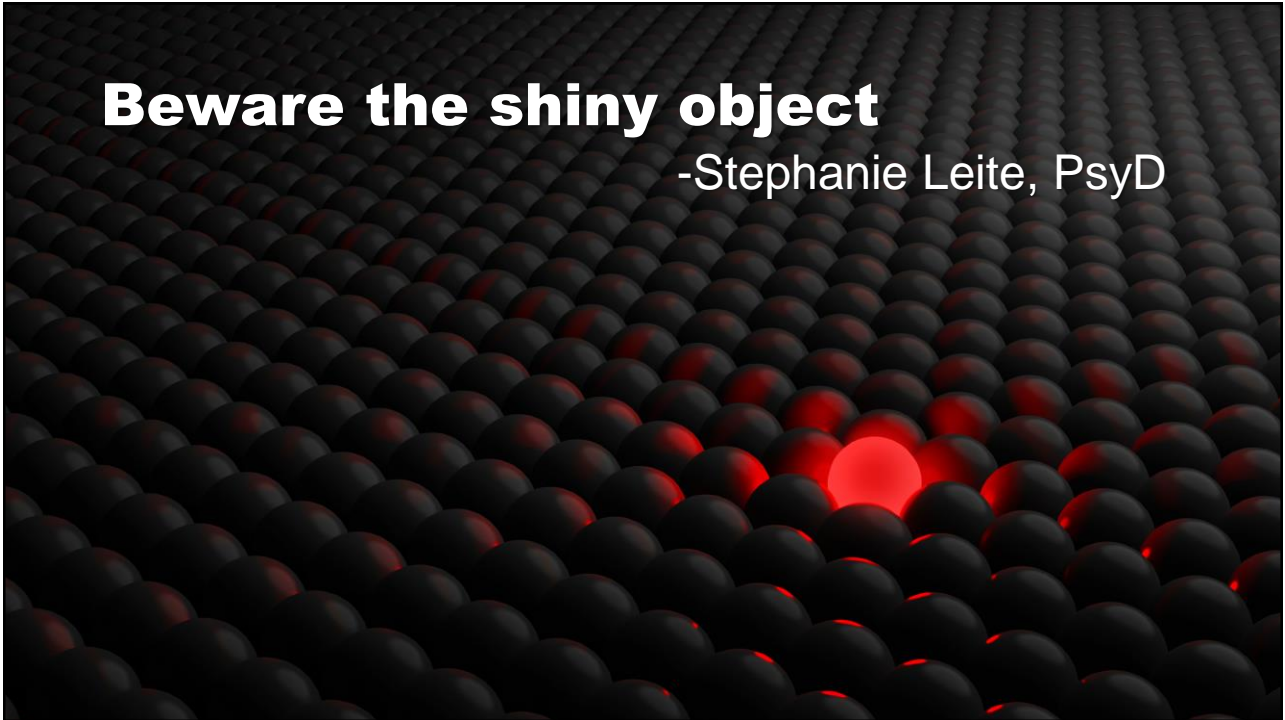
11

Potential risks of news coverage

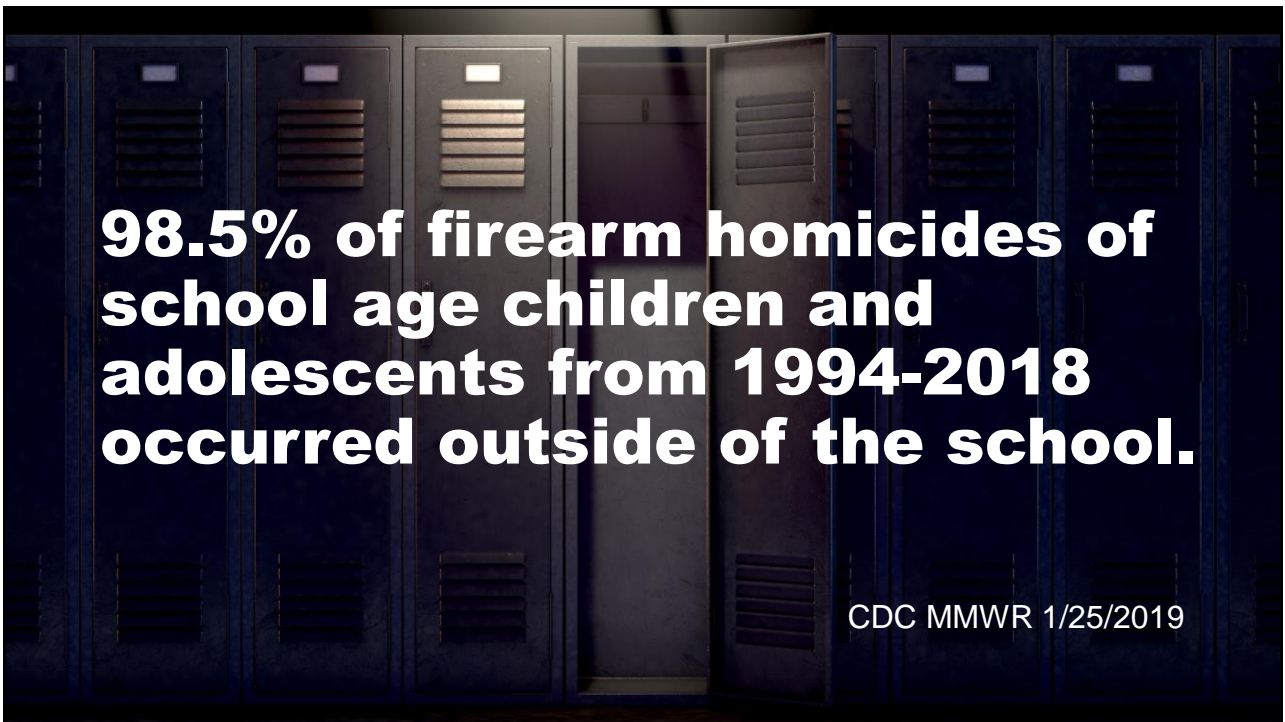
- **Desensitizing** → is it still news when it happens every day?
- **Traumatizing** → impacting audience and reporter alike
- **Misleading** → inspires incorrect policy goals and perceptions of risk and safety
- **Educating** → Tactical mimicry
- **Glamorizing** → Temporal clustering, outscoring
- **Stigmatizing** → bias against people with mental illness



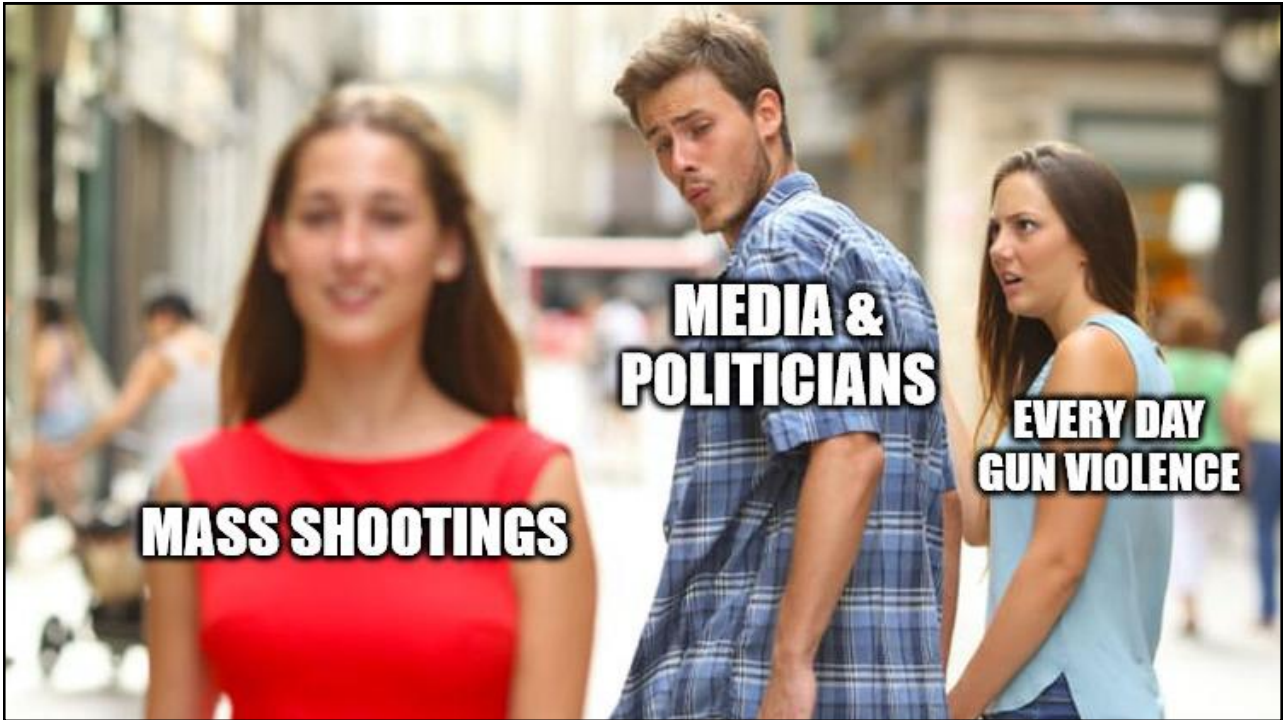
12



13



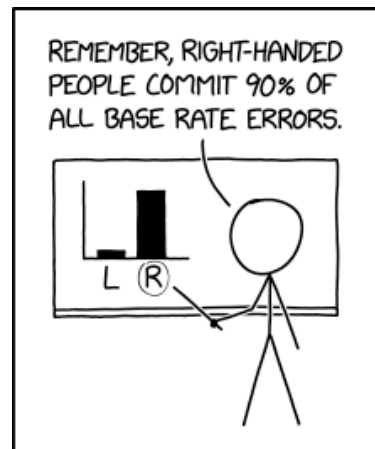
14



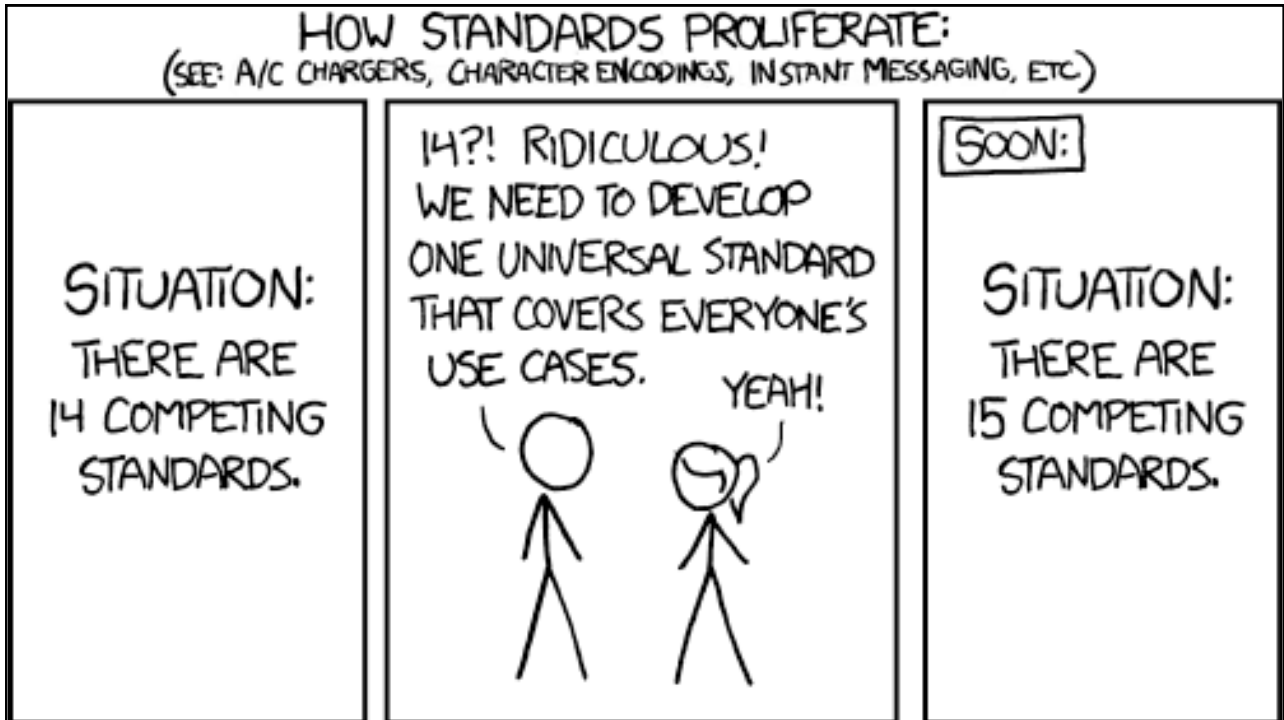
15

Layers of Mental Illness

- Symptoms
- Diagnoses, current or past
- Current, significant impairment
- If I saw this person in the psychiatric emergency service, would I
 - Recommend outpatient, partial, inpatient?
 - Involuntary commitment?
- Would this person meet criteria for involuntary outpatient commitment? Long term state hospitalization?
- Not competent to stand trial?
- Guilty but mentally ill? (Illness impacts)
- Not guilty by reason of insanity? (Illness overrides)



16

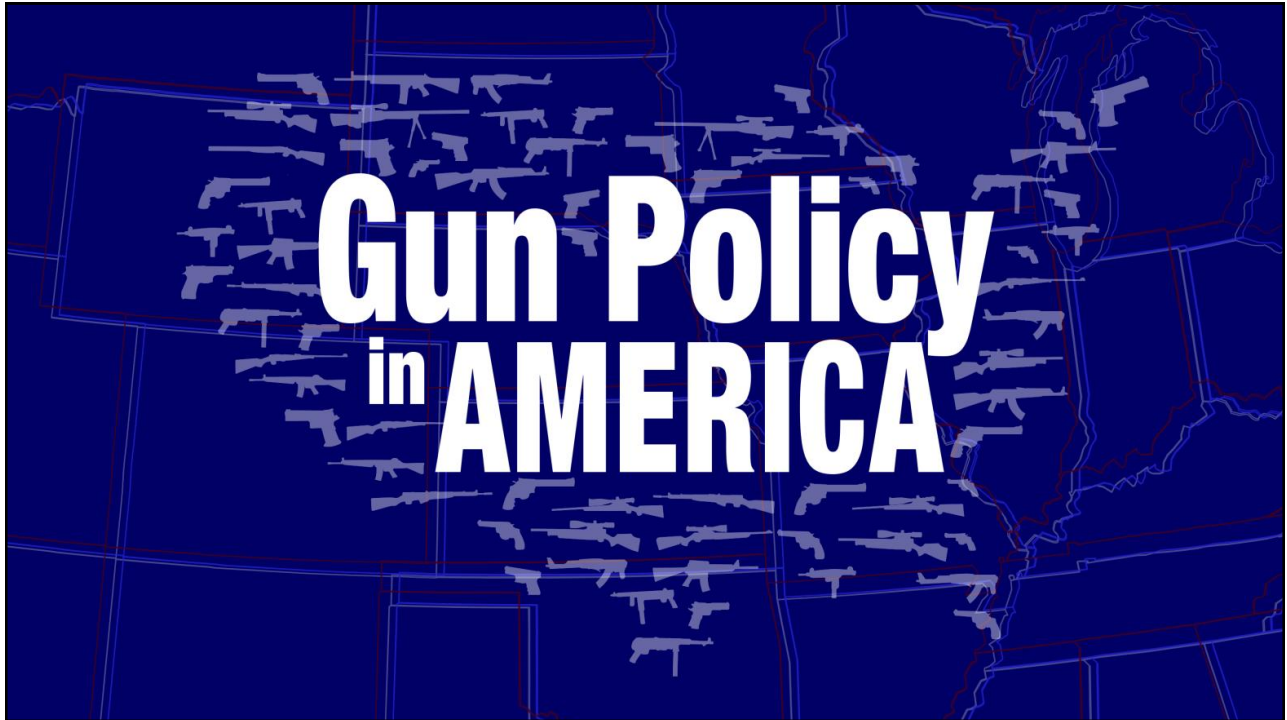


17

Violence & Mass Shootings: Likelihood of “mental illness”

4%	Violence attributable to mental illness (Swanson 1996)
17%	Any non-SUD Axis I in murder def's (Martone 2013)
4.7%	NICS-disqualifying mental illness PMSs (Silver et al 2018)
11%	Evidence of prior MH “concerns” (Everytown 2015)
17%	Pre-incident dx, school shooters (Vossekuil/SSI 2002)
25%	Evidence of SMI, 100+ yrs of MM (Stone 2015)
25%	Pre-incident diagnosis of any kind, AS (Silver/BAU 2018)
28%	Evidence of MI, ISIS-influenced (Gill & Corner 2017)
40%	Prior dx in targeted school attacks (USSS/NTAC 2019)
55%	Lifetime risk, DSM-IV Disorder, all of USA (Kessler 2006)
59%	“Signs of serious mental illness” (Duwe 2007)
62%	Mental Health “Stressor,” AS (Silver/BAU 2018)
86%	Prevalence by age 45, any disorder, Dunedin (Caspi 2020)

18



19

Mass Shootings

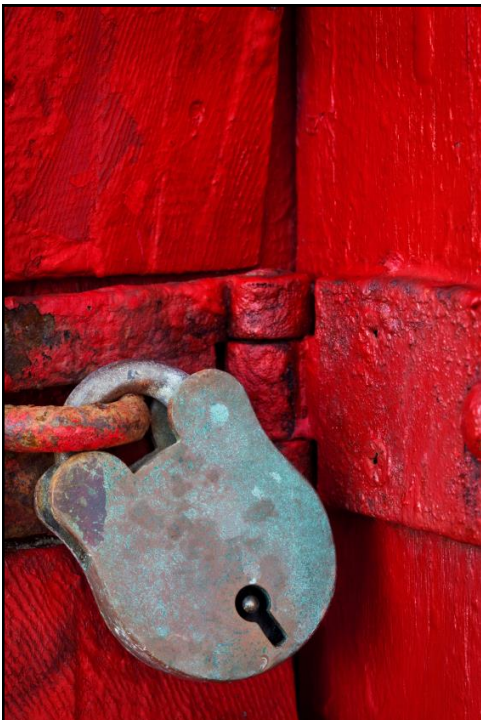
(Science of Gun Policy, 2020 Update)

- What does the scientific evidence say about the effects of various firearm policies on societally important outcomes?
- 123 / 12,916 studies (Title/Abstract Review) included in full SR; only 8 applicable to mass shootings
- Inconclusive findings:
 - Background checks, ASW/HCM bans, license/permit requirements, child access laws, minimum purchase age, CC laws, waiting periods, SYG laws
- No studies met inclusion criteria:
 - Saturday Night Special Laws, ERPOs, Training requirements, Gun Free Zones, Armed Staff in Schools, IPV/MI prohibitions, lost/stolen reporting, surrender by prohibited possessors

20



21



Good public health...

- Evidence based, not fear driven
- Costs proportional to benefits
- Infringement of liberties proportional to needs of the public
- Net positive impact on other risks
- Measurable interventions, measurable outcomes
- Effective across scale and category
- Not security theater

22

Why we're here:

Because Threat Assessment, as a discipline, offers:

- An approach to assessing and managing situations that can lead to violence
- Prevention strategies that are evidence based and scale across risk categories
- Security, not security theater
- A chance to work left of bang



23

A multidisciplinary threat assessment team, in conjunction with the appropriate policies, tools, and training, is the best practice for preventing future tragedies.

Protecting America's Schools
U.S. Secret Service, 2019

24

Critical findings

(USSS/NTAC Protecting America's Schools 2019)

- **There is no profile of a student attacker, nor is there a profile for the type of school that has been targeted**
- Attackers usually had multiple motives, the most common involving a grievance with classmates
- Most attackers used firearms, and firearms were most often acquired from the home
- Most attackers had experienced psychological, behavioral, or developmental symptoms
- Half of the attackers had interests in violent topics

25

Critical findings

(USSS/NTAC Protecting America's Schools 2019)

- All attackers experienced social stressors involving their relationships with peers and/or romantic partners
- Nearly every attacker experienced negative home life factors
- Most attackers were victims of bullying, which was often observed by others
- Most attackers had a history of school disciplinary actions, and many had prior contact with law enforcement
- **All attackers exhibited concerning behaviors. Most elicited concern from others, and most communicated their intent to attack**

26

Prior Knowledge of Potential School Based Violence (Pollack/USSS & DOE, 2008)

- School climate matters. Schools cannot take for granted that students will come forward; however, **the appropriate school climate can encourage students to do so**
- Some bystanders voiced a genuine disbelief that the attack would occur and thus did not report it
- Students feared negative consequences if they were to report information
- Students often misjudged the immediacy and likelihood of the planned attack
- **Parents and adults within the school setting can play a key role in influencing their children's reporting behavior**

27

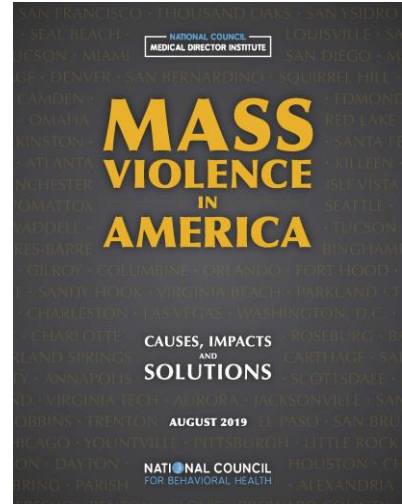
NatCon & SCGV: School Recommendations



28

NatCon Mass Violence Report: Modular Tool You Can Customize

- Executive Summary
- Environmental Scan – Causes and Impacts
- Potential Solutions
- Recommendations – specific and actionable
 - Schools
 - Federal and State Government
 - Psychiatrists and Allied Psychiatric Professions
 - Provider Organizations
 - Payers
 - Training Programs



29

Training is important prior to an event

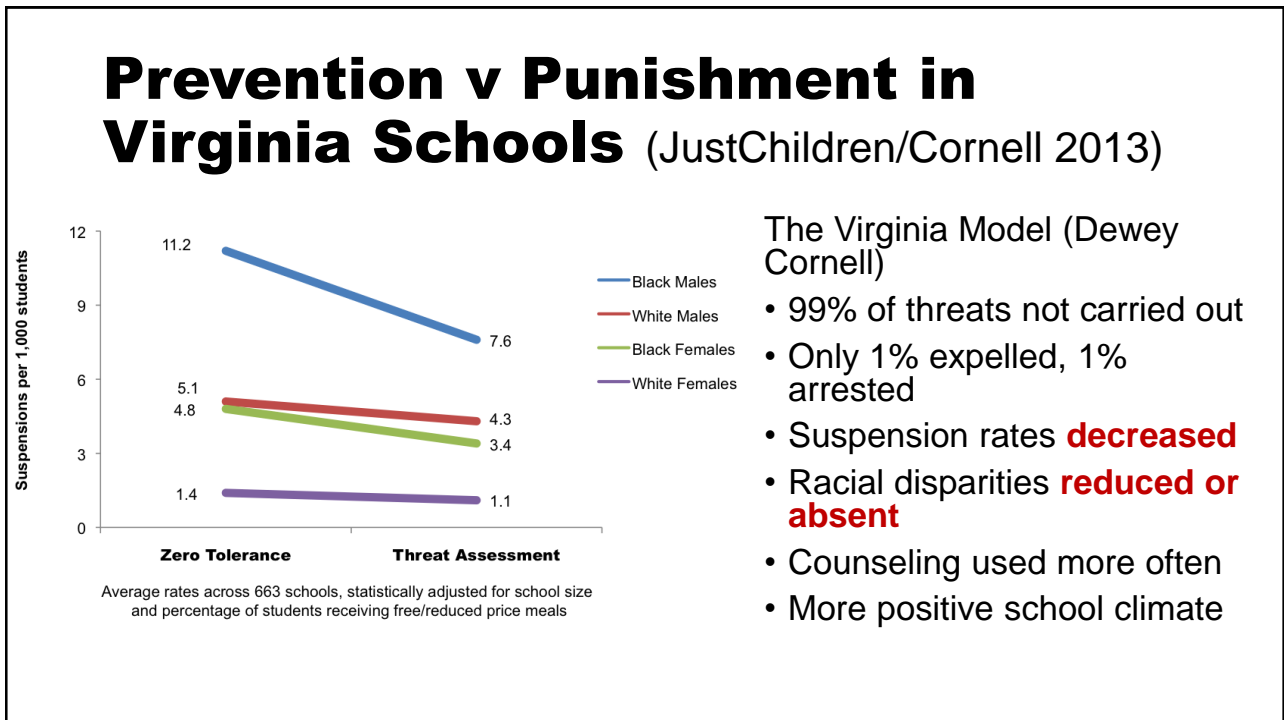
- Training has not been a priority in teacher preparation coursework nor in professional development
- Prevention – not just intervention
- Often sought only in the aftermath of a highly publicized event
- Preparedness involves not just planning to respond, but also planning to recover



30



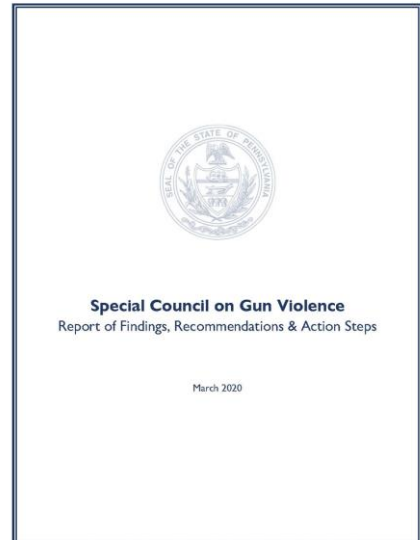
31



32

Governor's Special Council on Gun Violence

- Threat management
- Primary prevention, mental health promotion, trauma informed systems
- Universal background checks
- Child access prevention laws / incentives
- Safer storage laws / incentives
- Lost / stolen gun reporting laws / incentives
- Exploration of ERPOs
- Improved, evidence-based education for owners, dealers, and health professionals



33

Have you heard of Safe2Say?

**(Enter a yes/no or
very short answer in
the comments)**



34

Safe2SayPA.org

- 24/7/365 centralized reporting system for Pennsylvania K12
- Anonymous reporting via Online, App, **844-SAF2SAY** (no 'e')
- Reviewed and routed as indicated to school administration and / or law enforcement
- “If it makes you uncomfortable, submit a tip”



35

Safe2Say: 2020-2021 Highlights

TIP TOTALS 07/01/2020 - 06/30/2021	
Event Types	Total
Bullying / Cyber Bullying	1459
Suicide / Suicide Ideation	1394
Cutting / Self-Harm	944
Drug Distribution / Possession	603
Depression / Anxiety	566
Smoking (Tobacco, E-Cig, Vape) in School	556
Hate Crime / Hate Speech / Discrimination	510
Inappropriate Language/Behavior/Gesture	419
Harassment / Intimidation	390
False Report / Prank Tip	378

36

Upstanders, not bystanders

- Good data on bystander interventions for sexual assault, bullying
- Trust matters
- Diverse trusted leadership (a lock for every key)
- Heroes raise their hands – heroes help



37

Threat Management Essentials



38

Threat assessment and management

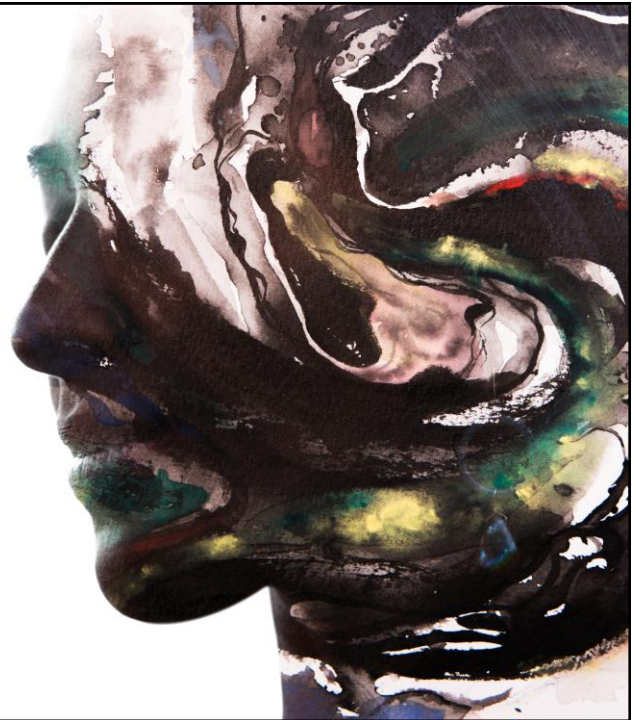
- Using diverse teams of subject matter and operational experts to recognize and manage violence risk before attacks happen
- Evidence based identification, investigation, prevention and follow up (case management*)
- May involve people with direct connection to person of concern (eg, family, teacher, clergy)
- Focus is on behavior, communication, risk factors; not profiling by diagnosis, religion, ethnicity, etc.
- Mitigation of harm is the absolute goal



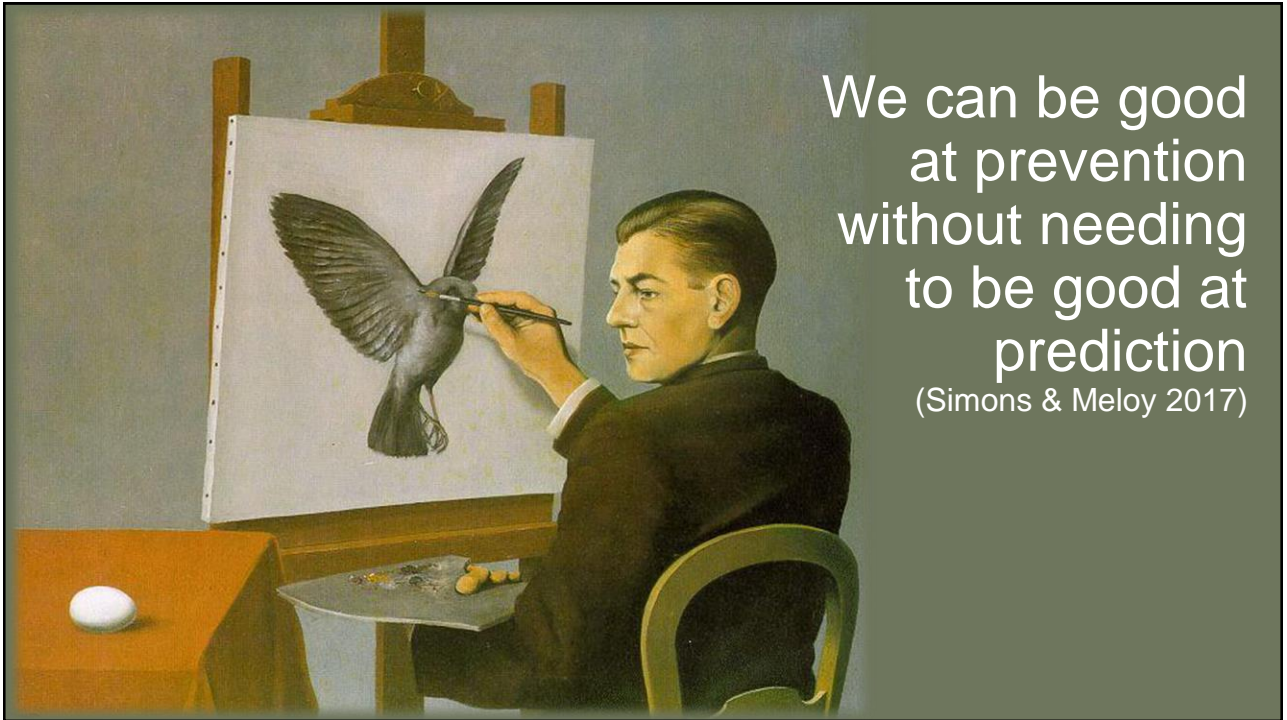
39

Behavior.
Communication.
Ideation.

Not profiling.
Not profiling.
Not profiling.
Not profiling.



40



41



42

How can I help?

- An illness that can be treated
- A legitimate grievance that can be addressed
- An error that can be apologized for
- A psychosocial stressor that I can mitigate
- A strength I can amplify
- A protective factor I can add or reinforce
- Soft landings & supported exits
- Promote connection



43

How can I hurt?

- Acting out of bias
- Ignore concerns – ignore the dots
- Blame / punish reporters
- Punish / Push away
- Zero tolerance
- Scare / alienate
- Hard landings / fast exits



44

Engaging, not interrogating



45

Path to Intended* Violence

(Adapted from Calhoun & Weston 2003/2016)



46

Targeted Violence Concepts: Hostile Attribution Model


- Youth and adults prone toward violence are more likely to interpret ambiguous actions as hostile and threatening than are their less aggressive counterparts
- Exists on a continuum – Cognitive distortions strong or weak
- Define social problems in hostile ways, adopt hostile goals, seek few additional facts, generate few alternatives, identify few consequences
- Hostile aggression – negative views of self, world, people
- Hypervigilant towards hostility

47

Aggression in Females



- An ongoing association with delinquent peers appears to be an important factor in the onset of delinquency among adolescent girls (Mullis et al. 2004).
- 92% of female juvenile offenders have been subject to some form of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse (Acoca & Dedel, 1998).
- In recent years, violence among young females has increased in terms of both the number of offenses committed and the severity of these offenses (Cauffman et al., 2007).
- Girls tend to follow the same developmental pathways toward antisocial behavior and delinquency as boys (Odgers et al. 2008)
- Girls may be more likely to be pulled into delinquency through involvement in intimate relationships with delinquent males rather than through involvement with delinquent gangs (Mullis et al. 2004).

48



“We stabbed her.”

Rachel Shoaf, January 3, 2013

FD-302 (Rev. 5-8-10) - 1 of 5 -

UNCLASSIFIED//FOUO

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Date of entry 01/08/2013

On January 3, 2013, RACHEL SHOAF was interviewed at the offices of her attorney, JOHN ANGOTTI, in Morgantown, West Virginia. The purpose of the interview was for SHOAF to provide additional information regarding the disappearance of SKYLAR NEESE. Conducting the interview in the presence of ANGOTTI was Special Agent Robert J. Ambrosini and West Virginia State Police Trooper Ronnie Gaskin.

Prior to beginning the interview ANGOTTI and his law partner, DAVID STRAPACE telephonically contacted Assistant United States Attorney Andrew B. Cogar to advise that he would like the intended proffer agreement/immunity letter to reflect "death and disappearance" and not singularly "disappearance" regarding knowledge SHOAF may supply about NEESE. All parties agreed that the mutual understanding of the original letter was that SHOAF would not be prosecuted for her information and that protection would also extend to information regarding NEESE'S death. After a second letter was faxed to the office with the amendment, SA Ambrosini was verbally given authority to sign on behalf of AUSA Cogar. After providing the identity of the interviewing agents and the nature of the interview, SHOAF provided the following information:

"We stabbed her", stated SHOAF referring to herself and SHELLA EDDY stabbing NEESE. SHOAF, EDDY, and NEESE never went to the CONWAY house as she originally stated during a previous proffer. NEESE was killed by SHOAF and EDDY because the girls always fought with NEESE and she was "in the way" of the friendship between SHOAF and EDDY. SHOAF denied any romantic involvement with EDDY. In the spring of 2012 EDDY and SHOAF first "joked" about killing NEESE during science class when one said "we should kill her" and the two girls gave each other an affirmative look. EDDY and NEESE always fought and the animosity towards NEESE intensified after NEESE accompanied EDDY on vacation.

This was a planned murder with the intention of picking NEESE up, smoking marijuana while driving around Star City, WV and then stabbing her with kitchen knives. On the night of the murder while on a gravel road in Brave, PA near EDDY'S father's home, the three girls pulled off to the side and attempted to smoke marijuana but the car lighter did not work. SHOAF told NEESE that she had to "pee" and while walking back towards the

UNCLASSIFIED//FOUO

Investigation on 01/03/2013 at Morgantown, West Virginia, United States (In Person)

File # TC-PC-2372430 Date dictated 01/07/2013

by AMBROSINI ROBERT J

This document contains neither recommendations nor conclusions of the FBI. It is the property of the FBI and is loaned to your agency; it and its contents are not to be distributed outside your agency.

49

Arousal, Control, & Frustration

- Prosocial solutions more complex than aggressive solutions
- High levels of arousal, diminished social competence / social skills, cognitive limitations interfere with the ability to find a prosocial solution

50

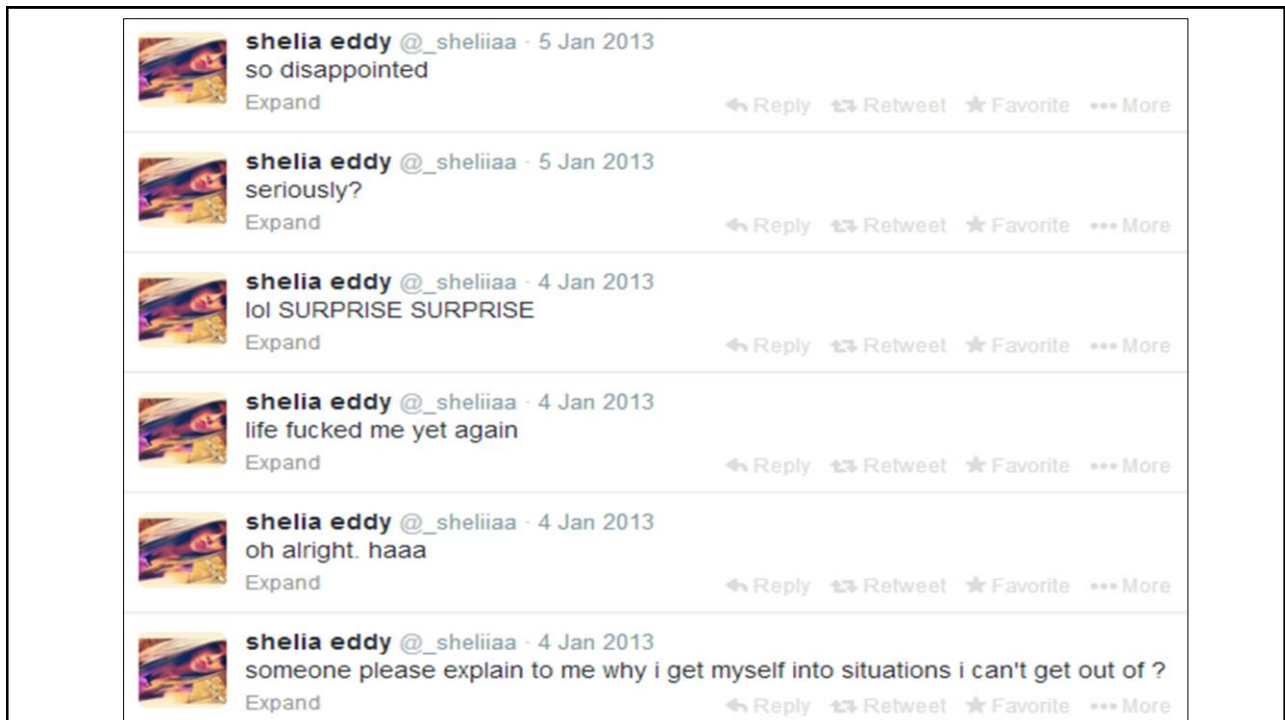
As many as 80% of assailants leak or threaten (Lankford et al 2019, Mitchell 2019 et al, Meloy & O'Toole 2011)

A **threat** is a communication to a target of intent to do harm.

Leakage is the communication to a third party of an intent to do harm.



51



52

*Don't regret what might have been.
Accept what is and rejoice in what is yet to be.*

July 6, 2012
d. I want to tell you
w/terribly sorry I
n for doing wrong
wards you lately. I
ned my back way
ainst you and I feel
e we are fading away.

want to be close to
) again God. I want to
el the way I did when
at back from camp. I
t you to be my #1
d a major part of
life, and im going to
nmit to it I promise.

eed to ask your
giveness once again
d. You truly are all

that I need. I didnt need
that to happen. your what
I need to happen. please
forgive me so that we
can be close again. I miss
you...

I LOVE YOU SO MUCH!

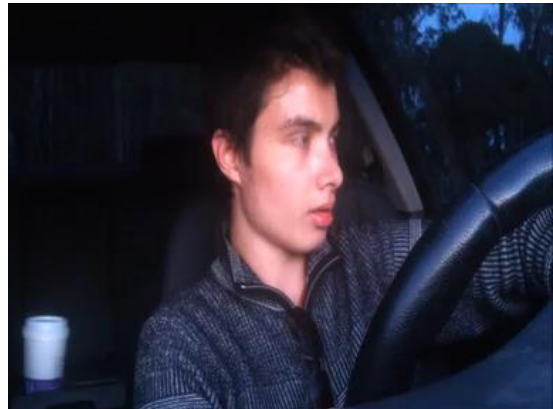
I know you cant just
go do whatever you want
& think its okay to just
come running back, but
im sorry. it truly hit
me how much I need
you in my life again.

Ephesians 4:20-24
'that however is not the
way of life you learned,
when you heard about

53

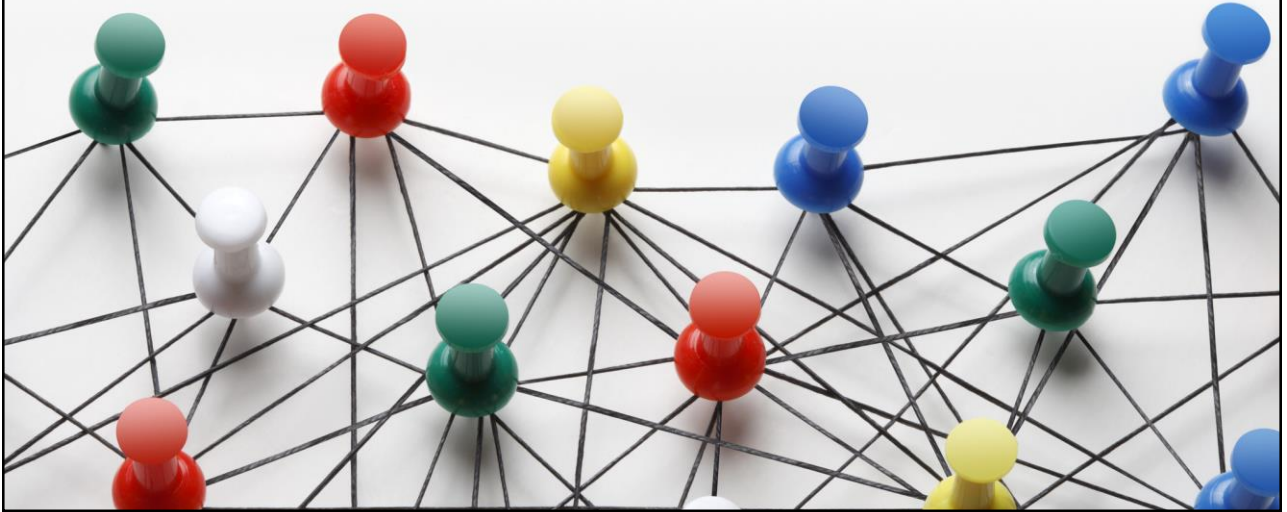
General Aggression Model

- The predatory individual perceives and interprets the social environment and forms Expectations
- Incorporates biological, personality development, social processes, basic cognitive process and decision process.
- Judgments and process become automatized over time.
- Violence occurs with an escalation cycle (real or perceived – a triggering event). The event can be influenced by a dyad – and then consider retaliation.
- Retaliation Cycle (caused by attribution error)



54

**You have to collect the dots
before you can connect the dots**



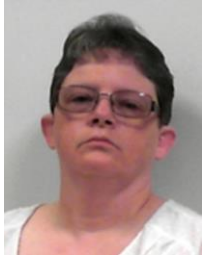
55



**Rapport
Based
Interviewing**

56

Interview Techniques



- PEACE Model – Plan, Engage, Explain, Account, Clarify, Challenge, Closure, Evaluation
- Observing Rapport Based Interview Model - Acceptance, Empathy, Adaptation, Evocation, Autonomy (Alison & Alison, 2017)
- Psychologically Based Credibility Assessment examines spatial detail with demeanor (Evans et al., 2013). Emphasizes the presentation of auditory details, spatial details, and temporal details (affective, comprehension)

57

Emerging Interviewing Techniques: PEACE

- Presentation and planning
- Engage and explain
- Account
- Clarify, challenge, and closure
- Principle 1: The interviewee is always invited to tell their story, which helps to preserve their autonomy and dignity.
- Principle 2: Circle back to topics covered that were not raised by the interviewee. Use OEQs to address.
- Principle 3: Questions are designed to clarify or subtly challenge. Develop discrepancy.
- Consider mimicry: Mimicking a conversation partner builds rapport. Mirror nonverbal, speech rate, linguistic patterns, posture, mannerisms.

58

Emerging Interviewing Techniques: Cognitive Interviewing Technique

- Cognitive Interviewing uses memory, social dynamics and perspective
- Cognitive Load vs limited Cognitive Flexibility (Vrij, 2014).
- Stage 1: Imposing Cognitive Load
 - Reverse Order, Secondary Tasking, Forced Turn Telling
- Stage 2: Encouraging Interviewee to Say More
 - Model Statement (expectations), Supportive Interviewer, Mimicry, Drawings, no detail too small
- Stage 3: Asking Open-Ended Questions
 - Spatial Questions, Process vs. Outcome, Ask Question Twice in Different Formats

59

Principles of Interviewing: Observe, Listen, and Project

- Active Listening to de-escalate
- Open-ended Questions
- Subtly reframe negative thoughts with alternatives
- Become an ally
- Identify Dichotomous Thinking
- Instill Hope
- Subtly suggest alternatives to constricted thinking
- Watch your body language, watch your nonverbal
- Help to identify Black and White thinking
- Allow subject to speak freely to obtain information
- Be on guard for "Duping Delight"
- Employ humor when appropriate
- Be straightforward and avoid air of superiority
- If subject makes even a minimal disclosure, compliment them
- Establish a "this for that" barter when negotiating information
- Probe if his current methods have gotten him success
- Motivational Interviewing
- Verifiability Interview
- Understand elements of rationalization, projection, minimization
- Allow to speak so to identify areas of possible deception

60



Thank you!

Jack Rozel
rozeljs@upmc.edu

Rob Ambrosini
ambrosinirj@upmc.edu

61