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OPINION

School Shooting a Tiny Fraction of Violence That Menaces Youth

By [Douglas A. Wain](#)

Posted on May 21, 2018



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violence is to stop all youth violence. School violence really is a form of youth violence. It is part of the tragic "youth vs. youth" war that exists today throughout the world, in school or out of school.

Adult actions regarding school safety that mostly focus on adults is like talking to the wrong end of the horse. Students outnumber teachers and school administration more than 10 to 1 in some schools. Students can turn the tide much faster in school and youth safety. Youth influencing youth rival any other power during a young person's life.

Many youths have gotten the false idea that they are supposed to do violence to other youth. Perhaps that is why a violent youth might go to nightclubs, concerts, markets, malls and schools, to attack other youth. As adults, we must work together with youth to correct this erroneous belief, and we certainly cannot take advantage of

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youth who harbor this destructive thinking.



Douglas A. Wain

People need an extra peaceful push during their teenage and young adult years when their risk threshold is the highest. Right now, youth are all over the board with the “patriarchtic” (patriarch and patriotic combined) messages they are receiving and are grasping at straws, desperately trying to decipher their true meaning, which they believe hold the key to their success.

Research has also shown that all interpersonal violence is intertwined. Singling out school violence is like a nonstarter



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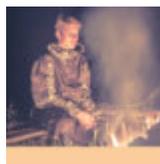
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to the problem of school violence. Students spend only 9 percent of their time in school; most youth who are victims of violence experience this violence out of school. Sometime a youth brings an outside problem into a school but often problems created in schools have unfortunate consequences after school. Most youth violence happens between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. so we have to deal with both scenarios.

When I talk to kids during our school program about violence, bullying and abuse in their lives, they often say, "It's worse than you know." I believe kids when they say that, and that's what keeps me up at night. We don't fully understand the scope and depths of youth and children's problems. There are not enough professionals in the world available to handle the situation. It's going to take all hands, all adults, on deck.

Research and law officials themselves have consistently said that enforcement cannot do it alone. In some cases, a law



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enforcement-only approach can have some unwanted and unintended consequences like a school-to-prison pipeline for some youth.



TO TOP

Self-harm is the center of all violence. Any violence, bullying and abuse education must have reducing self-harm at its core. The sad fact is that most kids hurt themselves.

One of our group's suggestions for gun legislation is to put prevention hurdles in the laws. The more lethal the weapon or combination of, the more hurdles there should be in acquiring them. More firepower require greater will power. Different hurdles can give the proper authorities the time to check everything out and send a message and a warning to the potential gun owner that in the country's view their responsibility to society and their burden of peace is going way up.

More important than gun legislation is gun education. Youth need to know all the information on weapons. Only then can

youth make a true voluntary choice. There no law that says you have to have a gun. We have discovered that some youth don't want a gun after doing a deep dive on the topic. I trust youth to make the right decisions on any subject once they have all the information. Because what kids don't know can and does hurt them.

And because guns are man-made we are 100 percent responsible for them. If we can't control them, then we can't make them. Same for anything made by humans. We are, after all, individually and collectively fighting for survival. Guns are not a natural or God-given right; life, self-defense and survival is.

Nations are indebted to youth. Nations wouldn't exist today if youth did not believe in them. I am not sure any nation or political campaign could even operate without youth. And how many nations were created, and are protected, by youth? Quite a few, I would imagine.



TO TOP

Nations need to step up and do their part. Everyone has their role to play, and every little bit does help. But let's not be afraid to talk directly, honestly and equally to kids. We need to remember that it's their world too.



Douglas A. Wain is CEO and executive director of YouthAlert!

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