



DODGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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Following every mass killing, I ask myself, what has happened to our society? I also wonder what the solution is to ensure our families do not become future victims.

Many have pointed out that years ago, people would go to school and have hunting rifles in their vehicles. Yet, mass violence in schools and other locations did not happen as in society today. It makes me think that there must be a root cause that we are not addressing that has led to this change.

So what has changed and more importantly how do we fix it? Media reports of school walk-outs and gun control discussions are becoming more prevalent than ever, all in an effort to find a quick and easy solution. I think it is safe to say that there is no quick and easy solution.

I think perhaps we are not evaluating the true root cause which is obviously very complex. We must make efforts to change our society as a whole. It's my belief that the root cause starts with our youth lacking basic skills including respect for authority figures like parents and teachers, the ability to cope with conflict and the ability to handle rejection. Further issues like mental health and alcohol/drug use also play a role, but column length restrictions limit my ability to cover all aspects of the root cause today.

I believe it is imperative that we raise our children in a manner that instills respect for authority. While we all love our children, we need to get back to a society of parents who expect a level of respect toward both them and others in authority, including teachers. Discipline needs to be reintegrated into our society. Parents, don't ever let anyone tell you that you can't or shouldn't reasonably discipline your child in a non-abusive manner. Teachers need to have the support of parents when they make disciplinary decisions and parents need to resist the urge of running to the defense of their children when a teacher feels the need to discipline. It undermines their authority and will likely be treated as an example for actions toward others in authority in the future.

What about inability to cope or handle rejection? For years we have watched as competition has been replaced by participation awards that are given to make children feel good. While no one wants their child to ever be disappointed or upset, when they are young, they need to face conflict and disappointment and learn to resolve it appropriately under the guidance of adults. It is part of developing their personality and dealing with conflict in the future. When youth are not taught how to handle difficult situations, they must find their own way to cope, which without guidance may result in unhealthy or even dangerous future behavior. I am no expert and am merely giving

an opinion of what I have seen in my own experience, but I feel that my opinions have merit as I have witnessed people dealing with difficult situations at the worst times of their lives.

My point in writing this is not to place blame but rather to start conversations on what truly is the root cause of violence in society. Many have strong opinions about gun control but realistically gun control will do nothing more than place a very small band aid on a much bigger problem. It is imperative that we have serious discussions on what we can do to change the norms of our society and positively impact the decisions our youth make. It's time to refocus our energy to affect long lasting change so that we can keep Dodge County a safe and enjoyable place to live, work and visit.

Sheriff Dale J. Schmidt