

School Violence

It seems like there are so many school shootings and scary things happening lately. I can't imagine if something like that would happen in my school. I just can't understand why someone would do that. Is there something our school can do to stop something like this?

There's no way to explain away or understand some of the things that have been reported in the news lately. It's hard to know how someone could be so filled with feelings of revenge or self-contempt to commit such violence against innocent children and teachers.

It's easy after such an event to hear discussions on the importance of security, funding or the need for metal detectors. But these types of measures are not going to make a difference in the heart of someone filled with hurt and anger who decides to do such a horrible thing. A nicely placed poster proclaiming a school as a safe zone isn't going to change a person's actions; it has to be a change of the heart, attitudes and priorities of an individual.

First of all, there is no place for joking around about violence towards a school, students or teachers. In our area a bomb plan was blocked because a student found out about it and told his principal. What made it even more heroic is that the boys who were planning the attack were his friends. He said that he couldn't have lived with himself if something bad would have happened and he didn't try to stop it. He did the right thing. So, first things first, if you suspect or hear someone making threats, report it.

But prevention is best when there's never a plan that needs to be stopped. True prevention begins in the hearts and actions of each one of us. Many of those who have been involved in school violence claim that they have been outcast in school. It doesn't justify their actions in any way, but we know that it often plays a role. So, creating an atmosphere of respect and dignity for all students is so important. You can only be responsible for who you are and how you treat people. But remember, you can also speak up for those who may be outcast or picked on and be an example of integrity and love to others. Another way to help is to talk with your school counselor or principal about different programs available. For example, Life! Promotions offers really effective school assembly programs that stir the hearts and minds of students to treat each other with respect and make wise choices.

Creating respect for others means going against society's system that tells us that appearances, popularity, achievements, money and power are the most important things in life. Every person is so important, no matter what their social status is. We need to remember that God created each one of us and that he loves everyone. We need to have the courage to talk to people if we think something they are doing might be wrong and the courage to take a look inside ourselves to find out if there is something inside of us that needs to be corrected. All people deserve respect no matter where they come from, where they live, or who they are. It is through love, value, courage, and respect that actions, thoughts, and hearts will be changed.

The reality is that it is unlikely that anything like this will happen in your community. School shooting deaths have actually declined in the last ten years. Still, it's important to help create a culture in your school where no one feels outcast and ever feels lead to inflict such violence.

And of course... Pray. It's sad that it takes horrible circumstances to bring us to our knees, but that is where we are most effective in this crazy world! Despite all our good efforts, bad things can still happen. But understand that nothing happens that God can't use for good. We only demonstrate peace that passes understanding when the whole world is freaking out and we have peace. It's sharing our faith without words, and I truly believe that's always the best way.

Articles are written by Bob Lenz, Tiffany Thompson and other national youth communicators with Life Promotions Inc., a non-profit youth organization committed to instilling hope, worth and value in youth.

Life Promotions • Appleton, WI • www.lifepromotions.com • 800-955-5433

