

The Newtown, Ct. Massacre

This is the 9/11 for autism. The world will be looking to those of us in the Autism Community to tell them that we will be monitoring ourselves and developing strategies that will mitigate this horrible tragedy from being repeated.

Although we don't have all the details regarding the young man who perpetrated this horrific crime but, if my instincts are correct, he is like so many lost souls with autism who are confused and alone in their respective world[s] and who engage in acts that are illegal but they don't know it or acts of total emotional and uncontrolled violence directed at the world for being so alien to them.

If it is determined that Autism is at the root of this situation then I think what is needed is a pithy statement that comes clean on how it is that someone with ASD might come to this very rare action if confronted with scripts associated with groups and individuals who model violence in word and deed, violent DVDs, violent interactive games and access to weapons of destruction.

It is instructive when we learn that many/most individuals with autism learn appropriate behavior through scripts that relate to what to say and how to behave yet many of our higher functioning youth are allowed, without restrictions, to engage in interactive violent games and DVDs and to watch pornography.

All of these activities are like throwing gas on a smoldering ember and I find myself in court trying to mitigate sentences for viewing and distributing child pornography, hacking into computer systems and, yes, murder and attempted murder.

Of course, these are a rarity when considering the numbers of people being diagnosed with autism today but once is too many and the nation and the world will be looking to us to help guide and direct so that we try to prevent such incidents going forward.

There are governmental actions that can take place such as affording folk on the spectrum opportunities to be gainfully engaged in life's activities such as having appropriate educational experiences, a job, a place to live and social activities to fill up leisure and recreational needs/time.

Parents, Educators and first responders [along with related disciplines and extended family members, friends and neighbors] can be taught the warning signs: social isolation; extended time on the computer without monitoring; anxiety; frustration; depression and anger expressed through property destruction, assault and threatening statements, and reflect on these antecedents to determine if inappropriate scripts are being rehearsed and tested and then to proactively intercede before someone or something gets seriously affected.

I hope and pray that we may we find a way to try and make this horrific situation for the families of lost loved ones a learning experience for all of us so that it is not repeated; if not we will be doomed to have this repeated. History is very helpful if we are prepared to learn from it.

Godspeed to everyone.

David