

Current Issues Seminar & Counselor Academy

Safe Schools & Healthy Students

Lt. Col. (U.S. Army Retired) Dave Grossman

(Following are notes I took at a February 19, 2010 seminar with Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, internationally recognized scholar, author, soldier and speaker who is one of the world's foremost experts in the field of human aggression and the roots of violence and violent crime. He is the author of the Pulitzer nominated book, "On Killing," and co-author of the internationally acclaimed book, "Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill: A Call to Action Against TV, Movie and Video Game Violence." To learn more about Grossman, visit www.killology.com.)

Grossman is a trainer of medical and health professionals on how to deal with and prevent killing. He trained mental health professionals in the aftermath of the Jonesboro shooting. At the time of the Jonesboro shootings, the first mass murder school shooting in our nation's history, Grossman and his family were living in Jonesboro, and Dave's son was a student in one of the middle schools. Grossman was at the scene of the shooting minutes after the news hit the airwaves.

How to Address School Violence

- Deny (This response has no value.)
- Deter (Security, posting guards and the like does deter some shooters.)
- Detect (Metal detectors, screening and the like also deters some violence.)
- Delay (Drills, security procedures, response training – the things we do now in schools.)
- Defeat (Grossman's thesis – we must do more to stop violent video imaging from reaching our children.)

A Few Facts

- The murder rate in 2009 was below that of 1960. Is that good news?
- The drop is a misconception that things are improving because it is more likely due to improvements in medical technology over the 1960's.
- The Murder Rate in 2009 would likely have been 4 times greater if all that had been available were 1970's medical technology.
- The Murder Rate in 2009 would likely have been 10 times greater if only 1930's medical technology were available.
- Violence is way up, AND we currently have 2.5 million violent offenders in jail.
- During the 1970's we had 500,000 violent offenders in jail.
- World wide, violent crime levels are up and are unrelated to topics like abortion, the death penalty, etc.
- ONE COMMON FACTOR emerges after 30 years of research – MEDIA VIOLENCE
- Violence is addictive.
- 30% of Michigan 2nd graders have played "Grand Theft Auto" (a video game which includes murders, drugs, rape, theft, prostitutes, etc.)
- MRI's of the brain show graphically that parts of the human which control rational, logical thinking shut down while playing violent video games while the mid-brain (dog brain) takes over.

Of All the School Killers...

None were in ROTC, church and youth groups, none were in sports, none in band, none in choir, none in student government, none were in any type of organized activity.

Every one of the school killers was heavily into Violent Video Games.

To date, there hasn't been a school killer in the U.S. who wasn't into Violent Video Games.

Soldiers being trained for combat typically resist killing someone face to face and have to receive extensive training. "The military learned in World War I that there is a vast gulf, a leap, between an ordinary citizen and being someone who can aim and fire a gun at another human being with intent to kill, even in war." Firing at bull's-eye targets did not properly prepare soldiers for combat. Practice shooting at targets familiarized soldiers with the mechanics of aiming, pulling the trigger, dealing with the recoil, etc. But soldiers in that war spent a lot of time firing their guns into the air or not at all. "The firing rate was a mere 15% among riflemen, which, from a military perspective, is like a 15% literacy rate among librarians."

The army's first simulators used "simulated people" or silhouettes as targets, and that appears to have been sufficient to increase the firing manifold. But pop-up targets, firing ranges and bullets are expensive... Improved technology now allows training on computer simulators... The entire event of killing in combat can be simulated by a computer. **These systems are almost identical to home and arcade video systems, even the themes and scenarios.**

"There are three things you need in order to shoot and kill effectively and efficiently. From a soldier in Vietnam to an eleven-year-old in Jonesboro, anyone who does not have all three will essentially fail in any endeavor to kill. First you need a gun. Next you need the skill to hit a target with a gun. And finally you need the will to use that gun. The gun, the skill, and the will. Of these three factors, the military knows that the killing simulators take care of two out of the three by nurturing both the skill and the will to kill a fellow human being... **Now these (powerful) simulators are in our homes and arcades – in the form of violent video games!**"

4 Things School Killers Had In Common (according to a Secret Service and FBI study)

1. Gun
2. Grievance (real or perceived - not all the shooters were bullied as is often speculated by the media)
3. Obsession with Media Violence
4. Persistent theme of violence in their school work

Four Stages – Fantasy, Planning, Preparation, and Execution

A brief history of television: Wherever television appeared, 15 years later the Murder Rate had doubled.

Kids in 1960 could legally buy a gun, buy the ammunition, and even saw off the barrel of a long gun or shotgun – all activities that have been illegal for the past 50 years. But there was no school violence (in the form of shootings and bombs) before 1960 – no lock down drills, no guards, no metal detectors, etc. The violence has been a recent phenomenon which parallels the spread of television and development and spread of Violent Video Images.