

ZERO – ONE: A Look At Serial Killers Among Us

by

Barry A. Goodfield, Ph.D., DABFM

The news flashes on our iPhone, iPad or a nearby television bursting out with breaking news telling about another mass shooting on a college campus, shopping center, or theater complex. Of course it grabs your attention but for how long? What does it say about you and me? About our reaction?



BREAKING NEWS

Here we go again! Another nut, wacko, quiet, creepy, little bastard steals the headlines and provokes the exact same discussion with the exact same conclusions as it was a few months ago.

It seems as if there is no collective wisdom granting us directions and correction to this predictable, periodic mayhem. No one likes to feel powerless. Clearly that is part of the formula that drives these individuals to their dastardly deeds.

I am sick and tired of these “no life” life takers. I simply want them to go away and be expunged from our human database. Assuming I get to heaven, this will be one of the top 10 questions on my list that I’ve got for the good Lord. But until I get that divine input and revealing answers I’m stuck with these thoughts.

As a psychologist, I have discovered that many of the issues that explains bizarre behavior finds their origin in a reflection of a distorted image of one’s self. We call that a self-concept (Carl Rogers) or symbolic-self (S. I. Hayakawa). Basically it’s just a picture of how you see you. The collective experiences like a kind of “psychological baklava.” One thin event at a time shaping a picture of who we are, how we are and what we are in relationship to those around us.

My wife is a great cook. I was watching her the other day sitting at the kitchen table, cookbooks spread out all over. I asked her what she was making and she simply said, “I’m trying to figure out what ingredients I need to create a lovely meal for our friends.”

I started thinking about the social ills that we suffer, international terrorism, Al Qaeda, ISIS, mass murderers, or simply our local “homegrown killers.” Why? It seems like most of these people were quiet, calm and unassuming individuals. The obligatory questioning of neighbors, schoolmates and anyone else anxious to insert their observations and analysis, all seem to say the same thing; “He was a quiet loner. Always keeping to himself - a nice kid.”

But what’s the recipe for this repetitive dish being offered up to us with increasing regularity? I thought about the definition of the self-concept that Rogers and Hayakawa stated years ago. “The self-concept is an organized configuration of perceptions about self, available to an awareness.” It’s my psychological image. It is what I see when I look in the mirror. Moreover, it assures me of how others will see, feel, and react to me on a daily basis.

If within that daily “psychological baklava” I build up layer, after layer of unspoken thoughts and unspoken feelings. I am left to my own conclusions about who I am, what I am, and where I am going. Ultimately I conclude my own fate in a relationship to the destiny I see in front of me. This does not necessarily have to reflect reality.

Unnoticed, as I slip through daily life, one dangling, painful thought tied together without solution or hope. Finally the undeniable fact begins to repeat and repeat telling me “THE TRUTH.” At the same time implicitly offering me the answer to the question, “Why don’t other people see me, hear me or address those painful thoughts and feelings locked so deep inside of me?”

Back to the recipe: painful feelings unexpressed, ruminating feelings of inadequacy in a relationship to everybody else, all of whom seem to enjoy the simple things in life much more than me. That is surely part of the recipe of one of these “life rippers.” Hell, you don’t need a Ph.D. to figure that out.

If you **don't talk** about your feelings, especially the painful ones, wrapped in fact or illusion they will not go away. They simply go down inside of us to accumulate and fester into an understated overwhelming reality, composed of silent fantasies that seemed tangible.

So what are we supposed to do? Do we broadcast on television on the internet, social media, and everywhere else possible down to the local pub - the answer to the senseless shootings?

Talk about your feelings! Make contact, and you won't kill your neighbors. Can be as simple as all that?

If you go back to the idea of the self-concept it says how you see you. How you express you, and how open you are - to being open. This may not be the complete answer but, it sure as hell is a big part of it! In a society that spends billions and ultimately trillions of dollars enabling us to have instant contact and quick information, it exemplifies the fact that sharing ideas, information and yes even feelings is an essential part of living.

I believe it is safe to say that if those individuals, who committed those horrendous, headline grabbing deeds could have deeply felt they were listening to and understood that, they might not have committed those life shattering actions on themselves or others.

In the long run it boils down to zero – one. “I am Zero, a nothing, unimportant person. Nobody cares, nobody listens to all those feelings I have not expressed. It builds pressure within me, it accumulates and ultimately I'm going to tell the world exactly what I felt all these years. Enough! Now you will hear me and now you will know how angry I am, and have been all these silent years!”

That's the recipe. It is as complex and simple as that. If you go through life believing that you are a “Zero,” in the long run someone will pay and you may be willing to sacrifice yourself to say, “I am One – I count!”

We need to become more alert to the signs of this growing and shocking social phenomena. It's like getting a sliver and not attending to it. At first it poses a little problem and perhaps some irritation. But unattended it will fester as the foreign body seeking escape until one is found and properly addressed.

Don't wait! Talk! Don't just talk, communicate! Don't just communicate, take direct action if your interventions do not help. Find a professional with skills in dealing with this kind of issue. Our daily headlines prove these points repeatedly:

Anger turned inwards is depression. Anger turned outwards is aggression.

Insight without action is anxiety. Action without insight is chaos.



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