

PARENTS OF TRAGEDY

by Sally Burgess, Forefront Families LLC

The USA was stunned this week to learn of the mass killing and wounding of people in Tucson, Arizona. This was a totally senseless act of violence by a young guy who had been showing signs of unusual and aggressive behavior for years. His friends reported him as different, strange or disturbing. One of his teachers on one occasion had called the police to the classroom because she was so concerned for her own and her student's safety.

In the aftermath of the tragedy the questions streamed in. Why wasn't this troubled young person intercepted earlier as a serious threat to society? Where did the 'system' fail in allowing such hatred to boil over into mass destruction? How is it possible for a disturbed young person to so easily purchase a gun and ammunition? I must confess, I did ask the same questions. However, I consider that the problem goes back way further than what eventually happened. I feel extremely sad for this boy's parents though they have probably got a lot to answer for, too. Their lives have been changed forever.

I consider that parents are responsible for monitoring their children's behavior. Where a child is troubled, defiant or secretive the parents need to investigate and get to the root of the issues before the child loses perspective and speaks of violence, or actually becomes violent.

How do parents teach their children to appropriately deal with their emotions? It starts from infancy. It might be as simple as diverting their attention, teaching them to take turns or to learn to wait. They also learn from observing you as parents. What they see you do and say, they think is normal and will copy you. As they get older they learn to express opinions and show preferences in different activities.

It is important to teach your kids that everyone's opinion has validity and that they don't always have to be right. It is vital to monitor their friendships and interests, making sure that they maintain a positive outlook on life. If they are kept physically active and busy they have less time on their hands to hang around with others with nothing to do. A feeling of success in their schoolwork and in their play gives them a sense of purpose and propels them to work even harder to achieve higher and higher goals. If they do get stuck on a negative thought pattern it is your responsibility to talk it through before they go into a downward spiral. You may need to get them professional help. Encourage them to have positive heroes to look up to.

I saw my teenage years as a rather treacherous journey from 12 years through to 20 years of age. If you are like me, we considered our parents were out of touch with reality and our outlook on life depended entirely on what (we

thought) our friends thought of us. Their opinions counted more than anything else. It is vital that we understand and keep up with the trends of our teens. We need them to come to us on any level of conversation, from what happened at school to talking through seriously troubling issues. They don't want us to judge them, just to understand them.

We need to check their activities and their rooms. While they are living in your home they are subject to your rules and search. It concerns trust. It could be a matter of safety and security for you, for them and for others. Kids often don't really think through the ramifications of what they do. They are usually only interested in the now and how they feel. We need to take notice of what teachers are saying and what their friends are saying about them. We have a right to know exactly where they are and what they are doing at all times. If you are concerned about your child's lack of anger management, then enroll them in anger management classes. Uncontrolled anger easily turns into rage and has dire consequences as we saw this week.

If you have any comments or questions on this subject, please do not hesitate to contact us at sally@forefrontfamilies.org. We invite you to also check out our website at www.forefrontfamilies.org and our blog site at www.forefrontfamilies.blogspot.com for further assistance.