

Thank you John.

Good morning everyone.

I am glad I am here and to have this opportunity to share with you my perspective on gun violence prevention. I want to thank Robin Mitchell, Katy Swanson, the members of the 2/4 Mens group, my BBAF John Sherman, and Lisa for their help. I have come to realize that these sermons are a real collaborative effort. Boy is it collaborative.

John has 4 cards to show and I will also read them. I am interested in the **immediate** images you create and **see in your minds eye** based on the words and single phrase. (Show each card for 3 seconds)

Sandy Hook

Aurora

Santa Barbara

Not One More

These words are important but also they are just words and not important. I love conundrums.

Pause

First, how did I get here? It starts with a story.

Don't all these things seem to start with a story?

Here is mine.

At the Encinitas Street Faire this spring I was walking around on the second day and enjoying the Sunday afternoon and stopped to look at one of the vendors. Pottery I think. I noticed a woman with several clipboards asking for signatures to meet ballot initiative requirements and I went over to look.

I love those things and sign some.

You have seen these, get X signatures and it becomes a ballot initiative. These varied from legalizing Marijuana, Privacy Initiative, Cigarette Tax for Brain Research, Anti-GMO, and one on Firearms.

Here is the Firearms Regulation Initiative

By the way, if you go to the CA State website you can see all these.

http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/elections_j.htm

(Solemnly read the numbers)

1619 (13-0031) Firearms Regulation Initiative Constitutional Amendment.

Robert Carrell and Tony Andrade are the “sponsors”.

Some of what it says:

Amends California Constitution to establish **a right** to acquire, possess, transport, transfer, and use firearms for lawful purposes, including for defense of self, family, home, and property.

Eliminates state firearms owner registration, regulation of ammunition, and assault weapons restrictions.

Permits

limited state regulation in areas of:

possession of firearms and ammunition by, and sale to, the dangerous mentally ill and felons; handguns for those under 21; tefloncoated, armor-piercing, or explosive ammunition; concealed weapons; fully automatic weapons; and background checks.

Limits seizure of firearms.

I concluded after a Google search about Carrell and Andrade that this was NRA supported. I thanked the person and I **started** to walk away.

PAUSE

A young couple, late 20's with a child in a stroller came by and the man asked what these were. Her reply was filled with comments and when he asked about the Firearms Initiative she said it was a way to reduce government regulations about firearms.

His response was "I will sign that one, I hate government getting in my business."

I stopped in my tracks.

What was this guy thinking? What immediately comes to my mind is an image of a child lying dead because someone shoots them at a school!

Now! Go back to my initial words.

What came to your mind?

That initiative was like those words!!!

I wanted to shout at the top of my voice "Are you nuts?" There are those in the audience who will believe I really wanted to say something else.

I realized then that I had met my problem.

How in a public (or private) place could I begin a dialog with someone I do not know about a subject I am so passionate about even though I have no idea what their response may be? Does it make a difference because I want to act within my UU principles?

Pause

Sorry it took so long to get here but I wanted to lead you through my process of how we can begin a dialog with someone outside our own "Choir"?

How can I start a dialog about Gun Violence Prevention with someone who supports Gun Rights?

Pause

I talked to Lisa and several people. In the process I remembered Robin Mitchell's superb sermon "Conservatively Speaking". Robin did a grand job of placing several of the conundrums that liberal and conservatives have in understanding political and social issues and the difficulty we have in hearing each other let alone talking to each other.

Maybe there was a link I could use.

She mentioned Dr. Jonathan Haidt and his book "The Righteous Mind". I read it! Lots of times! (Hold it UP). I know lots of stuff about Moral Foundations Theory, which is what his book is about.

Several people I have talked with have read it and I will, in typical UU style ", recommend it.

I wish I had a Jewish Grandmother voice.

Read it, it will be good for you. BIG SMILE

Dr. Haidt's Moral Foundations Theory is THE major focus of the book

but

it is more and filled with some really interesting insights, anecdotes, and stories. One of those is about the elephant and the rider and the analogy of taste buds. Moral Foundations and tastes buds?

Moral Foundations Theory comes from social and cultural psychologists trying to understand why morality varies so much across cultures yet still shows similarities and recurrent themes that support our moral decision making.

It proposes that several innate and universally available psychological systems are the foundations of "intuitive ethics".

Elephant and Rider. He says that we make moral decisions based on feelings and emotions (that is the elephant) and THEN create reasons to support them (that is the rider). The elephant is bigger and runs the decision process and is SUPPORTED by the rider. Reason is the rider.

For example: When you saw and heard the phrase **Not One More** do you agree or not? Justify your feeling! Your emotions came first, THEN your justification.

Rather than reason running the show, our emotions do.

Enough sociological anthropological psychology.

I was looking for a way to approach someone who has a different understanding about preventing gun violence than I do. I wanted to know if Dr. Haidt had an answer?

Does HE have an answer?

Here is what I learned.

Here are the 6 Moral Foundation Groups: PUT ON CHAIR AND READ THEM

CARE/HARM

LIBERTY/OPPRESSION

FAIRNESS/CHEATING

LOYALTY/BETRAYAL

AUTHORITY/SUBVERSION

SANCTITY/DEGRADATION

Haidt says progressives (that's us) and conservatives score differently on each of the 6 foundations. We both tend to value CARE/HARM and LIBERTY/OPPRESSION to the same degree but conservatives generally have higher emphasis on the other 4.

Think of these as different tastes buds **and** that you react to them in varying degrees. Liberals have high reception for sugar. Conservatives do also but to a slightly lesser degree.

CARE/HARM evolved from the need to protect and care for the suffering of children and compassion is the associated emotion.

FAIRNESS/CHEATING is associated with benefits to group members and stops members from getting a “free ride”. You don’t get what you don’t deserve.

I have a story about CARE/HARM - FAIRNESS/CHEATING we can all identify with.

Social Action in Murrieta

Remember when children were bussed to Murrieta and there were protesters blocking them and demanding that the children be taken to the border and NOT processed here?

I was appalled. Children.

It turns out that even though both progressives and conservatives value children the subtly is that liberals have a more universal view of a child without respect to borders whereas conservatives hold that child suffering is more likely to be triggered by people within the immediate group, nation, or culture.

AND conservatives tend to think that if there is cheating (unfair advantage or freeloading) that the cheating impacts the effect of CARE/HARM.

It isn’t that they don’t value children, the overriding factor was that these children were not from our nation AND they cheated to get here.

It is not that simple but the rationale for supporting one view over another is based on our Moral Foundations. That is why we are different, according to Haidt.

I am still stuck with how to open a dialog.

I actually wrote to Dr. Haidt. He wrote back!

He does not have any research about how to do address gun violence questions using Moral Foundations Theories. I felt sad. Bummer.

After a couple of e-mails he had only one piece of advice about how to address gun violence prevention:

Start by engaging others in conversation.

Pause

Epiphany! Enter Katy Swanson.

Her sermon “Good Enough – Mindful Self Compassion” lead me to a wonderful way (for me) to hope there may be a way to begin a conversation.

Although the sermon was about self-compassion I took her discussion about empathy and sympathy and extended it to Gun Violence Prevention.

I hope I got this right.

Empathy requires the ability to mutually experience the thoughts, emotions, and direct experience of others. Sympathy is a feeling of care and understanding for the suffering of others.

Here is an example:

No one except someone who has had a heart attack can empathize about my terror each day about dying.

We can all sympathize with Tiffany and support her battle with breast cancer.

If I can begin to enter into a dialog from a view of empathy/sympathy, can I start the conversation?

Pause

How would you begin the conversation with the young person on the street who wanted to sign the Firearms Initiative? What is the common ground for me to be sympathetic of use empathy?

And now what?

That brings me to my final **epiphany**.

It is evident that there are many organizations that support gun violence prevention in lots of different ways. Mothers Demand Action Against Gun Violence, Women Against Gun Violence, Gun Violence Prevention through Effective Public Policy, Brady Campaign to Prevent Gun Violence, Not One More Foundation.

There are groups and actions for nearly every type of interest we can think of. I belong to several and will be doing more on my own. I meet each Sunday for a conversation about Gun Violence Prevention.

I promised I wouldn't make a blatant pitch to attend our meetings at 11:15 each Sunday in the common area. Oops.

BUT!!!

In order for us to really have a sense of the reality of the gun control side of the issue it will mean I have to understand the issue from their point of view.

What I need is a common ground to explore ways of using empathy or sympathy.

Pause

The issue of common ground seems to me to be the love of children. When I read those words I showed you in the beginning I see those children. That is my vision.

Pause.

I am going to create an opportunity for us to challenge ourselves about understanding the issues surrounding gun violence and begin to try and understand the position of gun advocates at a community forum in January where we can sit and bring in speakers from all the various positions and listen.

LISTEN

I wrote to Dr. Haidt and asked if I could get a community forum together would he come.

Who would you like to hear?

My desire (elephant) is no more loss. My rider wants to find a way.

With our heads and our hearts. I am clear that the maximum number of deaths due to gun violence is ZERO.

Not One More.

How can we get there?

This will require us to go beyond our own "choir".

Instead of shouting at the other side we must be willing to sit down and listen. Find the area of common ground.

I will never waver in my support for our principles and from that I hope we find a way to understand and find a way so we can reach

"NOT ONE MORE".

Pause

So let it be written. So let it be done. (Apologies to Yul Brenner)

Blessed be.