

3 basic requirements are necessary before we can restore our sense of hope

Recently, we lost our innocence, but not our hope.

We grieve for the beauty which was stolen from us. We search within our souls to understand the incomprehensible. We know more than anything that such special lives should not be lost in vain.

We want to get back to our routines as soon as possible because we find comfort in knowing what to expect and terror sometimes in not knowing. This time, let's not return too soon. Let's stay focused and let us not get so tangled in options that we forget what it is that all children need.

So what's next? What will we do to restore our sense of hope for all our babies and the remarkable adults who dedicate their lives to them?

Our work is quite daunting as we need to do whatever we can on the front end hoping those efforts prevent these types

of tragedies from ever happening again.

It's obvious that we haven't yet figured out how these horrific situations can be prevented. What does strike me, though, are the similarities of the profiles of these shooters.

Of particular consequence to our work is what we discovered in our research that regardless of what you do, or try to do, or even think of doing, three elements need to be in place. If they are not everything else is just doing "stuff." We also know from our current research we aren't even meeting these very basic requirements:

» Kids need to be surrounded by adults who believe in them (without exception). It's more than just putting a warm adult body in front of children.



My Turn

RICK MILLER

» Kids need meaningful and sustainable relationships with caring adults. We need to reach out to those who appear unreachable.

» We need to teach our children to see themselves successful at four destinations in life: home and family; education and career; community and service; and hobbies and recreation. All these young people were intelligent, but they were never taught to see a future filled with hope and opportunity. We spend a lot of time teaching the three R's but equally we need to teach how to see a world filled with hope and opportunity.

From Columbine to Aurora; from Tucson to Sandy Hook; these were all young people in high school or college. All young people disconnected. All young people who lacked caring adult relationships. All young people who had no sense of their future.

I don't pretend to have all the answers

but I know that unless these three very basic pieces are in place nothing else seems to matter.

For those of us left to wrestle with the aftermath of this horrible incident, to protect our most vulnerable, to remember with all our heart the smiles lost forever, we cannot return to business as usual too quickly; that would be wrong. What would be right is to let every child know we care about them; they can count on us every day; and that the world is still filled with hope. We just have to search a little harder.

Written by Rick Miller, founder and president of Kids at Hope, a Phoenix-based international not-for-profit that studies hope and engagement and their related strategies.