

Reassuring kids after another senseless tragedy

October 2 2017, by E.j. Mundell, Healthday Reporter



(HealthDay)—As news pours in from Las Vegas on the record level of

carnage inflicted by a shooter at yet another crowded public event, psychiatrists urge young people and their parents to not give way to fear.

Media reports say retiree Stephen Paddock, of Mesquite, Nev., killed at least 58 people and injured more than 500 at a crowded country music festival on the Las Vegas strip late Sunday. Police later found Paddock dead in his hotel room near the scene of the shooting.

The horrific killings come on the heels of other senseless tragedies perpetrated on [young people](#) who were simply enjoying a night out. Twenty-two attendees at an Ariana Grande [concert](#) were killed in Manchester, U.K., this past May, and 49 revelers were shot down in 2016 at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando, Fla.

In the aftermath of these bloody and random attacks on young people at festive gatherings, the nerves of young would-be concertgoers or club attendees are bound to be frayed, psychiatrists say.

Certainly, "for those attending the concert in Las Vegas, their life will be marked as 'before' or 'after' the concert," said Dr. Victor Fornari. He directs child and adolescent psychiatry at Zucker Hillside Hospital, in Glen Oaks, N.Y.

"For those who were injured or lost a loved one, the impact of the event may be traumatic," Fornari said. "Trauma coupled with loss may lead to a traumatic bereavement, often colored by so many complex emotions."

And for those who witnessed the attack but survived, the psychological impact can be severe, he said. At these moments, the close support of family is key, as is the services of a trained trauma counselor, Fornari said.

And what about the millions of young Americans who simply learned of

the carnage via media?

According to Fornari, people should remember that thousands of concerts and other group events occur nationwide every day, and the chances of encountering violence at any one event remain extremely slim.

"Parents need to recognize that attending a concert is generally a safe event," he said. "The acts of violence we have seen are rare events, and should not interfere with young people from attending concerts."

Dr. Matthew Lorber, a psychiatrist at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City, agreed.

"It is natural for parents to be fearful [after such events], but they have to be careful to not teach teens to be afraid of everything, but rather teach teens smart safety precautions," he said.

"You do not want your children to be afraid of going out to crowded events for the rest of their lives, and even worse have them avoiding doing it out of fear," Lorber said. "The long-term effects of being exposed to these fear-invoking events can be traumatic, and it is important for parents to limit teens' exposures, and have an open dialogue answering all questions."

Agreeing with Fornari, Lorber stressed that for the average young American, "these events are very rare, and the chances of something happening at an event *they* are at are almost zero."

And how should concerned parents address the fears of younger children?

According to Lorber, "It is inappropriate to talk about these things to

children under 8, although at times they cannot be avoided because of peers talking about them. In that case, parents should address children's concerns, but reinforce that they are safe, their [parents](#) will protect them, and there are many more good people in the world who try and help others."

More information: For more on talking with children about terrorism, visit the [American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry](#).

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