

Aunt Bossy

Written by Susan Murphy

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A Silenced Teen

Dear Aunt Bossy,

My thirteen-year-old daughter refused to participate in the school walk-out last week. As a result, her teacher and most of her classmates have accused her of being a gun lover, of not caring about her fellow students, and of being a brainwashed idiot.

She explained to me that her classes have never had a thorough discussion about guns, mental health, and the kind of environment that practically encourages violence, and they seem to believe this out-of-control gun use is a recent development.

What can I tell her?

Annie

Dear Annie,

I don't shy away from controversy, but this is a doozie. Let me begin by stating very clearly what

I think about guns: I hate them. I grew up in a house where my bother had a lot of guns and they terrified me. Also, I could never kill an animal, but am fully aware that I subsidize people who kill lots of them. Last night I had rabbit for dinner.

Please assure your daughter that she was very brave to stand up for her first amendment rights to speak out and that those who berated her are bullies who are generally insecure and have to insist that everyone agree with them so they feel “right.” I’d also have a chat with the teacher, and if the teacher has a difficult time understanding that all people who defend the second amendment – even in its flawed state – do not hate children, take it higher. And higher if necessary.

As for what we should do in the United States, I believe we should ban assault weapons, which was done by Congress in 2004, although the ban ran out in 2014. It has not been re-instated in the last four years. Congress could have passed it from 2012 until 2016.

I also think we should have the same requirements that we have for a driver’s license, which would include an incredible amount of proof of who you are (I had to have my birth certificate, my old driver’s license, my social security card).

We should have a written *and* physical test to be sure the gun owner understands how to use the weapon, as well as a regular renewal process where the gun owner has to show up and pass an assessment, including a mental health evaluation.

The mental health assessment is the tough part, as this can be very difficult to do, and must be done by a professional to keep people from calling up and saying the next door neighbor is as crazy as a bat, or, in today’s world, a sexist or racist.

We also have to take a hard look at our culture. The Swiss have a gun in almost every household but don’t go around using them with abandon. We have been glamorizing gunslingers since the cowboys rode into the horizon.

Fortunately, the image of the Old West Cowboy did not encourage others to saddle up and shoot, any more than Wylie Coyote produced a bunch of kids who tried to push each other off cliffs. What we have is a breakdown of culture where guns are too easy to get.

Gun free zones are a joke, and I'm sure the money spent for all those signs could be used in the classroom. They remind me of "Don't Litter" signs. What person with the inclination to litter reads that and says, "Oh, ok"? The guy or gal who dreamed up the signs feels righteous, though.

The only places that are most probably gun free are the places where you have to go through security: office buildings in big cities, airplanes, government offices, the Beaufort Air Show, etc.

What we have done is raise a couple of generations who do not understand cause and effect, and are excused from taking personal responsibility for their actions. (Everyone gets a trophy.) They have been allowed to marinate in virtual reality games where slaughtering is a lot of fun. We have passed strict laws and failed to enforce them, and we wonder what happened. That, my friends, is insane.

We need to back up what is already in place with some real action, and also elect people who don't vote a certain way because a lobby gave them lots of money. Look at what happened to health care when we let the providers write the bill.

As for the school walk-out, I think it sentimentalized a very serious subject. The kids who participated surely feel morally superior, and surely had a lot of fun, but most of them don't know anything beyond the fact that there have been school shootings. Your daughter risked far more than the marchers did in defense of her beliefs.

There was no sacrifice involved for the marchers, and they returned to feel empowered to bully a young girl who didn't want to protest the way they did.

In my mind, they would be more productive if they spent the day studying the first and second amendments and talking about if and how those amendments should be amended.

In the 70s, we had to ride all night in a crappy bus to get to Selma and march. It wasn't fun, and

school wasn't cancelled. We had to return and work hard to catch up and do well on our exams.

Additionally, I am appalled at the overwhelming fear of a gun attack that is being sold to elementary school children. They should certainly know these things happen and we have to take action to change the easy accessibility to guns, but the odds are that it won't happen to them. This constant fear can produce PTSD and cripple any chance for a sane future.

Keeping young children in a constant state of terror could produce more people who use guns to destroy. In case you haven't noticed, most of these mass killers have a history of feeling alienated and threatened by the world. It makes me sick.

AB