

"Writing the truth
as I see it;
trying not to
offend
those who will
disagree."

The truth as I see it™

Idaho Common Sense™



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Teaching children to murder

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Littleton, Colorado, 1999; Santee, California, 2001; Cold Springs, Minnesota, 2003; Jacksboro, Tennessee, 2005; Cleveland, Ohio, 2007. These are just a few of the 60 school shootings occurring since Columbine in 1999, double previous decades. The propensity to kill is a learned behavior, not something children do naturally. So, where do we learn about teaching people to kill to better understand what may be happening to our children?

Our military must teach killing. How does it do so? What are some of the practice techniques they use? Are there any similarities with our children? Pistol shooters know one of the best practice techniques is dry firing, firing at a target with a facsimile weapon or an unloaded weapon. But, the value of dry firing can be improved if the target portrays an enemy soldier. It can be further improved if there is a laser bullet in the pistol that projects a red dot on the target when the gun is fired. Even more useful is making the target fall down when hit with the laser.

What am I describing — a military combat simulator or a children's video game? Both. The Marines, creating a combat simulator, modified the video game Doom. They use it to teach Marines to kill. We use it to teach children to kill. Further, military shooting instructors witness recruits who have never fired a pistol qualify as experts.

How could they do something so difficult? Simple. They played video games and they only needed to fire a few magazines of real ammunition to acclimate to the new "game" weapon, a real gun.

More suggestion of a link? A young man in West Paducah, Kentucky, loved violent video games, even converting his family's garage into a video arcade. He acquired a semi-automatic .22-caliber pistol and practiced by shooting only two magazines of ammunition—the first time he ever fired a real gun.

The next day, Dec. 1, 1997, he walked into his high school where a group of students were in a prayer circle. He stood about 25 feet from the students, squared to the group in a firing stance, and started firing. He fired eight shots and hit eight students—three in the head and five in the chest, unbelievable skill.

What was he doing? Why head shots? Why only one shot for each person? Why a rapid firing sequence, shooting the next target without confirming the first target was down? Bonus points. You get bonus points for head shots. You get bonus points for one shot, one kill. You get bonus points for speed. Bonus points.

He was not murdering human beings, he was playing a video game, shooting each target that popped up on his screen. Yes, video games make a difference. But they go well beyond television, which desensitizes our children to violence

and killing; they actually teach our children the skills to murder. And unlike during our childhood when we were chastised for hurting someone, children are now rewarded with bonus points and better weapons for killing as many as possible. But not to worry, it's just make-believe. Right?

Are there any differences between the military's combat simulator and video games? One very critical difference. The military teaches discipline, recognizing that responsibility and accountability are critical complements to weapons training. Our children's drill sergeants, their parents, do not.

Of course video games are not the lone cause for these shootings because it is only a handful of students that go over the edge. Other characteristics of these young killers are that most are loners who were teased a lot, did not fit in, and did not belong to any organizations requiring discipline, and the like. But there are many levels of violence, all escalating as we desensitize our children to murder.

We have a choice. We can continue to waste staggering sums of money trying to prove guns are the problem, ignoring all research to the contrary, or we can look at some of the real causes of escalating school violence and deal with them—violent video games being a significant contributor.