



# Gun Violence's Impact on Mental Health

## Topic Brief

Only halfway through 2019, there have been 24 times a firearm has discharged a live round near a school campus, documents NBC. 2018 was ranked as the worst year for school shootings, with 113 people killed or injured. As a result, active-shooter drills, emergency code-red procedures, and safety lockdowns have been implemented across the country in over 95 percent of public schools (National Center for Education Statistics). Teachers are trained to lock the doors and close the window blinds. Students practice dropping behind desks and staying still and silent against the walls. These school safety drills have become a norm for the students who live with the fear that a school shooting could happen at any time. This fear, a daily and constant reality for students, combined with the constant media coverage has resulted in unprecedented mental and emotional harm for Americans in this century. After the El Paso and Dayton shootings, two acts of terror that happened within 48 hours, people began sharing how they "don't feel safe anywhere" and think of "escape plans or exit strategies in public areas." For children, the implications are more severe. According to a Children's Defense Fund report, school shooting ranks as the second most common worry among school-age children. National trends in adolescent depression, anxiety, and suicidal behavior have spiked in the past few years. Psychologist Rachel O'Neill comments how these trends fall in line with the DSM-5 criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), "persistent negative trauma-related emotions" and "repeated extreme exposure to traumatic events." Kids today live in a state of constant worry that their parents and grandparents did not have to go through. This is the nightmare that is ingrained in our society and educational system.

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## Questions

1. What are some ways to cope with the traumatic emotions regarding school shootings?
2. How can you help support your friends, parents, and peers during this climate of fear?
3. What are some ways to solve the root of the problem: gun-violence?

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## Activity

Research how people are reacting to this age of gun-violence and school shootings. Ask your friends and peers about their concerns, if they are comfortable with sharing. Ask school administrators and teachers their thoughts on the safety drills as well. Look on Twitter and other forums where people can share their opinions.