



## **Bullying is a root of many of society's problems**

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“The long-documented problem with online bullying is that it is relentless,” Matt O’Brien explained in Sunday’s Daily News. “Roughly three-quarters of 15- to 26-year-olds said online bullying and abuse is a serious problem for their peers.”

Most people agree on the need to deal more effectively with the problem of bullying. Bullying in any form is unacceptable under any circumstance and should be dealt with immediately and decisively.

In a free society, everyone has the right to be different – to dress different, to act different and to hold different beliefs. At the same time, no one has the right to ridicule, humiliate or threaten those who don’t conform to their particular notion of what is “acceptable.”

And although everyone – including students who live online – should be aware of, and prepared to contend with, the consequences of their actions, respect for individual differences is essential in a civilized culture.

If I am minding my own business and not bothering you, and you purposefully make me feel uncomfortable or attempt to intimidate me in any way, then you are a bully – plain and simple.

The way someone dresses never absolves the rapist from the consequences of his or her criminal behavior. Similarly, anyone who claims those being bullied have somehow “brought it upon themselves” is essentially rationalizing the inexcusable. The conduct of the person being ostracized never vindicates or absolves the offender from taking full responsibility for the consequences of their deeds.

Perhaps if parents, teachers, and other professionals would take a more proactive stance against bullying in all its ugly forms, we would see a significant drop in the number of school shootings. Many of the perpetrators, you may recall, were bullied by their peers and/or school officials.

I miss the days when we actually had adults in the room.

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