

CHOOSE
YOUR OWN




ADVENTURE

GUN VIOLENCE & SCHOOL SAFETY

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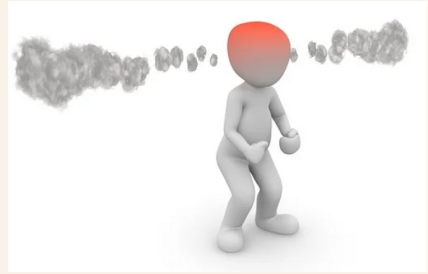
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SCENARIO

#1



Disclaimer: All of the characters and places in this project are fictional. Any similarity to actual persons, living or dead, or to actual places, is purely coincidental. In addition, all of the scenarios are fictional, but rooted in actual events and research. This project depicts some, but by no means all, of the different situations, choices, and outcomes that a high school student may face before a potential school shooting.

You are a high school junior who recently transferred to North River High School. Since you transferred in the middle of the semester, you don't know many people, but you became friends with someone who shares a few classes with you. As you wait for your friend by your locker before school starts, you overhear someone at a nearby locker who seems visibly angry. You can't make out most of the conversation between this student and his friend, but you hear the following concerning statement: "I'm so angry I could kill someone."

You are taken aback by this statement and wonder if it was a joke or if there was any truth to it. You don't really know the angry student, but you recognize that he is one of the more popular students in the school. You aren't sure if you should speak up about the concerning statement, or remain silent.

Flip a coin.

If you land on heads, go to page 3.

If you land on tails, go to page 5.

SCENARIO

#2



After some deliberation, you decide not to speak up about the concerning statement. As a new student, you understand that it is important to maintain your social status, so you do not say anything that could get you in trouble with the “popular” students. Moreover, you do not know the student who spoke the concerning statement, so it is possible that he was only joking. At your old school, some students made similar comments and nothing tragic ever happened.

You go about your day as normal, your thoughts shifting from the concerning statement to studying for your English exam the next day. After school, you go home, work on your homework, eat dinner, study some more, and go to sleep.

In the middle of the night, you wake up with a sickening gut feeling. What if the statement wasn’t a joke? You sit with this question for a few minutes, then realize you might be overreacting. Knowing you need sleep to pass your exam, you go back to bed.

The next morning, your worries from the night are gone, and you prepare for school as normal.

Flip a coin.

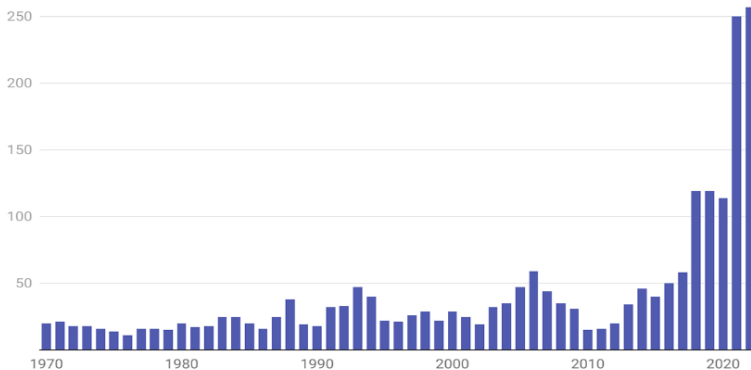
If you land on heads, go to page 7.

If you land on tails, go to page 9.

DID YOU KNOW?

Shooting events at schools increase in recent years

Since 2010, the number of incidents with guns being displayed or fired, or bullets hitting school property, has increased steadily, with significant increases in 2018 and again in 2021.



This data includes all events when a gun is brandished or is fired, or a bullet hits school property for any reason, regardless of the number of victims, time or day of the week.

Chart: The Conversation, CC-BY-ND • Source: David Riedman, K-12 School Shooting Database

What do we know about bystanders?

- 80% of school shooters tell someone about their plans. But too often, people think they're "just joking."
- 2023 is on track to set the record for the most mass shootings in U.S. history. Which makes it more important than ever that we all take threats of violence seriously.

SCENARIO

#3



After some deliberation, you decide to speak up about the concerning statement. Your dad's words - "truth is spoken in jest" - ring through your mind. You understand that you might get teased or even bullied if the student was only joking, but you decide to take that risk. The student seemed genuinely angry, even if he was trying to mask it. You want to tell someone what you heard, but you aren't exactly sure who you should tell. Since you are a fairly new student, you feel more comfortable telling your friend who shares several of the same classes with you. At the same time, you know it might be more beneficial to tell an adult.

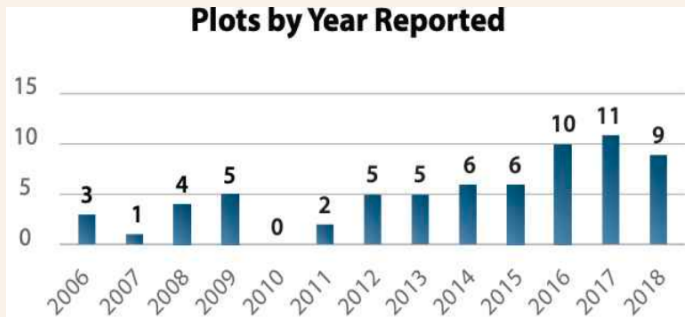
However, you don't know if you will be able to tell your parents because of their work schedule, since your mom and dad usually come home around the time you go to bed. You realize that talking to a school administrator is another option, but you don't know the administrators well and don't know which one to talk to.

If you decide to tell your friend, go to page 14.

If you decide to tell your parents, go to page 16.

If you decide to tell a school administrator, go to page 18.

DID YOU KNOW?



Warning Signs of a Potential School Shooter:

1. Suddenly withdrawing from friends, family and activities (including online or via social media)
2. Bullying, especially if targeted towards differences in race, religion, gender or sexual orientation
3. Excessive irritability, lack of patience, or becoming angry quickly
4. Experiencing chronic loneliness or social isolation
5. Expressing persistent thoughts of harming themselves or someone else
6. Making direct threats toward a place, another person, or themselves
7. Bragging about access to guns or weapons
8. Recruiting accomplices or audiences for an attack
9. Directly expressing a threat as a plan
10. Cruelty to animals

SCENARIO

4



At school, you go to English, your first class of the day, and take your exam. After class, you go to your locker to grab a snack, relieved that your exam is over and confident that you did your best. As soon as you arrive at your locker, you notice something out of the ordinary out of the corner of your eye. A locker near yours is covered in yellow caution tape, and a few students are talking in a huddle close by. You stifle a gasp, realizing that the locker belongs to the student who made the concerning statement, and one of the nearby students is the friend who the angry student spoke to the day before.

You overhear one of the students say that the angry student was in possession of several weapons, including a semiautomatic rifle, and had written an organized plan to attack specific students and teachers at school during lunch that day. Your heart starts racing and you feel sick to your stomach. Your gut feeling was right: the concerning statement was more than a joke. You wish you would have made more of an effort to speak up, but are relieved that someone else did before it was too late. Now, you know that if you hear a concerning statement, even if it appears to be a joke, you should tell someone because it could be a warning sign of something much more serious.

You have reached the end of this path for the “choose your own adventure”. You can either start at the beginning or explore some of the other scenarios.

DID YOU KNOW?



In a 2019 study by the US Secret Service, $\frac{1}{3}$ of attackers were found to have researched weapons prior to attacks. This includes online searches, literature, and asking other people. Research conducted by shooters often include methods of maximizing destruction and weapon capabilities.

In the study, 94% of shooters had difficulties in their home life including but not limited to substance abuse, incarceration, divorce/separation, and financial difficulties of parental guardians.

SCENARIO

#5



At school, you go to English (your first class of the day), and take your exam. After class, you go to your locker to grab a snack, relieved that your exam is over and confident that you did your best. Out of the corner of your eye, you notice the angry student from the previous day rummaging through his locker. He pulls out a journal, flips through the pages, stares at one page for a few moments, then returns it to his locker. The student appears upset with an air of determination. He closes his locker, makes brief eye contact with you, then walks away. You finish your snack, take a few books from your locker, then head to your next class.

A few hours later, you are sitting at your computer in the school library. You usually avoid the cafeteria because you prefer quiet and the smell of books to chaos and the smell of cafeteria food. Plus, you plan to meet your friend there to work on your science homework together. You take a few bites of your homemade sandwich between bouts of homework, then jump at a loud sound coming from the direction of the cafeteria. At first, it sounds like firecrackers, but once you hear students screaming and a rush of footsteps, you know something must be terribly wrong.

SCENARIO

#5



A teacher opens the door of the library and shouts, “There’s a school shooting! Hide behind those bookshelves! Now!” You and the other students and teachers hide behind the bookshelves. Your heart is pounding so loudly you can hear it in your ears. A student next to you stifles a sob. You continue hearing gunshots from the cafeteria, followed by more screams and footsteps. You wait... and wait... and wait...

After what seems like an eternity, an eerie silence falls over the school, soon punctuated by sirens. You wonder what exactly happened. Deep down, you have a sickening feeling that you know who the shooter is. You, too, stifle a sob and wait until you can be brought to safety.

Now, you know that if you hear a concerning statement, even if it appears to be a joke, you should tell someone because it could be a warning sign of something much more serious.

You have reached the end of this path for the “choose your own adventure”. You can either start at the beginning or explore some of the other scenarios.

Later, you learn that the shooter is the student who made the concerning statement the day before. He killed six students and two teachers, including your English teacher, and wounded nine more people, including the friend you were planning to study with. The biographies of the victims who lost their lives in the shooting are on the following pages.

The school shooting is a tragedy, and it is not your fault. There is no way you could have known that this would happen. However, you wonder if the outcome would have been different if you had spoken up.

STUDENT BIOGRAPHIES



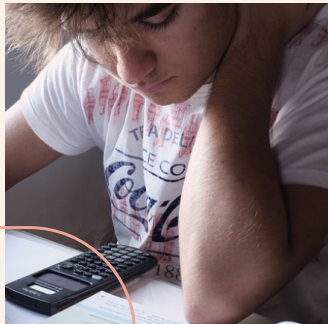
Joshua Phelps

Joshua Phelps was a senior at North River High School. Joshua was the pitcher for North River's baseball team for the last three years. He was also an avid member of the National Honor Society. After graduation, Joshua planned to go to college to study Business Management and to continue playing baseball. Joshua's history teacher, Mr. Robertson, said that "Joshua always came to class with a smile on his face".



Cammie Harris

Cammie Harris was a junior at North River High School. Cammie participated in the art club and the theater club, and she played the role of Glinda in North River's production of The Wizard of Oz. Cammie dreamed of going to art school and one day starring in a Broadway musical. Her friend Layla remembered her fondly, saying that Cammie was "amazingly talented".



Ricky Sanford

Ricky Sanford was a sophomore at North River High School. Ricky's favorite subjects in school were science and math, and he planned to follow in his father's footsteps and go to medical school. Ricky was also an active participant in North River's robotics club and enjoyed playing video games in his free time. His dad shared that Ricky was "brilliant and one of the hardest working people I know".

STUDENT BIOGRAPHIES



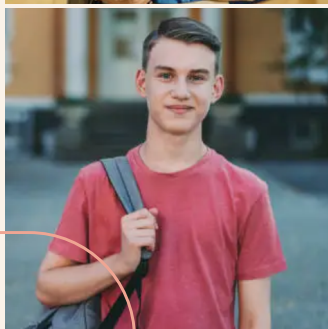
Drake Hampton

Drake Hampton was a senior at North River High School. Drake was the wide receiver for North High's football team and planned to go to college on a football scholarship. On the weekends, he volunteered at North River Elementary School and tutored students in math. Ryan, one of Drake's football teammates, recalled that Drake "always showed up for those he cared about".



Jessica Daniels

Jessica Daniels was a senior at North River High School. Jessica was the secretary of the student council and participated in North River's cross country team and cooking club. After graduation, Jessica planned to take a gap year to travel before either going to college for Communication or to culinary school. Jessica's cooking club advisor, Mrs. Meadows, said that "Jessica showed a lot of promise" and was "going to go far".



Travis Garner

Travis Garner was a junior at North River High School. Travis was in North River's journalism class and creative writing club for two years and dreamed of becoming a famous writer. He began writing a novel during his sophomore year and planned to publish it before he graduated high school. His mom said, "I'm heartbroken that Travis never got to finish his novel, but I hope that when people read about Travis, they'll remember that his life was the best story he could've written."

TEACHER BIOGRAPHIES



Mark Young

Mark Young was an algebra teacher and the boy's baseball coach at North River High School. During his eight years at North River, Mr. Young led the baseball team to three high school baseball championships, two of which they won. Aside from teaching, Mr. Young enjoyed hiking, skiing, and hosting barbecue parties. He is survived by his fiancée, Erin Smith, and his German Shepherd, Rocky.



Terrie Platt

Terrie Platt was an English teacher and the advisor of the creative writing club at North River High School. Mrs. Platt taught at North River for seventeen years, and is best remembered by her students as “the teacher who let us sing karaoke on Fridays”. Outside of school, Mrs. Platt enjoyed volunteering for a local food bank and reading a good book with a cup of coffee. She is survived by her husband, Jeffrey Platt, and her four kids, Will, Kaitlyn, Jacob, and Andrew.

SCENARIO

#6



After some deliberation, and even though you are new and don't know many people yet, you decide you want to tell one of your new friends from one of your classes since he is the person you are closest to at this school. You wait for your friend to get out of class and meet you by your locker before telling him. You find out he knows the suspicious student and has been friends with him for years; in fact, they used to be neighbors and longtime childhood friends. Your friend brushes it off and says that the student makes comments like this often. After all, this is high school and who doesn't make comments like that when they're upset?

He advises you to ignore it and not look into it too much. You feel a little better that your friend doesn't think it's concerning, but you still have your suspicions.

Flip a coin.

If you land on heads, you decide to not follow your friend's advice and decide to tell an administrator about the statement you heard; go to page 18.

If you land on tails, you decide to follow your friend's advice; go to page 7.

DID YOU KNOW?



Shooters who were previously disciplined at school were most commonly cited for fighting or brawling with other students (40%) and classroom conduct/disruption (34%).

Disciplinary measures were mostly carried out by way of school suspension (51%) both in and out of school, but only 17% of shooters had been expelled before their attack.

SCENARIO

#7



After some deliberation, you decide to tell your parents after school because they usually give good advice. You get home only to realize both of your parents have to work late. You check the calendar in the kitchen and check their schedules: your mom comes home at 10pm and your dad will be home at midnight. You decide to try to talk to your mom first since she will be home first, so you wait for her to be home.

At 10pm, you hear her come through the front door, looking very visibly exhausted. You try to tell her about the concerning statement, but since she is tired and has to wake up early for work the next day, she brushes you off, telling you that she'll talk to you about it when she's back from work the following afternoon before heading to bed. You can't blame her; you, too, are exhausted from a long day at school and going to bed sounds really tempting.

You know your dad comes home close to midnight, and he says there is truth in jest, so you know he might want to intervene if you bring it up.

Flip a coin.

If you land on heads, you decide to wait up and tell your dad. In the morning, your dad calls your school counselor. Due to the student's past behavior (detention, previous conflicts with teachers, etc.), the counselor takes the comment very seriously. Go to page 20.

If you land on tails, you decide to go to sleep and wait to tell your mom after she comes home from work the next day. Your dad is still sleeping in since he came home so late last night, and you go to school before he wakes up. Go to page 9.

DID YOU KNOW?



In a 2019 study by the Secret Service, it was found that only 17% of schools had an official means of notifying faculty of concerning student behavior. These means were seldom anonymous and included a phone number and email address.

SCENARIO

#8



Even though you're not very familiar with the administration, you decide to tell someone at the front desk. You make your way to the front office and approach the person at the front desk. You tell her what you heard. They thank you for letting them know and tell you to keep an eye out if the student's comments or behavior continues. You find this reassuring, but also think it might be a good idea to talk to your school counselor, so you ask if you could speak with the counselor. The front desk apologetically tells you the counselor is busy talking to another student at the moment, but that they should be free to talk to you in about 15 minutes.

You could wait but you would be very late to English, your first class of the day, and you know you have an important exam that you cannot miss in that class.

Flip a coin.

If you land on heads, you decide to wait and talk to your counselor, who also happens to be the counselor for the suspicious student, who takes the comment very seriously. Go to page 20.

If you land on tails, you decide to go to class and keep an eye out for the suspicious student, but you do not tell anyone else. Go to page 9.

DID YOU KNOW?



Today, Arizona is last in student-to-counselor ratios, with 716 students for every 1 school counselor. The American School Counselor Association recommends schools have a counselor for every 250 students.

SCENARIO

#9



The counselor invites the suspicious student in for a check-in session during his first class, making up an excuse that it is a mandatory semester check-in meeting that he needs to attend instead of his class. He gets to her office quickly, seeming relieved to be out of his class. The counselor asks him about his classes, how his family life is going, and what he's currently working on for the week. As they are talking, the student reaches into their backpack to pull out a folder and show the counselor their progress on an essay. The counselor notices what looks like the handle of a gun in the middle of his backpack.

The student seems a bit nervous; The counselor, observing his uneasy behavior and the weapon, tries to calmly continue the conversation. He starts to relax; he doesn't seem to think she saw anything. The counselor, still nervous about what they just saw, asks if he could wait in their office while they bring him a copy of his grades so that they could discuss what he needs to work on. They excuse themselves and leave the office, leaving him inside the room.

SCENARIO

#9



The counselor immediately beelines to the principal's office and explains the situation, who immediately makes a move to the student's locker to see if she finds anything else before calling the local police department. The principal finds a journal stuffed in the back of the locker with an organized plan for an attack at the school along with a list of students and professors he has a vendetta against. She realizes that the day that he plans to enact this shooting is tomorrow around lunchtime. She quickly calls the police and reports everything she found/ saw; she also gets in contact with the parents of the student and tells them to come to the school immediately.

The police are quick to respond and come to the school just as the parents arrive on campus. They search the student and find the handgun in their backpack and take the student with them for further questioning.

The news of what happened quickly spreads throughout the school; you hear about it within the hour of it happening. You are shocked and so relieved that such this tragedy was avoided, and even though it wouldn't have been your fault if you hadn't said something, you wonder if things would have been different if you hadn't spoken up.

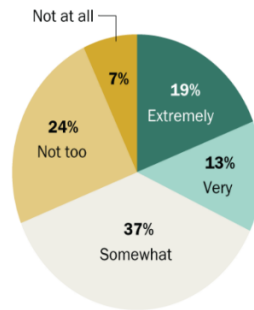
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DID YOU KNOW?

19% of K-12 parents are extremely worried about a shooting happening at their children's school

% of parents of K-12 students saying they are ____ **worried** about the possibility of a shooting ever happening at their children's school



Note: Based on parents whose children are not homeschooled and who answered the question.
Source: Survey of U.S. parents conducted Sept. 20-Oct. 2, 2022.

Pew Research Center 

In a study on school shootings that were prevented, the research showed half of all classmates who reported the potential threats did so to educators, coaches, and school resource officers who they viewed as trusted adults. Ashley Blair, a social science research specialist and one of the authors of *Averting Targeted School Violence: A U.S. Secret Service Analysis of Plots Against Schools*, emphasizes that creating a trusting climate - where students feel like they can come forward with their concerns - is vital in the effort to reduce school violence.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



If you are experiencing a mental health crisis, you can contact the following resources:

- For emergency help, call 911.
- For suicidal thoughts and behavior, dial 988 for the Suicidal & Crisis Lifeline. You can also reach them at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).
- For mental health issues after a disaster, contact the Disaster Distress Helpline at 1-800-985-5990.
- You can also text MHA to 741741 to connect with a trained Crisis Counselor from Crisis Text Line.