

Episode 91

Wed, 10/21 12:31PM 46:49

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

suicide, people, gun, firearm, talk, conversations, person, life, mom, moment, death certificate, killed, sharing, brady, access, feel, folks, grandfather, gun violence, understand

SPEAKERS

Adam Friedman, JJ Janflone, Kelly Sampson, Khary Penebaker



JJ Janflone 00:08

Hey everybody, this is the legal disclaimer where I tell you that the views, thoughts and opinions shared on this podcast belong solely to our guests and hosts, and not necessarily Brady or Brady's affiliates. Please note this podcast contains discussions of violence that some people may find disturbing. It's okay -- we find it disturbing too. Welcome back to another episode of "Red, Blue and Brady." Today's episode I'm going to warn you might be a little bit more triggering than some other ones. I know that we talk about a lot of really hard things on this podcast but today specifically, we are talking about firearm suicide. And I, and Kelly, are lucky enough to be joined by two fantastic individuals. First up, we have Khary Penebaker, we also have with us, Adam Friedman, a member of the Team Enough Executive Council. We're here not just talking about a new aspect of Brady's End Family Fire initiative, but also what it's like to lose a beloved family member to firearm suicide. Then, in our "unbelievable but" section, I'm telling you all about guns at airports. Again, I know, I'm sorry, I'm probably making y'all terrified to travel. Finally, in our news wrap up, we mark those who continue to fight for gun violence prevention, and micro remembrances of two mass shootings. So Khary, Adam, Kelly and I are so happy to have you with us. And I'm wondering if we can just start by having you know, in your own words, introduce yourself.



Khary Penebaker 01:50

My name is Khary Penebaker. I am a gun violence survivor for the last 41 years of my life.

My mom Joyce Pennebaker shot and killed herself on September 8, 1979.

A

Adam Friedman 02:02

Hi, my name is Adam Friedman. I'm a student at the George Washington University, and one of the national lobbying coordinators for Team Enough.

K

Kelly Sampson 02:10

If you all would be willing, and if it's not uncomfortable for you, would you both mind sharing your stories?

K

Khary Pennebaker 02:17

Well, so the first thing is, is that to go to your question about the whether the question is personal or not. I've done this so many times, this is almost therapeutic for me to share my story and be vulnerable. I get more value out of this than going to actual therapy, because I get to talk about it in my terms, not in therapeutic terms. And it just feels better to kind of keep this off my chest. Cause I know that when I share my story, it helps other people who are struggling with the same thing, whether they have survived a suicide attempt themselves, or someone else they know has completed it, they can find a way to talk about it in their own way. So there's no question that kind of throws me off. So don't worry about that. But I was roughly 20 months old when my mom shot and killed herself. So I don't know, the little parts about her that I know has been given to me third-hand. I have like maybe 50 or less pictures of her and they're all faded, that 1970s orangish kind of color that you don't need a Instagram filter for anymore. But the majority of my life up until about age nine or ten, they had told me my mom died of an illness. And I guess in a way, that's that's true, except the illness itself did not in her life -- a bullet did. And it was around nine or ten that I heard, I overheard my aunt say that my mom shot herself. But I still didn't conceptualize it. It really wasn't until I was actually 18 years old, my dad had been working on a house, I was a senior in high school. And I remember this day like it was this morning. And I was rummaging through his stuff just like young folks tend to do, except there sometimes when you rummage through things, you might find something you don't want to see. And I have found 100 copies of my mother's death certificate. And it was like, it was like a kick in the teeth. I was not anticipating that I would find, it wasn't looking for it, I surely wasn't looking for 100 copies of it, and it like destroyed my world. Because at that point, I felt like they had lied to me. They didn't tell me the truth about my mom, the real illness that had gripped her, and led her down the path of self harm and completing suicide. But the downside to looking at that death certificate is that I did not look at her birth. All I saw was "shot self with revolver." And I literally there was a, I had

longer hair at time I literally pulled a patch of hair out. I had to go to like intense therapy for a few weeks. I didn't go to school for, I think two weeks, because I was, just I felt like empty. And it was the first time that it like really crystallized, at least in that mindset, that my mom left. That doesn't mean that was her intent. In fact, if you look at some of the tweets and the speeches that I give, I've referenced that, like her leaving me, only as a way to segue into me forgiving her and realizing that her shooting and killing herself was her way of, I guess, thinking that my world was better off without her, as if she were a detriment or a burden to me or that she could have been as I grew up, and that's something that I try to do. So that people who are struggling with whether or not to complete suicide themselves, if they think, they stop thinking that they're a burden, because my world, I can assure you is not better off without her. And my, you know, my dad, obviously has been my dad for almost 43 years now. And my mom shot and killed herself. 41 years ago, we've only talked about her suicide three times. And the first time wasn't until 2015. So this is something that I don't have a lot of like that family-related kind of content.



JJ Janflone 05:44

Well and Adam I know, your experience is slightly different, because you and your grandfather were actually really close you, you and he spent a lot of time together before he passed.



Adam Friedman 05:55

When I was 13 years old, I lost my grandfather to gun suicide. It was incredibly hard for me. And I didn't know what to do in the wake of it. My grandfather was my hero, I looked up to him, his spontaneity and love of just existing. It has informed so much of who I am today and what I hold close. And for him to be such a larger than life character for me, and then suddenly lose him in the way that I did through suicide, and specifically gun suicide, I really didn't know what to do. I remember just a few days after his suicide, sitting in his old apartment, waiting for cleaners to leave his office thinking about why someone would do what he did and, and what I was supposed to do now with this, you know, 13 year old mentality of life being shattered in a way. And it wasn't till I'd say a few months, maybe even a year or so later, that I started to meet other folks who had similar experiences to the one that that I had to endure. And I began to realize that not only was I not alone, in having a loved one die by gun suicide, but I was actually part of a really big group in America. And being able to connect with other people and heal through action, has really enabled me to find community in that pain. But also turn that pain into something powerful, productive and healing, and find growth in ensuring that other folks don't have to go through that same pain that I had to go through. And I think a lot of that,

for me, comes down to what I'm doing right now, which is sharing my voice and my story, however I can, to ensure that anyone who listens can understand that there are little things we can do to ensure that these situations are ones that don't have to happen. I hope if one person can get that message and take action in their own life, take action in the life of a loved one, I'll feel like this work is meaningful and worthwhile.



JJ Janflone 08:07

And I want to jump in Khary, because I know when when you started researching your mom, and you ended up talking to your friends, that there were a few things you learned that that impacted you a lot, and have, in turn, I think really impacted you're really impacted your gun violence prevention policies. I'm wondering if you could talk about that a little bit.



Khary Penebaker 08:25

I also learned that my mother was, not only severely mentally unwell, but was an alcoholic. I learned that a month before she shot and killed herself that she had told her best friend that she wanted to die. And so when you when you go from sharing my story into policy, that's that's usually what I talk about. How a month before she died, she's telling her best friend that she wanted to die, but yet, no one thought "let's make sure we that Joyce doesn't have her gun." And so we can talk later whether it's self storage, or safe storage or extreme risk protection orders, this is something that could have saved my mother's life. That doesn't mean she would automatically be alive today because this was her third attempt, but it could have helped her stay alive one more day. One more day after that, one more day after that. Suicideality requires a day-by-day approach, not you know, "hey, 10 years from now you're going to be okay." It wasn't until I was I think maybe 39 or 40 that I actually learned my mother's birthday, bought her death certificate online. Because I couldn't ask my family, I definitely wasn't going to ask my dad. Because while, my mom shot and killed herself so did his wife. And now while I can, I can sit with fellow gun violence survivors whether it's Sandy or Richard Martinez, Erica, whoever, and we can have that moment. But I can't do it with my father. It's a it's a different dynamic and watching your father cry is something that, you know, it's beyond heartbreaking. So I didn't ask him her birthday. And when I was 18, again, I didn't look at what the birthday was. So I bought it and I remember getting it in the mail. And it was it was like the worst gut wrenching feeling thing I've ever had. Like, it's just I was I was angry and hurt. And then for her birthday, which is June 25, I put on Facebook, I included her death certificate, but I also said in this moment for your birthday, I want to forgive you for this. And what that really meant is that I'm just releasing the anger myself. Not that I don't know how you

forgive someone. I mean, people say that all the time, but what does that really mean? I don't know. I think it's a personal thing. It's a selfish thing. I needed to let go of something and not be angry, because the anger was really mixing with depression, and causing me like when that that dark wave comes, it was even worse when anger is involved. Because in some cases, in the times that I've attempted suicide, it's more about like I want, I want to, I want to hurt you for hurting me, right? Like, I want to get back at you for this, I want to get back at my family, I want to get back at my mom, and take me away from you. But in the end, I don't really want to do that. I don't want to hurt anybody, I surely don't want to hurt myself. But this has taken a long process to get to where I am today. Even when those thoughts of self harm creep into my brain, I have the coping mechanisms in place to know what I have to do. I know the steps I need to take, I know everything I need to do to get out of that moment. But ultimately, I know that this moment will pass. And that's usually the thing that I say to myself when it happens like "this too shall pass." While it's hard to grasp what you're going to the depths of that, those those dark moments, I know it to be true. But I also know that depression is lying to me, just like it lied to my mom and made her believe that my world was better off without her. But I know that my three children are going to be better off with me, so that's where I am today.

K

Kelly Sampson 11:46

I just want to thank you for I know, you've said that, you know, you shared the story so much. But I do just want to thank you for sharing it as openly as you did and being so vulnerable. I'm struck by that, because it is, I think, even though we have this culture of social media, and sharing, there's still a lot of stigma around being vulnerable, or talking about, you know, as you mentioned, even your own experiences of depression and feelings of self harm. So I just want to thank you for modeling what that looks like. And that kind of leads to the question of, you know, not only do we have stigmas in our society around talking about vulnerability, or mental health issues, you know, you can say, "Oh, I have some anxiety," but you can't really say "I have anxiety and I'm thinking of self harm," or you know, things like that. And we talk about suicide, especially firearm suicide there, there are these taboos. And I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about why you think those taboos still exist, and how can we normalize having conversations that can save someone's life? Or like you said, at least give them another day.

A

Adam Friedman 12:55

Yeah, absolutely. I appreciate you saying that. I think it's so easy for us to feel like this can't happen in our lives, this won't happen to us. And it won't, until it does. I think that's the thing that I try to remind folks. I know that these conversations can be hard to have, it's hard to talk about gun, gun violence, it's hard to talk about suicide. And as I can share

from personal experience, it's much much harder to lose someone you love to a gun, because those conversations didn't happen. So I'd say you know, to anyone who feels like this can't happen to me, I think it's worth just not taking that chance. I think it's important for people to recognize that everyone is human, and people struggle, that's part of life. It's okay to go through a moment of crisis, and that's why it's referred to as that, right? People who experience moments of crisis are in a time of additional pain and exertion where the state that they're in isn't their permanent state. And it's up to us to support them and help them get through that. And I think when folks are in that state, when they're going through a moment of crisis, the idea of ensuring their firearms are secured isn't about restricting access to a firearm at all. I think it's about ensuring that someone can get the help that they need. And at least in my experience, what I've seen is that, for example, in the case of my grandfather, having access to a firearm, it wasn't about him having access to a gun for us. That wasn't like the the central issue. It wasn't a question of gun rights or anything like that. In the wake of his suicide, I think the enduring thing we were all wondering was, if he didn't have access to that gun, would he still be alive, understanding that he had lived with guns in his home for years before. He was a veteran. He was someone who had been, you know, stationed overseas, had that experience, and then come back home lived with really dilapidating, excruciating PTSD for a number of years, was consistently going to therapy. And then it just took one day for all of that to break down in that moment of crisis. And I think that's what's so important for people to understand, right? Is that, you know, someone can be fine or seem fine, and we don't always know what's going on beneath that. But ultimately, there are ways for us to check in, and ways for us to be cautious and accommodating to ensure that what happened to my grandfather doesn't have to happen to anyone else.

K

Khary Penebaker 15:16

So I may start from from an odd angle. Last, last year, my good friend, Cory Booker, when he was running for president, decided he was going to, after hearing my story, probably the 10th time. He called me and said, "Hey, Khary, you know what, I don't want to be one of those politicians who listens to your story," and then you know, they'll feel sorry, and they'll they'll give you their well wishes and give you the happy talk. He's like, " I actually want to do something about it." So in his presidential platform, he included specific policy directed at suicide prevention, and even included gun suicide prevention. So he and I did this town hall event here in Milwaukee. Last April. And you know, heartbreaking. One of the things that I said at the end was, and I say this all the time, I remind people that it is okay not to be okay. And especially for men, it is okay to admit that you need help. It doesn't make you less of a man to do that. I think it makes you stronger as a person to, to own where you are, especially your your mental state, and want to better yourself, right? Me, I try to explain to people in the sense that if you are wanting to go lift weights, and

you feel like you're overweight, or you want to gain weight back, or pack on some pounds, whatever it might be. Do you feel less than a person? Because you're admitting you want to change yourself, physically? Of course not. So why would you be less of a person, if you do it mentally? It's harder to do it mentally. And I think it takes an immense amount of courage to do that, and should make you feel like you're that much stronger, for being able to have admitted that and then done the work to get the help that you need. So at this event, this guy comes up after me, after the event, and comes up to me and says, and I get this all the time. But he said, Do you think your mom would have completed suicide if she didn't have that gun? I'm thinking to myself, like, "Are you kidding me?" Like do I need to hypothesize about a different way my mom could have ended her life? I mean, isn't the one thing good enough? Right? It's, it's already chomping don't add to that. But it made me realize that people just simply don't understand what this all means. They don't know how to talk about it. Because there is a stigma from like, the every angle you look at. There's a stigma from the family perspective, because they're embarrassed, they're, they don't know how to explain what happened. There's a stigma from from those who've attempted, because they think that people will look at them different. But that's why I feel like I have to be as vulnerable and open as I am. Because if people can see that, in attempt, or even a completion within your family doesn't, it doesn't mean that's the end of your sentence. I have a very large, it's roughly a three inch, semi colon on my sternum, where it really hurt because there's not a lot of space between your skin and in the bone itself. And it really, really hurt. And, you know, to me, it was me doing the physical experience of going through that pain, because it's a reminder that I can get through this. But it's also a reminder that none of this is the end of my sentence. And that the more people I can explain that to, you know, yes, I've attempted suicide three times in my life, and I'm proud that I'm still here. I beat those moments. And I am, I didn't end up as something, I became a president of a company, I ran for Congress, I'm a DNC representative. I've done these things, despite what, you know, the hell I have been through. I've done these things, despite the hurdles that my mother's suicide placed in front of me when I didn't ask for it. So, and they can do the same thing. You can become something despite what these hurdles are. But it took me a long time to get there. And what really made it better for me is being this vulnerable. I mean, I've been on stages in front of thousands of people, and there's no therapy on Earth that's like that. Because in that moment in that space, it feels like this is exactly where I'm supposed to be, this is exactly what I'm supposed to be sharing. It makes me feel like I'm accomplishing something. When I share my mother's death certificate on her birthday a couple years ago, a good friend of mine, who's a fellow contractor, came up to me at a fundraiser a few days after I shared. And he said that he had seen my mother's death certificate, and a few days before that he had been considering self harm or even completing suicide. He said he had literally put his AR-15 and a nine millimeter on his bed and sat and stared at it. And just so happened to go on Facebook and saw my mother's death certificate and saw

what I had said, and that's what saved his life. Wow Therapy he can't do that for me. Not to say that you know, I'm the be all, end all. Or I'm awesome, nothing like that. But in that moment, you know, we hear people talk all the time about, I want to change the world. For this one person, I was able to do that I was able to change his world, at least change that paradigm with which he saw the world. There's value in that. So if this burden is something that I can't escape. I'd rather do something positive, like help save someone's life, than let it control me and make me believe that this world shouldn't have me in it.

K

Kelly Sampson 20:27

What are some things about firearm suicide that you both wish people knew?

A

Adam Friedman 20:32

I feel like, there are two parts to that question. The first thing is, I wish that people who were talking to someone like me who's had this experience would be accommodating and would ask if it was okay to talk about or check in ahead of time and not make assumptions about why someone died by suicide or what the context was around that. Because I think it's really easy for people to assume. It's important for people to understand what that can entail, so they understand why we need to avoid it. And I think it can be draining to relive that pain and that trauma. And what I will say is for folks who are asking questions just about the topic in general, I think it's really important to recognize that this happens to folks for very different reasons, right? There are a lot of different causes for suicide, and for someone to be at that place in their life. And I think it's important to recognize ultimately, that, at least for me, the way I see this issue is, it isn't about someone killing themselves. It isn't about why it happened or what happened exactly, when we think about prevention. For me, I think about the statistics, knowing that if someone has access to a firearm, there's a 90% chance if they're using that firearm to attempt suicide, that it'll be effective, but it's around a 4% chance for all other methods of suicide. And I think just that difference, and showing that someone doesn't have the means to die by gun, die by suicide, without time to seek support. I think that's the difference between life and death in these situations. And I hope that folks are able to understand that little nuance in the conversation that I think makes the biggest difference and less so a broader conversation about all the different factors around what led somebody to do this.

K

Khary Penebaker 22:19

This is not something that should be framed in a, in a partisan framework, it should be one that should be framed in a life saving framework. I don't care if you're a Republican, I don't

care if you own a gun or not. But what I do want to explain to you, if you do have a gun, there are some things you need to be cognizant of. My grandfather gave my mother that gun for self defense. We hear this all the time. All those talking points that you know, the NRA and their ilk want to throw out there . You need a gun for self defense, all all this other stuff. You're more likely to shoot and kill someone that you love, or yourself, than you are an assailant. My mom is proof of that. I don't know what my grandfather thought that she was, you know, she needed protection from. But someone should have helped her protect her from her. They didn't think about that. And I think too many people get caught in the fight, whether it's the theatrics of it, the romanticization of guns and all of that, while ignoring the undue risk you are introducing into your house. So if, you know, you would hope someone, a parent would know the mental condition of their child. But in this case, you know, my mom had attempted suicide two times before she shot and killed herself, that should have been a perfect indication to them. She should not have access to something as lethal as a gun. I will I will admit and concede that in 1979 the conversations about guns was far different. The conversation of mental health was nowhere even near what it is now, and even now it's still not good enough. But people need to understand what they are bringing into the house. But then also be willing to say "I'm a responsible gun owner and I'm going to make sure that this gun is not easily accessible by anyone in my house that may not be of the right mental capacity to have access to this." Whether, you know, if your wife, your partner is struggling, I would say a gun shouldn't be there. I would much rather have my house robbed, then have my life robbed of my mom, right? I would much rather lose a TV than a loved one. I can buy a new TV. I have renter's insurance. I have house insurance. I've all the insurance that I need to replace the crap in my house. I cannot replace my mom. Just it is mind boggling, how people don't see the difference between stuff -- and your loved one. I mean, you know, we have more and more young people that are completing suicide. Now a lot of it is from being bullied at school. But yet they have easy access to guns. And too many parents ignore that fact and say, you know, "I still need this to protect my TV." That is flat out cruel -- it's inhumane. You're only asking for one outcome. I wish more and more people could not only just hear my story, there's more stories like mine, this happens every 22 minutes in our country. But yet not enough people are taking the right precautions to prevent it from happening. I mean, this this idea that, "oh, it'll never happen here." How many times you hear that after a shooting? How many families said that after Sandy Hook? The families here in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, after the mass shooting we had in 2012 said the same thing. We never thought it would happen here. People that were in Las Vegas never thought it would happen here. Every shooting, you name it, is going to say the same thing. When you get you know more isolated, down to the gun suicides, which happen more frequently. No one is sitting there saying, "Oh yeah, Joyce is going to shoot and kill herself any moment. We still need this gun later on." It doesn't exist. We need to be proactive and not reactive. Too many people are ignoring that first part, and would rather just believe the nonsense than

protect their family the right way.



JJ Janflone 26:30

Well, in Khary and Adam, I know that you guys are both much better at Twitter than I am, very active on Twitter. And one of the things that every time I post an episode, unfortunately, that deals with firearm suicide, I get those comments, right? But you know, isn't, you know, isn't someone who is experiencing suicidality aren't, aren't they going to commit suicide by any means necessary? You know, what, why is it that this firearm matters? Right instead of, sort of a car, or something to that effect. And I think it's so important that we have these conversations, because the means actually do matter a lot. Because guns are just so lethal, people don't get a second chance. And so Adam, I would love to even hear your thoughts on this, because I think I've heard you a few times now describe it beautifully.



Adam Friedman 27:09

Yeah, absolutely. And like you said, I think people don't understand that because of the pain around this topic, where it's hard to talk about the fact that people will attempt suicide, or will try to kill themselves with some other means and survive, and that's a painful thing to discuss. And it's important to recognize that when someone survives a suicide attempt, they're a lot less likely to pursue that method again. They're a lot less likely to attempt suicide again, and ultimately giving someone that's second chance, is what I what I really want to talk about. Because understanding that nuance is understanding really how to save a life at the end of the day.



Kelly Sampson 27:52

You talked a little bit about one example of how you can prevent someone in crisis from gaining access, which is to take the gun out of the house. But I'm wondering are, what are other ways that people can protect people in their lives who are going through a crisis from gaining access to a firearm, or if they, if they do have access to a firearm, what are steps that you can take to to really protect them and give them another day?



Khary Penebaker 28:20

I honestly think the most comprehensive way and most direct way of saving someone's life is removing access to any lethal means by which they can harm themselves. One of the times I completed, or I had attempted suicide, I had to spend a weekend at a mental

hospital here in Wisconsin. They took my shoestrings, my belt, anything that I could use to harm myself. I had to sit for 48 hours in a padded room. I'm completely isolated from anything that I can use to arm myself with granted, I will admit that that is the the, you know, the extremity of it. But I think making sure a person doesn't have access to a gun, making sure they don't have access to pills or alcohol -- anything like that. If you really thought about it this way, if a person is a recovering alcoholic, you're not going to leave open intoxicants around them. If a person just got out of rehab because they were a drug user and they just finally kicked it, you're not gonna leave open bottles of Percocet and Vicodin around. So why would we change that dynamic when we're talking about preventing gun suicides? You cannot leave, you can't allow easy access to a gun for someone who has struggled with mental illness, whether they have struggled 10 minutes ago or 10 years ago. I think you need to have a clear separation between that person and a lethal means by which they can harm themselves. And I think it requires you to be flat out honest, that you simply should not have this, and here's why, I value you more than I value that gun, more than I value whatever you think I need to protect. That person is far more valuable than any of those things. And I think we miss that side of the equation. It's I mean, even in the way that you frame the question, it's almost like, well, how do you how do you still get around some of these other angles. To me, it's rather easy. And I always like to say this, because I've been through. I said, the last time I had attempted suicide, was with a loaded nine millimeter. I had that gun in my mouth for at least 30 minutes, I'm going to assure you gun oil is one of the worst things you can ever taste. I can taste it right now that I'm talking about. And thankfully, I had a cell phone, I was able to call my best friend, he came over and I have not touched the gun since, nor should I. But, I mean, I see what I'm capable of doing. I mean, there are friends who would say, you know, hey, let's go hunting, let's do these things like, No. I'm afraid of what I might do. I don't, I don't, I just don't want that, that, that negative part in my life, that, that that thing that if that dark moment can hit, because there's no schedule for it. Those dark moments come when they want to. If I had you know, a lethal means by which I can hurt myself. Maybe I was at the worst point ever, my coping mechanisms didn't kick in yet. Now I got a gun to my head. I can't have that. But I have gone through all the things I need to go through therapy and training all these things. But not enough people so that, whether they don't have access to mental health care. Here in Wisconsin, you can get a gun the same day you pass a background check. There's no waiting period here anymore. But you cannot get your first mental health care appointment the day that you call. Right. Yeah, that is that is a backwards way of looking at humanity. You can, you can have access to something that you can kill yourself or someone else with, but you can't have immediate access to the thing that might help save your life today. There's something wrong with that. But you know, I say that only to say that I think more families need to have more honest conversations with each other, and realizing and appreciating the mental capacity that they might be in, so that they don't have to end up at a Christmas dinner table with an

empty chair where that loved one should have been because they had too much easy access to a gun.



Kelly Sampson 31:39

Yes.



Adam Friedman 31:50

I feel like there are a lot of conversations we have that are conversations, about how people don't have certain conversations. And it's difficult because there's so many different incredibly important issues that we don't have enough conversations about and don't fully understand. And I think that's why there's so much value in us having these conversations, because the two of us have dedicated so much of our lives to this work. And I think it just takes someone to feel comfortable with us and where we're coming from and, and trust that what we say is accurate and truthful because we've done the work to ensure it is. And I hope, like, that listening and trust is conducive to folks working together to have more of these kinds of conversations, or at least get the information they need.



Kelly Sampson 32:23

Yeah, and it, I mean, it circles back, like you said, to the point earlier about stigma and honesty and vulnerability in these conversations. Because, yeah, it's like, it's vulnerability on the part of the person who is experiencing crisis, but also on the part of people in our support system to actually hear too. And I know, I've been in those situations myself, where sometimes you want to dance around it, and you're worried about hurting someone's feelings, instead of just being like, "Hey, I'm worried about you. And it sounds like you are thinking about hurting yourself." So I'm gonna, you know, just address it head on and, and kind of just have that conversation and not worry so much about, "Oh, my gosh," you know, should "what, what if they think I'm overreacting" or something like that. So I'm glad you pointed that out.



JJ Janflone 33:51

And again, this is so striking to me, because, and I say this a lot on here, but these are people -- not stories. You know we're, in the US, we're losing up to 63 people a day due to firearm suicide. That, that is, that that number is unbelievable. And really, that there are so many comments on things we could be doing to bring it down is shocking.



Adam Friedman 34:11

Absolutely. It's, I always think about the idea that you can, you can quantify, you know, death in numbers, but you can't quantify pain. All you can do is listen to stories, and feel that emotion that's being shared with you. And understand that, you know, after listening to one, two, three people share their pain with you, that's already too much. And then to recognize that you felt that way after just listening to a few folks. And there are, you know, 10, 20 thousand more or more people times that, right? Like there are 40,000 folks who are lost. I think to feel that, that tiny fraction of it, is really understanding the qualitative component, which is so much more painful to do, but I think just as important as understanding the statistics.



JJ Janflone 34:57

I think that's all sort of getting people to value themselves, though I think that's sort of what we're talking about too. And valuing life, over say, like, things like even like gun ownership, like valuing a person more than that, because people have, I mean, and I'll link them in the description of the episode. But there's, there's hotlines, you can call, there's mental health resources you can access. But you're right, when it comes to like, being able, there are places in the US where I can literally walk in, same day, and walk out with a gun. It's not necessarily the same for me walking in and, you know, getting a mental health professional that I can afford.



Khary Penebaker 35:32

Right.



JJ Janflone 35:33

And and that's difficult. I think that that's a difficult thing we have to reckon with,



Khary Penebaker 35:40

Mhm. And it's something like here in Wisconsin, we had a 48 hour waiting period, we had that for 40 years. And the politician who wrote it back in the 70s, specifically wrote it for crimes of passion, and self harm. And then it got repealed in 2015. Because they deemed it to be a time tax. And when I would talk to people about this, I'm like, "How much time do you think it takes to plan a funeral?" Right? I mean, so if you have to wait two days to get a gun, is that worth the time it might take for family that the planet funeral? Because a person had immediate access to a gun, but didn't have immediate access to mental

health care, does that seem fair to you? Now, I mean, you know, reasonable people will get that. But politicians aren't always reasonable, nor are they always smart. But even still, I would much rather tell people what I have struggled through, what I've dealt with, so that they too, can find that they can do this too. They can get on a podcast and talk about the things that they're struggling with, because I think the more people who talk about it means the more people who will talk about it, it's more people will talk about it. And not only will that cycle end, but so will this idea that there's this stigma preventing us from advancing past this. I mean, there are too many people who just stuck in isolation, who just feel like they're all alone, whether they are the ones considering self-harm themselves, or struggling with the after effect of someone like my mom, who shot and killed themselves. They will, there's no dummies guide to this. There's no organization on the planet that can guide me through what I have to deal with. There's not a single one of y'all that can tell me how I can keep putting two feet on the ground every morning, when I get out of bed. No one can tell me how to do that, I have to experience it myself. But the more I do it, I can help let other people know, y'all can do this too. And it's thanks to organizations like Brady and Everytown, and all these other organizations that bring these survivor stories together so that we're not just telling the heartbreaking side, we're telling the survivor side. And that, I think what gets missed in some of these conversations, when we talk purely about policy, I have to survive every single day. That's a process -- and it ain't easy. But the more people that get to see how that process works, the more they can emulate it themselves or find a process that works for them. So you have fewer and fewer people who end up like my mom. You know, many of us, me included, always say that we want to change the world. But not everybody can do that. You know, we can, there's only one Barack Obama, right. And so the way that people can also change the world is by a random act of kindness. When you see someone walking on the street, smile. Open a door for someone, by a person some coffee, or buy the lunch for the person standing behind you in the in the line of McDonald's or whatever the case, because you don't know the demon that that person might be facing. You don't know if that person might be in such a state where isolation is all they see, like they feel like they're on this island by themselves, that's covered with a black cloud, and it's only raining on them. But that one moment of kindness can literally change their life. If more people did that, maybe once or twice a week, think of the lives that we could save. Because, you know there those times when I've attempted suicide or I've thought about it, that's because I felt like no one could see me. But think about when you're walking down the street, when people are just simply looking down at their phone, or ignoring the light that's around them, try to be nice to someone. Try to change someone's life just by being kind to them. And as Erica Lafferty's, Mom, Dawn would say, "Be nice to each other. It's really all that matters."



Kelly Sampson 39:50

I mean, that's a really relevant reminder, especially right now, where I feel like when I do leave my house, which isn't often. But I'm wearing a mask and, kind of, totally absorbed in my own concerns about my own life. And, you know, it's to, to remember to look up and pay attention to the people around me, really important.

K Khary Penebaker 40:12
I absolutely agree.

K Kelly Sampson 40:14
And before we have to say goodbye, Adam, I'm just wondering if you could tell listeners a little bit more about Brady's initiatives like End Family Fire.

A Adam Friedman 40:22
Yeah, I've been really thankful for the opportunity to talk about my story, and, End Family Fire, which is an effort that I'm very lucky to be a part of, encouraging folks to safely and securely store their firearms at home, keeping their weapon unloaded and ammunition stored separately, because especially when it comes to gun suicide, which is, that makes up two thirds of gun deaths in our country, the difference between having access to a firearm and not for someone in a moment of crisis is literally the difference between life and death. And I think it's so important for us to be able to be there for folks who are struggling and provide them that second chance, ensuring that, you know, they can get the help they need the support they need from their loved ones, and their firearms are safely stored and secured. What I'd say is, to anyone who has a loved one who might be in a moment of crisis, it's essential to reach out and have a conversation with them, especially about firearms if they have firearms in the home. End Family Fire has a great guide on their website and [Endfamilyfire.org](https://endfamilyfire.org). What I'd say is, if you live in one of the states that has any sort of extreme risk protection laws, you know, someone is in a moment of crisis, that's another avenue to access, where you can go before a judge and explain the situation, and why someone's at a moment of crisis, and then that person can have their firearms restrained for a period of generally a couple of weeks, and then they're returned after that person has been able to get the help that they need. What I'd say is in addition to that, you know, if it feels right, for anyone who's listening to take action, I know on this podcast, that's most of what you talk about, is to get involved. But I think it's so important to recognize that it doesn't need to take this issue of affecting you personally to get involved. And also, for anyone who has been personally affected, especially by gun suicide, it's important to recognize that you're not alone in your experience. There are so many folks who have the same experience you do and who will be here to support you if

you ever do decide to take on this work, and fight for the solutions that we're working toward.



JJ Janflone 42:43

Adam, Khary I want to thank you all, on behalf of Kelly and I both, so much for coming on today, for sharing your stories, and for continuing to fight for gun violence prevention. We really appreciate it. So we've talked about guns in airports, and I've told Kelly about guns in toys. But now I have to tell you about gun magazines in toys at airports. Unfortunately agents with the Transportation Security Administration, aka the TSA found two high capacity magazines inside a baby toy box during a bag check at Orlando International Airport earlier this month. TSA says the gun magazines were discovered after an X-ray screening showed something odd in the package. Officers did a bag check, and found a toy box that was made to look like it had been factory sealed, but, in fact, had gun magazines inside. Now remember firearms are not allowed in carry on baggage on airplanes. If TSA finds a gun and carry on bag, the person with the bag can be fined up to \$13,000 and possibly arrested. Earlier this week, TSA officials said that they had stopped 84 guns from going through at Orlando International Airport this year alone. I begin this week's news wrap up by celebrating those who continue to fight for gun violence prevention. In Lexington, Kentucky the sixth annual peace walk in Duncan Park was held by activist Anita Franklin son, Ricardo Franklin. Anita, who began the event in 2014 after her son Antonio was killed by gun violence at the park, sadly died this February of a heart attack. Her son Ricardo has continued the event in her, and his brother's, memory. I also have to mark the remembrances of two mass shootings, the 2017 Las Vegas shooting the 2015 Umpqua shooting. On October 1, 2017 58 people were killed, and more than 800 injured, at the route 91 Harvest Outdoor Country Music Festival on the Las Vegas Strip, with a crowd of more than 22,000 people. Between 10:05 and 10:15pm, the shooter fired more than 1000 rounds of ammunition from his 32nd floor room in the Mandalay Bay hotel. Since 2017, two others went on to die from their wounds, including Kimberly Gervais, 57, who died in 2019 as a result of spinal injuries from the shooting. And most recently, Samanta Arjune, 49, who died earlier this month from complications with a gunshot wound to her left leg. With more than 60 people killed, the incident is the deadliest mass shooting committed by an individual in modern United States history. On the same day, two years earlier, nine people were killed and eight wounded at the Umpqua Community College in Oregon, when a student open fire inside the campuses Snyder hall. That mass shooting was the deadliest in Oregon's modern history. Are you interested in sharing with the podcast? Listeners can get in touch with us here at Red, Blue and Brady via phone or text message. Simply call or text us at 480-744-3452 with your thoughts, questions, concerns, ideas, whatever! And you know what else you can share? Chocolate. Come join me in eating your 2020 feelings by shopping Hu's Kitchen Chocolate which is free of dairy,

gluten, refined sugar, palm oil and cane sugar. My personal favorite are the dark gems. It's a bag bursting with 70% dark chocolate, paleo style. Click on the link in the description of our episode to help support the show and to buy you or your loved ones some tasty treats. Thanks for listening. As always, Brady's life saving work in Congress, the courts and communities across the country is made possible thanks to you. For more information on Brady or how to get involved in the fight against gun violence, please like and subscribe to the podcast, get in touch with us at Bradyunited.org or on social [@Bradybuzz](https://twitter.com/Bradybuzz). Be brave and remember -- take action not sides.