

14 VIOLENCE TRUISMS

1. Almost every individual, no matter how wrong their action may be, believes that they are right. And, generally, the worse their action is, the more self-righteous they will behave in overcompensation.
2. There will almost always be warnings before someone takes a violent action, despite the common claim that there were none. The challenge is that usually these warnings will be non-verbal and ambiguous.
 - a) Unfortunately, rather than inspiring correction, close-calls often embolden and/or desensitize an individual more-- leading to their doubling-down their risks with the ironic recklessness frequently exhibited by survivors (e.g., the twisted logic of, "If I can survive or get away with that, why not up the ante even more?").
3. Almost every violent individual believes that they are the victim. Reflexively, they feel that their action is defensive, or at least warranted, and not one of offense.
4. Negative actions are born from extremes-- whether seemingly good or bad. Like a slingshot being released, the person who tries too hard and is overly nice, might be just as likely-- if not more so than the obviously rageful-- to explode one day from this state of imbalance.
5. Fear is at the root of almost all negative behaviors-- be it controllingness or judgementality, etc.. The confusion is that this vulnerability is usually masked by the smoke-screen of anger as a defense mechanism.
 - a) Often, the best way to determine what someone else is feeling is to monitor our own emotional response to them. Not only might they actually be afraid, but additionally, they could be afraid to admit that that they are afraid.
6. Violence is not "human nature". In fact, statistically-- in comparison to laughter, sex, nurturing, eating, communication-- it is one of the most rarely realized of human instincts.
 - a) Fortunately, sadism is very rare. The vast majority of even chronically violent individuals are ambivalent about their own anti-social impulses and have the potential to "go either way".
7. Opportunity largely dictates action. Most tragic events are opportunistic. Increased temptation is commonly the decisive factor in what might have otherwise been an unacted upon impulse.
8. People do not run out of anger, but it is increased through its uncontrolled expression. Rage is not expendable, but expandable, unless the more fundamental emotions beneath it are recognized, admitted, and processed.
9. Violence is an unsustainable strategy. It may ostensibly "work" in the short-term, but in the long-run it fails due to its own asymmetry which begs for correction.
10. Chronically violent individuals are not anarchists, but perfectionists: obsessed with how the world "should" be.

11. Our intellect actually makes us dumber in terms of our physical survival on the planet. We are the only animal which is regularly willing to fight to the death or kill when our physical survival does not depend on it and/or when flight is an option.
 - a) It is not a “dog eat dog world”. Most animals never kill intraspecifically, but resolve conflict through ritualistic and symbolic conduct, followed by retreat due to it being in the best interest of any species as a whole to protect their own, to exercise a culture of cooperation.
12. Violence is rarely random, with victims, instead, often participating in and contributing to the ultimate outcome.
13. Philosophy aside, one of the greatest antidotes to violence is to behave above-reproach-- it is very hard to fault someone who overperforms, argue with someone who is agreeing, or escalate in the presence of an individual who remains calm.
14. The acting-out party does “know better”. It is emotional immaturity, not an intellectual deficit that spells most people’s downfall. The headlines detailing our well-educated, elite “leaders” misconducts attest to this almost daily, and always have....and most likely, always will. All the pseudo-sophistication and experience in the world cannot save someone from social a faux-pas due to their own behavioral incontinence.

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For over twenty years— since 1993— Ian Brennan has successfully trained over one-hundred thousand people across the country (as well as Europe, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East) in violence prevention, anger-management, and conflict resolution at shelters, schools, hospitals, clinics, jails, and drug-treatment programs, including such prestigious organizations as the Betty Ford Center, Bellevue Hospital (NYC), UC Berkeley, the National Accademia of Science (Rome), and Stanford University. His presentations are consistently reviewed as "the best" of their kind and, when studied, frequently demonstrate significant reductions in aggressive incidents, complaints, and injuries (e.g., a 1996 study revealed more than a 50% reduction in such episodes and was written up in a feature article on the front-page of the east bay’s major daily newspaper, The Tribune).

These trainings are based on over 15 years experience working as a mental health specialist in locked, acute-psychiatric settings, the job rated as “the most dangerous” in the state of California. From 1991 to 2001, he conducted psychiatric triage-interviews in the county emergency-room for Oakland, CA (one of the busiest in the country).

Additionally, he works throughout the United States providing one-on-one, anger-management sessions for individuals facing criminal charges due to violent conduct, and, relatedly, provides expert testimony in such cases.

He is also the author of the book Anger Antidotes, published April 2011 by W.W. Norton (NYC), which has also been released in an Italian language edition. Due to popular demand, his follow-up book, Hate-less, was issued in the fall of 2014.

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