

Behavioral Threat Assessment and Management

Protecting our Communities



Course Objectives

Upon completing this course you should be able to:

- Explain the core concepts of threat assessment
- Identify Threat Assessment tools and resources
- Better understanding different types of threatening behavior
- Identify strategies for management of threatening behavior

Goals✓



What is Threat Assessment?

Threat Assessment is a prevention strategy that has been referred to as the “missing link” in violence prevention. It is the process of deliberately trying to connect the dots or data that paints the picture that someone is moving on a pathway towards an act of Targeted Violence **before** the act occurs.



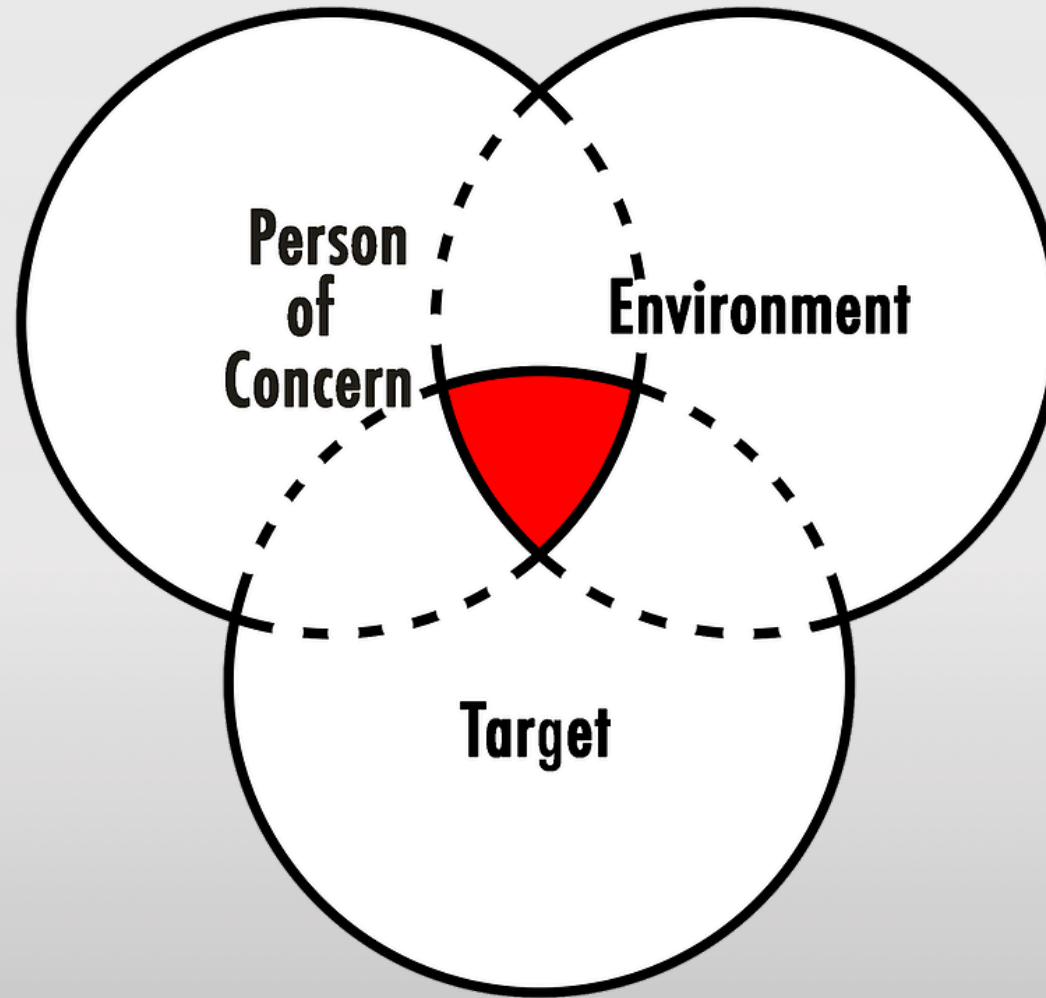
What is Targeted Violence?

Targeted violence refers to **violence** that is goal-directed, predatory, and focused towards a specific individual(s) (e.g., stalking, terrorism, sexual assault).

Threat assessment is the process of gathering information in an effort to estimate the threat of **violence** posed by a person or group of persons.

Source: Dr. Mario Scalora, University of Nebraska Targeted Violence Research Team

Spheres of Influence



Legal Considerations

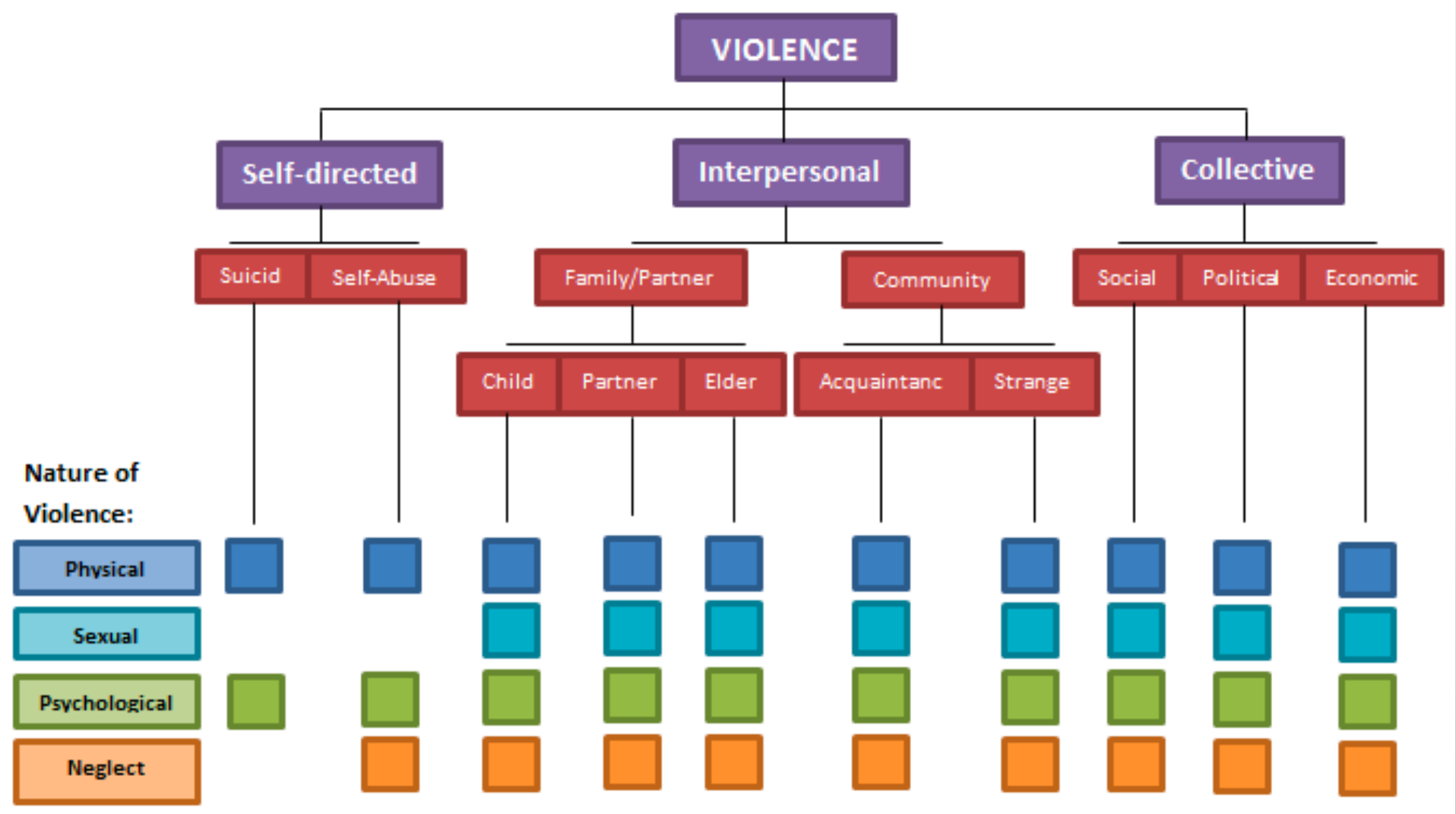


Six Principles of Threat Assessment

1. Targeted violence is the end result of an understandable, and often times discernible, process of thinking and behavior.
2. Targeted violence stems from an interaction between the individual, the situation, the setting, and the target.
3. An investigative, skeptical, inquisitive mindset is critical to successful threat assessment.
4. Effective threat assessment is based upon facts rather than characteristics or traits.
5. Threat assessment is guided by an integrated **systems** approach.
6. The central question in a threat assessment inquiry is whether a person *poses* a threat, not whether a person *made* a threat.

Source: US Secret Service

Topography of Violence



Source: World Health Organization

Workplace Violence



Type 1 – Criminal Activity

Includes violent acts by criminals who have no other connection with the workplace, but enter to commit robbery or another crime.



Type 2 - Customers/Clients

Includes violence directed at employees by customers, clients, patients, inmates, or any others for whom services are provided.



Type 3 - Coworkers

Consists of acts committed by a present or former employee.



Type 4 – Domestic Violence

Includes violence committed in the workplace by someone who doesn't work there, but has a personal relationship with an employee - for example, an abusive spouse or domestic partner.

Domestic Violence



Type 1 - Physical

Includes physical injuries to the victim, pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, etc.



Type 2 - Emotional

Includes degrading the victim, making them feel as if they have no self worth.



Type 3 - Sexual

Includes unwanted sexual assault and harassment.



Type 4 - Financial

Includes financial restriction, or dominance over the victim.



Type 5 - Psychological

Includes threatening, intimidating, and other behaviors to cause the victim fear.

Research – Active/Mass Shootings

A Concerning Dynamic – **Hyper focus on Mass /Active shootings**

US Secret Service Report on Mass Shooting

https://www.secretservice.gov/data/press/reports/USSS_FY2019_MAPS.pdf

FBI Report on Active Shooters in the United States from 2000-2018 <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/active-shooter-incidents-2000-2018.pdf/view>

Mother Jones Mass Shooting Database (1982-2019) – 114 Mass Shootings

<https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/07/mass-shootings-map/>

Everytown Mass Shooting Database (2009-2017) – 173 Mass Shootings

<https://everytownresearch.org/reports/mass-shootings-analysis/>

Peterson, J. & Densley, J. (2019, Aug. 4). We have studied every mass shooting since 1966. Here's what we've learned about the shooters. 150 Mass shootings <https://www.theviolenceproject.org/mass-shooters>

Risk Factors



What about Mental Health?

Two-thirds of the attackers (n = 18, 67%) experienced mental health symptoms prior to their attacks. The most common symptoms observed were related to depression and psychotic symptoms, such as paranoia, hallucinations, or delusions. Suicidal thoughts were also observed (see Table 1). Nearly half of the attackers (n = 12, 44%) had been diagnosed with, or treated for, a mental illness prior to their attacks.

Source: 2018 Secret Service Report on Mass Shootings

What about Mental Health?

In a 2018 report on 63 active shooter assailants, the FBI found that just a quarter of them had been diagnosed with a mental illness. Out of that 25 percent, only three of the assailants had been diagnosed with a psychotic disorder.

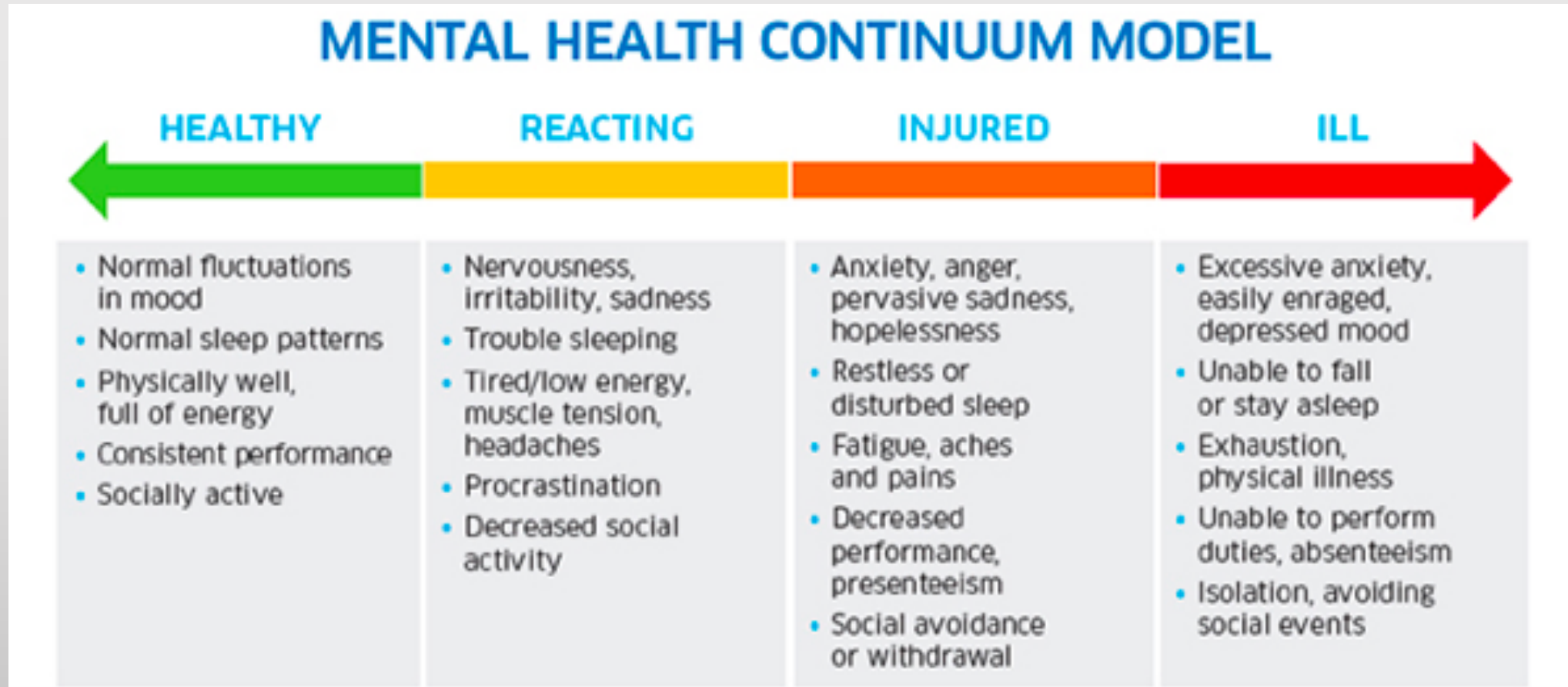
What about Mental Health?

Blaming mental illness for gun violence is simplistic, inaccurate — and prevents us from solving the problem — APA President August 9th 2019

What about Mental Health?

NAMI, the [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#), is deeply saddened by the tragic events that occurred over the weekend in Texas and Ohio. These mass shootings are far too common and impact every corner of our nation. Every time we experience a tragedy like this, people with mental illness are drawn into the conversation. The truth is that the vast majority of violence is not perpetrated by people with mental illness. Statements to the contrary only serve to perpetuate stigma and distract from the real issues.

What about Mental Health?



Source: Corey L. M. Keyes, The Mental Health Continuum (2002)

On the evening of May 23, 2014, in Isla Vista, California, 22-year-old Elliot Rodger killed six people and injured fourteen others near the campus of University of California, Santa Barbara, before killing himself inside his vehicle.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hP-UwheFiis>

Theories - Frustration Aggression

If a goal is being blocked, people often become **frustrated**. If we're feeling very angry at the source of that **frustration**, we may become **aggressive**. The **frustration-aggression theory** states that **frustration** often leads to **aggressive** behavior. This **theory** was proposed by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mower, and Sears in 1939.

Theories – Social Learning Theory

Aggression can be directly learned through operant conditioning, involving positive and negative reinforcement and punishment. **Aggression** can also be learned by the indirect mechanism of observational learning. **Social learning theory** maintains that children **learn** through a process of imitation. This **theory** was proposed by Albert Bandura in 1973

Theories – General Aggression Model

The **General Aggression Model (GAM)** is a comprehensive, integrative, framework for understanding **aggression**. It considers the role of social, cognitive, personality, developmental, and biological factors on **aggression**. This **theory** was proposed by DeWall, C. N., & Anderson, C. A. in 2011

Violence Warning Signs – Reid Meloy’s TRAP -18

Pathway

Fixation

Identification

Novel Aggression

Energy Burst

Leakage

Directly Communicated Threat

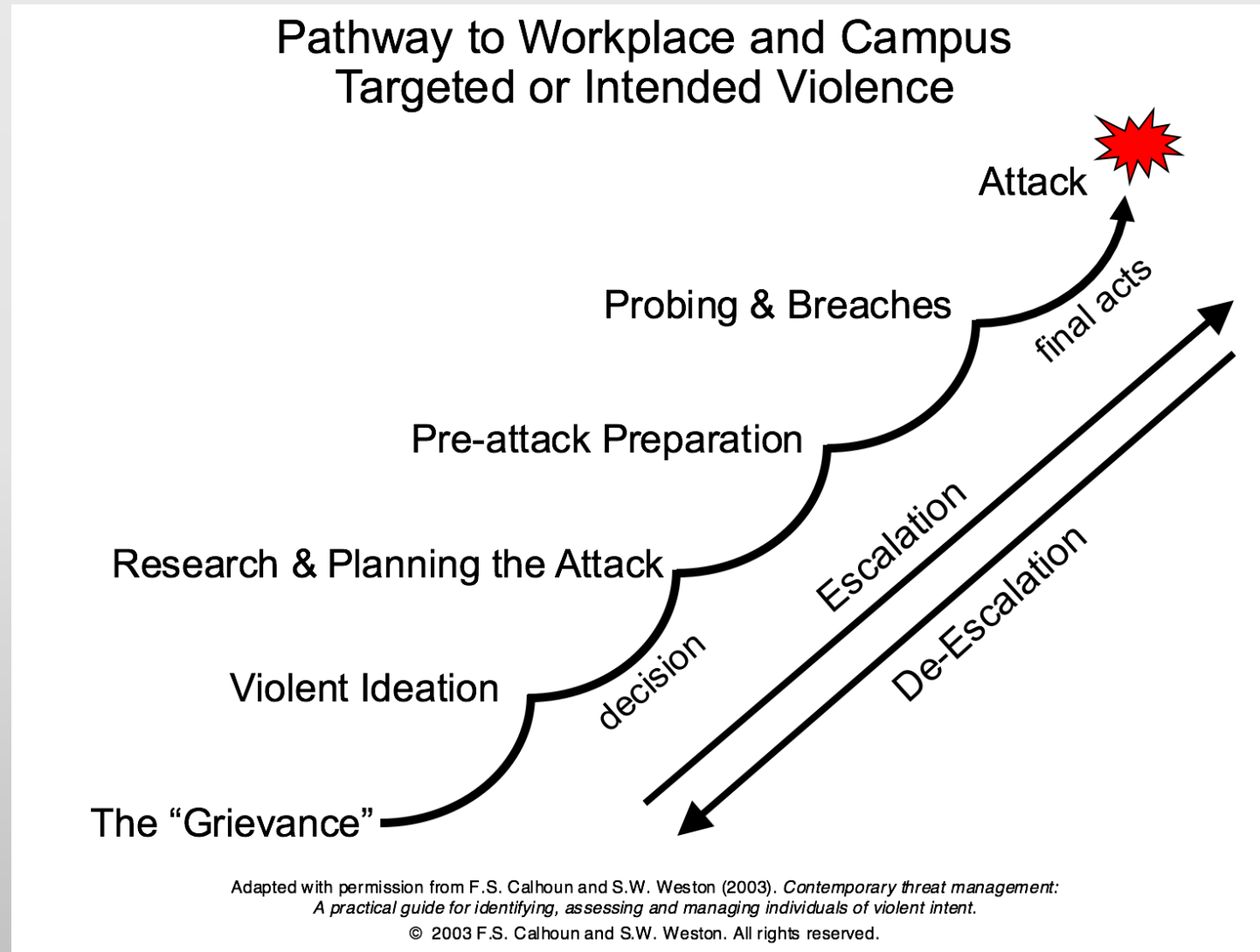
Last Resort Behavior

Recognizing the Warning Signs



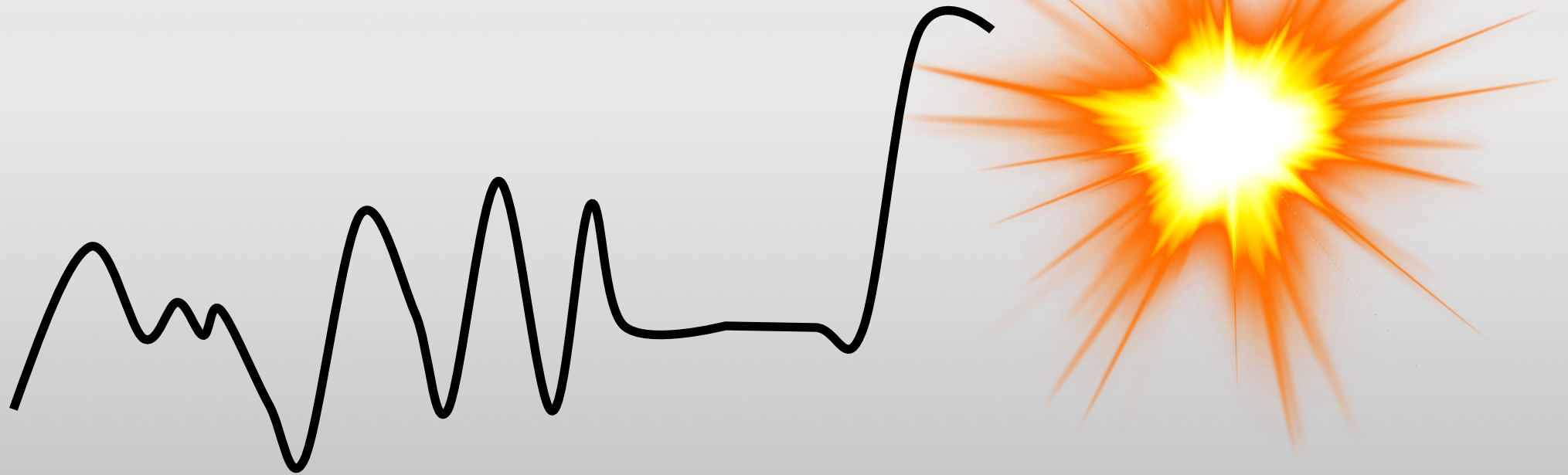
There is no single warning sign or trait of a person who will commit an act of violence, these are simply **“Red Flags”** to watch out for.

The “Pathway” to Violence



The Pathway – **Not** a Straight line

As an individual moves along a pathway to violence, that person may be influenced by a large number of factors. The individual's motivation will fluctuate, as will the emotional state. It is important to be aware of these fluctuations and assess the person's behavior over a period of time.



Pathway, Identification, and Last Resort are the proximal warning behaviors that separate attackers from non-attackers when we look at the cumulative studies so far.



Source:

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2019/08/21/neo-nazi-was-arrested-threatening-woman-saying-he-would-exterminate-hispanics-feds-say/>

Eric Lin, 35, was arrested Friday in Seattle and charged with making threatening communications via Facebook toward one unidentified South Florida woman, who believed that Lin targeted her after meeting her at a restaurant she worked at in Miami.

Pathway: reportedly sent more than 150 pages of threatening messages to a woman, who remains unidentified.

Identification: The woman said Lin's first message to her was an image of himself with a Hitler "filter" superimposed over his own face. A follow-up message described the photo as a "Composite of My Face with the Fuhrer."

**Last Resort "I will stop at
Nothing until you, your
family, your friends, your
entire WORTHLESS LATIN
RACE IS RACIALLY
EXTERMINATED,"**

Pens Down Discussion



This is an active case. Names of involved parties have been redacted or changed

In the spring of 2018 I provided a workplace violence awareness course to a local company. Shortly afterwards a female employee approached HR.

The story she shared would devolve into one of the more involved non-fatal Workplace Violence/DV spillover cases I've worked.

Employee dated Adam for several years and separated with him about a year ago. During that time he has made several “weird visits” to the office.

The most serious incident happened about a month **BEFORE** the training course.

- March 28th - He came into the office and started to harass me. He told me that he was going to kill me and that he was going to keep coming until he got me fired. I told him I was going to call the police but he said he didn't care. He finally left, but said he was going to be waiting for me.
- March 29th - The next morning when I arrived at work Adam approached me outside the office. He had latex gloves on, a large hoodie with black jeans and was carrying a large kitchen knife. I took my phone out and started to call 911 but he knocked the phone out of my hand. He kept yelling at me and telling me I was going to die. I was only able to get away when a large white truck drove between us and I was able to run away into a coffee shop. I called the police and made a report.

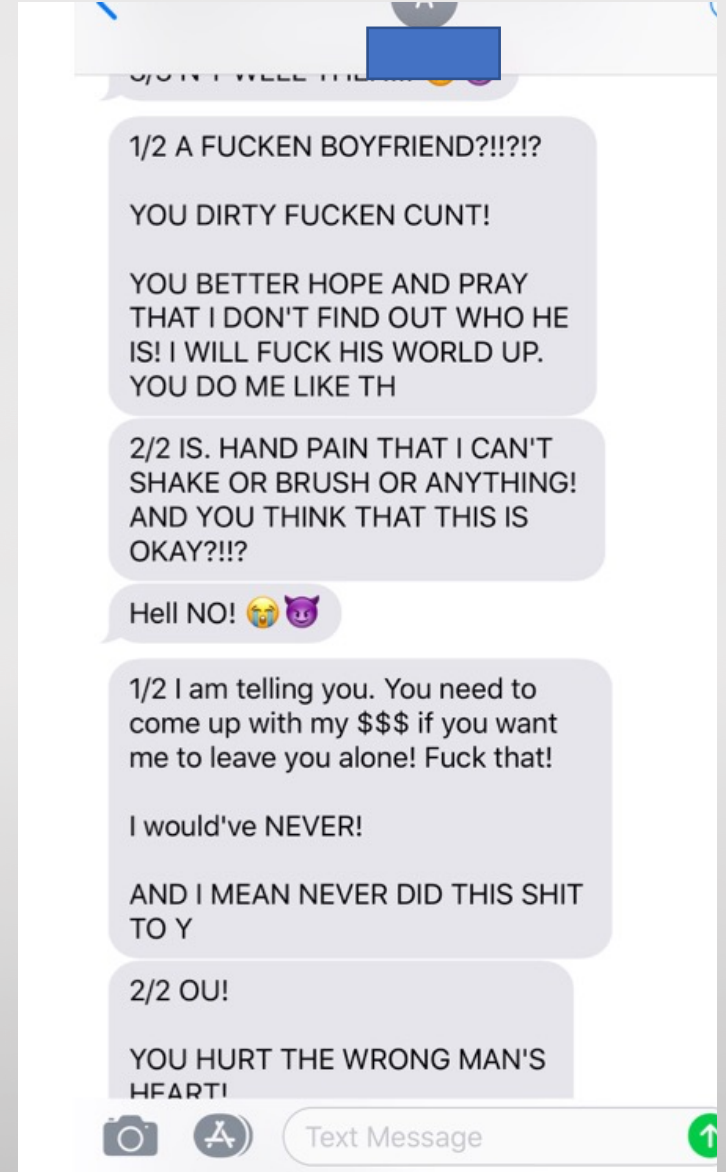
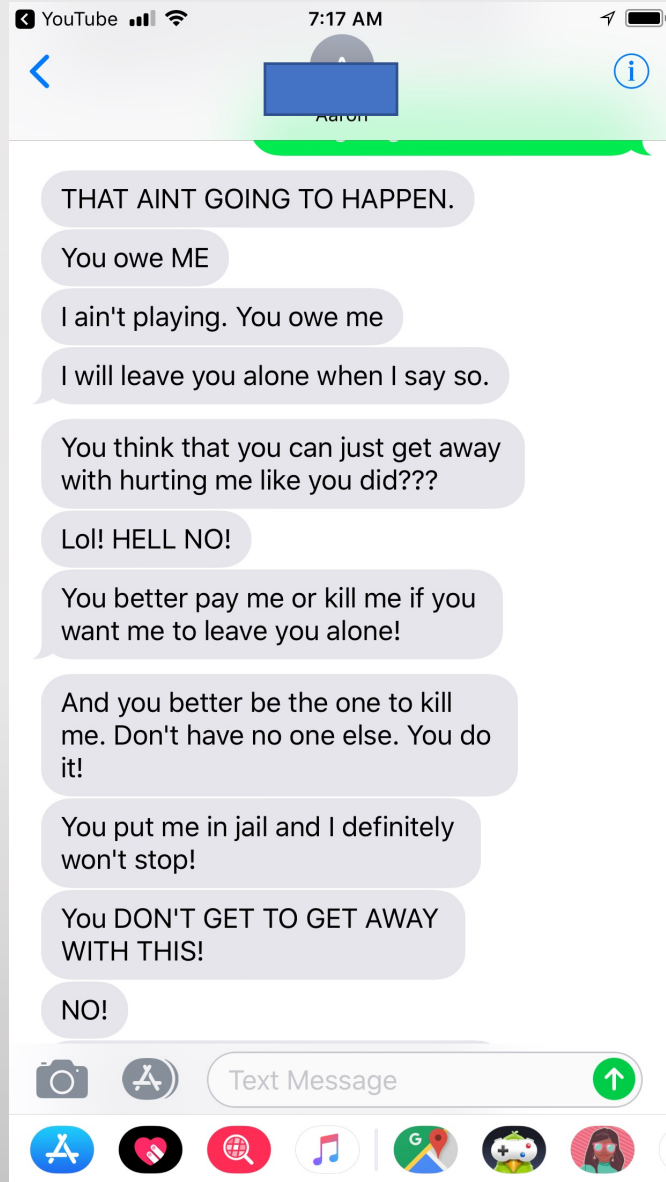
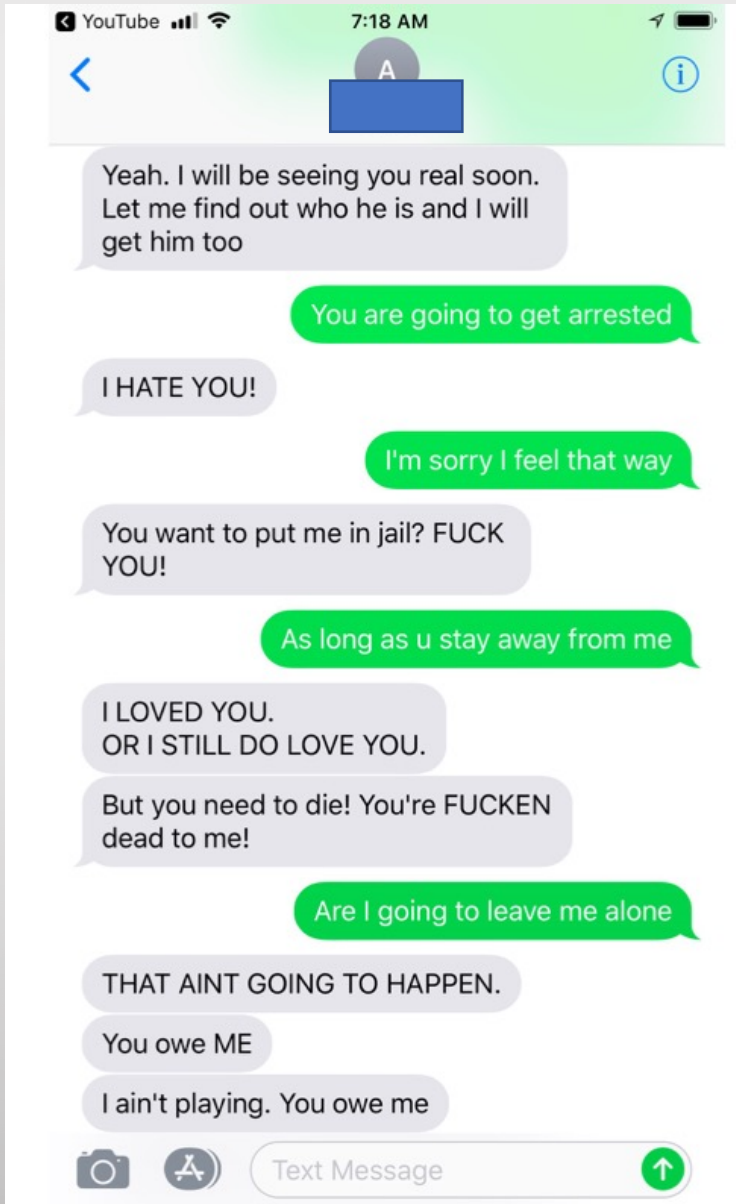
- April 18th – When I was leaving for an assignment with a coworker Adam was standing across the street watching the office.
- April 25th – As I arrived at work at about 8:00, Adam was apparently hiding in the bushes near the office. As soon as got off the bus he charged at me at full speed. I was able to get into the office after my manger “buzzed” me into the building. He ran right up to the door but left after he saw two of my coworkers.

Good Morning

First thank you for speaking to me yesterday. I don't feel so helpless in this situation right now.

Also I think I might have left that police number in my desk at the office. But I did unblock [REDACTED] yesterday and I have attached a few screen shots of his text to pass on to

Case Study – Workplace w DV spillover



I spoke to Hector and he really thinks based on the escalation of the text that you should file another police report. You can file the report online:

<https://www.cityofsacramento.org/Police/How-Do-I/File-a-Police-Report>

Once you have filed it, please forward me a copy so I can include it in the TRO with our attorney.

Also, we highly encourage you to contact WEAVE for additional support in the meantime. We are on our way to retrieve the police report from the March incident and will follow up with you once we receive it.

Voicemail from POC



Case Number: _____

To the Respondent:

The court has issued the temporary orders checked as granted below. If you do not obey these orders, you can be arrested and charged with a crime. You may have to go to jail for up to one year, pay a fine of up to \$1,000, or both.

6 Personal Conduct Orders

Not Requested Denied Until the Hearing **Granted as Follows:**

a. You are ordered **not** do the following things to the employee

and to the other protected persons listed in **4**:

- (1) Harass, molest, strike, assault (sexually or otherwise), batter, abuse, destroy personal property of, or disturb the peace of the person.
- (2) Commit acts of violence or make threats of violence against the person.
- (3) Follow or stalk the person during work hours or to or from the place of work.
- (4) Contact the person, either directly or indirectly, in **any** way, including, but not limited to, in person, by telephone, in writing, by public or private mail, by e-mail, by fax, or by other electronic means.
- (5) Enter the workplace of the person.
- (6) Take any action to obtain the person's address or locations. If this item is not checked, the court has found good cause not to make this order.
- (7) Other (specify):

Other personal conduct orders are attached at the end of this Order on Attachment 6a(7).

Adam was charged with
PC 422
PC 646.9 (A)
PC 417(A)(1)

**Adam was convicted of
PC 646.9(A) with a 2 year sentence
Other charges were dismissed as part of the plea.**

Employee approached HR and informed them that she just received a victims notification that Adam was set to be released this week.

Employee informed us that through a third party, Adam is going to make “everybody pay, anybody who had anything to do with him going to jail is going to pay.”

Employer Reached out to Intake Probation Officer to share Concerns. Probation was very receptive.

Adam Released from Custody under PCRS 8/27/19

(As of yet, he has not checked in with his Intake Probation Officer)

Thoughts?

Threat Assessment and Management



Considerations

Structure Professional Judgment Instruments

Actuarial Models

Expert Judgement

The use of multiple tools combined with Expert Judgment supported by a structured process has been supported as a best practice.

Assessment Tools and Instruments

- Association of Threat Assessment Professionals – V-RAGE
- The Workplace Assessment of Violence Risk-21, Version 3 WAVR-21
- The Historical Clinical Risk Management-20, Version 3 HCR -20
- Salem Keizer System, A Threat Assessment And Management Process For The Schools
- Secret Service –Threat Assessment in Schools Guide
- US Department of Education – Threat Assessment in Schools
- Virginia Model Model for Student Threat Assessment
- National Association of School Psychologist - Threat Assessment for School Administrators
- Los Angeles Unified School District – Threat Assessment and Management
- Structured Assessment of Violence Risk in Youth (S.A.V.R.Y)
- Children's Aggressive Scale -Teachers Version (CAS-T)
- Gavin DeBecker – JACA

Threat Assessment Team

The primary goal of this multidisciplinary team is to evaluate potentially threatening behavior, or actual incidents of violence within an organization and make recommendations on appropriate courses of action. The Threat Assessment Team is comprised of a small and very specific group of partners from across an organization. By leveraging each team members unique perspective, evaluations and associated recommendations are general more comprehensive.

Threat Assessments always start and often end with questions.

Uni-dimensional Assessments

“...the plague of the violence threat/risk assessment world.”

They can occur when one person of any professional background such as mental health, law enforcement, or school administration chooses to interview the individual in question without validating the interview data, and without investigating history regarding past violence, suicide attempts, or other factors.



Multi-Disciplinary Assessments



Groups of professionals from diverse disciplines, backgrounds and even professions to provide comprehensive assessment data and **contextual** variables.

Six Principles of Threat Assessment

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Source: US Secret Service

Understanding Threats

"There's something wrong here."

- ***Direct*** threat identifies a specific act against a specific target delivered in a straightforward, clear, and explicit manner.
- ***Indirect*** threat tends to be vague, unclear and ambiguous. Violence is implied, but threat is phrased tentatively, and suggests that a violent act *could* occur, not that it *will* occur.
- ***Veiled*** threat is one that strongly implies but does not explicitly threaten violence.
- ***Conditional*** threat is often seen in extortion cases. It warns that a violent act will happen unless certain demands or terms are met.

Threat Assessment - Step by Step

Identify
Assess
Manage
Follow-up

Step 1 - Identifying

The “Interviewer”

“An investigative, skeptical, inquisitive mindset is critical to successful threat assessment.” (Fein, et. al. 2002)

- thoughtful probing
- viewing information with healthy skepticism
- paying attention to key points regarding pre-attack behavior



Step 1- Utilize External Resources

Family and Friends

Social Media

Employee Assistance Programs

Domestic Violence Support Groups

Mental Health

Social Services

Specialized Consultants

Step 2 - Assessing Threatening Behavior

WHO - Concerns should be evaluated by a multi-disciplinary team. No one person should make the decision.

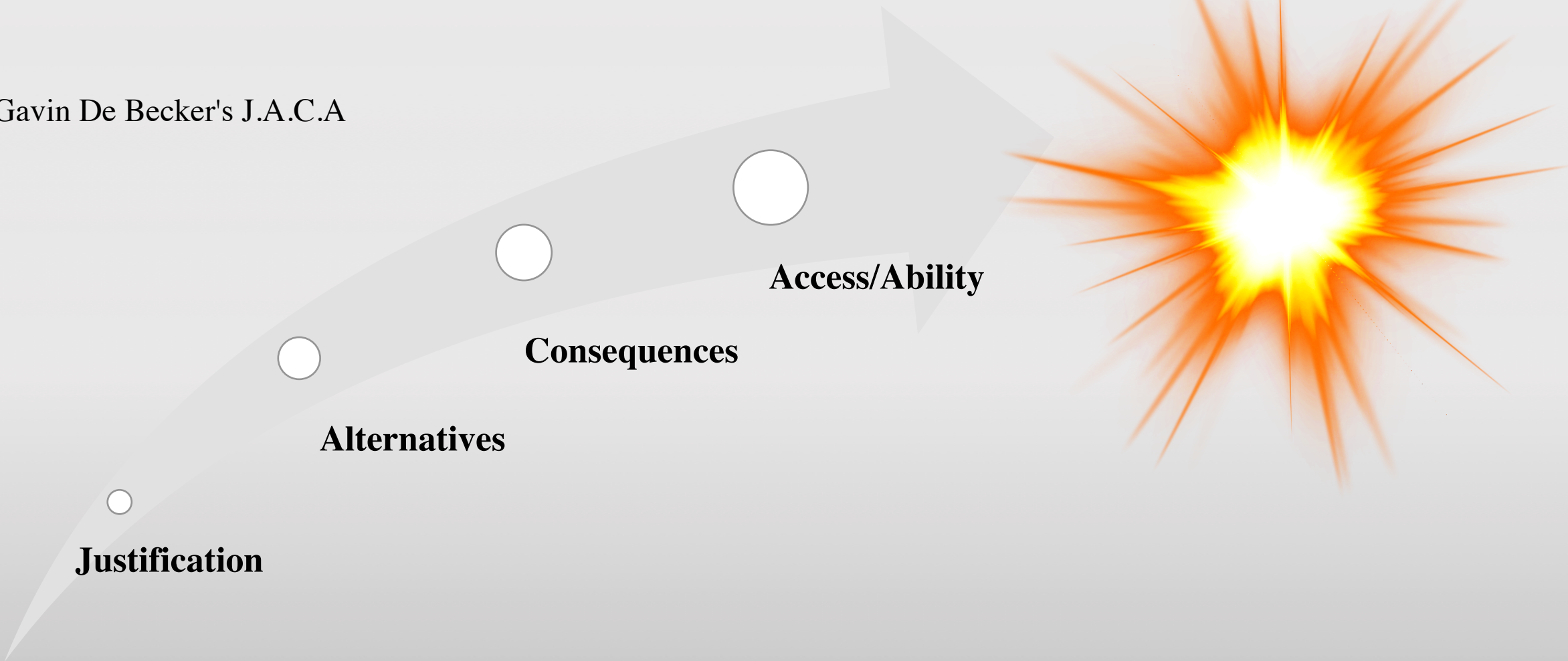
WHAT - Does the individual pose a threat, not merely was a threat made?

HOW – Use a structured process such as Gavin De Becker's J.A.C.A



STEP 2 - Assessing Threatening Behavior (cont.)

Gavin De Becker's J.A.C.A



Are the concerns valid? (Continue or Suspend)

J.A.C.A - Justification

Does the individual have subjective justification? Or have they justified a reason that they should do the aggressive act?

- “I warned her what would happen and she did it anyway.”

J.A.C.A - Alternatives

Do they have options other than acting out aggressively?

- i.e. “I am calling my lawyer and will have your job” vs. “No one can help now!”

The second is a much more threatening response.

J.A.C.A - Consequences

Does the individual identify any rewards or negative consequences to being aggressive or violent?

- Examples of concerning responses would include “I can do jail time.” or “I might get caught but it would feel good!”

J.A.C.A - Access

Does the individual have access/ability to carrying out the threat?

- We typically assume access is present. Just because we don't think they will actually build a nuclear bomb, they might Google search and find they have everything for a pipe bomb.

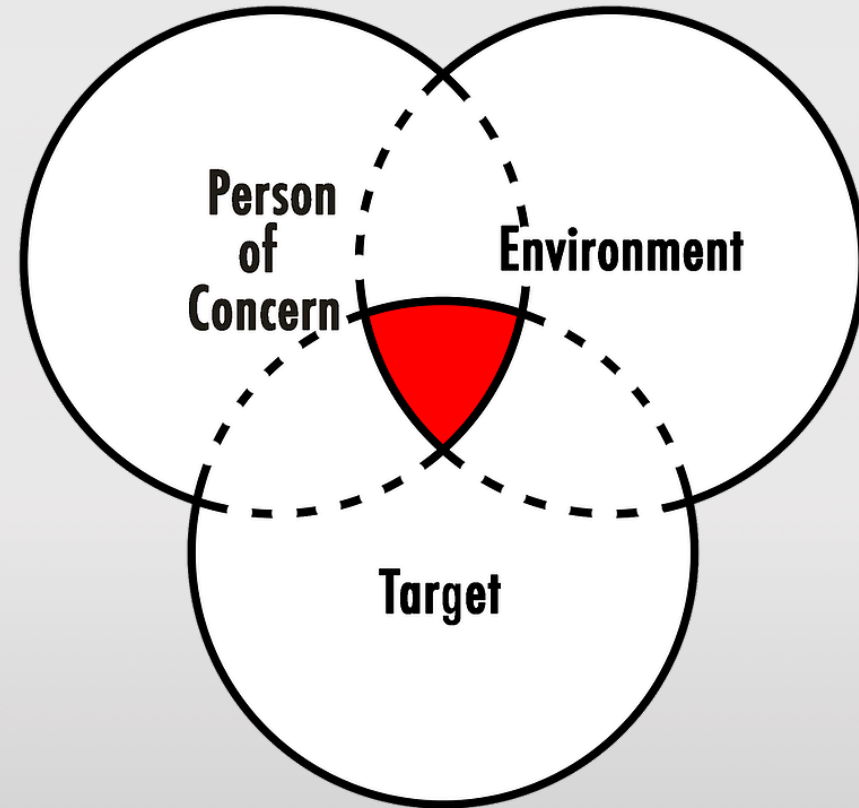
Level of Concern Determination

- 0 elements present – no threat
- 1 element present – mild threat
- 2 elements present – moderate threat
- 3 elements present – severe threat
- 4 elements present – profound or imminent threat.



Step 3 - Managing Threatening Behavior

Changes to the environment
Intervention with the POC
Intervention with the target



It's important to understand that we all tend to use the resources that we are the most comfortable with, even though they may not be the best solution for the problem.

Step 4 – Follow- Up

Targeted Violence can occur days, weeks and even months after we think a threatening situation was resolved. We may need to orchestrate a method to monitor and/or intervene with regard to a threatening individual over time. That can mean making difficult decisions about how best to monitor and who (inside or outside the organization) should intervene.

Closing Thoughts

Questions?

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