

Episode 51:Fighting Gun Violence While Social Distancing



National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255.
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*****Brady legal music*****

JJ

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 our 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.

*****Brady musical introduction*****

JJ

Hey everybody, and welcome back to a very special minisode of Red, Blue and Brady and in a world where everyone is, I think at this point starting to go a little stir crazy trying to figure out things to do at home. I am really excited to be joined by the president of Brady, Kris Brown,

who's gonna tell us, you know, some things that we can be doing that are going to help others help ourselves and ideally, keep us from, you know, slowly merging and becoming one with our couch. Hi Kris, thank you for joining me from your house.

JJ

Hi JJ, it's a pleasure to join you from my chair in my living room.

JJ

This is our comfy fit, I guess, minisode.

Kris Brown

Yes it's our comfy fit minisode series.

JJ

Yeah, it's been interesting to engage everyone going through physical distancing and yet still working. It's very strange. I feel like I talked to everyone from Brady every single day. But I see no one. It's very weird.

Kris Brown

Yeah, I crave that. At least what the video technology is giving, I find myself on a lot more video chats with everyone on our team and in the field as well as my own family. So I suppose that's a good thing.

JJ

Well, so I suppose you know, in this time, though, of physical distancing in this time of disruption, what I really wanted to talk to you about what I really wanted our listeners to have access to is how you could be doing this physical distancing, while also preventing gun violence, will also fighting gun violence. How can we be active while being confined to the home?

Kris Brown

Right. Well, I'm looking forward to getting into it, JJ, but you know, Brady's work is across Congress, courts and the communities, and it doesn't stop with the physical distancing that COVID-19. And our response to it requires, if anything, knowing that we have record gun sales that are happening right now as judged by the background check increase, reported to be at least 300%.

We have all the more reason to make sure that we're engaging virtually. And with physical distance in mind, to spread that important message around safe storage to End Family Fire and make sure we're not seeing an increase in gun deaths as a result of people's response to this pandemic. So our work here is so, so very important and can really help save the lives of our neighbors, our friends and maybe even our relatives.

And so the opportunity to really talk about all of those issues in a real and authentic way is right before us. And Brady has a lot of tools and a lot of tips to do that successfully and make it an easier journey for individuals who really want to reach out and make sure that their friends, their

neighbors, their loved ones understand the risk of a loaded unsecured gun in their home. Whether that's a new gun owner who's purchasing because of fears around COVID or someone who has guns in the home who may not safely secure them now.

JJ

So on that note, what are some things that people could be doing? I guess we should just jump right in and give me some tasks Kris, give our audience some homework here.

Kris Brown

Well, as all of us engage in socializing as we connect with some friends and family who we may not talk to as frequently, I think many people are doing that today, as you're checking in with folks, ask the question: is there an unlocked gun in your home? And I know for many people, it may not be the first question that they ask when they're checking in with family and friends. But as Ky said, I completely agree. That's really an act of empathy, of looking out for your friends and family in a very real way.

Keep in mind, like I said before, that we're at a time where people, many people close to us may feel very isolated, and the presence of a gun in the home greatly increases suicide risk in that home. And certainly the presence of a loaded, unlocked gun greatly increases the risk to family members in that home. So the question that you ask is there an unlocked gun in your home? Has the power to save a life, save a life of someone you care about, save the life of someone that you know and has the power to transform other people's lives, too.

Because it's not just the individuals in that home that will be saved with appropriate storage of firearms. It's also the people coming over to play at some point in the future in that home. So asking that question and finding a way in to do that, I can give some tips on that JJ. To make it less burdensome to people if they feel at all concerned about asking the question. Although I know you've given a lot of tips on other podcasts about that. Find a way to do it in a way that's comfortable to you.

I've talked to many people who asked the question kind of this way. Hey, I was just asked this question by a friend, and it really got me thinking. So I want to ask you, is there an unlocked gun in your home? Right? It doesn't have to be an intrusive question, but I will say from this question being asked in my own life, asking the question myself, if you have any trepidation about it, hopefully you understand that those who ask it typically get incredibly positive reception, an appreciation from the people who are asking the question.

This doesn't have to be a political question. It's just a question that's similar to a question that I always ask around allergy, allergens in the home. My daughter is severely allergic, so I always asked the question before she goes over to people's homes. Do you have peanuts? Do you have other things that she's allergic to, so I understand the risks. This question is no different from that. It's just like those. And I'm sure many of our listeners ask those kinds of questions. If you can ask those questions, this is a question you can also ask, and it will be really well received.

JJ

So I think one of the low impact sort of things, like certainly it's free to do while you're home is going to the Brady website Bradyunited.org, and I'll include a direct link, but going to our website and using the links that we have there to push Congress to pass common sense gun reform. So, actually, while I laid on my couch last night watching Netflix with my husband, I actually sat and went through and just was able to send out a bunch of messages to my elected official. Which is great, right? Like, didn't cost a thing. It was actually really nice to engage my brain after watching the Tiger King documentary for several hours.

Kris Brown

Oh my gosh, I watched that last night too. That's a separate discussion.

JJ

Yes, but while watching it go ahead, fight for the Violence Against Women Act at the same time, you know? Get engaged. So I was wondering if you could tell our listeners a little bit about you know, there are so many things that we would love for people to do, but they're sort of three that at this time we've been really pushing for.

Kris Brown

Yeah, yeah, that's right, JJ. So the important things that we can do effectively from our chairs or a couch right now is to lobby and push our members of Congress to pass common sense gun reform. And, you know, I worked on Capitol Hill as you know, JJ, for a long time, for about eight years, and I can tell you members of Congress pay a lot of attention to hearing from their constituents on key issues. We may not think that's the case, but it still is. And we hear time and again from senators from U. S senators and members of the House of Representatives that it was great to hear from so many of your supporters on this issue and hearing from you all really, really made a difference. And so we've tried to make this really easy at Brady.

Do go to our website at bradyunited.org. You can click on actions that you can take in this era of COVID, there's a box on the website that provides just a link to various actions that you can take, a whole series of them. One of them is number three here in a blog that we created that you'll go to called "Urge Your Members to Pass Commonsense Gun Reform." And there are three major issues we've noted there for a reason. One is the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. We know that the presence of a gun and a domestic violence situation increases the risk that a woman will be murdered by 500%. That's 500%.

But right now, under the Violence Against Women Act, we don't have a provision that ensures that intimate partners who may not be married would have guns removed in a domestic violence situation. And the removal of those guns is the critical linchpin in saving a life of a woman who may be abused, or a person who may be abused because men also get abused. And so we are asking everyone to go on our website and very easily click this button that we have created around urging your senator to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act. And ensure that the loophole in the law that does not apply to unmarried, intimate partners is closed and that all victims of domestic abuse, whether they're married or unmarried, to the person who's abusing them, are equally protected and can ensure that guns were removed from those dangerous situations.

The other really important note that we have there, and there are a few things JJ, but is to express your support to your member of Congress to support extreme risk laws. Those are the laws also known as extreme risk protection orders or red flag laws that are a proven tool to prevent firearms suicide. They're especially vital right now, because social distancing can increase feelings of depression and isolation. We've already talked about that and an extreme risk order, which you can get if a state has passed one of these laws, but not all have, will ensure that guns are temporarily removed from an individual who may be in crisis.

So we would ask everyone to go again to our website and to this section that tells you what you should be doing to be lobbying your members of Congress and urge Congress to support extreme risk laws, and that will ensure that more states make these laws, pass these laws. Right now, 17 states and DC have them, but we want more funding for states to pass them and put them in place. For those states that have had them in place, what they've seen is using Connecticut's example, which has the longest standing extreme risk law, a dramatic reduction in suicide in those states which is so important when we have people who are as isolated as they've ever been in life.

If they have a presence of a gun in the home, to be able to save those lives is critically important. And of course, we also want to pass universal background checks. I think that's pretty straightforward. One and five guns sold today are sold with no background check at all. And with skyrocketing gun sales, we need to close that loophole. So please also demand Mitch McConnell act now and pass H.R.8. That's the bill that passed the House that's been pending in the Senate for more than a year.

JJ

And these are all again, like these are all things that I think underscore the fact one of the things that we're talking about on an upcoming podcast, which is we've got an epidemic of gun violence that's not going to stop just because we have a pandemic.

Kris Brown

No. And you know we will eventually have a vaccine for that pandemic. But we're not gonna have a vaccine to inoculate us from gun violence very sadly, and these guns that people are buying, especially the new purchasers, are going to be around long, long after we've dealt with coronavirus and the risk to that person and that family continues unabated if we don't act. And so that's why it's so important that all of us take our time now with extra time at home, to be advocates, to raise our voices.

And we can really make a difference by doing that as hard as this time is right now, if we can gain more mindshare from folks who were just too busy before to do this kind of activism, we can make a huge difference around this issue. So I'd really encourage people to take the time to do that and raise your voice. We've learned more in the last year about how important each of our voices is in this democracy to count and be heard. So please do that. If you care at all about this issue, use these tools to tell your member of Congress how you feel about this issue and demand action now.

JJ

Well, and that then leads into the power of voting and and being counted. And so that's another thing that we're really suggesting, which is fill out your census.

Kris Brown

Yes, please. It's absolutely essential that your census forms be filled out. We know that there are various delays and the in-person count that folks doing the U.S. Census were going to do because of restrictions on physical distancing that are in place. And what we also know, though, is that people can go online to record their household members, and it's a simple act. I got my information on the mail yesterday with the code that I can go on and fill out the information that's necessary.

And just so folks know, I'm sure many many do. But the importance here is that accurate counts around the census, which is taken every 10 years, are absolutely critical to ensure that our representative democracy works as it should. This census count will determine the size, scale and scope of congressional districts all across this country, and an undercount by the census would mean less representation, resources and power for already marginalized populations, including those most impacted by gun violence.

This issue is absolutely tied to the issue of gun violence in this country, especially in communities of color which experience a disproportionate impact of everyday gun violence, so I can't emphasize enough how important it is for everyone to make sure that they learn more and start the 2020 census now. And for more information about that, please also go to our website at Bradyunited.org.

JJ

So one of the other things that I think is really important to and again, go to the website. I'm gonna keep saying it, but it's been striking to me people trying to figure out how to vote in this time, how to register to vote in this time too, because that's really important not to sort of sit on this.

Kris Brown

And that is critically important and I can understand people's confusion about it. Obviously, even in the primaries, that are still happening with respect to the presidential election, many states, because they have shut down all but essential service, is and are concerned about long lines for voting, which we've seen leading up to the last primaries that were held have postponed for many, voting and that can be confusing to people who were planning to vote coming up. Also, obviously we have a critical election in November. Last night, last I saw, I'm not sure that it's, maybe very subtle, but Donald Trump is trying to be a two term president, and you all need to keep in mind that among the issues that are crystallized as most most decisive and determinative in this race is the issue of gun violence.

Donald Trump has been one of the greatest champions and friends to the NRA, the gun industry that they have enjoyed really in history. And we have someone running on the other side of the

equation in Joe Biden, who's been a champion of gun violence prevention since he was elected to the U.S. Congress. So, really, this is a decisive and determinative election for our issue. And for folks, what we encourage all voters to do is visit vote411.org for the latest information about how your state is handling voting requirements for any upcoming election, including the presidential election, many states are offering, voting by mail, early voting and absentee ballots.

You know, voting early is the best way to ensure that in these uncertain times your vote is counted and is greatly appreciated, and to learn more you can also visit Rock the Vote. So this is really, really important. There are a lot of options out there to get educated and we would encourage all listeners to really explore the options and opportunities and move forward with early voting and absentee ballots, if your state allows that.

And I guess one last plug simply is I know that for a lot of people upending these routines and having this pandemic and the fear that induces and creates incredible stress and anxiety and we're here for you at Brady United. We understand that certainly. We were founded by survivors who experienced the brutal reality of gun violence which is obviously incredibly traumatic. And I don't wanna like that necessarily to what we're experiencing now. But that same sort of stress and grief and recovery is very important. What we know from all of our work that having a sense of purpose and all of this is really, really important.

Moving forward and getting a sense of control by doing something and doing something for others can be really therapeutic. And so I would really recommend the kinds of activities we talked about today. To give you a peace of mind and a sense of empowerment in this world today.

JJ

That such a perfect ending. Kris, thank you so much for coming on.

*****music plays*****

JJ

Well, thanks. 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. Come see us online at Bradyunited.org or follow us on social [@Bradybuzz](https://twitter.com/Bradybuzz). Be brave and remember, take action, not sides.

*****Brady musical outro*****

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