

Episode 183-- Responsible vs Safe Gun Storage

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SPEAKERS

JJ Janflone, Kelly Sampson, Michael Sodini



JJ Janflone 00:08

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JJ Janflone 00:37

Hey everybody, welcome back to another episode of Red, Blue, and Brady.



Kelly Sampson 00:41

I'm one of your hosts, Kelly.



JJ Janflone 00:43

And I'm your other host, JJ.



Kelly Sampson 00:45

Yeah. And thanks for joining us today as we sit down with Michael Sodini, president of Walk The Talk America, a nonprofit that sits at the intersection of mental health awareness and firearms.



JJ Janflone 00:56

Michael was super kind to join us to talk all about safe and responsible gun storage, the

Michael was super kind to join us to talk all about safe and responsible gun storage, the importance of credible messengers and why we need to be more open in our discussions about mental health.

M

Michael Sodini 01:09

My name is Michael Sodini. I'm the founder of Walk The Talk America, which is a nonprofit organization that looks for innovative ways to get people the help they need without fear of consequence, innovative solutions to the negative outcomes of firearms that don't involve legislation that kind of give people a different look at maybe some of the things we can do to focus more on root cause mitigation, and kind of cut down on the negative outcomes of firearms. I'm from the firearms community, originally. I got my job through nepotism, I used to own a firearms exporter and importer, and I wasn't necessarily a firearms person going into the business, it was more of a family business. So I have three generations of firearms industry professionals behind me. And that's, that's really what I am and what I do. And now I focus full time on Walk The Talk America.



JJ Janflone 02:02

Well, and you have a podcast with Walk The Talk America as well, and that again, hate to advertise for other podcasts on this platform, but we do end up doing it so much! But it's incredibly interesting and deals with this intersection of guns and mental health.

M

Michael Sodini 02:15

Yeah, no, I appreciate that. It's called the the "Guns and Mental Health" podcast, it's hosted by myself and Jake Wiskerchen and we like to bring on all walks of life when it comes to firearms and mental health. So we'll have people that may have survived a mass shooting, we'll have people that have used their firearm in a defensive situation, you know, we like to kind of unpack and explore every aspect of gun ownership and mental health and break down the stigmas that go along with it.



JJ Janflone 02:39

I mean, that's a great name. And so I'm just wondering, where did the name come from?

M

Michael Sodini 02:44

Yeah, it's a great question. As somebody who didn't grow up around gun people, right, I grew up in two of the worst places to for gun ownership. I grew up in Asbury Park, New Jersey, and San Francisco, California. So you know, I grew up with different walks of life, I wasn't necessarily a gun person, but I wanted to create a space where whatever organization I made, even if you weren't into firearms, you could be like, "I am going to get behind what these people do. I really like what they do." So for me, Walk The Talk America means are you really about saving lives, all the other stuff, we can check at the door, you know, in the name was

available, and I couldn't believe it. I remember the day that I looked it up and I was like, "This can't be true. This can't be available." But that's kind of like the origin story of Walk The Talk America, I thought, What kind of name? Would people no matter what they believed in, say, okay, that makes sense. Let's walk the talk. Let's not just talk about it. Let's save lives. Let's do whatever, we can now put our differences aside, and work together on solutions.



JJ Janflone 03:45

And I wonder if you can break down for us to how the org even came to be? How do you go from sort of working adjacent to this to saying, you know, "hey, I really want to focus on this intersection that's so important of guns and mental health."



Michael Sodini 03:58

Yeah, it's actually a really cool story. I'm gonna go back, though a little bit to 2009 when the president of my own firearms company took his life with a gun. And what I thought was very strange about the firearms industry itself is that we wouldn't talk about things like suicide, we wouldn't talk about the negative outcomes of firearms, simply because we didn't want it used against us, right? It could be something that's weaponized against us. And it still is to this day, in my opinion, when you see the lump number of firearm deaths, right? It doesn't break it down for people, it just says this many people, right. And there's different, death is bad period. I don't want anyone to misunderstand that. But you know, suicide is two thirds of that number. And it's just something that couldn't talk about. And for me, looking at the firearms industry, it's like, we're not talking about suicide, but yet we hold our first responders and combat vets so dear to us, and they take their life at an alarming rate. I thought that was really odd. So I just wanted to do something. And then in 2018, I had a chance meeting with a stranger that my national sales manager and I met at a restaurants very crowded restaurant, we were talking to her at the bar, said, Hey, do you want to join us for dinner and she was gun neutral, she had no idea about guns. So she was like, "what happens when there's this like a mass shooting? What happens?" I said, everybody blames us. We blame mental health, and nothing ever happens. And she asked one question that changed my life forever. She said, if you have identified what an issue is, like, how do you work with the mental health community to find solutions that you can agree on? I thought that was like a brilliant question. And it was like mind blown. And my, my sales manager turned to me, he's like, "Yeah, we really should be given like a dollar a gun gun to mental health," blanket statement, right? With no, nothing behind that not knowing what it means.



Michael Sodini 05:50

And then originally, I thought, well, this would be really cool. What if I could, what if I could raise money within the gun industry, and we could give it to the mental health side, right, and they could work on programs that might help people with outreach and things like that. It was really the lazy persons way out of something, right? It's just all throw money at it. But then when I kind of went down the rabbit hole of like, finding a mental health organization that would be gun neutral, or be open to the idea, I found Mental Health America and they took a stance where it was going to be an unpopular opinion. And it was a position paper 72. And it started off by saying, We're going to stay away from the gun rights thing, because we don't

believe that just because you battle mental illness, you should be denied your gun rights. And I thought, okay, these are people that I need to reach out and talk to cut to four years later, you know, what I found out was, nobody has the answers, right? There's no just throwing money at whatever mental health, anyone could donate to Mental Health America, anyone can donate to some of these great organizations. But there's nothing in place that that was innovative. And I came back to my board and I said, you know, here's the issue. And they were like, look, this is a learning opportunity. Let's take the time to look at ourselves as the gun industry and figure out what we can do. So it forced me to look inside the industry and say, Okay, let's get creative, right, let's do things that might be a little different.

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Michael Sodini 07:14

You know, take for example, one of the things that we do is, we get firearms manufacturers to put in mental health screenings in their boxes. So when you buy a firearm, it comes with a box, right? You open up that box. And now you have, and your listeners can't see this, but you know, I'm holding it up on camera, the the mental health screening card, which leads to mental health, which is powered by Mental Health America, at least 13 Different screenings, you could do one for anxiety, you could do one for depression, right? And it's free and anonymous. And that's what gun owners are into. So it's just kind of starting the ball there. But that's is one of the examples of what we do. Here's another example. I think you guys are really dig this is arms court ammo on the side of their ammo boxes, they have our mental health screening, you know, so for us, it's it's getting awareness, getting people to take a screening to to understand where they're at mentally, and then maybe being proactive about doing something about it.



JJ Janflone 08:03

So I have so so many questions, but I'd love to hear from you, you know, a Brady, we share the stat a lot that we know we lose 100 people a day to gun violence, 60 of those from suicide. And I'm wondering how you feel about us including those 60 folks a day in that 100 number?

M

Michael Sodini 08:19

Yeah, that's one of the things I think is intellectually dishonest sometimes, right? Because that's an emotional thing to throw out there. Look, death is bad, period. Some people have a threshold for death that, you know, I've never been able to pinpoint what it is like, I've had conversations with people where I've literally just wanted to be interested in what they're saying. So they're like, Yeah, we need a magazine capacity ban. I'm like, from what to what? And they're like, Well, no more than seven. Like, oh, okay, so seven people is, that's your threshold for death. I prefer you to be like, no guns at all right? At least, like, I know where you stand was, when I look at these things. And I look at these numbers. And I'm like, it doesn't really tell the whole story. Obviously, within that 100 deaths, you can break it out to all the different types, right? You're, whether it's suicide, or whether it's gang violence, whether it's somebody just doing something super horrific or an accidental, right. So you know, it doesn't really tell necessarily the whole story. And I feel like that's where we've kind of gotten away, away from the suicide prevention piece. The suicide prevention piece is so tough, because

there's a lot of people that they like, Oh, they're gonna do it anyways. Right? What can we do? How can we stop that? But I think that's a place that we need to really laser focus on. And I think no matter who you are, you can do that.

K

Kelly Sampson 09:36

I think you're really breaking down how important education is. And I wonder if you could share how education works in the mental health and gun owner space with Walk The Talk America.

M

Michael Sodini 09:47

So with what we do, obviously, there's a whole component of talking to gun owners about and educating them about the mental health process. And then there is another side of it where we're dealing with the mental health community and the variance there is so huge, right? So you can, obviously, when you're talking to a crowd or gun ownership crowd, they're going to be more aligned to the things that we already know inside the gun community. And then when you're talking to a crowd that doesn't know anything about firearms, or just wants to save lives, right? It's a totally different ballgame. So I never feel like I'm pushing back against anything. I feel like we're here to educate, and do it in a way that makes it inviting, right. So I truly believe that I'm not going to change everybody's mind. You know, for the staunch 2A supporter who's like, "You can't, you can't deal with mental health people, you can't talk to the mental health side, because they're just going to use it against you." You know, I never say like, I'm going to win this person over, I'm going to push back and get them to think the way I think I'm going to just plant seeds and show them that there's a reason why I do what I do. And then for the, you know, the person that just doesn't understand gun culture at all, and maybe they say like, I hate guns, because I don't want to see people die, which is something that I completely understand. Because I feel like most people that are anti-gun or for certain restrictions, really, in the heart of things just don't want to see people hurt. And, you know, that's a whole other conversation. But for me, I don't ever feel like there's you're pushing back against anything. I feel like you're just inviting people to the table to talk and throw out ideas.

K

Kelly Sampson 11:19

And one thing about you know, this intersection of mental health and gun violence that we've talked a lot about here at Brady is how safe storage can be so life saving, and we actually have a program called End Family Fire, which encourages, you know, gun owners to safely sort of firearm to prevent suicide, but also unintentional shootings, and in many cases, also, you know, homicide that can result from unsafe storage. And so I'm wondering if you could talk a little bit about the importance of safe storage for firearm owners.

M

Michael Sodini 11:50

Yeah, absolutely. One thing I really would suggest getting away from or what I try to, and this is just from years of experience is the word "safe storage", right, at Walk The Talk America, we like to use responsible storage. And the reason being is gun owners tend to think they're the safest people on the planet. Right? That's, that's something that we could argue, right. But if

you talk to most gun owners, especially ones that are involved in the community, and shoot and go to the range and everything like that, you know, they're gonna be like "You're talking to me about safe storage, safety, I am safe, I know muzzle flashing, I know trigger discipline, you know, I have guns staged all around my house for safety," and they tend to shut down. Now responsible storage is a completely different animal, right? Responsible storage is basically unauthorized access, right? Like not giving people access to your firearms. It's so important. It's really important when I talk to firearms owners who are like the staunch pry from my cold, dead hands 2A guy who's like, I need my firearm at all times, you know, I tried to bring them back to understanding that every negative outcome used in a firearm will be used against us, right. And one thing that I love to push when I'm talking to firearms owners, especially ones that are pushing back a little bit about what you guys call safe I call responsible storage is that you can train as hard retrieving your firearm from a quick access safe as you can with your firearm.



Michael Sodini 13:16

You know, we as gun owners, we pride ourselves on all the training that we do, if you've talked to any gun owner, they're going to tell you about the three day course they took or you know, I spent this much time at the range. And I'm a big believer in look, train is as hard as you can with your safe retrieving your firearm. I mean, right off camera, I have a quick access safe here. And sometimes when I'm on phone calls, I just run my fingers over, right, I could do it in my sleep, I have gun staged all around my house. Now I have teenage daughters, so I cannot have unauthorized access, I have to have them locked up. It's crucial even though they're trained in firearms, and they understand it. I don't know if their friends are, right. I don't know, if someone breaks into the house like I, to me, I think that everything needs to be stored properly. And basically, you should be able to have quick access to it. So I recommend things like Vara safety, Cannon, and Gun Vault like they all make safe storage options that are affordable, that you can get to them quick and you can train with them. You can train retrieving your firearm, it's huge for me.



JJ Janflone 14:17

I think it's so interesting, and then like I think sort of just like vitally points out the importance of like a credible messenger in in this space or in any space, like to a different community. Because I wouldn't, I would never think of framing it as responsible versus safe storage. But clearly, that's something that, you know, we joke on the podcast all the time. I've taken gun classes I've you know, I've trained some that, but I don't own one, right, and I'm not a member of that community. So it wouldn't occur to me to phrase it differently. But I'm sure if I was talking to someone, as you said, who you know, is really into this stuff or grew up really into this stuff, they would go "what do you know?"



Michael Sodini 14:52

Right? And that's one of the things that we hit. We have a cultural competence course that trains mental health clinicians where we give them CEU credits to learn about gun culture, it's really fascinating. Because when we bring that point up, you see, you see a turning in their head, they're like, "Oh my god, I never thought about that. Like, I'm sitting there telling

someone who has been a firearm owner for 15 years how to be safe, and I don't own a firearm, right? Maybe I need to think of the way I really approach that subject, right?" Because not everything has a malicious intent. You know, as a clinician, maybe you're just trying to find out what the plan is, right? Well, you have somebody in your house that's in crisis. So you're asking these questions. But safe is one that I found, that would turn somebody off, especially when they're being told that by somebody who doesn't understand muzzle flashing or trigger discipline or things like that, so it really is cool to watch in real time, when you see these clinicians that are in the course. And you know, they say, Okay, I am going to use responsible storage from here on out because I feel like that, that makes me that makes sense.



JJ Janflone 15:50

And how does Walk The Talk America sort of advocate, you know, talking to folks about topics that, you know, as you pointed out in the US, a lot of times get labeled as taboo like firearm, suicide, you know, how do you frame that as, hey, for as a gun owner, this is what we'd be you need to be doing to protect yourself or your loved ones?



Michael Sodini 16:10

Well, I always draw back on what I said earlier about making people that are in the firearms community understand, everything that's negative will be used against us, right. And it's important for them to know that they can do something about that. It's you can't just throw your hands up and say, Oh, we can't do something about that. It's a whole essence of Walk the Talk America. That's why I get gun manufacturers and ammo manufacturers to say like, oh, yeah, we can do something. Right. So I think that that's super important. And I think it gives people hope, right? Instead of us just standing on both sides of the room saying like, Oh, we're not going to talk to these people, or they don't understand us. It's like, we will say, Okay, well, here's the solutions that we're kind of working towards, you know, my whole thing is I want to inspire gun owners to understand that we don't have to let anyone else control the narrative, we could do it, like, we could do it ourselves, we could police our own. And I think that's the best way to start. And I think that's what a lot of people, you know, I hate doing the side thing I really do. Because like, we on this phone call here, we could agree on 50 things in life, right? We could disagree on certain things. So it's like, I hate siding it up. But even for the person that doesn't understand gun culture, right, and they come in, it's important for them to see some action, right. So like, for example, if you believe in legislation, which I don't, right, I think, what are you going to respond to better if I'm like, Look, I don't think this legislation is gonna save any more lives. But here's what I do think is going to help. And you look at something and you go, okay, he He provided a solution, at least he didn't just throw his hands up and say, it's not gonna work you know what I mean? So I think that's the that's important for us to all understand, especially in gun culture.



JJ Janflone 17:47

Well, I wonder if you could share what sort of responsibilities folks take on when they bring a gun into the home?



M

Michael Sodini 17:56

Yeah, that's a great question. I think there's a lot of responsibilities that people should have, you know, obviously, it's going to, there's a lot of nuance in that question. So, you know, different firearms owners, you know, especially ones with kids have different responsibilities. But I think first and foremost, I just want to make this clear, I don't believe that anything should be mandated. I'm not into mandates. You know, that's a whole different subject. But I do believe that everyone should take a firearms course, they should understand their firearm, they should also understand the legalities of using their firearm, they should also understand mental health. Right, I'll give you a prime example of what I'm talking about. I spoke at an event was, it was an event for people in Florida, most of them were new gun owners, right. And it was like 150 ladies, and they had training. And then they came in and they went to debriefing. And then they had a lawyer up there talking about the legalities of using your firearm in a defensive situation, which, you know, for those that aren't familiar with that. There's a lot, you don't just get to shoot somebody and you're off scot free. You know, even if you're defending yourself, and I, that's really great, right? So I got up and going, it's my turn to go. I said, ladies, you're doing the right thing, you're here, you know, training, you're getting the proper training, you bought the gun, you're part of the culture now, whether you like it or not, you own a gun. Now you're learning about defensive shootings.

M

Michael Sodini 19:17

And I was like, and here's the third thing you need to understand. You need to tend to your mental health because you're most likely to kill yourself with your firearm than ever be in defensive shooting. I think it was a powerful thing for them to understand that, you know, we lose over 67 people a day to suicide by firearm, right. And that's something that I think we need to put the focus on. We have a mass shooting everyday that nobody talks about, the media doesn't like to talk about it. It doesn't sell ad space. It's not sexy, you can't get three months out of it. It's something that we deal with every day. So I think as you know, a new gun owner, it's be responsible. Take the courses, understand your firearm, find your Quick Access safes and things that prevent unauthorized access. And then tend to your mental health and really pay attention to it right and make plans when things don't go your way. I mean, not everybody's in crisis all the time. But if you know you have a, you know, a teenage daughter who's going through a mental health crisis, you know, access to a firearm is not smart. It's not the move, right? You got to take plans that help the people around you and protect yourself and those that you love. Right. So that's what I'd recommend.



JJ Janflone 20:31

How has it been for you, you know, with Walk The Talk; you shared at the beginning of this just some of the partnerships that you formulated with, you know, like, with dealers or with sellers, and things like that, how has that outreach been to say, "hey, we want you know, we want a mental health screening on the side of your ammo boxes and things," how has that process been for you?

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Michael Sodini 20:51

It's been amazing. You know, to go back to the origin story of how that started, I was originally the the first one responsible to do it. I represented you know, when I owned Eagle Imports, which

the first gun company to do it. I represented, you know, when I owned Eagle Imports, which is the importer that I had, I represented like, six different gun companies that are all over the world. And I reached out to the owners of those companies and say, "Hey, would you mind if I put this mental health screening in the box," and I really wanted to see what kind of whether it was going to be blowback or feedback, or whatever, you know, whatever it was that I was going to get for doing it. And what I found was that I was getting customers calling the office saying, "Hey, I really appreciate you putting this in the box. This is awesome." So it was all positive. So I took it a step further, because I was like, Okay, let me just walk up to some of my peers and people that I've grown up with in this industry that own gun companies and see if they'd be willing to do it. And surprisingly, all you had to do was ask, right? So, you know, you'd be surprised. I think it's one of those things going back to the gun industry has been always so defensive. Because you know, they, it's about your right, right, like, that's the most important thing.

M

Michael Sodini 21:58

And it becomes this, it became this, like pry it from my cold dead hands thing. And I'm like, Okay, you can have that too. But you could also be proactive, and trying to save lives. And I don't think I think we got caught up in that, you know, where it was like, it's somebody else's problems. It's a mental health thing. I never thought, you know, okay, maybe we could do something. And I think that the reception has been so positive, because it's like, okay, this makes sense, right? This, this does make sense. Like, why not get people to think about their mental health and also give them an outlet where they can go, and it's free and anonymous. And, you know, you say a checkup from the neck up, right? Like, that's, that's important.



JJ Janflone 22:35

Is there ever fear? Or do you ever hear from gun owners that they're afraid to reach out for mental health assistance? Like, I know that we've heard on the podcasts, we've heard from folks that they're worried to say something, because they're afraid, for example, that their guns will get taken from them or something like that?

M

Michael Sodini 22:50

Well, we just accepted that. So yeah, you're dead on, right. Every day. They become anecdotal. But if I, if I had \$1, for every time somebody contacted me and said, "I want to go get help, but I'm afraid to" or "does the VA report that you own firearms, right?" I wouldn't have to champion for money. The money would just be there. There is definitely a fear. And some of it is real, right? There are certain states where it gets a little dicey if you admit that you're struggling, but some of it is just rhetoric that was created by certain organizations to fear monger, right? You know, overall, we just kind of accept the fact that people are going to be afraid to come forward and say they need to get help. And just let people know that, hey, as gun owners, you can contact us, we're there for you, we'll find solutions for you. But gun ownership is very interesting, just by nature. I think a lot of gun owners feel like they're leaders or protectors. And they can't show weakness, right? You think about how many first responders are combat vets. Let's not even, let's put that aside for a second. Just the average person who's like I bought this firearm to protect my family, whether it's single mom or father of five, you know, is really

strong and needs to be the leader of the family. It's very difficult for people to come forward and say like, I need help, especially when they value the Second Amendment and their right to defend themselves and their family. So much.

M

Michael Sodini 24:15

And everybody thinks, if you say one thing, then you're going to get a scarlet A on your chest for the rest of your life. So it's going to be something that we're going to be battling forever. It's something that I've just accepted. There's been a lot of harm done that needs to be undone. There's a lot of bad information out there that's passed that needs to be rolled back. But having Walk The Talk American, you know you talked about trusted messengers. That's why it was important, I think, for the gun community to step forward and say like, we're tackling this issue. And if you have any questions come to us, right, that makes you feel comfortable. And I used to sell, for the listeners out there. This is when I really understood how many guns were actually out there. We used to sell 60-80,000 firearms a year and we had no military or law enforcement contracts. And we were a little company. So think about that. Right, like that's, there's a lot of gun owners out there. You think about the Rugers and the Glocks and Smith & Wessons, right. It's kind of like, when you realize when you're swimming in the San Francisco Bay, that you're swimming amongst a lot of sharks, right? If you knew how many sharks you were swimming with, you probably wouldn't swim in there. So it is kind of interesting to see like, the dynamic of gun ownership, I think a lot of people do not admit that they have firearms just because of fear of losing it, I may go back to the dollar for every time someone has said something. If I had \$1, for every time someone has contacted me and said, "My physician, you know, asked me Do I own a firearm, and I just lied," right? Like, my clinician asked me, if I own a firearm, and I just lied, I that's not a healthy way to live, where you're lying, because you're afraid that something's going to be misunderstood and taken away from me.



JJ Janflone 25:50

It's just, it's got to be a really, I think, probably internally a very scary moment for someone to have to say both, I'm worried that I'm going to cause harm to myself, and then have to admit that they own something that can cause a great deal of harm to them, if they if they move forward, and then have to, you know, seek support maybe from a community that they feel isn't going to support them appropriately. So that's where we're asking a lot of somebody who might be in crisis, I think if we're not if we're not properly prepared.

M

Michael Sodini 26:19

Absolutely, absolutely. It's, it's the rock and a hard place, especially if your firearm represents something to you that provides for your family. Right, like think about the combat vet, or the first responder, you know, like, if they lose their firearm. We had we had one guest on it was Tupac Shakur's bodyguards's wife. Right. And it's a fascinating episode, because she got to deal with the aftermath of his mental psyche after Tupac was killed. Right. And this is a man that got older, and pretty much walked the earth feeling almost responsible for Tupac's death. And she talks about in the episode times when he was like, I can't go get help, because if I lose my gun rights, I won't be able to be a bodyguard. Right? Like, that's something that he addressed with her and it weighed on him, it's really tough position to be in. And that's why I

think we got to understand each other a little bit better, and really work towards, you know, solutions that don't involve restrictions that don't revolve take a risk, you don't want to get people killed by, you know, them hitting stage four, if that makes sense, right? Like, stage one cancer, bad. But at least you address it early enough. When you wait till stage four, to address anything, that's when real problems happen. And for those that don't want to seek help, because they, hands down the Second Amendment is the most important thing to them, their gun rights is most important thing to them. You know, whether or not the listening audience agrees that that is the most important thing, right? Everybody has their Hill to die on. They have to understand that there are people out there that literally will do everything based around the Second Amendment. They'll even vote, right just for anybody that's pro Second Amendment. So it does create this rock and a hard place that we got to get past.

K

Kelly Sampson 28:11

I'm so glad that you mentioned Tupac's bodyguard, because one of the things that I wanted to ask you about is sort of when we talk about gun owners, and we've just been using that term broadly. But obviously, gun owners are a diverse group, just like the United States. And so I'm wondering, are there differences or nuances that you've seen in terms of the way that mental health intersects with firearms between different races, different ethnicities or genders? So I'm wondering if there are nuances that you've noticed in the work that you've been doing?

M

Michael Sodini 28:43

I'm so glad you brought that up. Because one of the things that I, I wish people understood about the firearms industry is the diversity inside not necessarily industry, right, but the culture. Right. It's one of the easiest things to like, be invited into the tent. Like you feel like you're being attacked, like you're part of the LGBT community and you feel like you're under attack. And if you fear for your safety, arm up, come talk to us, right? There's different organizations like Pink Pistols, right Armed Equality. There's a lot of nuances in firearms ownership. So you can't really approach it with one kind of blanket, you know, way, right? You have to understand that guns mean different things to different people even going down to say like the person who just buys a firearm to have in their house and locks it up and never attends to it at all doesn't train with it, but it just there to the person who owns 20 guns right to what it means to to live in an underprivileged underserved area where law enforcement may not get to you in time. So you're responsible for your own safety I although I believe that we're all responsible for our own safety. I don't think we should count on anyone to help us but you know, different areas. Gun ownership means different things, clearly, and I think that that's the approach you have to have on it. There's so much nuance in firearms ownership. And even you know, going back to what you guys are saying like using the word safe, like using the word safe. Definitely, you know, for the brand new gun owner has never been in the industry. Yeah, that works fine, right? They get what you're saying, right? But then the 20 year vet doesn't like to your safe like, don't tell me about safety. Right. But so you know that that's an example of, of the different levels you have.



JJ Janflone 30:22

Do you have any thoughts about what folks who self identify as being in the gun violence prevention space could do better?

M

Michael Sodini 30:29

I have my opinions on it. And anytime you two, want to disagree with me, I will still love you to death. Okay, like I get it, you want to save lives. And that's what is most important to you. As long as you treat me with respect, we're good. And you've done nothing but that. So you know, to me to tell you guys what's going wrong. You know, I've pinpointed to a few things, right. One thing is I think a lot of times the focus is put on the wrong thing. It's not put on suicide prevention, right? It's put on things that even if we made legislation for aren't going to move the needle on stopping these deaths, but you're obviously not going to ditch legislation. Like that's not something that's in the cards for you. But that would be my first recommendation. I think the hardest part, for a lot of gun owners to hear from anyone that is against violence is the word gun owners, but it's like remove the but but we believe in this, right? Like that's a non starter for many people. It's like many people believe that you, the Second Amendment should not be touched at all right? So that's a tough one. And once again, I don't have the answer for you on how to get there. There are a lot of people that believe that us talking right now is going to send the world into some kind of spinning craziness that it's impossible to hold a conversation, you know, and you may never change the minds of those people. My feeling though, is, you know, you focus on suicide prevention, you drop the but, and then you kind of work towards programs that you know, one of the big things that we talked about at Walk the Talk America is preventable mental health care being prevented mental mental health care being a thing, right.

M

Michael Sodini 32:12

You know, ending gun violence is a really funny term. And I feel like the anti-gun or organizations that may believe in some of that legislation, right? Have kind of, they've owned that. But gun owners, all gun owners want to end violence, right? I want to end gun violence. Like I look at those those slogans and I'm like, That's me, too. Like, I don't want I don't want anyone to hurt themselves. I don't want negative outcomes with firearms. You know, I don't know where we lost that where it became like, one sides thing and the other side's not, right. I love more communication. You know, I don't know, it's gonna be a tough climb. Right. But you know, eventually you get there. I don't have the answer for yet. Wish I did.

M

Michael Sodini 32:13

No, I mean, I think communication is a big part of the answer, though. So you're great. And where can people find more information about Walk the Talk America and your work? To keep this conversation going.

M

Michael Sodini 33:08

You can find us on social media @wallthetalkus, we're on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and you can go to wtta.org. Or walkthetalkamerica.org and contact us through the website. If you have any questions. Once again, everybody that's involved in this does it for the love of the

game. I have some great volunteers. But we're we're very open to talk to anybody. There's not a conversation we won't go have with somebody. So you know, feel free to reach out.



JJ Janflone 33:37

So Mike shared, I think so many great things with us.



Kelly Sampson 33:41

Yeah, I mean, I lost count, but we at least pitched four or five other podcasts while he was still on?



JJ Janflone 33:48

We absolutely did. And what I'm really taking away though, from our conversation is that we have to have these discussions about safety at the community level and talk to folks where they are



Kelly Sampson 33:59

For sure. And you know, while there are a few things that people can do to keep firearms secure, like storing them unloaded, locked and away from ammunition, how we present that information is going to differ based on who we're talking to. And that's okay, so long as that information reaches the people who need it.



JJ Janflone 34:21

Hey! Want to share the podcast? Listeners can now 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! Kelly and I are standing by.



Kelly Sampson 34:35

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](https://bradyunited.org) or on social @brady buzz. Be brave and remember, take action, not sides.