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Police psychologist: Theater shooting 'shattered comfort zones'

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Written by Blair Shiff

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KUSA - Tragedies happen every day in the world, but one man in particular responds to them immediately.

John Nicoletti was on scene of the Columbine High School shootings, responded at the Platte Canyon shooting and was part of a team who did an assessment at Virginia Tech. He spoke to 9NEWS Saturday morning about how first responders can be survivors just as much as the victims can.

"They did a heroic job," John Nicoletti, a police psychologist, said. "They went in there and got those people out. There are images and things that folks have to live with."

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Since this happened inside of a movie theater, Nicoletti says the location of a shooting can affect a first responder's psyche as they try to recover.

"People organize a world around assumptions, in terms of what an environment is to be like," Nicoletti said. "When you go to war, you expect combat. When you go to a movie theater, a movie theater is a comforting environment. So, whenever we have a tragedy that occurs in a [comforting] environment it shatters our assumptions."

People may think "this isn't supposed to happen here." He says it also shatters comfort zones, which people later have to rebuild.

Nicoletti also says he does not think the shooting suspect James Holmes "snapped" per say.

"The thing that indicated he didn't snap is he was stock-piling ammunition for a period of time," Nicoletti said. "That indicates, to me, what we call a 'pro-active attack' - that the individual had a certain amount of premeditation."

He said, strictly speaking from psychological standpoint, it seemed to be planned. He also said people who typically commit these crimes have a sense of injustice in their lives.

"'You didn't hire me,' 'you bullied me,' 'you divorced me,' and then that perceived injustice then leads to kind of an obsession and that obsession then leads to a revenging action," Nicoletti said.

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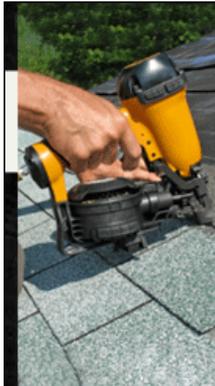


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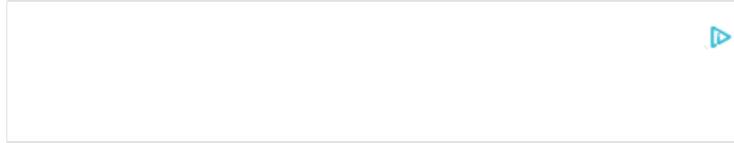
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