

My name is Lisa Leibowitz. I live in Redding, CT with my husband and our two children, nine and 11 years old. Like most Americans, we have been deeply affected by the tragic shootings in Newtown on December 14th and the killing of 20 innocent children and six adults. It has felt more personal for us than Aurora, or Columbine, or Virginia Tech, or the many others, because of our proximity to Newtown. But much more so because we knew one of the families who lost a child. My two children attend a local day camp in Redding where they have enjoyed many summers. Their beloved music counselor lost her six year old son in the shooting at Sandy Hook. His name was Benjamin, like my own son, and his older brother has been in the same group with my Ben for the past five summers.

On Friday December 14th, my nine and 11 year old found out that someone went into an elementary school less than half an hour from where we live and shot 20 first grade students; that it is possible that an elementary school might not always be a safe place. On the Monday after these shootings, shortly after being appropriately reassured by faculty and administration that they are indeed safe when they are at school, my children both spent an hour or so in "lockdown" - not a drill, but the real thing - after a suspicious person was reported near a local train station. My daughter in the sixth grade spent this time in the dark, hiding under her desk. She was told by her teacher how they would exit the building and where they would go. Many kids were crying. My son in his fourth grade classroom spent the time sitting in silence on the floor up against a wall in the dark. The windows were covered. One boy vomited, he was so afraid and anxious. My son told me later that he was really afraid; that he almost cried, but he didn't. His teacher made him feel safe. The teacher, I later learned, paced back and forth carrying a sharp scissor hidden so the kids couldn't see it.

That same Monday after the shootings, my kids also found out that the little boy they knew from camp, six-year-old Ben, had been killed. After that, my son began to routinely ask me at bedtime questions about Ben's death and the impact it would have on his family. How many times had Ben been shot? Did it hurt him? If he was shot a lot of times, did he die right away? And would that hurt more or less? Will Nate, Ben's brother, have to go to a different school now? Will his family move away? Will Aunt Francine (they call all their camp counselors "Aunt" and "Uncle"), Ben's mother, still be a counselor next summer?

These are questions *no* child should *ever* have to ask or wonder about. And even writing these words right now, it brings tears to my eyes and a pit to my stomach. So when I hear on the news, or see these youtube videos, or read these blogs by people who are talking about their right to bear arms and their freedoms being violated by those of us asking for some common sense gun regulation, I just feel sick.

Why should you give up your rights because a few people don't follow the rules? Well first of all, no one's asking you to give up your rights. We're talking about common sense regulation, *reasonable* regulation. But second, even if we were asking for you to give up those rights...why would you not? If it might save a child, why would you not? Wouldn't it be a sacrifice worth making?

I know that gun regulation isn't the whole solution. I know we need to address mental health issues, for example, and those who are falling through the cracks in our society. But gun

regulation is a part of the solution. And I know this isn't what the writers of the Second Amendment intended to protect.

Please do all that you can to make this right and to protect our children.

Respectfully,

Lisa Leibowitz
Redding, CT