

# EXPERTS URGE CAUTION WHEN RELATING MENTAL HEALTH TO MASS CASUALTY SHOOTINGS

*Mental Health Illness is NOT a Reason to Kill People*

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Jacksonville, Fla. – Behavioral health experts are urging the public to be cautious when relating mental health to mass shooting incidents. Following the shooting at The Landings in Jacksonville, it came to light that the suspected shooter, David Katz, 24, had a history of diagnosed mental illness. But Tracy Riley, Psy.D, founder of Tracy Riley Counseling says there are likely many other reasons this individual took the lives of two men and injured countless others.

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Mental illness is not a justification for killing two people. Though he might have had a behavioral health issue, his illness is not necessarily why he acted violently. This individual was evil.”

*Dr. Tracy Riley, LCSW*

“Mental illness is not a justification for killing two people,” Dr. Riley says. “Though he might have had a behavioral health issue, his illness is not necessarily why he acted violently. This individual was evil and made a conscious decision to hurt others.”

Dr. Riley believes that he lacked impulse control, empathy for others and was selfish. But those are not typically qualifiers for mental illness. Something else was likely a part of this man’s choice to commit murder.

Behavioral health experts have also made great headway in removing the stigma from mental illness. After this and other incidents, Dr. Riley fears associating mass shootings with mental illness will reverse that trend.

“This is a huge disservice to those who truly have a mental health issue,” she said. “The majority of people with a mental illness are not violent and do not deserve to be associated with such behavior.”

Dr. Riley wants to ensure that seeking help for a mental health condition is encouraged. Those with mental health issues need to be able to be comfortable discussing their mental health needs and pursuing care. If stigmas are attached to behavioral health patients, they may deny their condition and treatment, resulting in tragic results such as prolonged depression and anxiety or even suicide.

“Mental health is not a medical catch-all for the evil in this world,” said Dr. Riley. “Instead, let’s treat behavioral health conditions for what they are – a medical issue no different from cancer, diabetes or other health conditions. Only when we do that can we ensure the health and well-being of our loved ones and all those suffering from mental health issues.”

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Tracy Riley, Psy.D, is a psychologist and counselor. She is founder of Tracy Riley Counseling, which specializes in grief, loss, depression and other behavioral health conditions. For more information, visit [www.tracyriley.com](http://www.tracyriley.com).

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