

**Primary concerns from Dr. Scott Poland regarding the TV series “13 Reasons Why”
are the following:**

1. The graphic scene of Hannah’s suicide violated all media guidelines.
2. Unfortunately, the counselor in the program was portrayed as very ineffective and he did not focus on Hannah’s obvious depression and mental health needs. He minimized the facts that she was depressed and the victim of rape, and he failed to contact her parents. This sadly has resulted in students not seeing school counselors as someone who can help them.
3. The adults in the program were portrayed as absent, inept or in the case of Justin’s parents very uncaring and mean. We know that it is critically important for all teenagers to have go to adults when they or someone they know is threatening suicide or violence and unfortunately the program failed to provide examples of teens going to adults for help.
4. Hannah Baker appeared in every episode even though we knew in the beginning of the program that she had died by suicide. I have heard that somehow she will also appear in season two and this will further blur the lines between life and death.
5. Additionally, mental illness which is at the foundation of youth suicide was not even mentioned nor was any form of mental health treatment.
6. Many professional associations did put out a warning to parents about the content of season 1. Parents were encouraged to watch the program with their children. I personally believe that is an unrealistic recommendation in today’s world with busy families. I support the recommendations provided by Common Sense Media that stated no child under the age of 16 should watch the program. Additionally children over the age of 16 known to have been the victim of bullying or to suffer with anxiety and/or depression should not watch it.
7. I am also concerned about the impact of binge watching a dramatic program with content not appropriate for children.
8. It does appear that season 2 will likely include a school shooting. I am extremely concerned about this as many children around the world do not feel safe in their school. Thankfully a school shooting is a very rare event and last year in the United States for the 2016/2017 school year there were 14 incidents where someone was shot at school According to the organization Every Town USA. That is 14 to many school shootings but in the United States there are approximately 130,000 K to 12 schools. Unfortunately the media has given all of us the impression that a school shooting is probable. **A school shooting is a possibility but it is not a probability. Schools remain very safe places.**
9. I am sorry to report that some teachers actually showed segments of season 1 in classrooms and I believe that was totally inappropriate.
10. I believe it is very important for teachers to have talking points as students will be watching and talking about the program such as:
 - Thankfully most young people who are bullied do not attempt or die by suicide.
 - Suicide is not about revenge as it’s about ending unendurable pain
 - The vast majority of youth suicides can be prevented.



- Hannah Baker had alternatives and crisis resources are always available and all she had to do was touch a button on her smart phone and ask for help and in the U.S she would have been connected with the National Crisis Helpline.
- It is vitally important for students to identify their go to adults at school and in the community.
- Schools are very safe places.
- Students have a responsibility to be alert for homicidal or suicidal statements and to ensure that adults are notified immediately.
- School safety is really an inside job and we need a commitment from the student body first then from the faculty and the parents.
- Student input is important to improve safety and to reduce bullying. Classroom discussions and surveys are ideals way to gather student input on these issues.

Dr. Scott Poland, Licensed Psychologist

Nationally Certified School Psychologist

Professor at the College of Psychology

Co-Director of the Suicide and Violence Prevention Office

www.nova.edu/suicideprevention

Past Prevention Division Director American Association of Suicidology

Past President National Association of School Psychologists

Member National Emergency Assistance Team (1997-2011)

PSI Expert Partner

Nova Southeastern University