

Hard lockdown

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There is a line in Michael Moore's *Bowling for Columbine* that has come back to me recently: "After Columbine, it really sucked being a student in America."

Since the Newtown shooting, my son's school has gone into "hard lockdown" mode twice. It also has a "soft lockdown" option, in which teachers quietly lock their doors and continue on as normal. Hard lockdown has the teacher turn off the lights and convince the children to huddle in a corner of the room in the dark. The most recent episode of hard lockdown was caused by two girls reporting that they saw someone they didn't recognize in the school. This turned out to be a police officer who was touring the school while dressed in plain clothes.

It is difficult, as a parent, to argue against the school's policy of taking "every precaution," as the school's robocall refers to it when it tells us the school has gone into hard lockdown. My son now talks about lockdown as if it were an ordinary thing. "If we have a lockdown, then the cooks don't make lunch," he says. "We just have sack lunch." "Lockdown lunch," as we've taken to calling it.

I wish I could say that my son is taking all of this in stride, the way kids in the '50s might have taken their bombing drills in stride. But he isn't. Huddling in the dark with his fellow students had him shaking and crying. Lockdown itself causes terror.

And all of this makes perfect sense in a culture of fear, in which our neighbors are our enemies and our children are monsters capable of turning on us at any moment. I feel the in my bones the vulnerability of those who spend their days in schools, but my gut tells me that the culture of the lockdown is as much of a problem as the possibility of any intruder.