

# Mental Health of Mormons

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It has been alleged that Mormons find their religion so demanding that they often become neurotic, especially women in marriages that provide little in the way of personal development. It seems to me that this kind of problem occurs when the members fail to understand or follow what the church leaders actually teach, rather than being caused by those teachings (especially in regards to the treatment of women).

Ultimately, those who understand the atonement of Jesus Christ ought to be among the most well-adjusted of all people. I do see evidence that this can be the case.

Compare people's reactions to these two tragedies. An accidental fire in Rhode Island kills 100 people; a missionary is intentionally shot to death in Virginia. Which relatives better demonstrate a Christ-like attitude and the peace that should come from a religious perspective? Which reaction is healthier?

<b>Relatives of the RI victims</b>	<b>Parents of the missionary</b>
<p>Many in the crowded chamber -- friends and relatives of victims of the February 2003 fire in nearby West Warwick -- were furious that Daniel M. Biechele did not receive the maximum sentence of 10 years.</p> <p>Diane Mattera let out a shriek and crumpled into the arms of her husband, Raymond.</p> <p>As Biechele was led away in handcuffs, Patricia Belanger stood and shouted at his parents.</p> <p>Leaving the courtroom, Belanger struggled to control her anger. Her daughter Dina DeMaio was a waitress at The Station. "Of course he is getting away with murder," she said. "Four years, for 100 lives he killed? It's a joke."</p> <p>"This is not about forgiveness," said Suzanne Fox, the mother of victim Jeffrey Martin. "Make no mistake: There's not a shred of forgiveness in my heart, and I suspect there never will be."<sup>1</sup></p>	<p>"We are a family in grief, but we are not a family in crisis," Kathy Young said..."We're trying to get through to the end of Tuesday" [when the funeral would be held]...</p> <p>The flight from Salt Lake City to Virginia was a solemn one, Kathy Young said. The family spent time remembering Morgan Young and grieving. It was time well spent...The Youngs refuse to believe they are now a five-member family.</p> <p>"Life is eternal, and we are always a family," Kathy Young said.</p> <p>As for the man who is now accused of shooting their son, the Youngs don't hold any anger.</p> <p>"Just sorrow," Mark Young said. "The consequences of this are going to last some time."</p> <p>"I'm proud that he died with his boots on," Kathy Young said of her son.<sup>2</sup></p>

I have seen over and over the happiness that comes from understanding the atonement and the promise of a better future. I have felt it myself. I have seen the bitterness and heartache that comes from living without that.

By the way, the man who accidentally (but negligently) started the fire in Rhode Island gave heartbreaking testimony in court, expressing his grief and regret and his wish to undo the suffering and loss he helped cause. I think the sentence was appropriate, and I hope that he can find the absolution that can only come through the atonement. I hope he can put this behind him and be happy, even though so many other people will not let themselves heal.

Incidentally, the Amish community reacted to the mass killings that they suffered in 2006 in a similar way to the parents of the missionary. I was very impressed by their steadiness and their forgiveness. They do not have the fullness of the Gospel, but they have learned some of the important lessons nonetheless.

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<sup>1</sup> Fury, Tears and a 4-Year Term in Deadly Blaze, Los Angeles Times, May 11, 2006

<sup>2</sup> 'I'm proud he died with his boots on', Deseret Morning News, Saturday, January 7, 2006