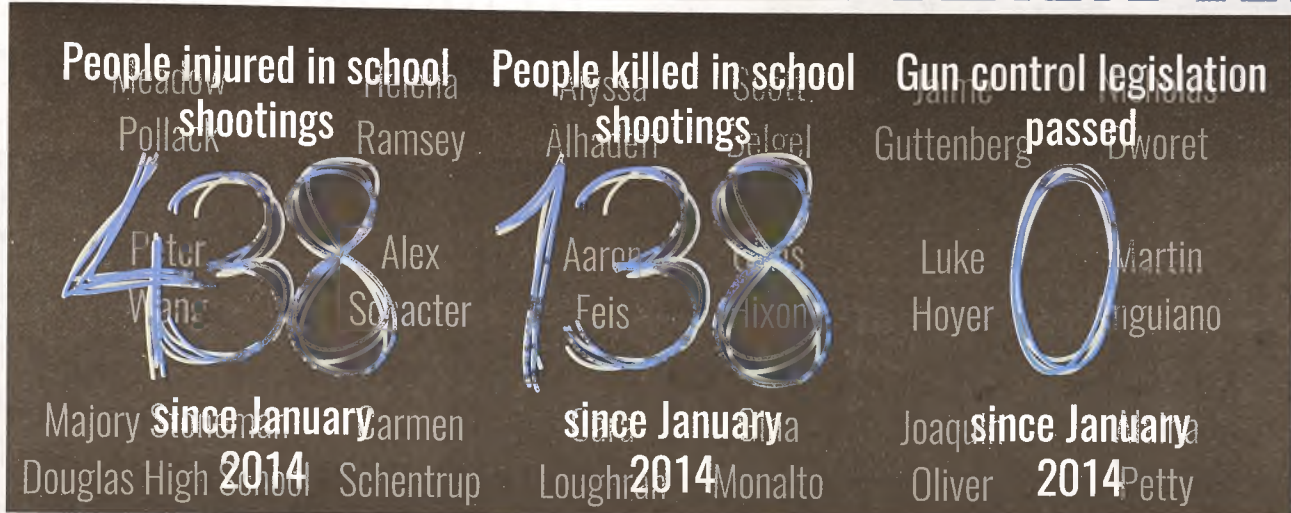


OPINIONS



STAFF EDITORIAL

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STATISTICS COURTESY OF THE NEW YORK TIMES

Now is a time to act — not to be complacent

HOW WE SEE IT

Following the tragic school shooting in Parkland, Fla., students must start seriously discussing the issue of gun violence.

It can happen here, too. Tragedies by gun fire come and go in our nation like the seasons. The cycle seems endless; a fatal shooting or massacre happens, people offer up thoughts and prayers, other people argue about gun control, members of Congress tweet or pledge to effect change and then, silence. Once another tragedy strikes our country, the conversation begins again.

It has only been a week since the horrific shooting in Parkland, Florida, which took 17 innocent lives, and the conversations surrounding the event are already fading. We cannot lose the momentum needed to enact change. We cannot sit idly by, waiting around for another tragedy and then share our grief and condolences on Facebook and Twitter, only to be silent again in a few days. We must change our culture from one of reaction to

one of taking action. There are so many ways Elon University students can get involved if they choose to. Given technological advancements and social media, being politically active in our nation has never been more accessible. There is almost no reason to not get involved.

On a personal level, students can simply engage in conversations. In the wake of this most recent shooting, many professors have opened up conversations about gun violence and gun control in their classrooms. Conversations are held around dinner tables, over coffee or during study breaks. It is important to take these conversations further. If someone has a different view from you, try to challenge it. At the same time, make sure to listen to whom you are speaking with.

Prior to these conversations, make

an active attempt to educate yourself with accurate facts about the issue, not just clickbait headlines shared on social media. Following the shooting in Parkland, many news outlets promoted a myriad of statistics — some of which ended up being completely false. One of the most circulated statistics stated that this shooting was the 18th school shooting so far in 2018. This statistic is correct, but not in the way it is being promoted. The 18 shootings actually include any time a firearm was discharged on school property, not the major school massacres we typically think of. When advocating, it is important to be factually accurate.

Students can also support local and national movements against gun violence. Though the amount of recent protests and marches may be overwhelming, it is important to remember that the foundation of our country is built on protest and political revolution. Almost every single major social change in our country has come from large protests by the American people. So far, two

major events have been planned: The National School Walkout on March 14 and the Walk for Our Lives on March 24. Both are events that students can get involved in.

Finally, we can all call our representatives — both in North Carolina and our home states — to voice our concerns and show that we will not back down until gun violence is no longer an issue. Students can contact federally elected officials by calling the United States Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121. Students can also learn how to contact other officials, such as governors and members of Congress, by going to usa.gov. It is not difficult to make a call or fill out a submission form.

No more innocent lives should be taken by gun violence — especially not children and educators in schools. Gun violence is preventable. Banning guns is not the only solution to this problem, but it is clear — considering the outrageous amount of deaths by guns in the United States each year — that some form of change needs to be made.

Make changes so your phone can't tell you what to do



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It seems like I can't go ten minutes without feeling a buzz in my pocket or a ding in my backpack as my phone begs me to check it. Oh look, it's a Snapchat from that one person who sends an update every 30 seconds of the day. Oh hey, CNN is here to tell me that we're one step closer to nuclear war with North Korea.

Even if I manage to escape the hellacious onslaught of notifications for more than five seconds, I can't help but pull out my phone anyway. What if I got an email from that student organization I'm not even a part of anymore? Perhaps a new Instagram story from someone I haven't talked to since high school?

After a while, it hit me. I didn't even care. I was looking at my phone every few seconds only to scroll through notifications and social media and then put it down again completely unsatisfied. I didn't particularly want to pull my phone out so much, I just felt like I had to. I felt like an

addict, taking a hit just to get a momentary buzz as soon as the last one faded.

That's no accident. The apps we use, the software on our phones, even the shapes and colors of the buttons we press: they're all designed to capture our attention and get us hooked. Tech industry insiders have come out to explain how programmers build social networks and operating systems with that in mind. The more your eyes are on their screens, the more ads they can show you and the more money they make.

But there's a way to fight back. You can tinker with the settings on your phone to minimize the effects of that addictive design and only look at your phone when you want to — not when it tells you to.

Turn off notifications

How often do you swipe open on a notification and find something you actually needed to see? Sure, there are

important alerts that you'll need to check with relative immediacy, but you'll be surprised at how many "Facebook memories" and "Twitter moments" notifications can pass by before you even remember to check those networks.

Cut down on notifications aren't absolutely imperative, and you'll find that you don't really miss them too much.

Use 'Do Not Disturb'

Most smartphones have a setting that turns off beeps and buzzes and rings whenever notifications pop up. How often do you pick up your phone to check a single notification only to get sucked into 15 minutes of aimless browsing afterwards?

If your phone isn't barking at you to look at its screen every single time a message comes in, you can take as long as you want between phone checks without feeling like you're missing anything. It helps you stay on task and feel in control of your own

time. Not every Snapchat from your best friend needs an immediate response. Few will be frustrated if you take 10 minutes instead of two to get back to a text. And you can always whitelist your mom and your boss just to make sure you don't miss anything important.

Delete social media apps

Going cold turkey is seldom an easy approach, but if you're really feeling addicted, deleting social media apps from your phone might be a necessary fix. It's hard to ignore the temptation to check Facebook and Twitter when all you have to do is click the logo sitting on your home screen.

I noticed that I was sometimes opening social media without even realizing it, as if it were muscle memory. By deleting the apps, you give yourself one extra hurdle to checking those networks. You can always visit those sites

in a mobile web browser, so you don't have to quit them entirely.

Switch colors to grayscale

Part of the attention-grabbing capability of your phone lies in the colors it uses on screen. Bright alarm reds and sickly-sweet greens and blues are all meant to catch your eye and call your attention to parts of the screen. If you switch your phone from full color to black and white, you can neuter the power of the bright colors. Your eye isn't called to the little number one in a red circle if the circle isn't red.

These steps can be implemented all at once or rolled out gradually over time.

They're not for everyone, but it can be a surprisingly relieving feeling to be less beholden to a steady stream of notifications. Take some time to think about why, when and how often you check your phone, and you might just find that you want to cut back.