

CPI *Unrestrained* Transcription

Episode 47: Sue Scheff

Record Date: 11/20/17

Length: 41:42

Host: Terry Vittone

Terry: Hello and welcome to *Unrestrained*, the CPI podcast series. This is your host, Terry Vittone, and today my guest is author and parent advocate Sue Scheff. Hello and welcome, Sue.

Sue: Oh, thank you for having me. I appreciate it.

Terry: You're welcome, Sue. I'm pleased to say that this is Sue's second appearance on *Unrestrained*. Her first interview appeared back in October of 2014, and concerned Sue's work as an author and parent advocate. In that interview, she talked about P.U.R.E. or Parents' Universal Resource Experts Incorporated (that's an advocacy organization Sue founded to educate parents about schooling and program options available to pre-teens and teenagers experiencing behavioral problems), as well as her books, [*Wit's End: Advice and Resources for Saving Your Out-of-Control Teen*](#) and [*Google Bomb: The Untold Story of the \\$11.3M Verdict That Changed the Way We Use the Internet*](#).

Today, Sue is going to talk about her new book, [*Shame Nation: The Global Epidemic of Online Hate*](#). Here's the introduction from the book's Amazon listing: "In today's digitally driven world, disaster is only a click away. A rogue tweet can bring down a business, an army of trolls can run a celebrity offline, and virtual harassment might cause real psychological damage. *Shame Nation* is the first book to both explore the fascinating phenomenon of online shaming and offer practical guidance and inspiring advice on how to prevent and protect against cyber blunders and faceless bullies."

Author Sue Scheff unveils all sides of online shaming "while drawing from the expertise of other top professionals spanning fields including law, psychology, and reputation management. From damning screenshots to revenge porn, *Shame Nation* shines a light on the rising trend of online shame culture and empowers readers to take charge of their digital lives." All right, Sue, with that, let's begin.

My first question is posed in the introduction of *Shame Nation*. What is digital shaming?

Sue: Well, digital shaming is very similar to cyberbullying. There's a goal to electronically embarrass, humiliate, and spread lies about someone. You're being electronically attacked online. And, you know, it can literally destroy someone, not only financially but emotionally, and that's where we've come to online today. You know, there were surveys

out there that 84% of Americans today have been attacked and faced incivility online. And I think that we're actually in an incivility crisis today.

Terry: That's kind of a shocking realization to make. It leads into my second question here, about the prevalence of digital shaming. Why does it amount to a shame nation?

Sue: Well, it's because absolutely no one is immune from the very, very young, which we're starting with the baby shaming, to the seniors out there in nursing homes. People that absolutely are shaming the helpless, people that are in extremely compromised positions, and you have nursing staff that are taking images of them when they're absolutely helpless. They're not able to defend themselves. Again, from baby shaming to senior shaming, no one gets a pass today from being swiped at by online shaming.

We even noted that on the obituary pages on legacy.com, the dead today are even being trolled and shamed online, which is extremely sad, don't you think? I mean, even when you have died and hopefully gone to heaven, people in real life are still taking swipes at you. And to me, I think that shows the prevalence of what we've become in our country, and the nation, and the world today where people just feel the need to use their keystrokes to hurt others. And I really think that we are, like I said just a moment ago, in crisis.

Terry: Well, I think when you are trolling the Internet to find obituaries so that you can harass the family who's been recently bereaved, you have sunk to, really, a new low. It's astonishing just to hear it, and it's truly alarming.

Sue: But, you know, we have to take this a step further. What we have to also realize is that these are adults. We all can talk about youth in cyberbullying, but a lot of this is adults doing it. We also discussed in the book, in *Shame Nation*, about the [Nikki Catsouras](#) story, where the officers took images of the young girl who was decapitated at a car accident, and they released the photos online. Do you recall that story, Terry?

Terry: Yes, I do.

Sue: It was horrifying. Now, these are young—I shouldn't say young professionals—these are officers of the law that did this. Again, everyone listening, you have to remember we're talking about adults that are acting like children online.

Terry: With a whole new set of capabilities and, let's say, you know, bad intention that only comes from an adult. I mean, seemingly, to go that low is, I mean, something a child hopefully would not conceive of except now they're being shown the way, I suppose, by people who are presenting such reprehensible behavior. I noticed that you got Monica Lewinsky to write the foreword for your book, and I wanted to ask about her connection to it, and talk about her contribution.

Sue: Well, Monica, as you read, she wrote a brilliant foreword, which reminds all of us, all of the readers, about the culture of cruelty and how it has evolved over the years. What she also talks about is digital resilience, and how we all must start building this, I hate to use the word "wall," but building a wall up around us because online hate has just become—I hate to say the norm, but it really has become the norm out there. Monica speaks about how she has had to build up this wall around herself. And you build it up to empathy and compassion for others.

We have to actually look up and over this wall of cruelty and just kill it with kindness. More importantly, Monica read the manuscript of *Shame Nation*, and I'm really proud to say that she's a very, very wonderful, kind person, very compassionate, very genuine. For anyone listening out there, I know a lot of people, when they think of Monica Lewinsky, they only have one thing on their mind. And I have to share with you that she went through a—everyone knows she went through a horrific time, but no one is more of a victim of public shaming than Monica Lewinsky.

Terry: She waited a long time to speak out.

Sue: She did, and it was that 2015 TED Talk, "[The Price of Shame](#)," that enlightened me, that made me approach her, and ask her to write the foreword. And what I realized that Monica and I had in common was the years that we waited before we really started sharing our story. And the similarity we had was we both started realizing that staying quiet wasn't helping anyone, because the fact was every day, we would wake up, and we would read the headlines, whether it's the Tyler Clementis out there, the Amanda Todds, the Rebecca Sedwicks, young people that had hit that same darkness, the same loneliness, the hopelessness. Because when you're a youth, when you're a young person, you never believe that you're ever going to climb out of that dark hole. You never believe that there's going to be light at the end of the tunnel without it being an oncoming train. Whereas with Monica and myself, we were old enough to know that eventually, it was going to get better. Even though we didn't think so at the time, we still had that maturity in our head; she had the support of her family. These kids don't understand that.

So, I give Monica so much credit because what happened to me was bad, but what happened to her was magnified by a million, because she was a public figure, obviously.

One more thing is when she did read the manuscript, she was so enlightened by it, she asked to have a bigger part in the book. And that's when you will read Chapter 7, and in Chapter 7, she becomes—she tells more of her story starting back in 1995, and what happened to her in the White House, and then the whole—I want to say the whole debacle, and how she became an activist for anti-bullying. And it's quite interesting.

Again, I give her so much credit. And then just this past October, she released her new PSA, *In Real Life*, where she encourages everyone to stop and think before they post, to consider: would you say that to someone in real life? And what I think is really interesting

is what she said in many interviews in October, is how many times people have passed her on the street and have said cruel things to her in the past 15, 20 years *to her face*, she can count the number on one hand, whereas online, they're constantly throwing insults at her.

I think that's a really great analogy of what the Internet is. Online, we don't have any problem throwing insults at people, but in real life, we would never do such a thing.

Terry: So, anonymity seems to bring out the worst in us?

Sue: Well, you know, I have to tell you, it doesn't even have to be anonymity, just being not face-to-face.

Terry: Right. Right. And that leads to my next question about a woman named Kelly Keegan, who—she was on a plane, and she noticed a couple breaking up. And she started, I believe, a hashtag, #planebreakup, and you tell the story in *Shame Nation*. Could you tell that to our listeners and talk about the lack of remorse shown by Kelly?

Sue: The lack of remorse? Yes.

Terry: Yes.

Sue: You know, you and I have discussed this. I've discussed this with many other people, too, and I want to preface it by saying, I give Kelly a little bit of credit here because she did come into the book, and she was interviewed by us. And, you know, anybody that wants to be interviewed for a book, I have to give a little bit of credit because she did step up; she stepped forward to speak about it.

She was on a plane, and there was a couple across the aisle from her. They were drinking, and I'm not saying it's right or wrong, and I'm not going to condone anybody's behavior here. There's lessons to be learned in this story, and this is why we share—this is why I'm sharing this story. Every story in *Shame Nation*, these are true stories. There's lessons in all of them. As you read in the book, there's takeaways in all of them.

Terry: We'll get to those.

Sue: So, Kelly was watching this plane breakup. This couple was breaking up. They started getting a little bit loud. They started getting a little bit obnoxious. Kelly had a few choices here. Now, she could have put her earbuds in, read a magazine. She could have maybe watched a movie on her iPad, or, she picked choice three, and that was to pull out her smartphone and videotape it. And not only did she videotape it, she took it a step further, and she started tweeting out the conversation verbatim on Twitter. And it was online.

I'm pretty sure it still is if you went back and you Google it. You can Google "#planebreakup," but you don't have to because you can buy my book, and we actually put some of the tweets . . .

Terry: That's right.

Sue: . . . in there. Yeah. It was a little bit embarrassing. Now, let's remember, Kelly did have a podcast, I believe, back in the day, and she probably still does, *Whine with Kelly*. In other words, she was building her audience. I mean, we do have a section in our book which is "Shaming for Profit," right, Terry?

Terry: Yes.

Sue: Not that she was making money off of this, but she was building her followers, and that she did. This couple never did come forward, by the way. Does she have any regrets? She does not. She did not have any remorse. We talked to her. She did not have any regrets. Now, what happened was there was reverse trolling that went on because there were a lot of people that clapped back at Kelly.

And what happened was they started attacking her and attacking her grandmother. Her grandmother passed away, something about her funeral. I don't believe in double shaming back. I'm not sure that's the best course to take. The only regret she had was posting their picture. She said she wouldn't do that again. There was no breach of privacy, according to her. She literally had talked to an attorney. She double-checked it. I think maybe she was a little bit concerned at one point, but there was no breach of any type of legal consequence here, you know, unlike the Dani Mathers case, which we all remember also.

Kelly was not in any legal hot water, but you know, again, these are choices we make. And I think the lesson here for everyone is when you're out in public, we should absolutely assume no expectation of privacy, whether you're sitting on a bus, whether you're sitting on a train, whether you're sitting on a plane. There are 92% of Americans out there armed with a smartphone. Your every "oops" moment has the opportunity to go viral, just like that poor mom at the Cincinnati Zoo last year. Was it last year or the year before?

Terry: With the gorilla.

Sue: Who lost her toddler. In the . . .

Terry: In the gorilla cage.

Sue: Yes. That could have happened to me or you, Terry. I lost my child at Disney World one time. It's the scariest thing. Listen, these kids are fast, and I mean, does that make us a bad parent? No. But today, we're not allowed an "oops" moment. It's just that simple.

Terry: Well, in fact, in Chapter 2, which is called, "No One Is Safe from Cyberhumiliation," you list the more extreme examples of digital disasters that can strike any of us before we learn how we can prevent and survive them. I'm wondering if you can review a few of these for our listeners who might not be aware of them, in order, from the book. They are, and this is quite a list: nonconsensual porn, revenge porn, noods, that's N-O-O-D-S, slut pages, sexting scandal, sextortion, ugly polls, mean memes, elder shaming, body shaming, teacher shaming, baby shaming, and parent shaming. Wow.

Sue: Yeah, too many of them, right?

Terry: Yeah.

Sue: Well, you have a college professor. She just innocently befriended a former high school friend. They started a romance. He had asked her for a few provocative photos, and she begrudgingly gave in. They weren't even 100% nude photos, but you know what? After six months of relationship, she wanted to end it. The next thing you know, he's selling them on eBay. Not only was he selling them on eBay, he gave them to the whole college that she worked at.

And again, everyone out there needs to understand, the Internet was not made for privacy. Anything you post online stays online, and it has a distinct possibility to going public. If a college professor can make this mistake, anyone can make this mistake. And then we come down to the noods, the slut pages, and sexting scandals. You know, sexting is considered the new flirting, but it doesn't make it right. There are consequences for sexting. There are laws in some states. I mean, for people to find out what your laws are in your state, you have to go to cyberbullying.org, and that's a phenomenal site that lists state by state on what your laws are, and I would absolutely go through that with your son or daughter.

But more importantly than that, we talk about one of the biggest sexting scandals that there was up in Duxbury, Massachusetts. And one of the interesting takeaways in this story was the girls were constantly told to stop sending nudes. And it's more than important. It's not only important to talk to the girls about stop sending nudes and start feeling better about yourself or building your self-esteem, the takeaway there was it's about telling our boys to stop asking for them, that it's not okay to ask for them.

I mean, there were some really interesting takeaways in that story that, I think, parents need to read. Because this is very normal today for girls to send sexual images, and I feel that we need to turn this around. We need to stop having this become normal.

Terry: Well, as you write, there's a sentence in the book, "Sexting is the new first base." That's very striking. So, how do you dissuade—I mean, kids want to be cool; they want to be accepted. They want to have that other in their life, you know. I think, as you say, the message has to apply to both boys and girls.

Sue: And what parents need to do is they have to give their kids a way out. So, when their kids are asked, "Hey, you know, everyone else is doing it," it's all about peer pressure, clique pressure. The parents need to give the kids a way out, and one of the ways to do that is the parents should say, "Hey, listen. Blame it on us." So, the teen can say, "Listen. If I do that, my phone is being monitored, my parents will find out, and then I'm going to risk losing my phone, and I can't risk having my phone confiscated." It's just little things that parents can do to help take the pressure off of the kids, and that's what parents need to learn to do.

And then we have such things as the "ugly poll contest." You know, back in the old days, we had these, the little—remember when notes used to get passed around the room? Notes being passed around a room, I mean, we had that in our high school, our junior high more than high school. But today, when it's online, it's magnified. And when it happened to Lynelle Cantwell, it was horrifying to her because it was on this app, ASK.fm.

I mean, listen. I say this to parents all day, every day. And I've been interviewed recently on that new app, what is it, Sarahah—I think that's the latest app. You know, it started with JuicyCampus, and then it went to, what is it, Formspring, and then it was BurnBook, and then it's WhatsApp, and then it went to ASK.fm. It doesn't matter what the name of the app is. It's all about educating your child offline about online safety and helping them to understand how to deal with consequences and cyberspace in general.

When they're feeling nervous or agitated or uncomfortable, they need to have the skills and the wisdom to know to come to you, or at least to click out, or at least to go to a friend. It doesn't matter what the app is, doesn't matter where they are online, because this was an ASK.fm ugly straw poll contest, and Lynelle was feeling horrible about herself. She was, what, number four in the poll? But she was strong enough to respond to it, and she told everybody, "Hey, listen. I may not be appealing to your eye, but you didn't take the time to get to know me. And I'm not even speaking for myself. I'm speaking for the three other girls that are on this ugly poll contest with me."

And you know what? When she stood up for herself, she had all these cheerleaders coming up behind her, and good for her. And you know what? She's doing really well today, by the way. I think we did give an update on her in the book, but good for her. But, yeah, these ugly poll contests, where is this cruelty coming from today? We have such a lack of empathy in the world today, and this is what we need to turn around.

Terry: Good. Excellent point. I mean, someone makes a point that you can't feel empathy and be cruel at the same time, and I think that's a good takeaway. And speaking of those, throughout the book, there are sections that are followed by the graphic of a hand with an index finger pointing to a sentence preceded by the takeaway. And so, there's a lot of really good practical advice in *Shame Nation*. I'm wondering if you could review a few of these takeaways, and talk about how they can help readers.

Sue: Great. One of the major points I tell kids and parents and adults all over, from top to bottom, is we have to start thinking about quality over quantity when it comes to friends. You can never assume you're among friends. We've seen a lot of huge cyber blunders out there from the Lindsey Stone case, from the Justine Sacco case. If you're not aware of these cases, Lindsey Stone is the one that posted the Facebook post of herself in the Arlington Cemetery that went viral. And she lost her job, and she's never been able to—I don't even know. Maybe she might be working finally, but it took her a very long time.

The fact is everyone out there should declutter their friends list. I always say clean it, you know, declutter it, go through it at least once a month. And not only your friends list, but your cellphone contact list, too. How many times have you butt dialed someone? You go, "Oops, oh my God. I haven't talked to that person in months." Or on your email list, even your email list.

I have to tell you how many times I've gone through my Outlook list or—because you get those spider spams every now and then. And everybody is sent out like this, you know, Oprah weight loss thing. Have you ever seen them, Terry?

Terry: I have.

Sue: Yeah, and then you see people that have received it, "Oh, my God. I haven't talked to that person in like eight years, and they've received this spider spam of mine."

Terry: Yes, and it looks like it's from one of your legitimate contacts, and it turns out to be a spam message. Yeah, I have. It's been a while but . . .

Sue: But anyway, in your Facebook, your Instagram, your Twitter, go through it and weed it out every now and then because there's going to be that one rare moment that you post a picture or you post a comment, when that one friend might get jealous, or she might have woken up on the wrong side of the bed. The fact is that the recent Cornell/Stanford study posted this year, in 2017, shows that anyone can be a troll. Wake up on the wrong side of the bed, under the right circumstances, and your fingers can go flying.

So, declutter your friends list—quality over quantity. And you know these kids today, they're all about the numbers. I have to have 3,000 friends or I'm not cool. Never assume your words won't get twisted. Remember, what translates on the screen is so different than what translates face-to-face. So, be really careful with your words. Keep in mind what seems clever to you may not be funny to others, so be very careful. Never put a temporary emotion on the permanent Internet, especially, now, if you're angry out there, wait 24 hours. Cool off.

Especially, you know, we just went through this very heated political year. These people were out there flying their words. You know, hate perpetrates hate, but you know what?

Kindness can perpetuate kindness, too. So, only choose kindness and compassion. If you're angry, click out. You know, technology can be turned off, too. So, think about that. Never put a temporary emotion on that permanent Internet.

Terry: Sue, doesn't that precede—doesn't that come directly before the story about the Harvard professor who complained about the prices on a Chinese menu?

Sue: Oh, my God. Was that a good story?

Terry: Yes.

Sue: Oh, wasn't that a good story? I know. Listen, studies have shown over and over again—I could sit here and name statistics to you all day long, but it's the stories that you're going to remember. That's what I love about *Shame Nation*. We've packed it with stories. And a lot of stories you don't know about because we've got a lot of little, you know, offbeat stories.

Terry: Well, we'll leave that one for readers to discover.

Sue: Yeah, the Harvard professor that made a beef over the restaurant. And what was it, \$4, right? Four dollars?

Terry: Well, yeah, it was like \$4 over what the menu price was so he went online, and like you said, put a temporary emotion on the permanent Internet. And he ended up, shall we say, paying much more than the \$4.

Sue: Oh, his reputation got—it now precedes him. And I don't know if I shared with you, but my co-author, Melissa, she happened to be up there in that restaurant, and they had read our book, and they know that professor. It's kind of funny.

Terry: Oh, my.

Sue: Yeah, but anyway, we'll move on.

Terry: Well, that leads to my next question. In Chapter 5, and here's a perfect title to sum up what we just talked about, and it's called "The Ramifications of a Digital Disaster." And you detail several severe repercussions that result from careless or really hateful online behavior. You write, "Employers today aren't drawing a distinction between their employees' online personas and their real identities." Can you talk about that? I mean, there's such tremendous exposure there, and I know you've got a good example in the book as well.

Sue: Yeah, we probably have several of them. But anyway, today, you're looking at CareerBuilder that says 70% of businesses are now screening social streams before they

even consider you. Fifty-four percent of them won't even interview you if they find something disturbing. And then, you know, I also had people say to me, "Well, it doesn't matter because I don't tech." And I think I shared this story with you before that I had a friend down in South Florida that said that she had a job for 20 years. She was married, then all of a sudden, she got divorced, and her company closed, and she couldn't find—she was like 52 years old and couldn't find a job. But, you know what? She didn't tech. Her idea of not teching is she didn't Facebook, she didn't LinkedIn, she didn't do anything, so you couldn't find her. And this was a qualified candidate; she had an accounting degree. She did bookkeeping and stuff like that for a construction company. Do you know it was over nine months, and I finally convinced her to put a LinkedIn profile up, and then within 30, 60 days, she finally got a job?

Fifty-seven percent of companies out there will not hire you if they cannot find you online. That's the importance of your online reputation today. So, everyone out there listening to me, you need to have some type of online presence. Let's go back now, again, let's go back to what you're saying, the ramifications of a digital disaster. Just because you have a job doesn't mean you're safe. Eighty percent of companies today now have social media policies in place.

Let's look at digital disasters. Look at the recent one here, Juli Briskman, who just got let go for flipping the finger at the President's motorcade. That was, you know—she breached her [employer's] social media policy. Fifty-one percent of companies today have actually hired third parties to monitor their employees' social media, and they can do that. This is allowed today. We just had the other—the nurses that were fired for laughing at someone—the veteran dying in his bed. Did you see that?

Terry: No, that one's new to me.

Sue: Yes, it's brand new. I mean, these are what's happening today. When you say, "I can't believe they fired me," yes, they can. Colleges are the same thing. Colleges and businesses view you as an extension of their brand today. The other one was the Domino's workers, that we have that one in the book, too, where they were taking videos of themselves—this is kind of disgusting, like blowing snot onto the pizza top, and it actually closed that Domino's pizzeria down. Did you read that?

Terry: Yes, I did. I'm shuddering as you speak.

Sue: Yeah. It was horrifying, but, I mean, people do believe that they think that they can get away with this stuff. You know, it's mind-boggling to me.

Terry: But more and more, if you take a position, there is a professional code of conduct that may very well monitor your outside social media usage, and that's what happened in the motorcade incident, I believe.

Sue: Well, no. The reason why she was fired is because she took that photo and she posted it as her profile picture.

Terry: Well, but that breached her employer's code of conduct, I believe.

Sue: Right. Oh, yes, yes. You're absolutely right. You're absolutely right. And then the Naval nurses—they weren't nurses, the Navy corpsmen at the hospital, it was here in Jacksonville, were baby-shaming the newborn babies. Did you remember that one?

Terry: Yes, I do remember that.

Sue: That was just like two months ago. It's just horrifying, and they lost their jobs, too. No one is immune to losing their job. Then we go back to the Harvard kids, the 10 Harvard students who posted the mean memes on Facebook, and they had their acceptances revoked from Harvard last spring. Again, from colleges to schools, just because you have a job or just because you've been accepted, it doesn't mean that you can't lose it.

Terry: Now, to the other side of things: in Chapter 8, which is called "Seeking Outside Help," it details a response a person can use when they are being severely attacked. You make a distinction in the book between an attack, and how it is different from being trolled. So could you talk about that? And then you also outlined some resources available to people in this situation.

Sue: Right. Well, an attack—we have two different types of trolling, is what we have. We have the recreational trolls and criminal trolls, and they're both bad because they both can really emotionally destroy someone's life. I mean, emotionally, they're trying on you. They break you down, but recreational trolls are annoying people who, on occasion, get into your news feed; they usually don't know you. They're saying stupid things. They're pestering you. I don't know—you just want to swat them with a fly swatter, basically.

Ignoring them and blocking them will usually remove them, and you probably won't even see them again. You may get other ones, but they're usually not the same ones. So, the criminal trolls are the type of trolls who are intending to harm you. They definitely have a mission to take you down, you, your family, usually your business sometimes, too. They have a personal reason to go out there and destroy you. And that's what happened to me back in 2003 when this person came after me. And she was on a mission to take me and my organization down, and she almost did, basically. So, yeah.

Terry: And this is the subject—I'll just briefly interrupt here. This is the subject of Sue's book, *Google Bomb: The Untold Story of the \$11.3M Verdict That Changed the Way We Use the Internet*. We'll put a link to that in the post, so people can find that as well. It's a fascinating story, and I'm glad you prevailed.

Sue: Yeah, thank you. So, anyway, there's definitely people you would rather be, let's say, attacked or bothered by a recreational troll versus the criminal trolls. The criminal trolls can be potentially really dangerous, and when I say "deadly," I mean deadly to your business. And sometimes, you may have to hire, you know, legal counsel, not all the time, but there are, like you were saying, resources available to people in the situation. And what's really great about *Shame Nation* is like what we were talking about. We do give a lot of great organizations in our book, like the Cyber Civil Rights Initiative online. We have Without My Consent. We have the DMCA.com. [Digital Millennium Copyright Act] We have the DMCA Defender. We have CopyByte.

There's just a lot of resources out there that way back in 2003, there was nothing anymore. There's Online SOS, there's the HeartMob, there's—what else is there? Gosh, there's so many. I'm going to have to open up the book because I just know we had so many—there's TrollBusters, HeartMob; there's Cybersmile Foundation. Also, there is STOMP Out Bullying, too. I mean, there's just so many phenomenal organizations.

I will have to tell you the Online SOS network, they're fairly new. They just opened up this year. If you haven't heard of them, it's onlinesosnetwork.org. They're offering, which is the first time for this, mental health referrals and services. They offer services and referrals there; we've never had that before, someone to help you out emotionally, which to me is phenomenal.

Without My Consent is a legal aid and legal services. Organizations like the Tyler Clementi Foundation, they actually have access to help you—I think it's through the New York University Law Center that has legal aid services. Believe it or not, there's a lot of services out there.

Terry: Okay. Sue, in Chapter 10, "Taking Action," you ask what we as parents, coaches, educators, or simply concerned citizens can do to bring civility back to public life. And you begin with "create empathy." And I wondered if you could talk about why empathy is so critical to reclaiming civility.

Sue: Well, it's been proven in studies time and time again, with greater empathy and compassion, it's just about impossible to leave a cruel comment or to be mean. [Dr. Michele Borba](#), one of the leading experts in empathy and in this field, has created a proven four-step method towards how to approach posting online. And it has helped curb online hate. With this acronym, it's called CARE, C-A-R-E, she's really taken this a step further, which is why she's allowed us to put it in our book, and she was interviewed in our book.

"C" is to call attention to uncaring, and this is really important. And this involves sitting down with our kids, from kids to teenagers. When you see that someone has posted an ugly comment, and sometimes our kids can come to us when parents were also guilty of

maybe posting some, you know, ugly comments out there, the kids could come to you and say, "Hey," you know, "Why did you post that?"

Call attention to when someone posts something ugly and talk about it. Was this about you? Was it about someone else? And let's discuss it. And then "A" is for assess. Assess how uncaring affects others, including yourself. Was your child the victim of a cruel comment? Maybe you were. Discuss how it made you feel. Discuss how it might possibly make the other person feel.

And just to expand a little bit about this discussion, I've discussed this many times with parents out there. Short chats are better than no chats at all. We've heard this over and over again: communication is key. I sit with parents. I tell parents this all the time. The most important thing you can do is—because I know kids don't like to talk. It's when they come home from school or if you're driving in the car, just when you say to them, "Hey, how is school? Or how is that sport, you know, how was dance today? Or how was soccer today?" You can ask, "Hey, anything new happen online, in your cyberspace? Any new apps today? Did you download any new songs today?" Anything like that, get involved.

I mean, I wrote an article once for, I think it was FOSI, Family Online Safety Institute, about being an interested parent is what's going to get your child to come to you when they're being harassed or shamed online. Because one of the problems we're having with kids being cyberbullied online is they're going to their peers rather than their parents when they're being harassed, and we need them coming to an adult. And I'm glad that they're going to someone, but we do prefer that they come to their parents.

So "R" is repair the hurt and require reparation. Did you notice that you or your teen wrote a comment that hurt someone even if they didn't mean to? And then immediately, were they remorseful? Did you make them go apologize to that person? And this is really important because being remorseful—I mean, we can all flippantly write something and it goes back to, again, sometimes, we don't mean to say something, especially when the Internet translates it in a different way. Another thing we have to be careful of is those emojis. Everybody takes an emoji a different way, so you have to be really careful using those emojis.

Terry: Very true.

Sue: Yeah. And then "E," express disappointment and stress caring expectations. So, here we go again. It's not about reprimanding your child as much as it is discussing and talking with your child about just, again, expressing or discussing with them that, "You know what? I expect a little bit more from you. Let's talk about this," and choosing kindness and compassion over, you know, reprimanding them.

Terry: So, essentially, be a better role model.

Sue: We have to be, absolutely. We must lead by example, and you know, again, going back to putting a temporary emotion on the permanent Internet. I don't care how heated you are about a topic. It's better to click out when in doubt than stay there. I mean, there's a way to constructively leave a comment than be combative. It's just that simple. There's just nothing that's that important that you need to be nasty online.

Terry: Excellent point and well said. Well, I'd like to thank you, Sue. My guest today has been Sue Scheff; she is the author of *Shame Nation: The Global Epidemic of Online Hate*. She wrote that along with Melissa Schorr. You can find it at [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). We'll leave a link on our website. Sue, thanks so much for taking time with us today.

Sue: No, thank you so much. I appreciate it.

Terry: All right. And thank you all for listening.