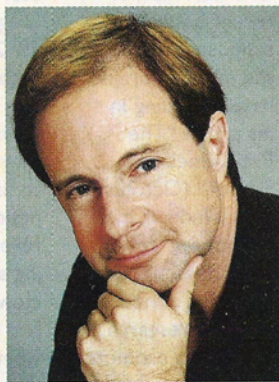


Day of Tragedy Day of Growth

I'M WRITING THIS ON THE EVENING OF ONE OF the most tragic days in American history, just as this issue of *Psychology Today* is about to go to press. By the time you read these words, the attacks on New York and Washington will have played out in a hundred ways I cannot now imagine. Today, all is mystery and frustration and anger and sorrow.



It's hard to imagine why presumably sane people would hijack airplanes and ram them into office buildings, causing their own deaths and the deaths of thousands of innocent people. But sanity is a relative term. If you're raised to believe that Americans (or Jews or Blacks) are evil, then killing them might seem like a good deed. If you're told that your suicide will assure you a place in paradise, then blowing yourself up might be a rational act. If your dead comrades are viewed as heroes by your community, you might be anxious to join them. It will take more than bombs and metal detectors to defeat terrorism; we must also try to understand the terrorists and the cultures that produce them. If we don't make that effort, we will fight with the wrong weapons, or worse yet, we will underestimate the enemy.

Today is one of those frustrating days that forces us to ask a thousand questions that have no answers. Who has perished, and how many might still be rescued? Who is responsible for these horrible crimes? Why did our intelligence and defense systems fail? How can we prevent heinous acts like this from happening again? Uncertainty is torture for most people; alas, the pain is so great that many prefer delusion. I hope and pray that by the time you read this all of today's questions will have been answered for you—and that the answers are not more disturbing than the questions.

On a personal note, I heard today from about 20 friends and family members, including some long lost. They were concerned about my safety, knowing that the magazine's main office is in Manhattan. And that, of course, is the upside of tragedy—that it brings us together in love. How sad that it takes the worst in humankind to bring out our best.

This is a time for family, for community, for prayer and for both personal and collective strength. For the sake of the dead and the suffering, we must turn today's tragedy into something positive for America and for humankind. From the ashes, we must build noble structures. From our pain, we must achieve enduring insights. And in our fear, we must find great courage.

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