

A few days ago, I received the following email:

Dear ThinkTwice a.k.a Good C*nts

You guys are actual f*cking retarded. Your website is f*cking sh*t too guys like actual what the f*ck... You could do so much better.... Dumb c*nts. You c*nts probs got autism don't you?

F*ck you,

Matt

The email was sent from a college server in New Zealand (and included the student's full name), so I contacted the administration:

Dear...

Yesterday, my organization in the United States received a nasty, threatening email from one of your students, Matt... (a copy of his email is included). I wonder what you are teaching your students but if Matt... is representative of your student body I am concerned for the future. Please stop him from contacting us again or we will contact your local media to share Matt's letter, and his association with your school, with the larger community.

I received an email from a higher-up at the college:

Dear...

The student concerned admitted that he had sent this message. Obviously, this young man has shown incredibly poor judgement and his conduct is clearly against our school values. I have met him and he has written an apology to you, which I include in my email to you. I also offer my sincere apology on behalf of the school. The views that your organisation espouse will, no doubt, attract a wide variety of responses, but we would expect our students to engage in well reasoned and civil debate.

Here is the student's apology:

Dear...

I want to offer my sincerest apologies for sending your organisation such an offensive and unpleasant email. It was incredibly stupid of me to criticise your organisation in this manner. At the time I thought that it was funny but upon further reflection I can see how inappropriate it was. I am sorry it has caused such offence, also that it has brought my school into disrepute. What I have done is completely against the school's values, especially the value of respect. Using the school's email to send messages like this is also completely inappropriate because it casts a poor light on the school. As a senior student at this school I should know better. I promise not to contact your organisation again. Once again, I apologise for the offence I have caused.

I wrote another email as a follow-up:

Dear...

Thank you for your email notifying me of your conversation with Matt.... I agree that students should be taught to engage in well-reasoned discussions without resorting to ad hominem attacks. The most disturbing part of Matt's letter was his attack on people with autism. It shows a lack of understanding, empathy and compassion. As you may or may not know, many families with autistic children firmly believe their child's regressive behavior began after a series of vaccines, despite official denials. The children were developing normally until they received vaccines, then began to lose developmental milestones. Here in the United States, 17 years ago the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) sponsored a study to look at whether thimerosal (mercury) in vaccines could cause neurodevelopmental disorders, including autism. The CDC's own study — conducted by Dr. Tom Verstraeten, the CDC's lead

epidemiologist — found that infants who received thimerosal-containing vaccines were nearly 8 times more likely to become autistic when compared to infants who did not receive thimerosal-containing vaccines (relative risk, RR = 7.6). These infants were also significantly more likely to develop neurologic disorders, sleep disorders and speech disorders. Instead of sounding an alarm and modifying vaccine protocols, the CDC suppressed this study; it was never published. However, you can read the abstract of this study here: http://thinktwice.com/CDC_quashed_study.pdf

Our organization does not advocate for or against vaccines. We support parents having access to all of the available information regarding vaccines and their right to remain free to accept or reject them. We are opposed to mandatory vaccines. We also publish a book that summarizes 400 peer-reviewed studies that are critical of vaccines. The studies in this book are indexed by the National Library of Medicine, published by the *New England Journal of Medicine*, *British Medical Journal*, etc. This book was endorsed by several highly-respected medical doctors. In accepting Matt's apology, I would like for him to accept a gift copy of this book, **Miller's Review of Critical Vaccine Studies: 400 Important Scientific Papers Summarized for Parents and Researchers** (<http://vacbook.com/mro.htm>). I would be happy to send you a gift copy of this book as well. In this way, we would truly have a mature exchange of ideas, and I believe Matt would gain a broader understanding of why so many very smart people have different ideas about this controversial topic.

I did not receive a response to this email, so I sent another email:

Dear...

I did not receive a response to my last email. I was hoping that you and Matt... would have accepted my gift of 400 peer-reviewed vaccine studies. It would have shown me that you were sincere when you claimed that your school expects your students to engage in “well-reasoned and civil debate.” To achieve that worthy goal, your students would need a) open minds, b) access to multiple sources of information regarding the topic under discussion, and c) genuine support from College leadership. I thought this would be an excellent learning opportunity. Matt claimed that we are retarded because of our views, implying that he has superior knowledge about vaccines. You claimed that because of the views that our organization espouses, a wide variety of responses is only natural. So it seems obvious to me that your minds are closed to alternate data, and leaders at your school are not willing or able to set a higher standard of learning.

However, do not fear that this learning opportunity will be completely lost. I plan on sharing Matt's letter on social media. Who knows, maybe it will go viral and Matt will become an internet sensation. Perhaps that will stimulate Matt (and his tutors with such low expectations) to rise to the occasion and sincerely seek to understand this important topic from a more comprehensive perspective.