



## What Paul Ryan gets totally wrong about Trump's Twitter feed

Analysis by [Chris Cillizza](#), CNN Editor-at-large

Updated 10:28 AM ET, Tue August 22, 2017

How does Ryan talk to his kids about bullying? 01:14

(CNN)When asked about President Donald Trump's Twitter habits at [a CNN town hall on Monday night](#), House Speaker Paul Ryan chuckled.

"Do I wish there would be a little less tweeting?" Ryan joked. "Of course, I do. But I think, I don't think that that's going to change."

Ha!

Except, not really.

The question Ryan was answering was about the impact that Trump's bullying behavior online has on kids.

That's a very important question, and not one that should be so easily laughed off.

Look, I get it. If people like Ryan were totally honest, they would say "Trump's Twitter feed is a massive problem and I'd give anything to stop him from using social media at all."

Ryan won't say that because a) Trump won't listen and b) why make the President angry if you have no hope of affecting change?

So what Ryan -- and the rest of the Republican political establishment -- have decided to do is laugh off the Trump tweets. Man he sure sends a lot! I wish he'd send fewer! Ha ha ha!

The problem with that strategy -- and it is, quite clearly, a strategy -- is that Trump's Twitter feed isn't the sort of thing you can laugh off. It's the prime vehicle for this President's communications -- and one through which he makes policy (banning [transgender people](#) from military service), savages political opponents (including some [within his own administration](#)) and sets the daily national political agenda.

Trump's Twitter feed isn't a sideshow to his administration. It is the *main* show -- every day, all day. To laugh it off is to avoid engaging with the president's behavior and views.

Go back to the question posed to Ryan on Monday night. It was about how he explains Trump's tendency toward online bullying and intimidation to his own children. Ryan's laughed-off response isn't adequate. (He noted that he urges his kids to turn off the TV as a general rule.) Leadership is about more than laughing off questions you don't want to answer.

What if, instead of chuckling, Ryan had said something like this: "I think President Trump needs to understand the impact he has on our culture. He needs to think more deeply before he tweets about the sort of message he is sending and example he is setting for all of us -- especially our young people."

Sure, Trump might not like that. And, yes, it might occasion a tweet from the President -- insisting that Ryan and the rest of the GOP political establishment is trying to silence him.

But is there any doubt that it would be the more leaderly thing to do? Leadership isn't about standing up when the going is easy and the potential impact is minimal. It's about doing the right thing no matter what the potential consequences.

Ryan, as I noted yesterday, [understands there is a dangerous leadership vacuum in his party caused by Trump's seeming abdication of moral leadership in the wake of the Charlottesville violence](#). But, in dismissing what Trump tweets with a laugh, Ryan is missing an opportunity to show Trump, the GOP and the country what real leadership looks like.

There are some things that just can't be laughed off. The Twitter feed of the president of the United States is one of them.

© 2017 Cable News Network. [Turner Broadcasting System, Inc.](#) All Rights Reserved. CNN Sans™ & © 2016 Cable News Network.