



934TH AIRLIFT WING

June 2022
Volume 4 Issue 6

Prevention Connection: Building a Healthier Community

Inside: Trauma and PTSD; We Can Do Better; The Benefits of Nature

There are several books, resources, and articles available to learn about improving one's health. One book in particular that has been very helpful to many is Dr. Kathi Kemper's, *"Mental Health, Naturally: The Family Guide to Holistic Care for a Healthy Mind and Body"*. The following table was taken from Dr. Kemper's book to help people understand the variances of physical, mental, and spiritual health. To have a strong sense of self and improve resilience, one should be balanced in all areas.

Physical Fitness

Strength
Flexibility
Endurance
Focus
Coordination
Resilience
Teamwork

Mental Health

Confidence and Courage
Adaptability
Cheerfulness
Attention/Concentration
Harmony
Hardiness
Social network/communication
skills/connection to community

Spiritual Well-Being

Faith
Forgiveness
Hope
Love
Kindness
Charity/Generosity
Connection with a higher
power, spirit, or nature

Special points of interest:

For more information on maintaining a balanced lifestyle go to:

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/work-life-balance/art-20048134>

<https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma16-4958.pdf>

<https://www.verywellmind.com/self-care-strategies-overall-stress-reduction-3144729>

Trauma and PTSD by Liz Swanson, LICSW, SARC

To quote Bob Dylan, “the times they are a-changin’,” especially when it comes to society’s view of trauma and the impact it can have on a person. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), a diagnosis that identifies the lasting effect trauma, was not recognized until 1980, when it was added to Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of mental health disorders. Previous to this, society took the “pull yourself up by your boot straps” approach when faced with trauma and used terms like “character defect” to describe why some people had lasting effects of trauma. Today we know this is not helpful and we have a better understanding of trauma and its impact.

Experts in the field of trauma generally agree that when a traumatic event is witnessed/experienced, it disrupts the brain’s ability to effectively process what happened. This results in gaps in memory, changes in a person’s normal emotional state (i.e. increased arousal, hypervigilance, increased irritability/aggression, increased negative thoughts) intrusive re-experiencing of the event (i.e. nightmares, flashbacks, physical/emotional distress after exposed to reminders), changes in behavior (i.e. avoiding trauma related thoughts or feelings, avoiding trauma related reminders) and can disrupt a person’s ability to do everyday functions (i.e. difficulty concentrating, difficulty sleeping, decreased interest in activities, difficulty experiencing positive feelings). It makes sense that some of these changes occur immediately following a traumatic event. However, for someone with PTSD, these changes continue to occur long after the traumatic event has ended, which is problematic.

Thankfully, PTSD is not a “life sentence.” Even though we call PTSD a mental health “disorder,” it is not a disorder like, for example, diabetes, that can only be managed but not healed. According to Peter Levine Ph.D., neuroscientist and creator of somatic experiencing (SE) therapy, “posttraumatic stress injury” is a better description. This is because a wound, with the right amount of care and effort can heal over time. This is also true for PTSD. Luckily our understanding of the treatment of trauma has also evolved and today there are many options. These may include the more traditional approaches like medications or talk therapy, or possibly indirect approaches like yoga or community building.

It is also important to remember that not all trauma turns into PTSD. Peter Levine states: “Trauma is not what happens to us but what we hold inside in the absence of an empathetic witness.” This quote highlights the healing effects of sharing our experience with someone we trust (i.e. friend, family member, therapist) as well as the importance of having strong social connections in our lives. “Social connections and interactions help individuals to deal with stressful situations, come out of the adverse conditions and display adaptive capacity,” (Marsh, 1996). In essence, social connections fuel resiliency.

Experts in the field of psychology are continuing to study trauma, the effect it has, how to treat it as well as prevention. I have to imagine that our understanding and approach to treating trauma will continue to improve.

We Can Do Better by Mike Sanford, VPI

In response to the Robb Elementary School shooting, I would like to think this is somewhat of a rarity. Unfortunately, it's not the case. The number of mass shootings in this country has been alarming. The Gun Violence Archive, an independent data collection organization, has counted 213 mass shootings thus far for the year (as of 25 May) (1). A mass shooting is defined as an incident of 4 or more people shot, excluding the shooter (1). There were 693 mass shootings in 2021, 611 in 2020, and 417 in 2019 (1).

Education Week, an organization that tracks and analyzes data regarding schools, has been tracking school shootings since 2018 and have found there have been 119 since that time (2). A school shooting is defined as a firearm being discharged in a school and at least one person was shot, excluding the shooter (2).

Oftentimes, people who perpetrate school shootings have similar risk factors and warning signs of those who partake in other forms of violence (i.e. workplace violence, domestic violence, suicide). Some of these risk factors are parental divorce, financial problems, family member arrested or incarcerated, domestic violence, family mental health problems, and abuse or neglect. In the book, *The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog*, Dr. Bruce Perry describes the importance of having a child grow up in a healthy, nurturing, and safe environment (3). Otherwise, the chances of them engaging in destructive behaviors remarkably increases.

In doing my own research, I've found the majority of those who perpetrated mass shootings had several risk factors and warning signs. Unfortunately, they were either ignored or weren't taken seriously. I ask that you continue to talk about "See Something, Say Something" within your squadrons and sections and with those you interact. Please report any suspicious activities to Security Forces (612-713-1102) or your local law enforcement agency. No one is immune to these shootings and remember if you see something, say something.

Sources:

- (1) <https://www.gunviolencearchive.org/past-tolls>
- (2) <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/school-shootings-this-year-how-many-and-where/2022/01>
- (3) Perry, B. & M. Szalavitz (2017). *The Boy Who Was as a Dog and Other Stories from a Child Psychiatrist's Notebook*. Basic Books, Perseus Books Group.

Let us know peace.
For as long as the moon shall rise,
For as long as the rivers shall flow,
For as long as the sun shall rise,
For as long as the grass shall grow,
Let us know peace.

~ A Cheyenne Prayer



The Benefits of Nature by Chayo Smith

“Grow through what you go through,” has been my mantra for the last five years. I get lost in planting seeds, watching them break ground, budding blooms and bleeding hearts dangling from their delicate stems. I reap the benefits of time spent outside, gardening connects me to the natural world.

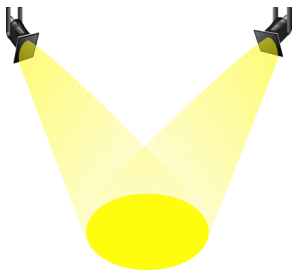
I forced some bulbs this winter, when the amaryllis bloomed and faded, I decided to store the bulb in the basement in a Tupperware. I poked some holes, tossed the bulb in there and it remained in the laundry room. This morning, I went to change washing to the dryer and out of the corner of my eye, spied a green spike. I thought of one of my favorite Thoreau quotes, “I was not born to be forced.”

I marveled at two things. 1. I’m amazingly bad at keeping bulbs, I have a lot to learn. 2. Like this bulb, we are all on a quest to live, we are all on a journey. Even in the darkness, there is a yearning for the sun, it’s far more powerful than me and my basement.

According to a 2020 article published at the Yale School of Environment, “Nature is not only nice to have, but it’s a have-to-have for physical health and cognitive function.” Nature has other benefits too, one does not need to dig in the dirt. Japanese researchers call walking in the woods, “forest bathing.” Time spent in nature can lower blood pressure, stress hormone levels, reduce anxiety and improve mood. The article cites a 2015 study from the U. K. which correlated exposure to nature to increased community cohesion and lower crime rates.

There are also some wonderful lessons to be learned. I cannot force anything to grow where it is not meant. I must have patience. I can relinquish some control and let the irises and the columbine bloom where they are planted. I can work with the trees and shade. I expanded my garden at building 752 to include the Fitness Center and was pleasantly surprised when asked if mulch should be ordered for the rain garden. I hope we can all enjoy it.

This brings me back to Thoreau, my favorite essayist and that pesky bulb. I am going to plant it in a sunny spot and see what happens. I hope we can all get out and take a forest bath, or at the very least breathe deep and feel the warmth of the sun. May you all take a walk in the woods and come out taller than the trees. (A blessing inspired by Henry David Thoreau.)



Resource Spotlight

Vet Center—The Vet Center (1-877-War Vets) provides a broad range of counseling, outreach, and referral services to combat veterans and their families. Vet Centers guide veterans and their families through many of the major adjustments in lifestyle that often occur after a veteran returns from a deployment. Services for a veteran may include individual and group counseling in areas such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), alcohol and drug assessment, and suicide prevention referrals. All services are free and strictly confidential.

Prevention Partners/Response:

Violence Prevention: 713-1159

Sexual Assault Response Coordinator:
713-1315

Director of Psychological Health:
713-1224

Airman & Family Readiness: 713-1516

Personal Financial Counselor:
612-297-2826

Chaplain Corps: 713-1226

Equal Opportunity: 713-1221

Exercise Physiologist: 713-1472

Security Forces (BDOC): 713-1101

Military One Source: 1-800-342-9647

DoD Safe Helpline: 1-877-995-5247

Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
1-800-273-8255

National Domestic Violence Hotline:
1-800-799-7233

National Human Trafficking Resource
Center: 1-888-373-7888

Self Care Strategy—Add this to your Tool Box!

Reframe—Control How You React!

Are you aware that certain events aren't necessarily the cause of your reaction? In reality, it's our thoughts about an event that drives our reactions, both emotional and physical. Reframing helps us to be more aware of our thoughts vs. our reactions.

Essentially, you want to describe the event, identify your thoughts (how you are thinking about that event), and your reactions. Will your reaction help or hurt the situation or your performance? If it hurts the situation, you want to reframe your thoughts in a way that will be more productive. Want more info? Talk with your RTA or MRT.



RESILIENCE