

# Prevention Connection

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MAY 2020

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, National Physical Fitness and Sports Month, Women's Health Awareness Month, National Pet Month, National Meditation Month

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According to the CDC, mental health is an important part of our overall health and well-being. It includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Mental health affects how we think, feel, and act. It helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make healthy choices.



May is  
Mental Health  
Awareness  
Month

The purpose of Mental Health Awareness Month is to bring attention to our mental health and to help destigmatize mental illness. There is a distinct difference from mental health and mental illness. People who might be struggling with mental health may not be diagnosed with a mental illness. Likewise, a person with a mental illness can experience a positive mental well-being. During these times of physical distancing, it's important to put as much emphasis on our mental health as it is our physical health. We need to do the things that bring us comfort and improves our well-being, which includes our happiness.

It's also important for us to reach out to those who might be struggling. It is our responsibility to help our fellow Airmen during difficult times. If you know someone who is challenged by our current situation, reach out to them. Call them, email them, text them, or send the carrier pigeon. You'll both be glad you did.

Source: <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/index.htm>

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“Happiness can be found even in the darkest of times, if only one remembers to turn on the light.”

~ Albus Dumbledore



## Meditation—It's a Spiritual Benefit

by Chaplain Cooper

I love duck hunting. The sounds and sights of Teal zipping over the cattails really gets the blood pumping. (We won't talk about the blasts of shotguns which usually have no effect.) But sometimes the skies are empty, and the shooting is sparse. That becomes my time to think, to meditate.

May is Meditation Month. Meditation is an indispensable practice, especially given the busy and complex culture we live in. With multiple demands from work and endless opportunities for distractions, time for meditation is often in short supply. However, without it we often end up being the dog wagged by the tail.

We need times of focused, intentional, thought to fix our course and remain true to it. Do you ever feel like you are being swept along by life's events, or that you are living reactively, rather than pro-actively? Meditation provides an opportunity for assessing life's direction. It provides a time and tool for asking simple, yet significant questions such as: What am I doing? Should I take this job? What are my goals? The answer to any of these can be life altering. Meditation provides opportunity for thoughtful answers.

Meditation also provides opportunity for probing deeply, getting to the soul, the real self. This type of thinking answers questions like: Who am I? What are my values? What are my priorities? What kind of person do I want to be? It is this type of thinking that the endless distractions are so effective in preventing. Hundreds of movie channels, endless games, the constant barrage of information; the opportunities for mindlessness are infinite. Have you noticed how celebrities are capitalizing on this time of "stay in place", clamoring for our time and attention? If there is a silver-lining to this pandemic, it is that people are quieting themselves and engaging in deep, thoughtful explorations of self.

Meditation also provides a venue for considering the larger, ultimate questions of life. Why do I exist? What is the meaning of life? Is there a Higher Being, and a grand purpose and plan I am part of? These questions probe the spiritual and the accompanying religious practices. This is Spiritual Pillar thinking. Above all, I encourage you not to neglect this kind of meditation. This kind and level of meditation shapes a foundation for our being, and is vital for facing and overcoming life's greatest obstacles. It deserves serious time and effort.

As we enter May and remain confined, take this opportunity to formulate a plan for periodic meditation, if you haven't already done so. As for me, there will be plenty of quiet duck hunting days this fall, but in the meantime I'll be thinking.

## Getting Creative to Meet Your Fitness Goals

by Eric Neal

May is National Physical Fitness and Sports Month and what a barrier we face in meeting goals that are fitness and sports related. Fitness centers are shutdown and home equipment is either not available or the price is much higher than normal.

These circumstances had quite an effect on me, considering I am a gym guy that likes to use free weights, strength and cardiovascular machines. The results I worked very hard to accomplish started to diminish in a short period of time. As soon as the gyms closed, I tried to purchase Bowflex Adjustable Dumbbells, but none were in stock for weeks, maybe months. I was fortunate enough to find a good deal on a used treadmill and a Bowflex Body Tower. Once the equipment was delivered and assembled, I decided its time to get back to the diet and the workout routine. Despite the limitations, I am no longer heading in the wrong direction and the comeback will be better than the setback.

If you find yourself having trouble getting results because you lost access to your gym on and off base, check out some of the workouts I've posted on the 934 AW Fitness Assessment Cell SharePoint (link is below). To find your way to exercise at home, go to the Exercise folder under Exercise Guidance and Workouts.

In addition to the workouts, think like Arnold. In the movie, "Pumping Iron", Arnold states that he finds it strange when someone drives a quarter of a mile in five seconds when they can walk. If we follow his way of thinking, we can reduce the impact of less calories burned from exercise by increasing calories burned from activities of daily living.

If you lack or have limited access to exercise equipment, right now is the perfect time to use some of the time on flexibility. Stretching, yoga, and Pilates could be great workouts that require limited or no equipment. Plus there are several online classes that you can sign up for, or download an app, such as Wellbeats© or Yoga Studio©, that works just as well.

**"If you want to be a champion, you cannot have any kind of an outside negative force coming in an affect you."**

~ Arnold Schwarzenegger

SharePoint site for home workouts: <https://afrc.eim.us.af.mil/sites/934aw/934AWG/Fitness/SitePages/Home.aspx>



## Don't Cheat Your Body! by Chayo Smith

I am forty-four years old and I am struggling. I am beginning to question the relationships in my life and how meaningful they have been, what is important. Yes, I am talking about my hairdresser. I really miss her. The gray hairs have been waging an attack at my temples, infiltrating my straight mane with their wiry, white strands.

I should be more concerned with heart disease, cancer and chronic lower respiratory diseases (in that order) since May is Women's Health Awareness Month. According to the Centers for Disease Control, 33 percent of women over 20 have hypertension or are taking an anti-hypertensive medication (CDC, 2016).

Is there any reason why? We are under so much pressure to maintain composure while striving for excellence, balancing motherhood and/or work and self-actualizing, living our best lives on social media, taking our best pictures (or filtering the photos), fostering some new found passion, all the while moisturizing with a magic potion of anti-aging creams. My heart beats faster just typing about the pressures we place upon ourselves.

I stop, and take a breath. This is an amazing time to be alive and aging. We have many opportunities, more than ever, to communicate with one another and build community. Instead of letting the statistics get me down, we can inform one another that now is the time to take an inventory of heart health and share our stories, share our family history of cancer with each other and find common ground. Health issues are universal, especially now. This is the perfect time to talk about health, when we are ALL promoting health, wellness, hand hygiene, and toilet paper, has anyone seen the memes?

No article these days is complete without mentioning COVID-19. Our way of moving about the world has changed so drastically in the last two months, it is incomprehensible some days. I miss my friend, Heather.

She and I share the same relationship with our gray hair, out of sight out of mind. She and I feel the same way about the gym and weightlifting: Don't cheat your body! We participate in an online fitness community, [www.sweatminnesota.com](http://www.sweatminnesota.com). It's a website featuring personal trainers and gym owners who post workouts to keep ALL Minnesotans moving. We text each other during the workouts: "Yikes, ouch, and I hate carpet," we really mean "I'm here too," "I miss working out together," "I hate working out on carpet but I am trying to keep our friendship going." It's our way of keeping fit: mind, heart and body.

She texted me yesterday to let me know she was struggling and sent a meme about her hair. I laughed so hard I graciously snorted into my coffee cup. I get it. She texted again, "Minnesota Sweat this Saturday?" "I have to, it's Women Health Awareness Month and I can't cheat my body," I replied.



Did you know that over 80 million households either have a dog or cat? If you include other pets (i.e. birds, horses, fish, ferrets, rabbits, etc.), the number exceeds over 100 million households. There must be a good reason if nearly one-third of U.S. households has a pet.



According to the CDC, there are many health benefits of owning a pet. They increase opportunities to exercise, getting outside, and socializing. Pets also help decrease blood pressure, cholesterol levels, and triglyceride levels, and they help us manage loneliness and depression. Likewise, some studies show that after being around pets, most people's cortisol level lowers (that's the stress hormone), while increasing the feel-good hormone of serotonin.

It's important to note the CDC also recommends to wash your hands:

- After touching or playing with your pet
- After feeding your pet or handling pet food
- After handling pet habitats or equipment (cages, tanks, toys, food and water dishes, etc.)



- After cleaning up after pets
- After leaving areas where animals live (coops, barns, stalls, etc.), even if you did not touch an animal
- Before eating and drinking
- Before preparing food or drinks
- After removing soiled clothes or shoes

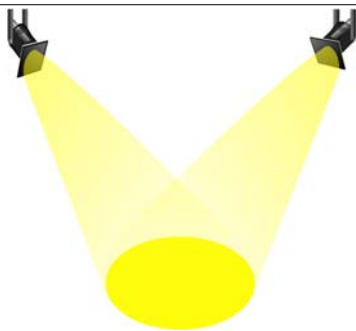
Sources: <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/reports-statistics/us-pet-ownership-statistics>; <https://www.cdc.gov/healthypets/health-benefits/index.html>; <https://healthybrains.org/power-of-pets/>

“Until one has loved an animal a part of one's soul remains unawakened.”

~ Anatole France

## Additional Information/Resources

### Resource Spotlight



**Employee Assistance Program (EAP) (1-866-580-9078).** This is a confidential and free service for federal civilian employees and dependents. They offer assistance with a wide range of personal problems or life issues. They also have free webinars, videos and articles on self-care. For questions about the EAP for federal employees, contact Ms. Shedd at 612-713-1224, or go to: [www.AFPC.af.mil/EAP](http://www.AFPC.af.mil/EAP).

### *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 Corp: 713-1226

Equal Opportunity: 713-1221

Exercise Physiologist: 713-1472

SFS (BDOC): 713-1101/1102

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

### **APP\* Spotlight and Self Care Strategy—Add this to your Tool Box!**



**Strava is Swedish for strive. The Strava® app tracks your miles of all types of exercising (e.g. run, walk, biking, hiking, canoeing, kayaking, inline skating, and many others) It uses a GPS tracker to locate your position from start to finish. You can share your progress with other Strava users, which can be encouraging for some.**

**Strava® also allows you to sync with most devices—your phone, GPS watch or head unit, heart rate monitor or power meter. It also records just about any performance metric you can imagine. There is a pay feature called Strava Summit® where they have training plans, power analysis, and safety features at an additional cost.**

**\*The DOD and Air Force does not endorse any organization or product listed.**