



**934TH AIRLIFT WING**

**September 2021  
Volume 3 Issue 9**

## **Prevention Connection: Building a Healthy Community**

**Inside: A Wave of Hope is Coming, Lessons from the Garden, Common Misconceptions & Countering Facts About Suicide, Resources for Military and Families, Tips for Better Sleep**

**SafeTALK Suicide Prevention Training:** We have a great opportunity to learn about being better prepared to talk with someone who may be contemplating suicide. This is a four-hour training that “goes more in-depth...to recognize when someone needs help, how to talk with them to better understand their situation, and safely connect them to the resources they need.”

**Reservations are required, max class size is 40.**

**\*\* Lunch will be provided from 1200-1300.**

**28 Sept 2021, 0800-1200, Building 760, Room 110**

**To register: email Michael Sanford at: [michael.sanford@us.af.mil](mailto:michael.sanford@us.af.mil)**

**For more information about the training go to:  
[www.livingworks.net/safeTALK](http://www.livingworks.net/safeTALK)**

**Special points of interest:**

**For more information on preventing suicide go to:**

**[www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/suicide)**

**[www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org](http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org)**

**<https://save.org>**

**<https://www.dspo.mil>**

## A Wave of Hope is Coming by Ch. Brokenshire

Growing up in Southern California, I spent a lot of time in the ocean looking for the perfect wave. Sometimes a great wave would come and you'd be too far in. Other times you'd be too far out. Sometimes you would let a great wave go by because an even better wave might be coming next. When you'd miss a great wave, there was disappointment. But in the midst of the disappointment was the reality that if you waited, another set was coming.

We all have times of disappointment in our lives. There are times when we feel like the pain we are feeling will never end. People who die by suicide don't generally want to die, they want their pain to stop. Suicide is a permanent action aimed at a temporary problem. Depression causes people to make bad decisions. Feelings of isolation and helplessness deceive us into thinking that the pain we feel is forever.

Depression also causes us to feel isolated. God did not create us to be alone. We are called to bear one another's burdens. In Air Force terms, to be a Wingman to our fellow Airmen. If you notice changes in your Wingman's behavior, take initiative to ask if they are struggling and be willing to listen and guide them to help. If someone talks about hurting themselves or wanting to die, ask the honest question about whether they are contemplating suicide.

A sobering statistic is that more than twice as many people take their own lives each year as those who are murdered. For young adults, suicide is second only to accidents as the leading cause of death. I have prayed over flag draped transfer cases on deployment and have presided over funerals of desperate people who took their own lives. I have witnessed the pain as I have mourned with family members and friends who would do anything to have their loved one back.

If you are struggling with thoughts of suicide please find someone you trust. In moments of clarity, establish obstacles and remove means of harming yourself. Know that mental illness is not your identity. Reach out for help and don't bear the weight alone. The pain you feel is not forever. You are loved and cared for more than you know. Hold on, a wave of mercy and hope will come.



**“Each day is like surfing... sometimes it's off-balance, sometimes it's scary, and sometimes it's a crash. But regardless, there will always be those that are ideal and picture-perfect.”**

**~ Unknown**

## Lessons from the Garden – Seasons by Liz Swanson

When it comes to weather, the one thing you can count on in Minnesota is that it will change. Change is our constant as hot summer days are followed by cool fall afternoons then on into the frozen tundra of winter. This lasts only a few months before the earth reawakens in spring and the cycle repeats. Life also happens in cycles and in order to live a fulfilling life we need to embrace this change and follow this pattern.

In Minnesota, there is a season for sowing, a season for growing, a season for reaping and a season for letting go. This is also true for us Minnesotans and can be seen in our relationships or the projects we immerse ourselves in and even in our own development as we age. And when we are in sync with this pattern, our efforts flourish. However, being out of sync can keep us from reaching our potential. For example, in an instant gratification society, it's easy to think that those around us are "naturally talented" or "naturally in shape" because the sowing and growing stages aren't posted. Without this awareness, we think we should be able to skip right to the benefits stage and there is something wrong with us when we don't. In essence we are trying to skip a season. Staying in one season too long can also cause problems. For example, fear may keep us talking about our next project or the perfect job or perfect relationship yet we never take action and as a result we never get there. Without any growth, the place where we stand starts to feel very empty.

The last season can sometimes be hard to accept, it is the season of letting go. Not all things are meant to stay in our lives and that is okay. Change is constant. The vibrant colors of fall serve as a good reminder that endings can be beautiful and winter gives us the space we need to grieve and plan our next venture. Staying in sync with these cycles keeps us thriving.

**"Try not to resist the changes that come your way. Instead let life live through you. And do not worry that you life is turning upside down. How do you know that the side you are used to is better than the one to come."**

**~ Rumi**



## Common Misconceptions & Countering Facts About Suicide

**Misconception:** Suicide is not impulsive.

**Fact:** Research shows it can take less than 10 minutes between thinking about suicide to acting on it. Putting time and distance between a person at risk and a means for suicide is an effective way to prevent death.

**Misconception:** Owning a firearm is not associated with suicide risk.

**Fact:** Owning a firearm does not cause someone to be suicidal; however, storing a loaded firearm at home increases risk for dying by suicide four to six times.

**Misconception:** Suicidal behavior is hereditary.

**Fact:** There is no genetic predisposition to suicide. Although there may be over-representation of suicide in some families, behaviors such as suicide ideation and/or attempts do not transmit genetically.

**Misconception:** Most military firearm deaths are by combat.

**Fact:** Most firearm deaths of Service members are the result of suicide (83.0%), as compared to combat (3.5%), accident (2.0%), and homicide (9.0%).

**Misconception:** Only mental health professionals can help individuals who are at risk for suicide.

**Fact:** Everyone has a role to play in preventing suicide. Engaging community stakeholders, like financial counselors, can be an impactful way to prevent suicide.



## Common Misconceptions & Countering Facts About Suicide, *continued*

**Misconception:** The military suicide rate is higher than the U.S. general population.

**Fact:** Given the differences in composition between the U.S. military and general population, any comparison of suicide rates must first account for age and sex. After controlling for differences in age and sex between these populations, military suicide rates are roughly equivalent or lower than the U.S. population.

**Misconception:** Deployment increases suicide risk among Service members.

**Fact:** Although it may be a factor for some, several studies have shown being deployed (including combat experience, length of deployment, and number of deployments) is not associated with suicide risk among Service members.

**Misconception:** The majority of Service members who die by suicide had a mental illness.

**Fact:** Less than half of military suicide decedents had a current or past mental health diagnosis.

**Misconception:** If you remove access to one lethal method of suicide, someone at risk for suicide will replace it with another.

**Fact:** Research has debunked the misconception that people substitute methods of suicide. If access to the preferred lethal means of suicide is limited, other means are generally not substituted.

**Misconception:** Talking about suicide will lead to suicide.

**Fact:** Talking about suicide in a supportive way will not lead to suicide; instead it gives the at-risk individual an opportunity to express thoughts and feelings about something they may have been keeping secret, as well as obtain help and support as needed.

## Resources for Military and Families

### Veterans/Military Crisis Line (VCL/MCL)

The VCL/MCL is a free, confidential resource that provides Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) support for all Service members, including members of the National Guard and Reserve, all veterans, and their families, even if they are not registered with VA or enrolled in VA health care. The caring, qualified responders at the VCL/MCL are specially trained and experienced in helping Service members and veterans of all ages and circumstances. If you or someone you know is in a suicidal crisis, there is help – contact the VCL/MCL.



Contact Information: Phone: 800-273-8255 (Press 1) or Text: 838255

### National Poison Control

If you suspect a poisoning, contact a Poison Control Center right away, online, or by phone. Knowing is safer than guessing, and quick action could save a life. Help is available online, with the web POISONCONTROL tool, or by phone at 800-222-1222. Both options are free and confidential.

Website: [www.poison.org](http://www.poison.org)



### National Suicide Prevention Lifeline

A national network of local crisis centers that provides free and confidential emotional support to people in suicidal crisis or emotional distress 24/7. Your call is routed to the nearest crisis center in the national network of 150+ crisis centers.

Contact Information:

Phone: 800-273-TALK (8255); TTY: 800-799-4889



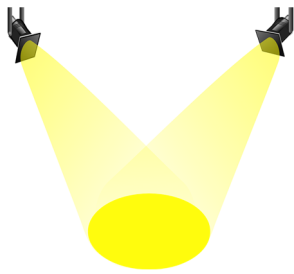
## **Tips for Better Sleep – Seasons by Liz Swanson, LICSW**

**It's a well-known fact that getting a good night's sleep is good for your health. Shawn Stevenson, author of the book Sleep Smarter, states "High quality sleep fortifies your immune system, balances your hormones, boost your metabolism, increases physical energy and improves the function of your brain." All of this is essential for a living a healthy and fulfilling life. Here are a few lesser known tips for getting high quality sleep.**

**Get sun exposure between 0600 and 0830 - Journal of innovations and neuroscience found that getting sun exposure between 0600 and 0830 improve sleep quality as it raises cortisol in the morning, which in turn results in lowering cortisol at night. It was also found that this sun exposure also increases serotonin levels in the morning. Serotonin is a precursor to melatonin, a hormone that is responsible regulating the sleep-wake cycle at night. It was found that as little as 10-20 min of sun exposure either directly on our skin or through a window can achieve these effects.**

**Get at least 5-10 min of exercise between in the morning - Appellation State University found that individuals who exercised in the morning spent significantly more time in anabolic stages of sleep (restrictive stage where body produces more growth hormone, leaving us strong and healthy). Some of the participants spent up to 75% more time in this stage! In addition, these individuals also experienced more stable sleep cycles and a 25% greater drop in blood pressure at night. This effect was achieved with as little as 5 to 10 min of morning exercise.**

**Make sure room is cool and dark – A Cornell University research study asked participants experiencing insomnia to put on a cooling cap and found that every participant fell asleep faster and stayed asleep longer than those who didn't have insomnia. It is hypothesis that the body's processes for cooling can interfere with the sleep cycle which is why having a cooled environment, ideally between 62-68 degrees, can aid in healthy sleep. Another study found that even a small artificial light that stayed on all night was enough to disrupt sleep patterns.**



## Resource Spotlight

### **inTransition (1-800-424-7877)**

A free, confidential program offers specialized coaching and assistance for active duty Service members, National Guard members, Reservists, Veterans, and retirees who need access to a new mental health provider or wish to initiate mental health care for the first time. Services are available to ALL military members regardless of length of service and discharge status.

### **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

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!**

#### **Bring Your Strengths**

- Improves engagement and purpose
- Energizes you and boosts mission performance
- Builds meaning and well-being
- Leaders who recognize strengths in others improve individual and team performance



**RESILIENCE**

**Bring Your Strengths by: identifying your strengths, finding new ways to use your strengths, and understanding how your strengths contributes to the mission. To find your strengths take the free assessment at: <https://www.viacharacter.org>**