



**934TH AIRLIFT WING**

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

### **Inside: Suicide Does Not Discriminate, National Self-Improvement Month, Popsicles and the Brain**

**The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline number has changed to 988. Now when someone dials 988 they will get support from a trained counselor. Anyone within the United States can call or text 9-8-8 any time of day, seven days a week to seek support for a variety of reasons (i.e. suicidal thoughts, mental health crisis, substance abuse). Callers will be routed to a local crisis center based on their area code. Veterans have an additional option of being connected to the Veteran's Crisis Line instead of a local crisis center.**

**According to the Department of Defense's annual suicide report, nearly 600 service members (active, reserve, and Guard) died by suicide in 2020. The report also shows 202 military family members died by suicide in 2019. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255) will not go away. People will receive the same services regardless of which number they call.**



**Special points of interest:**

**For more information on Suicide Prevention go to:**

**<https://www.samhsa.gov/>**

**<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/suicide-prevention>**

**<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/suicide/mnresponse/988.html>**

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

## Suicide Does Not Discriminate by Mike Sanford, VPI

I know it's National Yoga Month, National Preparedness Month, and even National Square Dance Month, but I thought writing about suicide prevention might be more appropriate since I work in violence prevention and September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. Suicide does not discriminate as it can affect anyone regardless of age, gender, or background. There have been famous writers, actors, singers, artists, models, athletes, holocaust survivors, tribal leaders, generals, kings, queens... I could go on.

The best thing anyone can do to prevent suicide is to know the warning signs and risk factors and intervene when necessary. Warning signs are those things that we see when someone is struggling, such as increased use in alcohol and drugs, aggressive behavior, withdrawal from family and friends, dramatic mood swings, and impulsive and reckless behavior. Risk factors on the other hand are those things we may not see. They are in our environment and can impact us negatively; things such as relationship struggles, financial issues, legal issues, prolonged stress, a recent loss, or chronic medical condition.

We all should know the ACE model: Ask, Care, Escort. Ask—Ask the person if they are thinking about suicide. Care—show you Care by having empathy and that you are genuinely concerned about their safety. Escort—you may need to Escort them to the next level of care.

Suicide is preventable. The reason we have Suicide Prevention Awareness Month is to help decrease the stigma and encourage help-seeking behaviors. Remember, it does not discriminate. Therefore, anyone could be at risk at any given time. That is why it is important to reach out if you are hurting. And if you notice someone is struggling, be a support and open up that conversation.

**“Soak up the views. Take in the bad weather and the good weather. You are not the storm.”**

**~ Matt Haig**



## National Self-Improvement Month by Eric Neal

September is National Self Improvement Month and happens to be a topic I love to promote. There are many areas we can strive to make self-improvement, such as appearance, physical and mental health abilities, education, finance, social, and spiritual improvements. The key to making these improvements starts with knowledge and drive.

Knowledge starts with knowing yourself. What is it you want to improve? We must also obtain the knowledge of how we can make those improvements. For example, I would like to be physically stronger. The goal to be physically stronger is what you want to improve, but how do you become physically stronger? The next step would be to learn this through research or from an expert. Most likely you would find working each muscle two to three times per week using high resistance with low reps. Also to become physically stronger you will probably find getting enough sleep and proper nutrition that includes adequate carbohydrates.

Now that we have covered a brief description of how to achieve the goal of becoming physically stronger, we must cover what is most important. Why is this an area that you want to make self-improvement? This is where we get into drive. Maybe you want to become physically stronger to be a better athlete or maybe because you feel like it will help in self-defense. If there is something giving you that drive for self-improvement, you will do whatever it takes and learn how to make those improvements for a better you.

I can identify with the example I've provided. As far back as I can remember, I wanted to excel at sports. At the age of 13, I started lifting weights in my garage, followed by using football facilities and wellness centers. I would never miss a workout. I would sneak into weight-rooms and go to facilities I wasn't old enough to use without a parent. I also paid my own way while only earning \$4.25 an hour. I wanted to be a great football player or have large muscles like Lex Luger or Mr. Olympia Dorian Yates. I ended up being a high school version of Rudy rather than achieving the goal. But this was the beginning of self-improvement I applied for myself with a continuous drive and desire for knowledge to make improvements to be the best that I can be within my abilities applied to everything in life. Can you identify with something you've done in your past, doing now in the present, or want to do in the future for your own self-improvement? If so, knowledge and drive will play a very strong role in your journey of self-improvement.

## Popsicles and the Brain by Chayo Smith

In 1905, Frank Epperson stepped out onto his creaky porch stirring a glass of powdered soda and water. Eager to drink his yummy concoction, his mother calls him for his chores. He is disappointed and forgets the glass, the stir stick and the sweet-smelling mixture on the step. Apparently, it was a frosty night, temperatures dipping below freezing. Much to Frank's surprise and delight, he found a frozen pop waiting for him on the porch. He ran warm water along the glass to free the frozen treat. It was blueberry flavored, and it was delicious. He called it the "Epsicle." His school friends thought they were smashing, and he sold them around the neighborhood. Later, Frank's own children asked for "Pop's Sickie." In 1923, inspired by his kids, he changed the name to Popsicle, and applied for a patent. It was a booming success. September 2 is Blueberry Popsicle Day.



The 140 words you read didn't just give you information about the origin of the popsicle, you were engaging in multiple processes in the region of the brain. Reading is a literal (all puns intended) workout for your brain. The frontal lobe activates morphological recognition, allowing you to understand the patterns of letters that create words. We take most of these processes for granted since we learned them so young.

Our brain literally rebuilds the words it sees and that information flows into the temporal lobe for reading comprehension. Syntactic recognition will kick in and let you know whether a word is a verb and its tense.

Did you picture an old wooden porch? What a glass and a stir stick look like? Thank your occipital-temporal and parietal-temporal regions of the brain. They store images, meanings and sounds of words.

Interestingly, reading stories about people activates other regions of the temporal lobe, accessing a deeper meaning since reading is related to memory. You probably won't forget about Frank, at least for a while. Remember when Frank was eager to drink his yummy concoction and disappointed when his mother called him to do chores? Did you find yourself remembering what it was like to anticipate a treat

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## Popsicles and the Brain by Chayo Smith

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and be disappointed? These are brain processes occurring in the limbic system. The attention and motivation networks in the brain are activated by emotional stories. It turns out that emotional verbiage increases your reading time! Kudos to those romance paperback authors.

September is also anti-aging month. As a biologist, I know every organism ages, and aging presents itself in different ways. Reading changes your brain through white matter creation; making the brain's communication networks run more efficiently. Stress causes premature aging, reading a good book reduces stress. No kidding, getting lost in a book allows us to escape the information world and relax. A study at the University of Sussex found that it only took six minutes of reading before study participants felt a reduction in muscle tension and slow heart rate. Reading also staves dementia and memory loss.

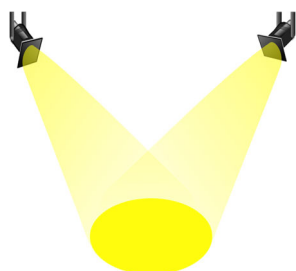
As it turns out, reading up to 3.5 hours per week can extend your life by 23 months, according to a Yale study. As we are well into September, celebrating Blueberry Popsicles and Healthy Aging (blueberries have awesome antioxidant properties), let us pick up a good book at your local bookstore and get lost in our incredible imaginations as we workout our brains.

### References:

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## Resource Spotlight

**Suicide Prevention Lifeline 988 (1-800- 273-8255, for Military Press 1) - 988 has been designated as the new three-digit dialing code that will route callers to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (now known as the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline). It is now active across the United States. When people call, text, or chat 988, they will be connected to trained counselors that are part of the existing Lifeline network. These trained counselors will listen, understand how their problems affect them, provide support, and connect them to resources if necessary.**

### ***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!**

**Mindfulness—This skill helps you stay engaged and be present. Some people call this being grounded. It also helps you stay calm during stressful situations and helps you focus on what's important.**



**The way one practices mindfulness is dependent on each individual. Some will use deep breathing, others will observe their thoughts, and others will use mediation. It simply depends on the person. The important thing is to use what is best for you, formal or informal.**

**The easiest way to practice mindfulness is to take three deep breaths and focus on one thing. Then determine what your next steps are.**