

Commander's Call Topics



August 14, 2014

"Our brightest blazes of gladness
are commonly kindled by unexpected sparks."

Samuel Johnson
English poet, essayist, moralist, literary critic,
biographer, editor and lexicographer
(1709-1784)

**START THE CONVERSATION
THAT COULD SAVE A LIFE!**
If you're depressed and thinking of suicide,
or if you know someone who is,
start the conversation
with a caring person at
800-273 TALK (8255).

This Is Not a Test

From "Good Morning, Vietnam" to days and evenings in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait and 10 other countries where he performed stand-up routines for nearly 90,000 troops, Robin Williams shined brightly, and he brought hope and laughter to millions more. His death due to an apparent suicide is especially poignant as the Air Force focuses on suicide prevention.

"It's a brain disease," popular CNN television host Dr. Drew commented about depression and substance abuse. "It's treatable. It is a really important thing to remind ourselves that these are medical conditions that are serious, and if anyone has a loved one or they themselves are struggling with this sort of thing, please take advantage of treatment and stay with it." He urged that a national conversation about this brain disease open up, and that people actively engage those who seem to withdraw into depression and the self-medicating that often accompanies it.

The statistics are grim. On Tuesday, August 12, NBC Nightly News host Brian Williams noted that in America a suicide occurs, "on average, once every 13 minutes and claims over 39,000 lives annually, more than the number of lives lost in automobile accidents."

That number looks even worse in the 2012 Surgeon General's "National Strategy for Suicide Prevention." Calling suicide "a serious public health problem that has shattered the lives of millions of people, families and communities," Dr. Regina Benjamin tells us that the 39,000 lives lost annually to suicide are more than twice as many as the lives lost to homicide.

Individuals who have substance abuse problems, mental illness or are coping with serious medical conditions are at increased risk for suicide. In the military that would especially include those who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The best hope for suicide prevention relies on a two-step process. The first is to be aware of the warning signs:

- Talking about wanting to die; feeling hopeless, trapped, or in unbearable pain; being a burden to others;
- Looking for a way to kill oneself;
- Increasing the use of alcohol or drugs;
- Acting anxious, agitated, or reckless;
- Sleeping too little or too much;
- Withdrawing or feeling isolated;
- Showing rage or talking about seeking revenge; and
- Displaying extreme mood swings.

The second step involves all of us. While it's true that there is no perfect way to completely and successfully prevent all suicides, the Surgeon General's report recommends that we take these steps if we believe that someone is at risk:

- Ask them if they are thinking about killing themselves. (This will *not* put the idea into their heads, or make it more likely that they will attempt suicide.)
- Call the U.S. National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255).
- Take the person to an emergency room or seek help from a medical or mental health professional.
- Remove any objects that could be used in a suicide attempt.
- If possible, *do not* leave the person alone.

Suicide is drastic. Sudden. The conditions that lead to it are treatable and must not be stigmatized if the staggering statistics are to be reduced. As DJ Airman Adrian Cronauer told us every day in "Good Morning, Vietnam," "This is not a test."



► RESOURCES

Website access to the following resources can be gained by clicking on the name.

[AF.mil](#)

[Airman magazine](#)

[Military OneSource/HomeFront](#)

[Air Force Personnel Center](#)

[Air Reserve Personnel Center](#)

[Department of Defense News](#)

[Department of Veteran Affairs](#)

[TRICARE](#)

[U.S. Government Website](#)

[Air Force Association](#)

[Scholarships](#)

[Air Force Safety Center](#)

[Civil Service Employment Opportunities](#)

[NAF Employment Opportunities](#)

[Air Force Bands/Outreach](#)

► THIS WEEK IN AIR FORCE HISTORY

August 14, 1945 – Final B-29 Combat Mission against Japan. This 20th Air Force mission included a record number of effective aircraft: 754 B-29s and 169 fighters. One phase of the mission, against Tsuchizaka, produced the longest unstaged mission (3,650 miles) of the war from the Marianas.

August 15, 1945 – Victory Day, Japan. After the August 6th and 9th atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, respectively, the Japanese government announced its intention to surrender "unconditionally," subject to an Allied agreement to maintain the monarchy. Washington declared a cease-fire immediately.

August 16, 2002 – Global War on Terror. The Air Force extended the mobilization of over 14,000 Guardsmen and Reservists, mostly security forces, into a second year of this conflict.

August 17, 1972 – The Air Force changed navigator bombardier training into a nonflying training program to save \$1.9 million a year.

August 18, 1956 – Last class in Air Force to fly piston-engine T-6 aircraft graduated at Barstow AB, Fla. The Air Force used various versions of the T-6 to polish pilot skills since 1941.

August 19, 1942 – 2nd Lt. Sam F. Junkin became the first active duty American pilot to shoot down a German fighter over Europe while giving air support to a commando raid on Dieppe, France.

August 20, 1990 – Operation Desert Shield. More than 15,300 reservists, roughly 22 percent of the reserve force, volunteered to serve.

► CURRENT ISSUES

[Voting now open for American Airman Video Contest](#)

Every Airman has a story, and these 14 finalists in the American Airmen Video Contest have selfies ready and waiting for your vote on the [AF BlueTube channel](#).

► FAMILY, HEALTH AND SAFETY

[Defense Health Agency makes progress](#)

Creating and maintaining the highest standards of care while containing costs through collaboration among the Army, Navy and Air Force medical departments has resulted in greater depth in the programs and increased availability of care.

► PERSONNEL ISSUES

[Nominations open for 66th Annual Arthur S. Flemming Award](#)

Nominations are due in November for the Arthur S. Flemming Awards honoring outstanding federal employees.

[AF implements static EPR closeout dates, eliminates change of reporting](#)

Ensuring that job performance is the most important factor when identifying and evaluating Airmen for promotion is the basis of the new evaluation system.

► ENVIRONMENT, SPACE AND TECHNOLOGY

[2015 AFA Aerospace Award nominees sought](#)

The 2015 Air Force Association Aerospace Awards for outstanding contributions to national defense nominations are now open in four different categories.

For more information on Air Force heritage, visit <http://www.airforcehistory.af.mil>

The Defense Media Activity produces **Commander's Call Topics** weekly. For questions or comments about this, or any other DMA product, send an e-mail to afproducts@dma.mil.

Subscribe to AF news and information products online, go to <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/USDODAF/subscriber/new>