



The Receiver



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But be doers of the word, and not hearers only.... James 1:22

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For many of us, the month of June signals the arrival of summer. Summer brings with it sunshine, warmer weather, vacations, outdoor activities of all kinds, and opportunities to gather with others and make great memories. It is a time of celebrations as well, such that some may forget the harshness and isolation the winter brought with it.

This last winter was unusual in a number of ways. Across the nation, and especially for those of us in the West, snow totals shattered records. The skies were darkened by storm after storm, even as the typical calendar markers of springtime came and went. In many ways, it seemed as if winter would never end. And yet, here we are.

Depression can be much like winter months. Many parallels and metaphors can be drawn. I think one of the most important ones, though, is that eventually winter will end and summer will come.

A common symptom of depression is hopelessness; the feeling that things will always feel the way they do right now and will not improve. Some may feel so discouraged by this they no longer want to be a part of this world, and may talk about and/or take action to harm themselves. As you read this, you may think to yourself, "Yeah, I've heard of that happening, but it's so rare. Kids don't even really know what it means to feel like that."

Imagine for a moment that you are preparing to teach a Character Development lesson for a flight of about 50 cadets. To start the class, you ask the cadets to raise their hands if they have been affected by suicide – whether they know of a family member, friend, or acquaintance who has either attempted or died by suicide. How many hands do you think would be raised? Three? Ten?

As many of our CDIs and Chaplains in CAP will attest from their own such experiences, the answer will take your breath away. You will be hard-pressed to find a single hand that is not raised.

A growing body of research clearly shows that not only are more youth experiencing depression and anxiety than any generation in history, but they are exposed to suicide at ever-younger ages. For our youth, this extraordinarily long winter is simply another reminder that a majority of their lives have been lived in a world full of catastrophic events and trends, seemingly hallmarks of this generation. It is little wonder why so many feel hopeless and helpless.

And yet, depression and suicide are not only concerns among the youth. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has found that some of the highest suicide rates among any group can be found among older adults (age 75+), particularly among non-Hispanic white males of this group. Adults ages 35-64 account for about 47% of all suicides.

Knowing the facts is not enough to change them. In some ways, by the time we begin to recognize the signs of depression and suicidality in others or even ourselves, the "red flags", so to speak– the battle to save a life–has already become monumental.

In the Civil Air Patrol, we are pushing for more preventative interventions for all members through resiliency training. The idea behind this is that we learn to recognize the "orange" and even "yellow" flags in ourselves and in others before ever reaching the "red flags." Please make the effort and sacrifices necessary to increase your own resiliency and help others to do the same by participating in available training opportunities.

It is critical that every one of us embody what it means to be a Wingman. Utilize the core values to become the best Wingman you can be. When winter comes around again, let us all remember that no matter how cold it gets, how much snow falls, or how eternal the gray skies and storms may seem, summer is always right around the corner.

– Ch, Capt Camille Barlow, RMR Deputy Chaplain