

Ep. 19: Domestic Violence Awareness Month

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Gladiators, Francis Martinez, Director of Psychological Health for the 960th Cyberspace Wing here with a very special guest, Steven Mayfield, the violence prevention integrator for JBSA Lackland. - Yes, how are you? - Good, how are you? - I'm doing great, thank you for this opportunity. - Thank you for coming out, we really appreciate your expertise in this matter. We wanted to touch a little bit on domestic violence, being that it's Domestic Violence Awareness Month. - Yes Ma'am. - And so when I first came on, I didn't know what the VPI was. And so I heard about it, and I reached out to you, I found you through some different channels. And why don't you tell us a little bit about your role and what the VPI is. - Certainly. So about five years ago, the United States Air Force recognized the need to create a position that focused solely on violence prevention. So the two categories that we focus on is interpersonal violence, which includes sexual assaults, domestic violence that we're talking about with this monthly observance and also self-directed violence, which is suicide prevention. So we are now the Suicide Prevention Program Managers for all non-clinical aspects of suicide prevention, the mental health clinic maintain the clinical portion. And we also focus on those interpersonal violence issues as we said, domestic violence, sexual assault, et cetera. Our primary goal is prevention. We want to make sure that we intercede and more importantly, we give people tools to intercede before the violence occurs. So is a better concept, and it's better for the United States Air Force as a whole, if we can prevent those issues from occurring. - And I think domestic violence, it's kinda taboo, right? Suicide is taboo, domestic violence. No one wants to talk about these issues. - As far as talking about it, all aspects of violence, nobody wants to talk about it. And obviously part of that is there's illegalities that go along with that, it's those violence issues, to stalk someone, to sexually assault someone, is illegal to domestically abused someone, there are legalities that go with that. So a lot of people sorta step back because of those legalities and those legal issues. But in our program, we encourage wingmanship. We want everyone that if you see something, say something, do something, okay? And it doesn't have to be something enormous that you do or something elaborate, it might just be the fact that you walk up to the person you perceive to be the victim, and be supportive of them, you know? Is that it's that wingman concept, you come alongside them as a wingman and make sure that they're okay. - Communicate with them-- - Yeah. - Offer that support, right? - Offer support. We also do a great deal in our classes and across JBSA, making sure that people know how to contact the appropriate resource. - Right. - Those resources are there. Let's focus on domestic violence. A number of resources across JBSA to assist

those persons who are, and I hate using the V word, but those persons who are victims of domestic violence, we have resources all across Joint Base San Antonio to assist them. - Now I know you guys do a lot of training in classes. Is it geared specifically towards units or wings, or do you have family outreach or spousal outreach? - We do outstanding that you mentioned there, because I'm teaching a class for key spouses tomorrow. - Okay. - Yeah. So we partnered with the Military and Family Readiness Center to make sure that key spouses had the knowledge and the tools that they would need to support, once again, that wingman concept, to support family members that may be going through domestic violence, sexual assault, maybe having suicidal ideations. So we make sure that we reach out to those family members as well. - Okay. And I don't think some people, before this month happened and I did my research on domestic violence, because I'm not an expert in violence, unless it's self-inflicted. But I saw about one in four women are affected by domestic violence. - Yes. The statistics are alarming. And then the throw in the phenomenon of COVID-19. - Right. - Okay? Where now we have perhaps relationships that aren't going well and the individuals in that relationship are spending all day together now, where one of them used to be gone for eight hours. And if the commander had an extra project for him, maybe 12. - Right. - But now, we're seeing more and more that familiarity and that proximity is causing persons to experience more domestic violence incidents, yes. - And I don't think people realize, right? It's not always the females that are the victims. - I'm glad you mentioned that because we painstakingly include that in our curriculum. That is not always the females that are the victims. And in some of our scenarios, when we mentioned them in the class, people may scoff or they may laugh, and we have to say, hey, guys get abused too. And it may not be physical, it may be psychological, but it's still that domestic, those psychological things can be as violent as a physical abuse situation. - Yeah, so the US is reporting about one in nine men are affected by domestic violence-- - Right. - Or interpersonal. - And then here's the other part that goes along with that, I'm a man, okay? So if I'm being domestically abused and I'm a man, am I going to say anything? Who am I going to share that with? Who am I going to sort of hate to use the word, be little myself and my man hood and say, my wife hit me over the head with a frying pan yesterday. Or I'm not going to do that. And it's sort of unfortunate. So in our classes and I have two teammates, and both of them are female, but we painstakingly include in our classes, what I call role reversal scenarios, where the person who is being abused is the male in a male-female relationship. - And so the DOD has report out. They don't have a 2019 data, but the most recent data is a 2018 data. - Right. - About 16,000, little over 16,700 reported cases of domestic violence. - It's enormous. - Right. - Interpersonal violence within itself, across the United States Air Force and across the Department of Defense is an enormous problem. And we try to get leaders at all levels to understand the problematic situation that it creates, and how it's going to sort of impact their mission accomplishment. We really focus on welfare of each and every individual, both active duty guard reserve and family members is paramount to us accomplishing the mission of the air force. There could just be one instance in a large organization, and that instance could bleed over and affect numerous people within that organization. - Right. And weapons always have something to do with

domestic violence, right? It said about 500% increase of homicide, if there is a weapon in the home. What is your take on that? - Very true. And the United States Air Force in his infinite wisdom has created a program for controlling those weapons. And I'm glad you asked, 'cause I'm going to offer this to your wing. We have a large supply of gun locks-- - Right. - Okay? The acronym that the Air Force came up with this year is-- - Go slow. (Laughs) - Go slow. You see, we're on the same wavelength, yeah. You secure those and lock those weapons up. And the concept is really based upon when you're in those heated situations, be it domestic violence, or be it you're considering harming yourself, the fact that there is a lock on that weapon is very, very important. It gives you, I call it the moment of intercession, right? Gives you that moment where you can say, I'm not going to do this. - It gives you that moment of clarity to make that decision, right? - That's right, yeah. - Rationalizes it. - It's not emotional. - Right. - Takes the emotion out, you have a moment to actually rationalize and think, is this a rational move I'm about to make? And so for your wing right now, I'm offering you some gun locks. We have some and we need to start distributing more, this is another impact of COVID-19. - Yeah. - We got them. And then we went into our own sequestrations so to speak. And if you guys have folks who need gun locks or want some gun locks, I can provide those to you. 'Cause it's very, very important like I said, not only in domestic violence situations, but also in those situations where a person is considering self-harm, yeah. - And 87% of military spouses, whether be male or female, didn't report any domestic violence. The fear of the service member getting in trouble, getting kicked out, and then them ultimately losing their financial stability. - Yeah. That's an aspect of what we're seeing with respect to the whole spectrum of violence. My first 13 years of active duty I was a cop. So I realized that my perspective is different from others. And when I teach classes, I have to take that into consideration, that there are people out there who are not going to self disclose. And that's unfortunate because some of the rationale that they use is really sort of prevailing when, this is what I heard, not what the real deal is. I know people with security clearances who have been implicated in incidents, perhaps not interpersonal violence or self directed violence who have gone on to be chief master sergeants in the United States Air Force, colonels in the Air Force. So some of the, I might lose my security clearance or I might lose my job, perhaps it's not valid. Now I can't say that's a hundred percent because I used to be the superintendent of a mental health clinic. And I have seen people who have lost their job because of their mental health diagnoses. But for me, the bottom line always comes down to the health and welfare of the individual and the family. And I'll just use myself again as a real quick example. My first 13 years in the air force, I was a law enforcement K9 handler, loved it, just absolutely loved it. Happened to make a master sergeant real quick, and the Air Force said, "Ah, we're gon retrain you." And I was like, um, not sure I want that to happen, okay? But, I retrained and ended up becoming a mental health technician. As a matter of fact, I was the superintendent of the mental health clinic here at Wilford Hall before they made the building all pretty and I can't find nothing in there anymore-- - Yeah. - Okay? (Laughs) But, I was the superintendent at Wilford Hall. And truthfully, the retrain sort of catapulted me to the positions that I've had up till now. So that impact on my security clearance, or that impact on my current

job, that may be an opening of a door that solidifies your future in the United States Air Force and beyond. So we try to make sure that people know, yeah, I loved what I was doing as well. But the retrain catapulted me to where I am today. - And I'm sure you wouldn't change it. - No, no, loving it, loving what I'm doing now, loved what I did in the mental health clinic. And to go all the way back, loved what I did as a law enforcement K9 handler. But truthfully, I was just a therapist with a weapon, same thing as a cop. - And so, how do we, as professionals in the field, really open the door and make it a safe environment for people to seek help, and wanna help and raise that awareness? - Could be a difficult proposition. I'll just share what I did when I was in the mental health clinic. Number one, I'm going to be totally honest with the person that comes in. Are there perhaps ramifications? Yeah. Are all those ramifications negative? No, right? Number two, I always operate what motivates me to do this job right now, which I hope is my last roundup, after 23 years. What motivates me to do this job is, I believe in the inherent goodness of people, right? Even evil people, 'cause there are some out there, okay? But somewhere within them, there's goodness, somewhere within them, there's potential. And 46 years affiliated with the air force, somewhere within them, is a valuable contribution to the United States Air Force and to our nation. And doing the job that I do, I'm trying to find that. I know is in there, is like the guy digging through the horse manure and saying, "I know there's a pony in here somewhere, (laughs) right? So, that's what I focus on. Somewhere within them, there is that potential that needs to be pulled out. And being an old soldier, an old airman, it's going to benefit the United States Air Force. - And those people that are seeking help, what resources do we have on base that families can seek help? - Here across JBSA, we have a number of resources. I wish I'd have brought all the phone numbers with me. We do have our family advocacy folks. We do have our behavioral health/mental health clinic that people can seek out assistance. They can actually contact the violence prevention integrator because we're about prevention. So we can't counsel or treat, but we'll act as a referral agency to get them to the right person. - Okay. And so like gladiators know, I have for all the GSUs, I just uploaded in our Microsoft team's channel, resources for all family advocacy across our units. So everything is there and it was uploaded this morning in addition to mental health resources. - That's great. Every class we have been adamant, we do the prevention classes for sexual assault prevention as well, suicide prevention. And myself and my two teammates: Miss Marlowe Bearden and Miss Tanya Lee, every PowerPoint educational presentation we put together, excuse me, starts out with available resources across JBSA. And we were adamant that that be slide number one. And I've actually had classes where I'm getting ready to teach, and because slide number one is the helping agencies that people have said, "Mr. Mayfield, I need step out." And they have gone to those helping agencies. So we were adamant that we're gonna make sure in our classes, that the helping agencies are our slide number two, right after this is the annual training. - Okay. So a reminder to gladiators, we are having a wing competition for Domestic Violence 5K. - Oh, great. - Yeah. So it's going to be running through October 16th through the 31st. We did one for Suicide Prevention Month. We had really great participation. So I'm hoping that with domestic violence we'll have equal or even greater participation. So please send me in your pictures. Mr. Mayfield, I want to thank you for coming today,

introducing yourself to our wing and really shedding some light on this difficult topic. - Certainly, my pleasure, anything that I can do to support all of the wings that JBSA Lackland, Lackland is my base. The other two ladies handle the other two major locations. Anything that I can do, I'm at your service. - Well thank you. And if you're needing help with domestic violence, please contact the National Domestic Violence hotline at 800.799.SAFE Or you can reach out to your local family advocacy. Thank you everyone and have a great day. (Upbeat music)