

NOVEMBER 2023



DETACHMENT 60 GOUGE

THE PFC PAUL E. ISON DET #60 NEWSLETTER

DETACHMENT INFORMATION

Meeting Schedule

Every 2nd Monday of the Month

Meeting Time: 7:30 pm

Meeting Location

Brotherhood of Heroes Resource Center & Museum

4522 Del Prado Blvd S, Cape Coral, FL 33904

Website: pfcison.com

Email: marines@pfcison.com



EDITOR:
ARIEL MONTERO
SR. VICE COMMANDANT
YOUNG MARINES, XO

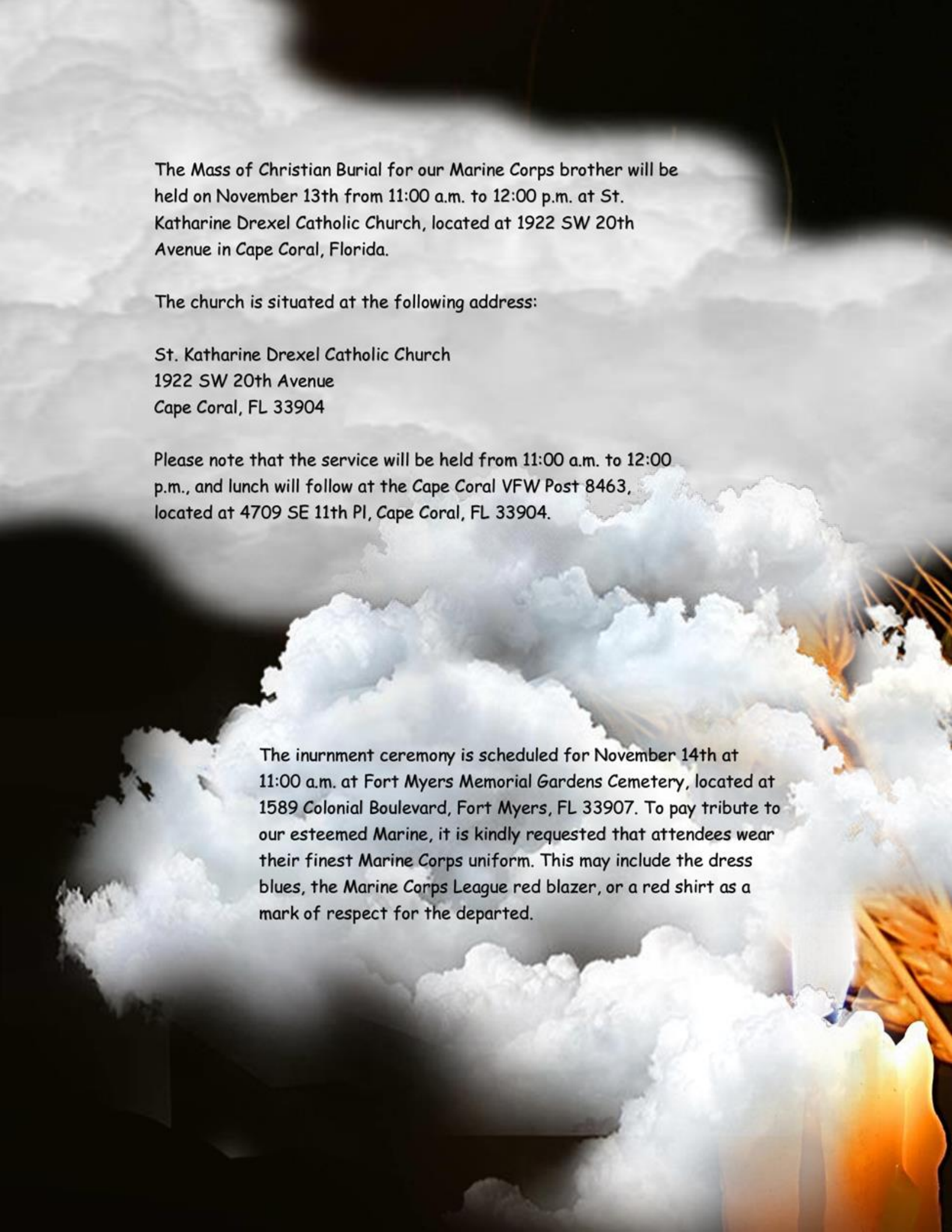




In Loving Memory

It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of George A. Colom, a true hero and dedicated supporter of the Marine Corps. At 91, George leaves behind a legacy that will forever be etched in the annals of our beloved Corps. His unwavering commitment and selfless service to our nation and the Marine Corps League have left an indelible mark on all those who had the privilege of knowing him. George's contributions to the Corps were immeasurable, as he tirelessly worked to support our veterans, advocate for their rights, and ensure their well-being. His passion for the Marine Corps was unmatched, and his dedication to preserving its values and traditions was unwavering. George's presence will be sorely missed, but his spirit will continue to inspire us as we carry on his mission. We extend our deepest condolences to his family and friends during this difficult time.

Semper Fidelis!

The background of the entire page is a soft-focus image of white, fluffy clouds. In the bottom right corner, there is a close-up of a lit candle with a bright orange and yellow flame. The text is overlaid on this background.

The Mass of Christian Burial for our Marine Corps brother will be held on November 13th from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at St. Katharine Drexel Catholic Church, located at 1922 SW 20th Avenue in Cape Coral, Florida.

The church is situated at the following address:

St. Katharine Drexel Catholic Church
1922 SW 20th Avenue
Cape Coral, FL 33904

Please note that the service will be held from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m., and lunch will follow at the Cape Coral VFW Post 8463, located at 4709 SE 11th Pl, Cape Coral, FL 33904.

The inurnment ceremony is scheduled for November 14th at 11:00 a.m. at Fort Myers Memorial Gardens Cemetery, located at 1589 Colonial Boulevard, Fort Myers, FL 33907. To pay tribute to our esteemed Marine, it is kindly requested that attendees wear their finest Marine Corps uniform. This may include the dress blues, the Marine Corps League red blazer, or a red shirt as a mark of respect for the departed.



ATTENTION MARINES!

**The Marine Corps Ball is Just
★ Around the Corner!**

★ **Friday, November 10, 2023**

5 pm

MARINE CORPS LEAGUE PFC PAUL E. ISON DETACHMENT 60
PRESENTS

The 248th Annual

MARINE



CORPS

Birthday Ball

Friday, November 10, 2023

At 1700-2200 (5pm-10pm)

Crowne Plaza Fort Myers Gulf Coast

9931 Interstate Commerce Drive,

Fort Myers, Florida 33913

Tickets* available at

www.eventbrite.com, search: United States Marine Corps Birthday Ball
Fort Myers, Florida

Make Checks payable to MCL PFC Paul E. Ison Detachment 60

PO BOX 100841, Cape Coral, FL 33910-0841

In the amount of \$65 per person(until 09/30/2023)

\$70 per person from 10/01-10/31

\$75 per person from 11/01-11/03

Must include meal choice, otherwise will be defaulted to Chicken

1-Roasted Chicken Breast. 2-Pan Seared Salmon.

3-Grilled Filet Mignon. 4-Portobello Mushroom(Vegetarian).

*Tickets are a "quid pro quo" donation(is a non-refundable, non-tax deductible donation to the Detachment in which you get something in return...E.g. The meal, The cake, The fun, The dancing, etc.)

HISTORICAL ARTICLES

November is a month of turkey-induced comas and awkward family gatherings, but it's also a month filled with significant events in American history.



Election Day

(First Tuesday after November 1)

Election Day, the enchanting moment in American democracy, where we unite for a thrilling round of "Lord of the Flies." It's akin to selecting the captain for your dodgeball squad but on a grand national level. So please sit back, relax, and grab your popcorn as we prepare for an exhausting display of political tragedies!



Fall of the Berlin Wall

(November 9, 1989)

The Berlin Wall, a massive hunk of bricks and mortar, caused quite a commotion when it decided to crumble like a poorly played game of Jenga, leaving everyone in shock and awe. It was like the world's most dramatic family reunion, with global politics feeling the aftershocks. This momentous occasion marked a turning point in history, allowing Germany to have that long-awaited big family get-together.



Happy Birthday
Marines!
(November 10, 1775)

SEMPER PARATUS

UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS



VETERANS DAY
NOVEMBER 11



November 12

*Happy
Anniversary
My Love*

The day my wife married a legend!



Thanksgiving



fourth Thursday of November

DETACHMENT EVENTS

MONDAY MEETINGS



Join the monthly Marine Corps League meetings at the Brotherhood of Heroes Resource Center & Museum in Cape Coral, FL, where you can mingle with many Marine Corps fanatics, veterans, and supporters who are just as obsessed with the Corps as you are. And hey, remember to take a selfie with our Commandant while you are there, preferably in your snazzy dress uniform. **NO FLASH PHOTOGRAPHY!** These meetings happen like clockwork on the second Monday of every month, so mark your calendar and show up! After all the serious business, we will head over to Backstreets for some well-deserved drinks. So grab your combat boots and compass because it's time for some Marine Corps bonding and maybe even a few diplomacy lessons (because who doesn't need those?).



Brotherhood of Heroes Resource Center & Museum

4522 Del Prado Blvd S,
Cape Coral, FL

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13
AT 7:30 PM

POST MEETING GATHERING

Join us for our post-meeting gathering at BackStreets Sports Bar located on 915 SE 47th Ter, Cape Coral, FL! Indulge in delicious comfort food and enjoy live music in a warm and welcoming atmosphere. Everyone is invited, so show up and have fun. See you there!

BACKSTREETS SPORTS BAR



BackStreets Sports Bar

915 SE 47th Ter,
Cape Coral, FL

MONDAY, OCTOBER 9

Post-Meeting

ACE DETAIL



We are excited to announce that Vision Ace Hardware, conveniently located at 1004 Cape Coral Pkwy E, Cape Coral, FL, allows our detachment to collect donations on the first Saturday of every month.

For more information on how to become a volunteer, please email us at marines@pfcision.com. We'll happily provide all the details you need to get started.

Thank you for your generosity and support. Together, we can make a real difference in the lives of those who need it most.

*Join us in making a difference
at Vision Ace Hardware!*

Vision Ace Hardware
1004 Cape Coral Pkwy E,
Cape Coral, FL

**SATURDAY,
NOVEMBER 4**



October Luncheon

Join us for our monthly luncheon, a gathering that brings together former and current Marines and Navy Corpsmen to connect with like-minded individuals who share a common bond and celebrate the principles and customs of the United States Marine Corps.

Our monthly luncheon will be held at FRD Sports Bar & Grille (formerly known as First Round Draft), conveniently located at 1217 Del Prado Blvd S. in Cape Coral, FL. Mark your calendars for the last Tuesday of the month.



FRD SPORTS BAR & GRILLE

1217 Del Prado Blvd S

Cape Coral, FL.

**NOVEMBER 28,
AT 1 PM**

CAPE CORAL VETERANS DAY PARADE

Once a year, we gather to honor our veterans, those brave peasants who have served our country.

It's Veteran's Day, humans! And this time, the City of Cape Coral Parks and Recreation and many anti-communist local volunteers have joined forces to create the ultimate patriotic mandatory fun day. So, please put on your most American gear, grab your canteen cup full of Whiskey, and don't forget your agoraphobic PTSD (it's all the rage these days). Prepare for some unexpected civilian hugs as they show you love and appreciation.

Remember, after this glorious day, you'll return to being a mere VA peasant for the rest of the year.

Ah, the circle of life!

Saturday, November 11, 2023

11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Location:

This year's parade will be on Cape Coral Parkway at 11 a.m. The parade route is westbound from Cape Coral Street to Chester Street.



Join the Young Marines and Become a Leader of Tomorrow!

Looking for a way to give back to your community and inspire the next generation of leaders? Look no further than the Young Marines!

This youth organization, affiliated with the Marine Corps, offers a unique opportunity for young people ages 8-18 to develop leadership skills, learn teamwork and discipline, and become involved in their communities. As a member of the Young Marines, you'll participate in community service projects, learn about American history and government, and develop essential life skills like teamwork, discipline, and self-confidence.



But that's not all! As a member of the Young Marines, you'll also have the opportunity to participate in exciting activities like drill and ceremony, color guard, and athletic competitions. And you'll be part of a proud tradition of leadership and service that dates back to the founding of the Marine Corps.

So why wait? Join the Young Marines today and start making a difference in your community and the lives of young people everywhere. With the Young Marines, you'll be part of a supportive and inclusive community that will help you grow and thrive on and off the field.




Find out more



Attention all Marines and supporters!

TOYS FOR TOTS

The time has come to rally together for our 2023 Campaign, set to commence on October 1st. We are calling upon all of you to join us in this noble cause. Whether you wish to contribute as a dedicated volunteer or become a Toy Drop Site, we implore you to contact us immediately. Together, we can profoundly impact and create lasting memories for those in need. Let us unite our strength and determination to ensure this year's Campaign is an unparalleled success. Join forces with us today!

Join us on  Facebook for the latest updates on our events and campaigns!

Contribute to our Toys for Tots North-Central Lee County campaign online or by mailing a check to P.O. BOX 3072, North Fort Myers, FL 33918.

Our coordinator, Oscar Antonio Rauda, USMC Retired, invites you to join us and make a difference in the lives of local children this holiday season.

Take advantage of the opportunity to give back to your community and support a worthy cause. Follow us on Facebook today and stay updated on our latest events and campaigns!



MEMBER RECRUITING & NEW MEMBERS

Join the Marine Corps League to uphold the values and traditions of the United States Marine Corps. As a member, you'll connect with fellow Marines, engage in meaningful activities, and positively impact your community. Expanding our membership strengthens our organization and empowers us to support veterans and their families. Join us in honoring our past and shaping a brighter future.



ARE **YOU**

A MARINE CORPS LEAGUE
MEMBER?

★ Land ★ Sea ★ Air ★

Happy Birthday, you magnificent human beings! Another year has passed, and congratulations on leveling up in the game of life. You're now a little older and hopefully a tad wiser, or that's what we'll tell ourselves. So, how are those hips holding up? Still grooving to the beat or creaking like an old rocking chair? If it's the latter, it's time to invest in some WD-40 or consider taking up yoga to keep those joints limber. By the way, the word "Groovy" is out of date now! It's time to find a new catchphrase that screams, "I'm hip and happening!" (FYI, also outdated). And let's not forget the most crucial question of all: have you had your daily dose of pudding today? Because let's be honest, nothing says "I'm living my best life" like indulging in some creamy goodness you don't have to chew. In all seriousness, we do hope that those damn kids stay off your lawn and that you get a new mini pharmacy pill organizer that is state-of-the-art. After all, who needs a boring old pillbox when you can have a high-tech gadget that dispenses your meds with the touch of a button? So go ahead and celebrate this special day with enthusiasm because you deserve it!



*"Happy
Birthday!"*

Happy Anniversary



Here's to another year of laughter, camaraderie, and endless humor! May your membership be filled with voluntold adventures, surprises, and belly laughs. Thank you for being an integral part of our community and bringing so much work into our lives. Happy anniversary!



MEET YOUR OFFICERS



Commandant Oscar Rauda, the superhero of MCL, is a force to be reckoned with. With his gable at his side, he fearlessly enforces MCL bylaws and policies, ensuring no rule goes unnoticed. His focus and determination are unmatched as he leads meetings with a lion tamer's authority and a kindergarten teacher's fairness. With every decision he makes, he ensures that the detachment operates with integrity, leaving no room for mischief or shenanigans. Commandant Oscar Rauda embodies what it means to be an exceptional leader in the world of MCL.



Senior Vice Commandant Ariel Montero is the ultimate sidekick to the Commandant, always ready to swoop in and save the day. With insanity close behind him, Montero steps up to the plate when the Commandant is off on his secret missions, handling everything with the finesse of an under-seasoned pro. He tackles tasks and projects with the precision of a mystery chef lightly seasoning a dish, ensuring that everything runs as smoothly as butter. With his dedication and expertise, Montero has successfully procrastinated community outreach programs and recruitment efforts, making him a fictional anti-hero in the Marine Corps League's mission.



Junior Vice Commandant Jackleen Hurd is the right-hand person to the Commandant and Senior Vice Commandant. She's the one who helps them with all the important stuff, like deciding who has to do the boring fundraising and PR tasks. She's the master organizer, ensuring all detachment members get together for fun events and activities that make them feel like a big, happy family. Without her expertise and dedication, things would be a hot mess.



The Judge Advocate, also known as the legal superhero of the detachment, is like a walking encyclopedia of laws, regulations, and MCL policies. They are the ones who make sure that the party doesn't accidentally break any rules and end up in hot water. Their knowledge and guidance are worth their weight in gold when dealing with complicated legal issues like contracts, liability problems, or disputes. And if things hit the fan and legal action is required, fear not! The Judge Advocate will swoop in with their expertise and professionalism to represent the detachment.



Adjutant Dick Scriber, the superhero of administrative tasks and Marine Corps League enthusiast, is the secret ingredient behind the smooth operation and success of the detachment. His unwavering dedication and impressive skills ensure that paperwork is filed, meetings are scheduled, and chaos is kept at bay. Not only does he keep things running like a well-oiled machine, but he also serves as a knowledgeable resource for those curious about the MCL. Whether you need to know about membership requirements or the league's history, Dick Scriber is your go-to guy. His influence on the detachment's growth and triumph cannot be overstated. Without him, it would be like navigating a minefield blindfolded while juggling flaming torches – a disaster waiting to happen.



Mike Dewars, the financial superhero of our detachment, is the Paymaster extraordinaire! With his calculator not far behind him, he fearlessly manages our organization's finances, ensuring every penny is accounted for. From collecting membership dues to maintaining meticulous financial records, Mike is the guardian of our financial security. He's like a financial Sherlock Holmes, ensuring all established procedures are followed, and no money goes astray. But wait, there's more! Mike also can provide us with invaluable financial reports and budgets, allowing us to assess the health and stability of our organization's finances. And if that wasn't enough, he even moonlights as a notary, ready to assist anyone in the detachment free of charge.



Chaplain Patricia Smith is like a superhero in a robe, armed with compassion and spiritual wisdom. She swoops in to save the day, offering guidance and powerful prayers to those in need. Whether you're facing personal challenges or feeling down, Chaplain Patricia is there to help you navigate the stormy seas of life and come out on top. You'll survive and thrive with her by your side, feeling your absolute best. So, if you need divine intervention, don't hesitate to call upon the incredible Chaplain Patricia Smith!



Sergeant-at-Arms Ernest Grecsek, the ultimate meeting superhero, is the guardian of order and discipline in the chaotic realm of meetings. Armed with a rulebook thicker than a phone directory, he fearlessly ensures that all members toe the line and follow established protocols. With a stern yet graceful demeanor, he gracefully handles disruptions like a seasoned ballerina twirling through a minefield. His mission? To make meetings run smoother than spreading cream cheese on your bagel. Not only does he keep things in check, but he also takes the safety and well-being of all participants seriously. He covertly arranges security measures like a secret agent to protect everyone from potential meeting mayhem.



The Historian, the unsung hero of the detachment, is like a time-traveling superhero whose mission is to protect and preserve the group's history and quirky traditions. Armed with a camera and a pen, they diligently gather and maintain records, photos, and other artifacts that tell the tales of the detachment's triumphs and adventures. They are also the official chroniclers of epic moments and significant milestones in the detachment's past.

ARE YOU A VETERAN IN CRISIS?

OR

CONCERNED ABOUT ONE?

You're not alone.

THE VETERANS CRISIS LINE IS HERE FOR YOU.

You don't have to be enrolled in VA benefits or health care to call.



**Veterans
Crisis Line**

DIAL 988 then PRESS 1



Are you suffering
with psoriasis??

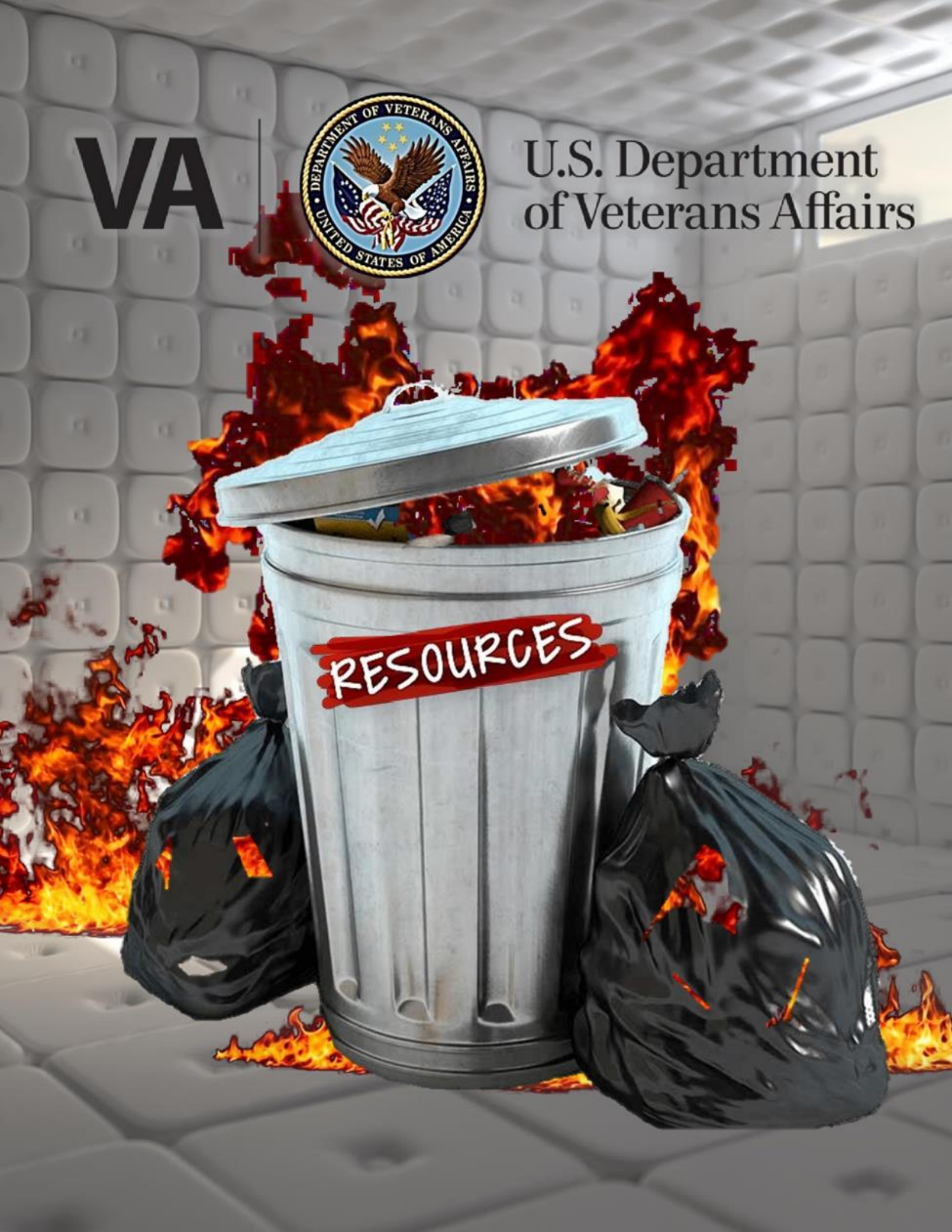


VA



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

RESOURCES



Suicide Ideation

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SUICIDAL AND SUICIDAL IDEATION?

Have your nurse tighten your fashionable restrain jacket, gulp down those colorful meds like candy, and buckle up for a wild ride through the twisted world of suicidal thoughts and ideation! Before we dive into this abyss of despair, let's clarify something: suicidal thoughts and suicidal ideation are like two razors on your wrist. They may seem similar, but trust me, they're as different as confusing your left and right sock. You know, related but distinct - just like that distant cousin you only see at family reunions.

Being suicidal is like playing a dangerous game of Russian roulette with a twist. It's as if you're holding a loaded pistol and contemplating whether to pull the trigger. On the other hand, having suicidal ideation is more like playing Russian roulette with an unloaded revolver. You're still spinning the chamber and pointing it at your head, but there's no risk of blowing your brains out. It's like having those dark thoughts of self-harm or death swirling around in your head, but without actually taking action. It's like having a naughty little devil perched on your shoulder, whispering sinister ideas into your ear, hoping against hope that you'll plunge into the abyss.

Understanding this difference helps those enigmatic mental health providers, those elusive creatures with the uncanny ability to disappear into thin air when we need them the most. It's almost as if they have a secret teleportation power, whisking themselves away and leaving us in bewilderment and frustration. They seem to possess a sixth sense for knowing exactly when we require their assistance, only to decide to vanish into their secret underground lair, where they retreat to when things get tough. It's like that one mental health provider who left me hanging in mid-air, desperately reaching out for support that never arrived. The same one left me feeling

abandoned and alone, exacerbating my PTSD and anxiety, ultimately leading me on a wild goose chase to the emergency room for high blood pressure and anxiety. Talk about adding insult to injury! It's a wonder they haven't invented a support hotline for mental health providers.

The critical differences between suicidal and suicidal ideation are:

1. Intent: Suicidal individuals intend to die, while suicidal ideation lacks a specific plan or intention to act.

Picture this hypothetical and slightly fictional scenario: you're feeling down in the dumps and decide it's time to regroup with your battle buddies in Valhalla. Yep, that's what we call "intent" - having a one-way ticket to the afterlife on your mind.

But hold on, there's another side to this coin.

Imagine someone daydreaming about answering the call to the void, taunting them to leap headfirst from the roof, arms casually tucked in their pockets. Or maybe they're envisioning a situation where someone pulls out a weapon on them, and they're cool with being un-alive because they'll look heroic without anyone suspecting their true intentions of meeting their maker without any concrete plans. That, my friends, is what we call "suicidal ideation."

Concerning these matters, the intent involves one-way tickets to Valhalla, while suicidal ideation is more like a wild leap of faith or some twisted heroic fantasy. To put it simply, intent means you are ready to order off the menu, while ideation means you're still browsing.

2. Behavior: Suicidal behavior involves a direct attempt to cause harm, while suicidal ideation is limited to thoughts or fantasies.

Imagine cruising down the road on your trusty motorcycle, trying to clear your mind and escape the daily grind, but then those pesky dark thoughts sneak up like a mischievous gremlin. Suddenly, your arm becomes sentient and twitches to activate the throttle while stuck in heavy traffic!

Most people would panic in this situation, realizing the potential risks involved. But not you! Not when your inner demon takes the helm and possesses you like some daredevil who's a master of maneuvering through the chaos of cars despite your realistic amateur riding skills. You bob and weave like a ninja on wheels, dodging left and right with lightning-fast reflexes. It's like a high-stakes game of Frogger, except instead of crossing a river, you're trying to avoid becoming roadkill.

But let's be honest here, my humans. We all know that some clueless driver could swerve into your path at any moment and send you flying into oblivion. So, what's your brilliant strategy to minimize the chances of becoming a paraplegic? Simple! Just crank up the speed and throw caution to the wind. Who needs a helmet anyway? It's not like it's designed to protect your precious noggin or anything.

Ah, yes, this behavior can only be described as suicidal. At least you're living life on the edge. Just remember to nod to Lady Luck occasionally because she's the only thing standing between you and an unfortunate meeting with the pavement.

That is not thrill-seeking behavior, my dear humans. Despite the tremendous adrenaline rush pumping through your core, it's suicidal behavior.

Suicidal ideation is like the less extreme cousin of suicidal behavior. It's all about giving the appearance of riding in a tight group, uniformed, looking like a real MC, not going above the speed limit, and appearing disciplined on the outside while the thought of taking a sharp last-second left turn onto the lane of oncoming traffic and other such thoughts and fantasies that pop into our heads from time to time.

3. Severity: Suicidal ideation can be a milder form of suicidal thinking, while suicidal behavior is a more severe and immediate risk.

Suicidal ideation is like dipping your toes in the pool of suicidal thinking, while suicidal behavior is like cannonballing into the deep end. It's like going from "Hmm, maybe life isn't worth it" to "Hold my beer!"

But let's break it down a bit more seriously. Suicidal ideation refers to having thoughts about ending one's own life. It can range from fleeting and passing thoughts to more persistent and intrusive ones. It's like having a tiny devil on your shoulder whispering, "Hey, wouldn't it be easier if you just disappeared?"

On the other hand, suicidal behavior is when someone takes action toward ending their life; this is where things get dire. It's like that devil on your shoulder suddenly grows wings and starts screaming, "Jump! Jump! Jump!" It's an immediate and urgent risk that requires close attention and intervention.

Survival mode

Could it stem from my time in the not-so-tropical heat? Well, that is for experts to decide. After three tours, I vividly remember the constant presence of the Grim Reaper lurking around the corner at the beginning and end of each deployment. It was like playing a game of hide-and-seek with death, except death wasn't hiding; it was just waiting for the perfect moment to jump out and say, "Gotcha!"

There's this strange mix of anticipation and dread when you're in a war zone. On one hand, you have no idea what to expect when you first step foot into the unknown. Will it be like an action-packed movie with explosions and heroic moments? Or will it be more like a never-ending nightmare where danger lurks behind every corner? It's like going on a blind date with Destiny, the exotic dancer, except Destiny is a succubus with a penchant for throwing grenades.

And then there's the end of the deployment, where you start counting down the days until you can finally return home to anyone who cared enough to answer your call despite the eight-hour difference in time zones or surprise you back on base, holding a sign with your name, screams of "welcome home," while emotional tears run down their face like a flood from a busted damn. The excitement is palpable, but so is the fear. Because after months of living with the constant reminder that your life could be snuffed out at any moment, it's hard to let go of that mindset. It's like building a wall around your emotions so thick that even Godzilla would struggle to tear it down.

We become masters of compression, squeezing all those intense emotions into a tiny box labeled "Survival Mode." We convince ourselves that accepting our fate is part of the job description. Every minute spent outside the wire becomes a potential dance with death, and we learn to accept that reality with a shrug and a "Well if you cared, you would have had more action and fewer excuses, but don't worry. I made sure to put your name on the SGLI so you can wipe your tears with those \$400k!"

But let's remember the middle of the deployment. Ah, yes, that glorious period where we're stuck between the beginning and the end. It's like being in limbo, except instead of waiting for judgment day, we're waiting for the next rocket attack or ambush. It's a time when the days blend, and every step outside feels like a game of Russian roulette. Will today be the day I finally meet my maker? Or am I stuck returning to base unscathed, eating the nasty chow, looking for the letter from home that never came, only to repeat the process tomorrow?

Did it begin after my first deployment? I'll put it this way: the body keeps the score.

Where is the OFF switch?

Well, unfortunately, there's no magical OFF switch for me. So, how do I cope with my never-ending existence? I've devised a rather amusing solution - I live my life through metaphors! It's like having a closet full of costumes, where I pick the perfect face to match each day. One day, I might don purple scrubs and wear a mask that screams, "I am the epitome of knowledge and expertise!" as I impart valuable skills and wisdom to aspiring surgical technologists. It's like being a superhero without extraordinary powers or fancy surgical instruments.

Seriously, I've got more masks than a Halloween store! One of my favorites is the "Marine Corps League" mask, where I became the Senior Vice Commandant. I put on my uniforms, sprinkle in some leadership skills, resilience, accountability, and voila! I'm ready to represent like a boss.

Another mask I wear is the "Executive Officer for the Young Marines Unit" mask. This one brings out my visionary leader side. I add a dash of dedication, a sprinkle of mentorship, and a whole lot of empowerment. And just like that, I'm transforming into the ultimate role model.

There is the "Jack of all trades mask!" It's like a superhero cape but for my face. This bad boy is versatile. I can wear it in any situation. Need someone to give an inspiring speech? Bam! I put on my mask, and suddenly, I'm the most confident and resilient person in the room. Want someone to listen to your problems and care? Boom! My mask transforms me into the most empathetic soul you've ever seen. It's like magic! It's also exhausting.

I, the eccentric and slightly unhinged scientist, am knee-deep in my groundbreaking research, tirelessly observing the masses in search of the ultimate concoction that will allow me to blend in seamlessly. While I must admit that my experiments are a work in progress, I have amassed enough data to know exactly what to say, when to chuckle, or when to feign sorrow. In the grand scheme of things, death is an inevitable fate. So, you see, I can be just as content lounging at home, binge-watching television shows, as I would be attending a funeral where tears flow like rivers.

Let me paint the picture: everyone's crying their eyes out over losing their beloved while I'm here like a steak-loving sociopath, savoring the juiciest Ribeye this side of the graveyard. But, oh no! I can't let my emotional constipation show, or I'll blow my cover as a normal human being. Due to this, I need to research how to assimilate emotions better because I am astute enough to understand that such behavior would be socially unacceptable.

Asking for help can be quite a challenge. It's not that I feel weak or too proud! It's more the lack of trust. I enrolled as a patient at the VA, and I wondered how someone who hadn't walked a mile in my shoes could assist me. I decided to give it the good ol' college try anyway. It was like diving headfirst into a new relationship with trust issues, just like that crazy girlfriend you had back in the day. You know, the one who always suspected you were up to no good because "all men are the same?" That was me at the

VA, side-eyeing them because the government runs it. And we all know how patient and strategic they can be like a predator waiting for the perfect moment to pounce on its prey. They're biding their time until they can snatch away our rights, like our beloved 2nd Amendment.

It reminds me of my wild but mundane adventure in which I earned the HIGH RISK label at the VA in 2008. So there I was, labeled as a potential danger to myself, all because of a silly dream I had. Just a dream! Maybe some DNA traces in that dream could have been mistaken for suicidal thoughts, but come on! Talk about jumping to conclusions. Instead of having a rational conversation, they took me to this dark place where they started asking crazy questions. Like, would I be cool with being Baker Acted? And do I happen to own any firearms? Seriously? I had to think long and hard about my response. So I said, "Listen, if I wanted to turn those dreams into reality, I'd just tap into my inner Marine Corps training. You know, where we learned that anything can be used as a weapon of opportunity. Taking away my firearms would only challenge my creativity! By the way, I was the artist recruit!

My trust in the VA mental health providers took a nosedive and decided to throw a wrench right into the gears of my healing process. It was time for a change of plans. Instead of bulldozing my way through town like a raging bull, I've realized that a more cunning approach is needed.

Moving forward, I will maneuver through the country like a stealthy ninja, avoiding all the drama and chaos. All because the VA made it oh-so-pleasantly uncomfortable for me to address the core problem when they dangled the threat of taking away my precious freedom.

But fear not, for I devised what I like to call a clinically diplomatic approach. I am now the master of keeping things on the surface level. I focus solely on those pesky symptoms that make me appear compromised, treating them like a used car salesman waxing the exterior of a GEO METRO to sell like a compact car for a collector. No need to tackle the actual problem head-on, oh no! Let's sweep it under the rug and pretend it doesn't exist.

I'm still struggling to keep my mental surface clean, and I'm not too proud to ask for help. It's like trying to keep a pressure cooker from exploding - you must let off some steam before things get out of control. But let me tell you, it's not easy when your psychologist decides to ghost you just when you need them the most!

Don't even get me started on the VA. They've got many methods to "unmask" my stealthy, iron-strong persona. Despite life's constant petty jabs, I try to keep it together, but my blood pressure and anxiety always give me away. The last time I had an appointment to see my new psychiatrist, I was already irritable with only 45 minutes of sleep because my anxiety made me jump out of bed as soon as I laid down the night before. It didn't help that I had such a busy and overwhelming day ahead of me where I would follow one appointment with another and go back to a significant meeting at work, which we only have twice yearly.

I stumbled into the VA, half-asleep and aware I needed to be on my best VA behavior. As a lowly peasant in the grand scheme of things, I knew better than to demand to see the same doctor despite the VA shuffling him off to another department. Regardless, I was prepared to unleash my tales of woe about my absent psychologist. I keep insisting that she had ghosted me, but the more I repeat it, the more I think she may have been kidnapped after providing such stellar treatment to other veterans.

Anyway, there I was, trying to maintain an air of calmness, ready for a serious discussion. But alas! My blood pressure skyrocketed, chest pain kicked in, and all sorts of symptoms conspired against me, including (their words) being the ripe old age of 38, turning me from a composed individual into a hot mess. And just like that, I was whisked to the ER for a delightful cocktail of hypertension and anxiety!

I would never in a million years admit to having suicide on my agenda. I'm all about maintaining my freedom and keeping my empathy under wraps. I would never tell you that the thoughts are like being stuck in a thick fog that even the best roux for gumbo would be jealous of. That it's so dense you can't see anything of value staring back at you! I value my independence so much

that I wouldn't dare utter a word about being lost in a deep abyss where the concept of reality never existed. Rational thoughts? Ha! They packed their bags and hightailed them without even leaving a forwarding address. It's like they vanished into thin air! And those lovely thoughts of people caring about you? What people? Not in a "nobody cares" way, but as if their existence was never discovered. You would have never thought to call the one you know in reality could bring you back. You are in a trance, void of emotions until the fog clears. I'll never admit to it. I may toy with the idea of finding the perfect words as far away from the Baker Act as possible that may state something along the lines of comprehending the existence of a fog so thick that poor souls fall victim to the void.

Why on earth do I spill my guts about something so personal? Well, let me rack my brain for a couple of reasons. First, babbling about this stuff is good for my mental health. Secondly, and here's the kicker: nobody actually reads these articles! So, in a bizarre and twisted way, I get to release all my frustrations and prove that I made an effort to communicate with over a hundred people through these monthly newsletters while demonstrating that no one takes the time (as I mentioned before) to read the articles to their entirety because not a single soul has yet taken the time to ask if I'm okay. It's like sending out smoke signals on a deserted island to the people you see in the distance who know you exist but refuse to turn around and address the signs.

Thank you. More on nothing next week!



Meet the Author...

FORGOTTEN