



Just Keep Breathing

By: Krystal Vigar, NREMT-P, FP-C, Parkview Samaritan

As the holiday season approaches, it's important to remember that this can be a difficult time for us and our patients - specifically those who are acutely aware of loss. Holiday gatherings are intended to be a time of joyful memories, filled with family, love, and laughter. Those who are coping with loss may experience a stark contrast to this. Instead of a season filled with joy, it can create a season of grief, loneliness and depression.

As EMS providers and first responders, we tend to see an increase in the number of suicides and suicide attempts during this time of year. These circumstances can create an especially difficult time for us. Not only are the things we see not normal, but now add the holiday season, and we are faced with grieving family members left without loved ones during special times of the year.

How do we successfully cope with critical/stressful incidents?

Any scuba diver knows, the most important rule in scuba diving is never hold your breath. And so it is with these critical incidents. Breathe continuously and never keep things to yourself when dealing with critical/stressful instances. Chetan Kharod, U.S. Air Force Col., said, "although firefighters, EMS personnel and law enforcement officers embody a proud tradition of compassionate, selfless service, the reality is that many of these special men and women will encounter emotions and situations beyond the range of normal human experience over the span of their careers."*



And he's right! The things we do and see are not normal for the human mind to try and comprehend. That is why we all must seek help when needed. Don't hold your breath, talk to someone.

Safe Call Now is a resource for public safety employees to speak confidentially with current/former law enforcement officers, public safety professionals and/or mental healthcare providers who are familiar with our line of work.

MAKE A SAFE CALL NOW: 206-459-3020

Samaritan Spotlight

Andy Gilbert, RN, CFRN – Samaritan Flight Nurse

Andy Gilbert is one of our flight crewmembers who has been with the Parkview Samaritan Flight program since the very beginning. With an eye for detail, Andy recalls the exact date he began as a Samaritan paramedic: November 18, 1989. He also remembers his early days as a flight paramedic, with just 4 RN's, 4 Paramedics and 4 Pilots. He received his RN license in 1995 and transitioned into the flight nurse role in 1998.



When asked what has surprised him the most over his years with Samaritan he states, “I think I’ve been here so long...originally I thought it would be something to do ‘for a while’. But now, here I am 28 years later and can’t imagine doing anything else.”

As a Samaritan nurse, a robust experience and knowledge is required to care for all the different age groups and illnesses. Of all the calls however, it’s those trauma calls Andy enjoys caring for the most. “It’s fast paced and we have a chance to make a difference in their outcome and survival.” Seasoned skills developed from years of experience provide him with stories his co-workers fondly call, “Gilby tales.”

Helping those who are injured or ill has given Andy a perspective and wisdom to know that even though he loves his job, he also loves his time off. He always has something to look forward to and enjoys camping with his wife Staci (also a Samaritan flight nurse). They, along with their two little dogs, Max and Chloe, go camping in their 1974 Volkswagen camper bus, lovingly named “Mildred”. Andy and Staci have 4 grown children, and he is looking forward to becoming a Grandpa this coming April.

Andy’s thoughts and advice to others are: ***“This ‘job’ has taught me to live for today but plan for tomorrow, knowing that it may never come. Life is our most precious gift. Live life like you are on borrowed time.”***



Reference:

*Heightman, A. (2017, August). Resiliency Alliance. *Journal of Emergency Medical Services* 42(8), 8-9.