

PACEsetter Mutual Respect

Audience: Leaders/Teams/Organizations

Purpose

Provide a guide for leaders in the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Space Force at any level, to initiate critical thinking and group discussion/interaction on the topics of age, ethnic, religion, rank, and sex discrimination within the Air and Space Forces. All leaders will be able to drive home the importance of showing mutual respect to everyone.

Description

Air Force Core Values are built on a foundation that includes and requires mutual respect. Mutual respect is the concern for the dignity of a person as a fellow human being. To build on this foundation, we must foster an environment where we can work together to successfully reach a common goal, in an atmosphere where all members are valued for their individuality and self-worth.

In the Air and Space Force team, each generation of men and women inspire and encourage the next to aim even higher and to carry our values further. For our Air and Space Forces to aim higher, mutual respect must be at the forefront in what we do and how we live in the Profession of Arms. It must shape the way we honor one another and our country.

So how do we start the conversation?

Execution

Ground Rules

Everyone's voice is valued. In discussions of mutual respect, those negatively affected might feel they have not been heard or cannot speak freely. Please consider the following:

- Listen more than you speak. The purpose of such conversations is to understand the perspective of others using empathy. Expressing empathy allows you to imagine how another person might feel based on what you know about him/her, even though you might have not experienced those feelings directly.
- Ask questions to help you and others understand.
- Ask for assistance. Prior to this discussion, ask a few members if they would like to share their perspective of lapses of mutual respect or equality in the Air or Space Forces during the group session.
- Seek to understand others, not others understand you. Though you might not agree with another member's perspective, remember, it is their perspective.
- No one should apologize for his/her feelings of hurt, distress, sadness, vulnerability, or fright.
- Openness begins with vulnerability, honesty, and truth.
- Do not force anyone to speak. A tough discussion requires a willingness to speak out, which some might not feel comfortable to do so.
- Use anonymity. Remind members not to provide specific names or information with so much detail that the person(s) mentioned (negatively) is identified.
- Ask for solutions within the unit and across the Air and Space Forces.
- Provide resources from agencies such as the Chaplain Corps, IG, or EO.
- Forward viable solutions to leadership.
- Provide feedback in appropriate settings.

Before watching the Mutual Respect Heritage Today Video

- Thank the group for their participation in the discussion.
- Remind the group that:
 - The purpose for this discussion is to provide a dialogue to understand the perspective of others. The discussion might be tough and uncomfortable for some, but these types of discussions are important because it impacts each member and his/her teammates.

Contact Us

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- In the Airman’s Creed, we never leave an Airman behind, and unfortunately, some members in the Air and Space Forces feel that way. To remedy this issue, it begins with discussions on mutual respect.
 - There will be no reprisal for appropriate discussion comments.
 - Provide a quick overview on the goal of seeking to understand by expressing empathy.
 - Open the discussion with your own understanding of lapses of mutual respect or equality in the unit and the Air and Space Forces. Even if you have not faced or seen lapses of mutual respect or equality, speak on your understanding and ask for further questions and dialogue.
 - Mutual respect can be described as treating your fellow Air and Space professional like you treat your own ____ (brother, sister, father, mother, mentor, or close friend). What does it mean to you?
 - What do you think would happen if mutual respect was ignored? How can loss of mutual respect affect the integrity of a unit?
 - Can you think of a situation where mutual respect would slow down or stop a process?

After watching the Mutual Respect Heritage Today Video

Assume the lead for the discussion. Below are questions that can be asked if and where appropriate in your group setting.

- How does mutual respect play a part in our Core Values?
- Can you share a story of when you felt disrespected and how you handled the situation? If you handled it negatively, how would you handle it if you could do it over again?
- What are your experiences in seeing lapses of mutual respect or equality in the workplace?
- How challenging has it been for you to understand lapses of mutual respect or equality exist in the Air and Space Forces?
- What can you do to prepare for situations where people are not being respectful or display mutual respect towards someone or a group of people?
- How can you honor your fellow members and their sacrifices by ensuring everyone is mutual respected?
- How can you spread and embody mutual respect for all people?
- In addition to respect for human dignity, respect in the Profession of Arms also includes respect for the chain of command, rank, and authority. Any examples where that might need improvement?
- What can I or our unit do to improve mutual respect in our organization.

Conclusion

- Summarize some of the discussion points, suggestions, and available resources.
- Thank everyone for their participation.
- Continue to engage your senior leaders, supervisors, and members with regular individual and group discussions.

References

Mutual Respect Heritage Today Video:

<https://www.airman.af.mil/HeritageToday/video/415885/dvpcc/false/#DVIDSVideoPlayer33885>

“What’s the difference between sympathy and empathy?,” Merriam-Webster, accessed 22 June 2020, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/words-at-play/sympathy-empathy-difference>.
