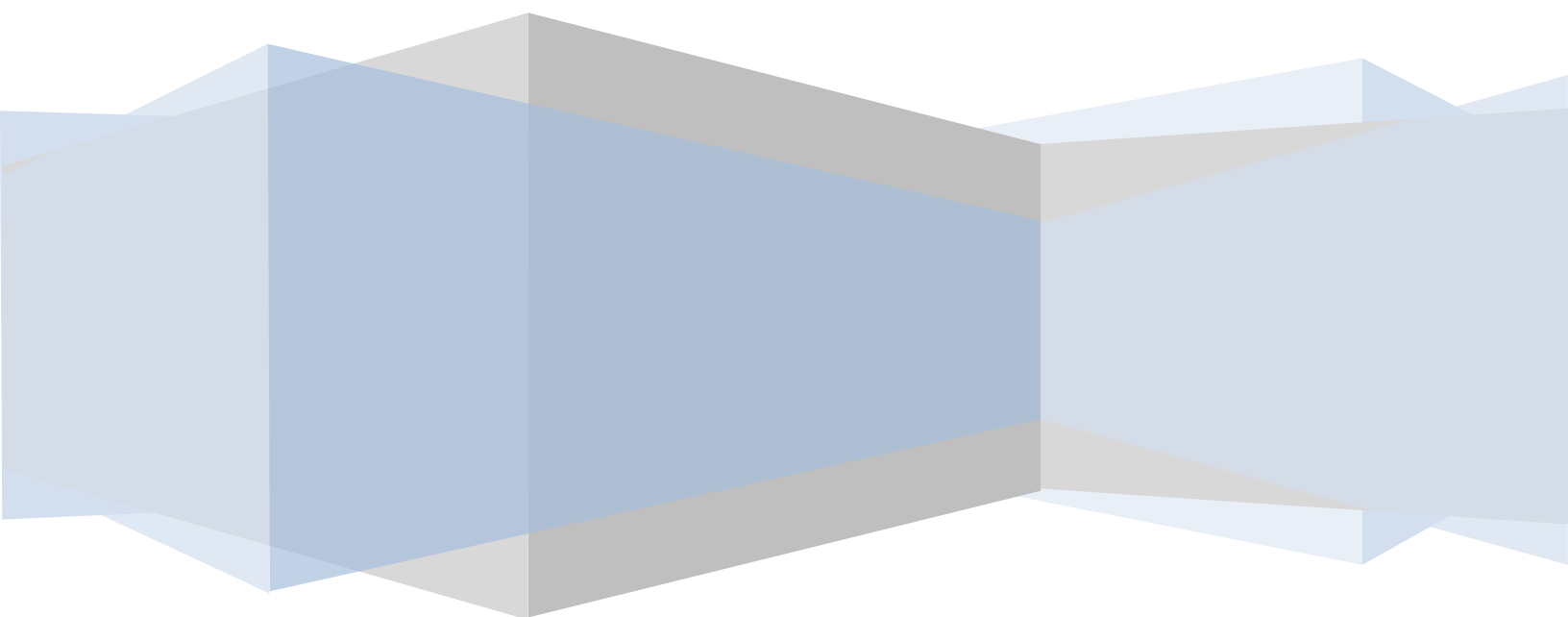


# Re-Focus

A Leader's Guide to Mentorship

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## Preface

Mentoring is something very near and dear to my heart. I believe in camaraderie and caring for one another. We wear the same last name over our hearts; therefore, we must remain cognizant of our commitment to service and to each other. I call it, Wingmanship 101.

Inspired by the positive influences of my mentors, advisors, and leaders, I started a peer-to-peer group at Luke AFB, AZ called Re-Focus. The reasoning behind the creation of the group was to realign our leadership techniques with the back to basics campaign and re-focus our state of mind into practical and attainable mentorship. As we drawdown within our force, the need for effective leadership has never been more relevant. I recognized a need for our Enlisted Force to reconnect with one another. I was determined to motivate and encourage those around me to adhere to the same notion of mentorship that gave me the drive to be the best leader I can be. Subsequently, the group triggered a monthly forum of open dialogue in which all tiers were able to interact collectively. After brainstorming ideas for the forums, I created an agenda with focus areas that I have found useful in my supervisory practices thus far.

What you are about to read is a combination of the aforementioned forum agenda and methods that I found effective in my own mentoring experiences, merged with some of our most powerful guidance as leaders (*AF Pamphlet 36-2241, Professional Development Guide and AFI 36-2618, The Enlisted Force Structure*). This guide is divided into 10 sections that will aid you in your application of leadership and mentorship. Each of the sections covers a specific focus that will highlight important mentoring topics. This guide is not intended to be the know all, end all of guides; however, each focus should serve as a stepping-stone in creating an effective mentoring approach.

It is time to get “Back to Basics.” Find the mentor within yourself.

Let’s get Re-Focused!

## Section 1. Let's Mentor

Focus: We are leaders! As leaders, our Airmen ARE our business.

Regardless of rank or age, stressors affect us all. Seeking out the stem of a problem is the trait of a true leader. I am sure no one wakes up in the morning and says, "I want to be a dirt bag today." Sometimes, as supervisors, we can solve the problem and other times all we can do is soothe an issue that is past mending. Regardless, caring should be the first order of business.

Being a leader coincides with our Airman's Creed since aspiring to be great leaders is what the foundation of our force's livelihood is built upon. We are all capable of being leaders and mentors. Advocating these characteristics does not require you to hold a certain duty title or position. A mentor possesses a valuable ability to take the reins and guide others to success.

Chapter 10, Leadership, Section 10D- Mentoring of the Airman Handbook describes a mentor as *"a trusted counselor or guide. Mentoring, therefore, is a relationship in which a person with greater experience and wisdom guides another person to develop both personally and professionally."*

Mentoring can be a helpful and motivational tool in the leadership toolbox. I have learned that building rapport with your Airmen will prove more beneficial than any on-the-job training or briefing your Airmen could ever attend. A rapport allows you to build a face-to-face connection with your Airmen.

Section 10.20.2 Assignment of Mentors goes on to say, *"Key to the mentoring process is direct involvement... supervisors must continually challenge their Airmen to improve. They must provide clear performance feedback and guidance in setting realistic near-, mid-, and long-term professional and personal development goals."*

Regrettably, there are Airmen out there who are not being mentored. We live in a day and age where some supervisors are intimidated by face-to-face interaction and rely on new aged devices to speak on their behalves. Some Airmen find it hard to confide in their leadership for fear of reprisal. Others have unmotivated supervisors or supervisors who want to mentor but are uneducated about mentoring.

As leaders, we must always be ready to step in and ask questions when our Airman shows a lack of motivation or inexplicable behavior. Observe, assess, and then counsel your Airmen into successful state of mind. Everyone deserves a fighting chance and as leaders, we must be that solution-oriented voice of reason. Do not give up on your Airmen. Taking the time to interact with your Airmen on a daily basis will almost guarantee an improvement in their productivity. Ensure that your Airmen know what your standards are by giving them clear guidance. Ask questions and request feedback from your Airmen. You will be surprised to see what they have to say.



## Now It's Your Turn...

Conduct a mock counseling session with your Airman. Refer to the scenario as an example.

### Counseling Scenario

#### *Background:*

SrA Jones: He has been your Airman for about a year and was promoted to SrA 2 months ago. He has had some issues in the past failing to complete some of his assigned duties. He's a good Airman for the most part. Lately, he is not performing his duties in accordance with your standards or his potential.

#### *Scenario:*

You return to work at about 1700 after leaving your cell phone on your desk to find that the building is unsecured. You call your Airman, SrA Jones who is the Facility Manager and as you suspect, he is at home. After you ask him why the building was left unsecured, he responds, "Well, I asked someone to take care of that for me." He acknowledged that he knows that it is his responsibility regardless.

- What would you do?
- How would you counsel this Airman?

#### **Quick Tip:**

Assess the situation by asking your Airman a few questions:

- What happened?
- Why did it happen?
- How can this incident be prevented from reoccurring in the future?

Abnormal behavior from your Airman is usually a red flag. Ordinarily, Airmen will display typical performance mannerisms and typical behavior. Pay attention to your Airmen, look for signs of difficulty, assess the situation by asking questions, and take immediate action. Your Airmen should always sense your concern for their wellbeing. This builds trust between you and your Airmen and you will most likely get to the root of the problem quicker.

*"As a leader you are always trying to build trust. You have to be able to establish trust, grow trust and sustain trust. If people don't trust you, you can't lead them. You can manage them, you may give someone an order, but not lead. We get one chance as leaders to get it right. We better get it right." –Brig Gen Michael D. Rothstein*

## Section 2. Let's Communicate

Focus: Communication is key in our day-to-day interactions with our Airmen. As NCOs, we have to know how to reach each of our Airmen to include mastering the proper protocol and procedures of the Performance Feedback.

How will your Airmen ever know where they stand if you never provide clear guidance or standards? You should rate your Airmen by your standards and their immediate peers' performance, meaning those Airmen solely under your supervision only. Airmen should not be rated based on the performance of other Airmen outside of your scope of supervision.

Clear and frequent feedback is the most important processes in setting your Airmen up for success. Feedback is meant to develop personnel to their highest potential. It is a two-way communication session that should be used to convey any observed weaknesses and to help your Airman establish goals to improve. When considering your role in the feedback process, think of yourself as a tutor or coach. You want to fine-tune your Airmen into a prepared state so that they can take your place someday. In order to ensure your Airmen are receptive of your guidance, you must prove yourself worthy of the standards you are about to set. No one is going to follow guidance that is not personified by its officiator. Keep in mind that you must not only talk-the-talk, but you must walk-the-walk. Prior to the feedback session, gain your ratees confidence and show them that you are fair, compassionate, and understanding, just as a good leader should be. You are the Air Force's example of the standard. You have been charged within your duties as a supervisor and NCO to perform as the embodiment of the standard.

By regulation, an initial feedback session must be take place within 60 days of assumption of supervision. Feedback sessions should be private and face-to-face whenever possible. They should also take place in a relaxed and quiet environment. Survey your Airmen's performance when preparing for a feedback session. You will not be able to effectively comment or give direction in areas that require improvement without routinely watching performance.

Use the AF Form 931 *Airman Comprehensive Assessment (ACA) Worksheet (AB thru TSGT)*. Be specific with your guidance in each section of the worksheet to establish well-defined direction for your Airmen to meet and exceed yours and Air Force standards.

Remember, not all feedbacks have to be negative. You can give your Airman positive feedback. Feedbacks can be a great motivator. A simple, "good job" can go a long way.



## Now It's Your Turn...

Read each of the scenarios, one at a time and consider what type of feedback you would give the Airman in each situation. When giving feedback remember the following:

1) Observe.

- What happened
- What behaviors did I observe?
- Was the unit's mission affected by these behaviors?

According to the Airman Handbook, para.10.34, Approaches to Counseling, *"An effective leader approaches each Airman as an individual. Different people and different situations require different counseling approaches."*

2) Choose an approach.

- Directive
- Non-directive
- Combined

3) Set an agenda with a basic outline of what you would like to discuss during your feedback.

Incorporate the above foci into the scenario listed below. You might consider reading the scenario to your Airman and asking them for feedback from an Airman's perspective.

1. *SrA Jones has just completed a physical fitness assessment and has not eaten since the night before. He knows he also has an important meeting in about 15 minutes. He decides to go to the drive thru at McDonalds knowing he may not make the start time of the meeting. As a result, SrA Jones arrives 5 minutes late to the meeting.*

-How would you counsel SrA Jones?

**Quick Tip:**

This is an example of a poor decision-making choice on SrA Jones' part. Nevertheless, remember to keep your composure as well as an open mind in calmly assessing the situation with some questions; "What happened?" Moreover, "How can this situation be prevented in the future?" If you feel paperwork is an appropriate rehabilitation tool for this behavior then serve it to your Airman once the situation has calmed down. You can also consult your First Sergeant for some rehabilitative counseling methods.

### Section 3. Let's Adapt Our Approach to Change and Diversity

Focus: How well can you cope with change? Are you a flexible leader?

It has been said that some were born to lead; however, there is a standard set for us as a force so we all must step up to the plate and accept leadership roles and responsibilities. Some supervisors nowadays want their Airmen to like them and do not want to hurt anyone's feelings. However, being a leader cannot be about friendship; it is establishing a standard, and then holding your subordinates accountable to meet or exceed that standard.

Establishing a rapport early on with your Airman will be greatly beneficial in the event your work center experiences change. We have all heard the saying, "change is inevitable." Changes are constantly taking place all around us every day. Changes such as new leadership, various supervisor and subordinate assignments, even our inevitable changes from one duty station to another. Change is never easy, it is not automatic, and it can be a complicated and often painful process.

Likewise, in the consideration of change, each of us comes from different lifestyles stemming from different social norms, morals, and beliefs. Understand that you will have to cater your leadership approaches to each of your Airmen's way of understanding because of their diverse backgrounds.

Chapter 10, Leadership, Section 10E- Developmental Counseling (10.36. Leveraging Diversity) in the Airman Handbook says, *"Our work environment today is more diverse than ever. As leaders, incorporating everyone's specific talents into a cohesive and optimal workforce can be challenging. We must recognize that people are vital to an organization's success. Consequently, we need to understand the motivations and interests of this diverse workforce. People are motivated for their reasons, not yours."*

You cannot change an individual's personality, but you can adapt your approach as a leader. We must create an environment that thrives on commonality amongst our impending diversity. We must also lay down our preconceived notions of our co-workers; these notions trigger stereotypes.

Such toxic prejudice perceptions exist because there is a lack of education regarding individuals or ways of doing things. Establishing a common ground can be difficult but is necessary. Be open-minded in your realization that yes, we are all different but collectively, we are all striving to achieve the same goal and we need each other in order to move forward with to the successful completion of the mission.





## Now It's Your Turn...

Try using following discussion questions as a conversational icebreaker concerning our differences and similarities with your Airman.

-What are some examples of stereotypes we face as NCOs, supervisors, and Airmen in the Air Force?

-What are some commonalities we share as Airmen?

## Section 4. Let's Strive to be Better

Focus: Our core values are a concept that personifies our commitment as military members.

By definition, leadership is the process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task. Leadership is a characteristic that cannot be gained by reading a book, AFI, or guidance, it is an unremitting practice. Picture yourself, for a moment, in the midst of a challenge. How will you deal with that challenge? Will you shy away? Will you hide in the shadows of another's motivation and knowledge? Or, will you move into the forefront and say, "I'm ready to lead?" As Airmen, we must strive to be better.

Our core values serve as the foundation of our efforts to be the best we can be in our careers, interactions, and our military way of life. Our dedication to continuously making good choices exemplifies our core value, *Integrity First*.

All of us, as service members, have accepted the responsibility of guarding our nation at all costs to include the sacrifice of our lives if need be. This endeavor personifies our core value of *Service before Self*.

A leader is not necessarily always the individual in an authoritative position but can be an individual that possesses the ability to motivate, develop, and inspire others. Leaders should lead by example and possess a positive attitude since the attitude they possess is reflected in those who surround them. A good leader can recognize when their people are doing good work and in doing so, encourage and motivate them to do even better. Nevertheless, in order to devise motivational and persuasive perks which influence others, an effective leader must evaluate themselves and work on their own shortcomings. This notion supports our core value, *Excellence in All We Do*.

Even our Air Force Symbol incorporates the motif of our core values within its depiction.

The Air Force Symbol



The star is framed with three diamonds that represent our core values—integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do.



## Now It's Your Turn...

Discuss some goals with your Airman, then follow-up with your Airman's goals in 6 months. Cover some of the following areas:

### **Personal Goals (What do you want to improve about yourself?):**

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### **Educational Goals:**

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### **Career Goals:**

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### **Financial Goals:**

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## Section 5. Let's Show a Little Compassion

Focus: Compassion and Kindness.

How hard is it to be compassionate or to be kind? Trials and tribulations affect all of our lives. Nevertheless, during those hard times, would it not be nice to know that you potentially have someone that you can turn to? That “someone” should be your fellow Airmen. Set an example that exudes in the presence of those who surround you. When people see greatness, they will want to emulate it. Through kindness and compassion, great leadership is achieved.

Chapter 6, Standards of Conduct, Section 6D- Everyday Conduct in the Airman Handbook states, *“Compassion is an essential element of good government. Courtesy and kindness, both to those we serve and to those with whom we work, help to ensure individuals are not treated solely as a means to an end. Caring for others is the counterbalance against the temptation to pursue the mission at any cost.”*

Kindness is contagious. During our active, everyday lives, we usually find no problem meeting and greeting strangers with kindness. Imagine if we started treating our co-workers with the same kindness. Such a practice of kindness would immerse you and your fellow Airmen in an experience that would foster greater levels of respect and support within your workplace. Showing compassion builds a bond between you and your Airmen; thus fostering resiliency and enhancing morale.



### Now It's Your Turn...

Try smiling and positively interacting with some of your Airmen and coworkers.

Use some of the following statements:

- Good morning!
- How are you?
- How is your family?
- What plans do you have for the weekend?-Or -What did you do this weekend?
- Thank you for your hard work today!

## Section 6. Let's be Respectful

Focus: Remember the childhood game, "Mother, May I...?" Back then, we incorporated politeness and manners into a childhood game. If "please" and "thank you" were the magic words then common courtesy would be the magic wand.

The word "professional" should inspire all military members to aspire to maintaining exemplary and courteous conduct. Unfortunately, many supervisors have gotten away from enforcing the practice of well-mannered performance because they would rather shy away from face-to-face confrontation in order to be their subordinate's "friends." Be mindful of the fact that there has to be a distinguished line between personal and professional. You should never let your personal feelings take over where adherence to a standard is lacking. We must remember to enforce the standards, even the small ones that tend to be neglected from time to time.

In my supervisory experience, the abandonment of small common acts of courtesy such as telephone etiquette, leaning on desks, addressing someone as "Sir" or "Ma'am", or standing when someone higher in rank enters the room or is speaking to you, can initiate a foul impression of one's professionalism.

Everyday common courtesies are acts of respect that *"play an extremely important role in building morale, esprit de corps, discipline, and mission effectiveness."* per Section 8C-Professional Behavior in the Airman's Handbook. Continued consideration for one another is vital in maintaining a stress-free work environment. The Airman's Handbook goes on to say, *"In general, use common sense, be considerate of other people, and insist your subordinates do the same."*

In the midst of our commitment as service members, sacrifice is a matter that is clear to each of us. Each of us should employ additional efforts in demonstrating mutual understanding as we are all embracing the same circumstance as members of an elite force. Likewise, our wingman concept requires us to support one another. We have to lean and depend on one another in order to empower the notion of dignity and mutual respect.

It is essential that we treat one another in the manner in which we would like to be treated. If we employ a respectful way of thinking, we will emit a code of fraternal closeness; thus, influencing a culture of dignity and respect. We should be mindful that we must first become the change we wish to see in others. We can begin with a self-assessment. Ask yourself, "Does my reflection match my efforts to have a positive influence on those who surround me? And do I reflect a culture of dignity and respect?"

Supervisors, it is our duty to enforce manners as a standard. However, that does not mean that just because we hold more rank, we are entitled to demean our Airmen. Rank has its privileges, but those privileges should not be prevalent in the form of maltreatment. Be mindful to treat those around you in the same manner you wish to be treated. Are you prepared to step up to the plate as the leader your subordinates need?



## Now It's Your Turn...

Try the following exercises with your Airmen.

1. Conduct a mock telephone conversation with your Airman to practice telephone etiquette.

*(((The Phone Rings)))*

Airman X: *(State the Unit e.g. 56th Fighter Wing), this is an unsecured line, Airman (Insert Name) speaking, how may I help you?*

Some key issues to point out are...

- Advising them to be mindful of saying “Please Stand-by” instead of “Hold on” or “Wait.”
- Reminding them to be mindful of asking, “May I leave a message?” when whomever the call concerns is not available.

2. Have your Airmen practice reporting procedures.

Report-in by knocking **once** and entering when told to do so--two paces from desk, halt, salute and report-in, “*Sir/Ma’am, Airman (insert name) reports as ordered.*”

3. Have your Airmen practice what to do when someone of higher rank enters their work center with a question. Remind your Airman to be mindful of their customs and courtesies by standing and asking, “*How may I help you Sir/Ma’am?*”

## Section 7. Let's Be Safe

Focus: Safety is an essential piece of our lives on and off duty.

Chapter 4, NCO Responsibilities in AFI 36-2618, The Enlisted Force Structure states, *“NCOs must also exceed the standards and expectations levied upon their Airmen; epitomize excellence and serve as a role model for Airmen to emulate; lead by example by exhibiting professional behavior, military bearing, respect for authority, and the highest standards of dress and appearance; instill professional behaviors in their subordinates; clarify Air Force standards in such areas as duty performance, safety, on- and off-duty behavior, professional and unprofessional relationships, and personal appearance; and be alert to and immediately correct personnel who violate Air Force standards. NCOs must remain keenly aware of individual and group dynamics affecting readiness and safety. Identify Airmen exhibiting high-risk behavior and deter further unsafe practices.”*

All of our military standards require some form of ORM (Operational Risk Management). As NCOs, we must make certain that safety measures and precautions are in place and understood in order to guarantee our Airmen are physically, spiritually, and mentally ready to accomplish the mission.

I conducted a brief interview with a safety prevention subject matter expert; *“Rather than relying solely on individual experience to complete the job, risk management teaches us that careful analysis and control of hazards will give us the optimum results in any situation. There are times when the professionally qualified solution in a situation will outweigh our personal need or intent to get the situation resolved. Employ ORM at all levels! Make smart choices,”* said MSgt Raymond Chalifoux who is a Squadron Safety Monitor assigned to the 357th Aircraft Maintenance Unit at Davis Monthan AFB in Arizona.

Safety precautions and prevention measures include but are not limited to, health, proper instructions regarding work such as abiding by TOs & mandated guidance, as well as avoiding ground safety mishaps by safely participating in off-duty hobbies such as skiing, bungee jumping, skydiving, etc.

*Note: Your Wing Safety Office will have some great additional information regarding incorporating safety measures within your squadrons, units, sections, flights, and your personal off-duty time.*



## Now It's Your Turn...

MSgt Raymond Chalifoux was kind enough to provide a scenario to further the understanding of the Operational Risk Management Process.

Refer to the scenario and the 5-Step Risk Management Process diagram below and conduct a discussion regarding the concepts of Operational Risk Management (*AFI 90-802, Risk Management*) with your Airman.

### Operational Risk Management Scenario:

Aircraft maintenance wants to be able to back their trucks up within 5 feet of an explosively loaded aircraft, 20 feet closer than usual. This would cut hours off transportation time of materials to complete maintenance and other required work. Aircraft maintenance is heavily tasked which causes Air Tasking Order to be late on a recurring basis. The desired solution to the problem is ensuring the Air Tasking Order arrives on time and cut the workload for their workers. How can aircraft maintenance resolve their dilemma?

Using ORM, the following questions are good ideas to consider:

- Who possesses the best insight to the benefits and costs of a risk?
- Who has the resources to mitigate a risk?
- Who answers in the event of a mishap?
- What level makes the operational sense?
- Who is the senior person at the scene?
- Who makes these decisions in other activities?
- Who will make decisions in combat operations?

### 5-Step Risk Management Process





## Section 8. Let's Take Care of Family

Focus: In theory and as one force, we are a family; consisting of active duty, civilians, Guard, Reserve, and retirees.

One of our Core Values is *Service Before Self*. However, we must be mindful never to mistake that belief for Service INSTEAD of Self. We care for one another through our “Wingman Concept” and in times of our separation from our personal lives and loved ones, we tend to become a home away from home to one another. Caring for one another ensures that each of us is ready to fulfill our commitment to the carrying out of the mission. Not only should we be ready and capable to carry out the mission, our personal affairs must be squared away to include aligning our finances with our lifestyle in order to take care of ourselves and provide for our families. Ensuring that your family is taken care of in your absence is not as difficult as it may seem.

Chapter 10 of the Airman's Handbook states that, *“Airmen have a duty to their families just as strong as that to the service...there are times the service and Nation will require them to be away from home. Their responsibilities to their families include ensuring they are cared for when deployed or when duty away requires it.”*

As supervisors, we have to be ready to support our Airmen in all situations. Along with our supervisory support, remind your Airmen that their social network is a very essential part of their life in order to survive and prosper. Those individuals that are closest to your Airmen know them best and can prove a valid avenue of reassurance in a time of need.

Support is also available from local military agencies. Some of those agencies that are available to assist are as follows:

- The First Sergeant
- The Airman and Family Readiness Center
- The Chapel
- The Finance Office



## Now It's Your Turn...

Take some time to find out about your Airman's personal life. When a new Airman arrives in your unit, shop or to your supervision, have them to fill out a "Smart Card." You may want to inquire about some of the following areas:

**Place of Birth/Hometown and State:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Status** (*Circle One*) - Single---Engaged---Married---Divorced

If "Married":

**Spouse Name**                      **Status** (Military or Civilian)      If "Military", List **Org**

\_\_\_\_\_

### Family

Children: (*Yes or No*)

If "Yes":

Sex	Name	Date of Birth
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Mother Living? \_\_\_\_\_

Father Living? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have any siblings? (*Yes or No*) \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, how many? (Brothers or/and Sisters) \_\_\_\_\_

*Note: The Airman and Family Readiness Flight will be able to provide you with additional information.*

## Section 9. Let's March

Focus: "Aim High! Fly, Fight, Win!"

We must always remember that above all else we are Airmen first.

Our warrior ethos is the foundation of our obligation and dedication to serve. We must embody the ideology of this philosophy within our commitment and dedicate our very being to the success of our mission at all costs.

Chapter 9, Enlisted Force Development, Section 9.11 *Airmanship Defined* in the Airman's Handbook defines warrior ethos as "*an unstoppable determination...it is this mindset that we aspire to create and sustain in order to perpetuate behaviors necessary for mission accomplishment.*"

By exemplifying the proverb of our Enlisted Force Structure with concepts of valor, courage, and sacrifice, we can guarantee the accomplishment of the mission.

Our Enlisted Force consists of three tiers, the Junior Enlisted Airman, the Noncommissioned Officer, and the Senior Noncommissioned Officer. As a whole, we are all required to follow the same policies and regulations; however, each tier differs in the introduction of new challenges and more responsibility as rank is acquired. Despite our differences in rank or responsibility, our warrior ethos creates a common ground for all of us to correlate within our dedication to service.

The question is not will we be called to fight; it is when we are called to fight, will we be ready to demonstrate our commitment?

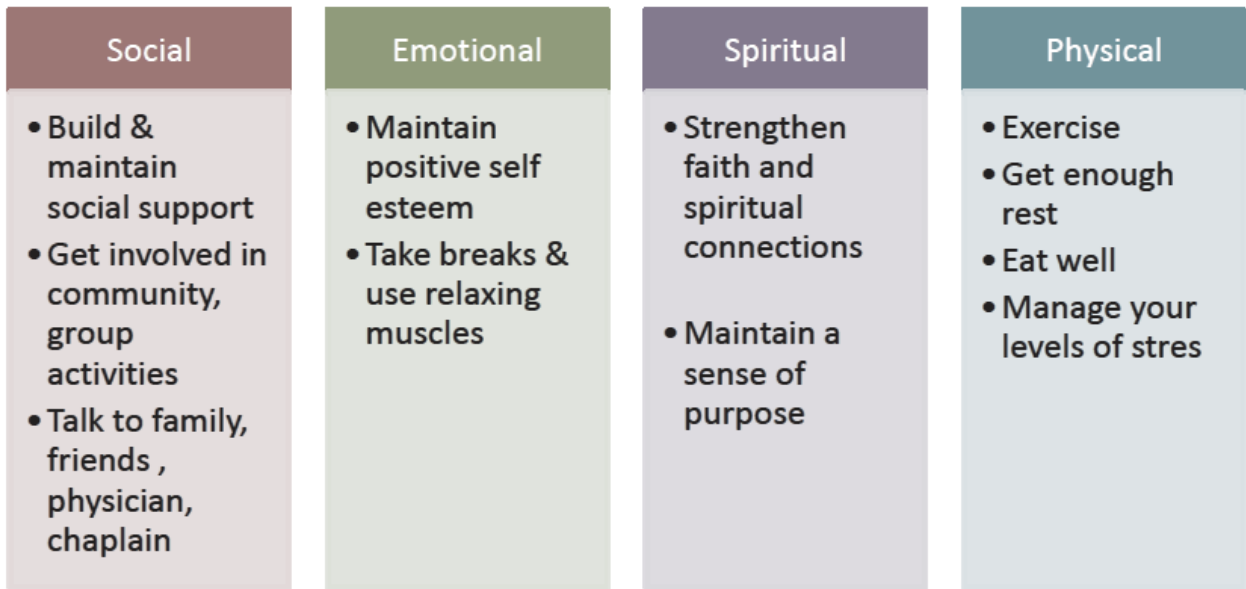
Are your Airmen ready mentally, physically, and spiritually to accomplish the mission?

The most useful way we can ensure our Airmen are ready to confront the pressures and anxieties associated with military life and deployment is to develop their resiliency. Resiliency is the ability to endure, prevail over, and recover from all stressors and challenges. Ask yourself, "What does it take to be a resilient Airman?"



## Now It's Your Turn...

- Using the diagram below, discuss the Four Dimensions of Wellness (Social, Emotional, Spiritual, and Physical) with your Airmen.



- Ask your Airmen the following questions about how they can prepare themselves to be ready to accomplish the mission:

*How can you socially prepare yourself?*

*How can you emotionally prepare yourself?*

*How can you spiritually prepare yourself?*

*How can you physically prepare yourself?*

- Have your Airmen reference any challenge they have faced in their life (on or off duty), how they overcame that challenge, and how that relates to being resilient.

## Section 10. Let's Reflect

Focus: Let us call to mind the significance of our role as Noncommissioned Officers

Our military culture prides itself on a tradition of honor and valor. Our customs and courtesies deepen our responsibility to conduct ourselves in the most dignified manner. Our presence should project a quality of genuine valor. Dignity is in essence a self-controlled behavior; it is a concept that each of us has an obligation to invoke. A dignified culture yields an outlook that supports our intent as an elite force to keep our composure regardless of the challenges we may face. We have an obligation to uphold the standards that guide our profession.

As NCOs, commanders depend on us to lead our Airmen to accomplish the mission. There are many tools to educate and remind us of who we are as leaders but none as compelling or as memorable as our creeds. The US Air Force has utilized several different creeds (the NCO Creed, the SNCO Creed, the Chief's Creed, the First Sergeant's Creed, the Security Forces Creed, etc. As of April 2007, all of the creeds used in the Air Force were replaced by The Airman's Creed; however, we must always be mindful of our history which teaches us where we come from and who we are as a tier. Read the Noncommissioned Officer's Charge and contemplate its importance.

### **THE NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER'S CHARGE**

- ❖ YOU ARE CHARGED WITH ENSURING THAT PERSONNEL AND RESOURCES UNDER YOUR CONTROL ARE EFFECTIVELY USED.
- ❖ YOU ARE CHARGED WITH REMAINING ALERT TO DETECTING ADVERSE MORALE TRENDS AND INITIATING CORRECTIVE ACTION WITHIN YOUR CONTROL, PROVIDING APPROPRIATE FEEDBACK TO SUPERIORS.
- ❖ YOU ARE CHARGED WITH MAINTAINING THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF COMMUNICATION AND RAPPORT WITH SUBORDINATES, REMAINING ATTUNED TO THEIR NEEDS, BEING EVER MINDFUL THAT THE KEY IS EMPATHY, NOT APATHY.
- ❖ YOU ARE CHARGED WITH ACTIVELY ENCOURAGING AND MOTIVATING BOTH ON AND OFF-DUTY INVOLVEMENT IN UNIT AND BASE ACTIVITIES BY LEADING THE WAY.
- ❖ YOU ARE CHARGED WITH ENSURING THAT PEOPLE ARE TREATED FAIRLY BY ALL AGENCIES AND ACTIVITIES, BOTH ON AND OFF BASE, AND INITIATING CORRECTIVE ACTION IN ANY INSTANCE WHICH VIOLATES THIS PRINCIPLE.
- ❖ YOU ARE CHARGED WITH ALWAYS WEARING THE UNIFORM PROPERLY AND ENSURING COMPLIANCE FROM SUBORDINATES.
- ❖ YOU ARE CHARGED WITH A PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF ON AND OFF-DUTY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS WHICH WILL ENHANCE YOUR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN PREPARATION TO ASSUME INCREASED LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES IN YOUR QUEST TO ATTAIN HIGHER NCO GRADES.
- ❖ YOU ARE CHARGED AT ALL TIMES WITH PRESENTING AN IMAGE OF COMPETENCE, INTEGRITY, AND PRIDE; THE IMAGE OF A PROFESSIONAL NONCOMMISSIONED OFFICER.



## Now It's Your Turn...

It has been said repeatedly that NCOs are the backbone of our force. Our value as NCOs is intertwined with the successes or failures of our respective organizations. In order to contribute to the successful completion of the mission, we must be aware of our responsibilities and capable to carry out our duties at all times. We must also be committed to thorough and effective training of our subordinates, as they will replace us one day.

Talk with your Airman about the importance of being a good leader. Try discussing the importance of the following leadership qualities:

- Leading by Example: *You have to be willing to do as much work as you delegate. It is easy to give out orders, but an effective leader will show their Airmen how to get the job done right the first time.*

- Being Honest: *It is essential as a leader to earn your Airman's trust. In order to do that, you have to show them that you are dependable, honorable, and upright. At the same time, you must be approachable. If your Airmen do not feel that they can trust you, then they will never allow you to lead them. Exemplify our number one core value by the epitomizing Integrity First.*

- Empowering Those Around You: *Share the wealth! Sharing power will provide your Airmen with opportunities to show you what they are capable of accomplishing. They will appreciate you putting your trust in them and in turn, they will further your development as a leader and empower you.*

*“Good leaders are people who have a passion to succeed. To become successful leaders, we must first learn that no matter how good the technology or how shiny the equipment, people-to-people relations get things done in our organizations. People are the assets that determine our success or failure. If you are to be a good leader, you have to cultivate your skills in the arena of personal relations.” –General Ronald R. Fogleman*

## **Conclusion**

Showing our Airmen the way to success is not a path that is easily paved. It is through mentorship that we will lead our Airmen beyond greatness. Effective mentorship is assembled through the enforcement of standards, compassion, commitment, and in taking a devoted interest in every aspect of our Airmen's lives. It is a state of mind that pushes each of us to go further than we ever thought we could. We must dedicate ourselves to the continued development of the "toolbox," which is our inner mentor.

It is time to prove ourselves worthy and take our capability to the next level. Our subordinates desperately need us. They look up to us. I implore you to push forward into a better demonstration of what a leader is. Be perseverance in the flesh. Empower your Airmen by giving them the opportunities that will allow them to show you and everyone else that they too are qualified to succeed. We are all more than capable. We are inherently great!

**Now...Let's Get Re-Focused!**





