

2019



R4L

RESILIENCE FOR LIFE

A follow-up to the Resilience Tactical Pause

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BACKGROUND

In September 2019, the CSAF directed a Resilience Tactical Pause to address the rising rates of suicide this year. The directives and goals of this effort are outlined in the RTP Playbook, located in the “Commander’s Toolkit” section of this document.

Without direct, targeted efforts, we are on track to lose over 150 Total Force Airmen this year to suicide (a 32% increase over the last 5 years). This trend cannot continue; inaction is simply not an option.

Suicide prevention is “Command Team business” that requires an investment from the entire unit. We are losing Airmen to an internal threat that we must root out and fight back at the idea of hopelessness among

our ranks. To do this, we must focus on ‘Connectedness’ as a necessary component in preventing suicide. A culture of connectedness is a beneficial ingredient for greater unit cohesion and increased trust.

Leaders at all levels must make every effort to enhance unit connectedness and create a climate that fosters total force resilience. Airmen should feel empowered to share their ideas and concerns, share with one another, and acquire the tools and skills necessary to increase their confidence in recognizing signs of distress.

Our goal is to improve an Airman’s ability and willingness to seek help for themselves and each other. ⚡

TARGETED FEEDBACKS

To accompany my four RTP commander calls, I conducted three design thinking sessions to collect feedback directly from our workforce on what’s possibly contributing to suicide. This document serves a summary of this effort for Command Teams and Airmen at all levels, to review and assess

how best their organization can address this crises. Additionally, I met with squadron commanders and superintendents to better understand their needs and means to ‘bake’ resiliency into our lives and throughout Scott AFB. It’ll take all of us, working in concert, to develop a more resilient culture. ⚡



Design thinking encompassed three groups: Commanders, superintendents & helping agencies; frontline supervisors [TSgt/SSgt]; and junior officer/enlisted.

JUNIOR AIRMEN [E1-E4]
COMPANY GRADE OFFICERS

ENLISTED FRONTLINE
SUPERVISORS:
SSGT/TSGT

COMMANDERS
SUPERINTENDENTS
FIRST SERGEANTS
HELPING AGENCIES

Q1 What are the root causes of HOPELESSNESS?

CATEGORIES WITH MOST RESPONSES

1. PERSONAL ISSUES

2. JOB RELATED

3. RELATIONSHIPS

1. JOB RELATED

2. PERSONAL ISSUES

3. RELATIONSHIPS

1. JOB RELATED

2. RELATIONSHIPS

3. PERSONAL ISSUES

UNIQUE RESPONSES FROM EACH GROUP

POWERLESSNESS
NOT GROWING
LOSS OF PERSPECTIVE
NO LIFE BALANCE
LEADERS W/NO HUMILITY
WORK FRIENDS ONLY
ACADEMIC STRESS
RACIAL DIVIDE

NOT EMOTIONALLY AVAIL
SUBSTANCE ABUSE
INSENSITIVE LEADERS
WORK NOT UNIFIED
STRESS
TOXIC LEADERSHIP
FEW EXAMPLES OF
SUCCESS AFTER FAILURE

"I CAN HANDLE IT"
BEING IN A RUT
TRAUMA
PASSED OVER FOR RANK
NEGATIVE EVALS
ADDT'L DUTIES
FEAR OF FUTURE
CULTURAL CHANGES

COMMON RESPONSES FROM ALL GROUPS LISTED BY CATEGORY

JOB RELATED

- TASK SATURATION • LACK OF PURPOSE/JOB SATISFACTION • DIET/PT
- LACK OF RECOGNITION • DISCIPLINE ISSUES • LONELINESS • DISCONNECTED

PERSONAL ISSUES

- FINANCES/DEBT • FEAR OF FAILURE • MEDICAL ISSUES • MENTAL HEALTH
- LOW SELF ESTEEM • LACK OF FAITH • LONELINESS • ISOLATION

RELATIONSHIPS

- LACK OF COMMUNITY • ISOLATION • PERSONAL PROBLEMS
- FAMILY SEPARATION • DEATH • DIVORCE/BREAK UPS
- CUSTODY/CHILD- RELATED ISSUES

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Q2 What causes LOSS OF TRUST & CONFIDENCE?

CATEGORIES WITH MOST RESPONSES

1. WORK ISSUES

2. UNIT/MORALE

3. HOME ISSUES

1. UNIT/MORALE

2. WORK ISSUES

3. HOME ISSUES

1. WORK ISSUES

2. UNIT/MORALE

3. HOME ISSUES

UNIQUE RESPONSES FROM EACH GROUP

BETRAYALS

BLANKET STATEMENTS

POOR PERFORMANCES

MICROMANAGEMENT

VERBAL ABUSE

"EATING OUR OWN"

GOSSIP

FAVORITISM

PEOPLE NOT CARING

NOT ACTIVE LISTENING

UNSTABLE PERSONALITY

LEADERS NOT GOING TO
BAT FOR THEIR PEOPLE

ALONE DURING DPLYMNTS
EPR RATINGS

LACK OF FEEDBACK

INFIDELITY

STEREOTYPES

MANAGER VS. COACHING

THE BUREAUCRACY

GOOD WORK = MORE WORK

LACK OF ACTION

UNFAIR AWARDS PRGM

ANGER MANAGEMENT

COMMON RESPONSES FROM ALL GROUPS LISTED BY CATEGORY

WORK ISSUES

- LACK OF PROFESSIONALISM • LACK OF INVOLVEMENT FROM LEADERS
- DISCIPLINE • LACK OF EMPATHY • NO FEEDBACK • UNETHICAL CONDUCT

UNIT/MORALE

- POOR LEADERSHIP • COMMUNICATION • SUPERVISOR/DISCIPLINE ISSUES
- NO TRANSPARENCY • FAVORITISM • WORK OVERLOAD • NO RECOGNITION

HOME ISSUES

- INFIDELITY • DISHONESTY • FAMILY PROBLEMS • VERBAL/PHYSICAL ABUSE
- FINANCIAL ISSUES

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Q3 What are BARRIERS TO SEEKING HELP?

CATEGORIES WITH MOST RESPONSES

1. STIGMA

2. ACCESS TO CARE

3. SUPERVISOR

1. SUPERVISOR

2. COMMUNICATION

3. STIGMA

1. STIGMA

2. ACCESS TO CARE

3. SUPERVISOR

UNIQUE RESPONSES FROM EACH GROUP

PAPERWORK
LACK OF TRUST
PROBLEM ISN'T BAD
ENOUGH
BURDEN ON OTHERS
CONFIDENTIALITY
NEG COMMUNICATIONS
NO ONE TO TRUST

LACK OF EDUCATION
ABOUT RESOURCES
FEARS
CONSISTENCY
HELP DOESN'T HELP
LACK OF SYSTEM TRUST
TIME LIMITATIONS

SHYNESS
PEOPLE TEND TO BE
NEGATIVE IN EXPERIENCES
OF HELP-SEEKING
WHAT PEERS THINK
PRIDE
DRAGGING OTHERS IN
"SHIRT WORK" ONLY

COMMON RESPONSES FROM ALL GROUPS LISTED BY CATEGORY

STIGMA

- PERCEPTIONS • EMBARRASSMENT • SEEN AS WEAK • TROUBLE MAKER
- RETRIBUTION • DON'T RECOGNIZE IT • SHAME • AFTERMATH • CAREER IMPACT

SUPERVISOR

- PERCEPTION OF RETRIBUTION • FAVORITISM • LACK OF EXPERIENCE
- RANK DISPARITY • "JUST SUCK IT UP" • OPS TEMPO • LACK OF TRUST
- ABSENT BOSS

ACCESS TO CARE

- LACK OF TIMELY APPOINTMENTS • MULTIPLE PASS OFFS
- POOR FOLLOW UPS • NO HELP FOR NON-ACTIVE DUTY STATUS
- AGENCIES TOO BUSY • OVERWHELMED

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Q4 What causes BARRIERS TO FEEDBACK?

CATEGORIES WITH MOST RESPONSES

1. COMMUNICATION

2. SUPERVISOR

3. STIGMA

1. SUPERVISOR

2. COMMUNICATION

3. STIGMA

1. SUPERVISOR

2. COMMUNICATION

3. STIGMA

UNIQUE RESPONSES FROM EACH GROUP

PROOF OF CHANGE
NO SOLUTIONS
CHASING METRICS
DISREGARDED
NOT INVESTED
AVOID CONFLICT
TOO BUSY
NOT EFFECTIVE

OUR TROOPS ALREADY
KNOW WHAT WE
EXPECT
WORRIED ABOUT AMN'S
MENTAL HEALTH
BAD COMMUNICATION
AGE
TWO-FACED

SOME HAVE NO MORAL
COMPASS SO THEY DRIFT
BUSY TAKING CARE
OF OTHERS
MATURITY
PROBLEM WILL FIX ITSELF
MISUNDERSTOOD
SHY
TOXIC COWORKERS

COMMON RESPONSES FROM ALL GROUPS LISTED BY CATEGORY

SUPERVISOR

- NEG. CULTURE • HURT FEELINGS • DIFFERENT SCHEDULE • LAZINESS
- FREQUENCY • NOT LISTENING • LACK OF SKILLS • EMOTIONS/TRUTH

COMMUNICATION

- COPY & PASTE MENTALITY • NO CONFIDENTIALITY • TOO MUCH FEEDBACK
- FEAR OF REPRISALS • LISTENING SKILLS • SAFE FORUM • NOT A PRIORITY
- TIME CONSTRAINTS

STIGMA

- HOW WILL IT BE RECEIVED? • DON'T KNOW ENOUGH
- CAREER PROGRESSION • NOTHING WILL CHANGE • DON'T CARE • RANK

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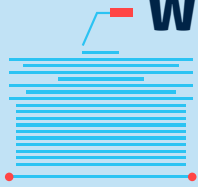
**COMMANDERS
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Q5 SUGGESTIONS FOR ACTIVITIES/WAYS TO CONNECT

MENTORSHIP SESSIONS
LEADERS TELLING MORE STORIES
MORE ALL CALLS
TALENT SHOWS
AMAZING RACE W/HELPING AGENCIES
ACTIVITIES THAT REINFORCE "ASKING FOR HELP" VS. JUST PERSISTENCE/RESILIENCE
MATCH SPEAKING EVENTS WITH UNIT FOLLOW UP TIME
THEATER GROUPS
MANAGING ENERGY VS. TIME
MORE COACHING TRAINING
VULNERABILITY/COACHING
HOW TO MANAGE THE CAREER IMPACT VS. IT WON'T IMPACT

CLASSES ON EMOTIONS MGMT
JOB SWAPPING
QTRLY RESILIENCE TIME
COMBAT DINING IN
GET TO KNOW YOUR AMN ACTIVITIES
GUIDED WORKCENTER DISCUSSIONS
MAKE DELIBERATE TIME
UNIT PT
SMALL UNIT FACILITATION ON WING TNG DAYS
ACTUAL TRAINING DAYS
MORALE EVENTS BASED ON DEMOGRAPHICS
eSPORTS EVENTS
HERITAGE ROOMS
REMEMBER THAT SUICIDE IS A SYMPTOM, NOT A DIAGNOSIS
WEEKLY AIRMAN TIME
MORE MRTS IN EACH UNIT
NETWORKING EVENTS

CONFIDENCE COURSES
TALK TO LDRS W/O AMN ABOUT HOW LDRSP CONTRIBUTED TO SUICIDE VS. PREVENTION
HELPING AGENCY EXPO/TOURS/ GAME
IMPROVE SPONSOR PROGRAM
AF CONNECT APP/TOOLKITS
INSPIRATIONAL SPEAKERS/TED TALK STYLE
WORK W/HELPING AGENCIES IN NEW/BETTER WAYS
MINI-CONVERSATION STARTER KITS FOR UNITS
IMPROVE ACCESS TO CARE
ASIST TRAINING
MORE ON CALL/WALK-IN HOURS
RESILIENCY TRNG W/SPOUSES
MORE FRONTLINE SUPERVISOR TRAINING
AMN FOLLOWUPS AFTER FTAC
UNIT/FAMILY TRAINING EVENTS
MORE WHITESPACE FOR UNITS
KEEP KILLING EXCESS ADMIN QWEEP



WHY DOES THIS MATTER?



As we explore how to develop resilience in our lives, I'm sure there are many questions going through your head.

Is this just another Air Force marketing campaign that will be short lived?

What difference can we really make?

Why go through all this effort if suicides keep rising?

What can I really do?

These are all valid questions, and you wouldn't be human if some of this internal dialogue wasn't taking place inside your head. So let me offer why this is important, and why we should all care.

According to my research on positive psychology, “resilience is a great trait to possess because it can lead to many positive outcomes in our lives and in our work” such as:

- improved learning and academic achievement
- lower absences from work due to sickness
- reduction in risk-taking behaviors such as excessive drinking, smoking, and drug use
- more involvement in their organizations local community, and family activities
- lower rates of mortality, and
- increased physical health, which is probably the most important one to focus on early in this journey.

There are many more positive benefits and reasons to focus on developing resilience, and it's not just for the superheroes or the strongest among us. It's developed through a personal set of experiences that helps build confidence and is measured through how one thrives under pressure and bounces back from disappointment. Avoiding tough situations **will not** build personal resilience.

You can raise your own, and your team's, level of resilience by:

- building and maintaining connections
- avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems
- taking action
- keeping things in perspective
- moving toward goals, and
- developing and nurturing a positive view of yourself and others.

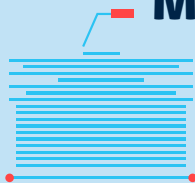
Sources:

① <https://positivepsychology.com/what-is-resilience/>

① <https://findtheedge.com/general/what-exactly-is-resilience-and-why-should-you-care>

① <https://er.educause.edu/blogs/2017/12/building-resilience-and-why-its-important-to-you-and-your-team>

MOVING FORWARD WITH 'RESILIENCE FOR LIFE'



I challenge all leadership teams to step out of their comfort zone and look at ways to increase personal resilience in themselves and in their workforce.

Using some of the knowledge gained through the design thinking sessions shared here and through feedback and programs offered from our helping agencies, **I ask that you to develop a resilience strategy that specifically targets your organizational and personal needs and then take action!** If you need time to connect as a squadron via spiritual, physical and mental health events, then schedule it and go after it. If you need resources/programs from helping agencies and the wing, then request it directly from us or bring it to our attention via the Community Action Board, or CAB.

You are free to design your resilience program as you see fit, so don't wait on the wing to address unit-level concerns. Lean into action and tell me what I can take off your plate in order to execute.

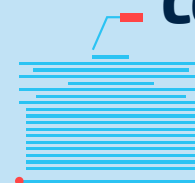
Additionally, we all benefit when we share our strategies and plans with one another, so the wing will develop a consolidated location (Sharepoint, Website, etc.) where you can find other resources, share, and provide feedback and ideas on expanding our efforts.

Finally, the wing will sponsor and provide resources for some of the great ideas that came directly from our Airmen that are beyond the scope of unit-level execution. Examples of this may be wing-wide fitness days, a guest speaker series, and other events focused on connectedness, development, growth and fun.

We want to ensure that any activity scheduled has true value associated with developing personal resilience—not just a collection of mass briefings and training that feels impersonal. Diverse and dynamic programming is key, and we'll get after it together as one, big Air Force family. ⭐

#R4L

COMMANDERS TOOLKIT



AF CONNECT APP

AF LEADERS APP

RTP PLAYBOOK

SAFB 'WE CARE' WEBSITE