



Department of the Air Force RESILIENCE

SUPPORTING BOTH OUR AIR AND SPACE FORCES AND FAMILIES



Prevention - #11

Medical/Mental Health

MEDICAL PROBLEMS

Prolonged illness can be devastating to individuals and families. One may find that his/her usual ways of coping (e.g., exercise, social activities, etc.) may be unavailable due to limitations caused by the illness. Therefore, the person may experience intense feelings of disorganization as usual routines are disrupted; anxiety and fear over the financial and career implications; grief over the loss of significant roles such as provider, parent, spouse, and team member or the realization that future goals may be unattainable; guilt as family members assume responsibilities previously managed by the ill person; and sadness or depression if he/she feels unable to contribute to the mission or family.

Signs Wingmen Should Know/Look For

- Diagnosed with a medical condition that involves significant physical discomfort, disability, or disruption of usual behaviors.
- Diagnosed with terminal illness.
- Absence of social support.
- History of mental health issues or difficulty coping with change.

Recommended Wingman Action

- Be aware that prolonged medical problems are severely distressing to the entire family.
- Be aware that medical conditions associated with significant pain, severe disability, or terminal prognosis can be associated with increased risk for suicide.
- Monitor status of the individual and entire family.
- Mobilize support to assist as appropriate.

Leadership Considerations

- Facilitate attendance at medical appointments.
- Consider safety issues and appropriate duty restrictions.
- Coordinate among the various helping resources.
- Mobilize unit support and assign someone to monitor the status of the impacted individual/family.
- Be aware of practical/logistical concerns of daily life, such as having meals brought in, transportation to medical appointments, etc.
- Consult with the Mental Health Clinic (MHC) if there is concern that the individual may represent a risk for harming themselves or others.