



Department of the Air Force RESILIENCE

SUPPORTING BOTH OUR AIR AND SPACE FORCES AND FAMILIES



Prevention - #16

Personal/Family

RELATIONSHIP/MARITAL PROBLEMS

A wide range of issues, including communication, parenting, sexual intimacy, finances, role conflict, and differing goals, can be extremely distressing and enduring. Many people prefer not to interfere in the personal lives of others. However, experience suggests that relationship problems can quickly interfere with duty performance. Also, relationship problems have been identified as one of the most common risk factors associated with suicide and domestic abuse among Air Force personnel. It is therefore important to remember that one can be a good wingman by asking how someone is doing, expressing concern and support, and reminding them of the wide range of helping resources, without being overly invasive.

Signs Wingmen Should Know/Look For

- Any talk or behavior that suggests thoughts of harming oneself or others.
- Frequent complaints about spouse/partner or issues related to the home/relationship.

Recommended Wingman Action

- Recognize that relationship problems place personnel at greater risk for suicide and violence, and make an extra effort to be a good wingman to these individuals.
- Take seriously any talk or indications that the individual might be considering thoughts of harming self or others.
- Be vigilant for any indications of abuse or violence within the relationship or home.
- Be vigilant for any indications of unhealthy coping mechanisms such as alcohol or drug abuse.
- Ensure personnel are aware of the availability of marital/relationship counseling provided by chaplains, mental health, Military One Source, and Military Family Life Counselors (MFLC).
- Communicate any concerns to leadership.

Leadership Considerations

- Be alert to the possibility of increased risk of abuse or violence within the relationship or home.
- Be alert that stress can increase potential for reduced situational awareness, impaired problem solving, and accidents.
- Refer member to the Family Advocacy Program if there are indications of violence or abuse within the home.
- Consult with the Mental Health Clinic if there are concerns that mental health issues place the member at risk for harming self or others, or cause significant duty impairment.
- Maintain awareness of the situation even after the relationship or situation is resolved, recognizing that long-term stressors may result when relationships end.