



COMMANDER'S CALL TALKING POINTS

DECEMBER 2019



Easing Holiday Stress for Airmen

It is critical that we support our Airmen to make sure they are managing stress successfully. While the holiday season is usually a time for family gatherings and celebration, it can be an additional source of stress for Airmen living with [invisible wounds](#). Prioritize the mental health of your Airmen to ensure they can enjoy the holidays in whatever way is best for them.

Tips to Stay Resilient through the Holidays

Encourage your Airmen to take steps to stay resilient and prevent added stress, anxiety, or depression that can arise during the holiday season. Leverage the four pillars of [Comprehensive Airman Fitness](#) to gauge your Airmen's readiness and provide them with the following tips to help your Airmen achieve physical, spiritual, mental, and social fitness.



1. **Be conscious of your schedule:** The holiday season can be overwhelming. Do not overbook your schedule and be sure to set aside time to relax to give yourself a break.
2. **Maintain a daily routine:** If you don't have holiday plans, create a sense of normalcy and maintain a daily routine. If you have set daily activities, like working out in the morning, continue to do them.
3. **Acknowledge your emotions:** It is common to feel like you must force yourself to be happy just because of the holidays. Recognize that it is OK to feel all emotions during the holidays. Give yourself time to process your emotions and discuss how you are feeling with your loved ones.
4. **Start new traditions:** If old traditions are linked to painful memories, start new ones. Try activities that bring joy even if it is not related to this time of year, like volunteering, exploring a new city, or watching a holiday movie.
5. **Tell your loved ones how you'd like to celebrate:** Communicate with your friends and family what type of event you'd prefer when celebrating the holidays. Creating plans can help decrease the chances of being in an uncomfortable or stressful environment.
6. **Be aware of your spending:** Indulging in retail therapy can be tempting during the holidays, but spending the extra money and losing track of your budget could lead to increased stress or anxiety once the bills arrive. Set a budget ahead of time and do your best to stay on target.
7. **Know when to seek help:** If symptoms of increased depression appear well before the holidays or linger beyond the end of the holiday season, this could be an indicator to schedule an appointment with a medical provider or leverage your peer or spiritual support teams.

Support Your Airmen during the Holidays

Encourage your Airmen to stay connected through local activities and give back to their communities. Help them feel supported. Check in on your Airmen regularly, invite them to your family celebrations, or include them in unit activities whenever possible.

- ✧ **Organize** a team potluck or activity
- ✧ **Encourage** unity
- ✧ **Create and send** care packages
- ✧ **Coordinate** a volunteer activity
- ✧ **Connect** via phone or text message
- ✧ **Host** a gathering for your Airmen
- ✧ **Arrange** a Secret Santa or White Elephant gift exchange

Resources



[Operation Gratitude](#) offers opportunities for Airmen to connect and give back this holiday season. Operation Gratitude is assembling and delivering over 75,000 care packages to deployed service members, veterans, wounded warriors, and caregivers. Positively impact the lives of your fellow service members this holiday season by volunteering to support this mission.



The holidays can be difficult when dealing with stressors. [Military OneSource](#) offers support and ways to cope with holiday stress. Non-medical counseling is available in person, by phone, video, or [online chat](#). Call **800-342-9647**.