

The holiday season is upon us! While this time of year may be fun and enjoyable, it can also be challenging for those spending time away from their loved ones. The holiday season can serve as another unfortunate reminder that a deployed friend or family member isn't around to join the festivities.

Many people thrive during this time of year, but your fellow Airmen may need some additional help getting through this holiday season. The following tools and tips are meant to help you and your Airmen stay healthy in mind and body, to remain resilient, and maintain mission readiness.

### What are the holiday blues?

This time of year may cause negative emotions and feelings of stress, anxiety, and sadness. The holiday blues are temporary. They can be caused by increased pressure from unrealistic expectations, additional financial requirements, distance from loved ones due to deployment, and excessive food and alcohol during celebrations.

Even though the holiday blues will pass, they can lead to the development of long-term mental health conditions such as clinical anxiety or depression if they aren't taken seriously.

### Have a happy holiday season

Help your squadron maintain resiliency through this holiday season by encouraging them to take care of themselves both physically and mentally. Share the following tips to help with potential stressors this holiday season:

- **Stick to your normal routine as much as possible.**
- **Get enough sleep.** Lack of sleep may contribute to increased rates of depression.
- **Take time for yourself, without becoming isolated.**
- **Eat and drink in moderation.** During the holidays, people tend to overindulge, which can lead to feeling worse about yourself.
- **Exercise.** Exercise is known to ease symptoms of depression. Physical activities release endorphins and boost your energy levels.
- **Set reasonable expectations and goals for holiday activities.** Don't over-extend yourself.
- **Stick to your budget.** Don't exceed your financial limits.



Image Source: [airman.dodlive.mil](mailto:airman.dodlive.mil)

### Support Your Airmen

Think about how you can support your fellow Airmen. Actively engage with deployed Airmen and help them maintain connections with your unit and their families. Whether deployed, working, or home for the holidays, support your Airmen in finding ways to help make their holiday special.

### Give Back

Lending a hand to your fellow Airmen and others in need can help bring joy to everyone. If you're seeking ways to pay it forward and give back this holiday season, here are a few ideas of places to start:

#### Adopt-a-Family:

Adopt a military or veteran family for the holidays by joining a local organization that offers this; activities often include letter writing, sewing and crafting, and baking.

#### Adopt-a-Veteran:

Adopt a veteran this holiday season to help those feeling lonely or isolated. This helps those in VA hospitals, assisted living, or homeless.

#### Honor our lost:

Volunteer to lay wreaths on headstones of troops on National Wreaths Across America Day. Wreath-laying ceremonies are held over 1,200 locations in all 50 U.S. states, at sea, and abroad.

#### Impact veterans in need:

Donate your time at a holiday support program where they host holiday parties for wounded heroes at a local VA hospital or veteran homeless shelter.

#### Pack deployed care packages:

Volunteer with an organization that sends packages to deployed troops for Christmas.

#### Military Installations:

Contact your local Airmen and Family Readiness Center about opportunities for you and your family to give back during this holiday season.