

Wingmanship

According to [AFI 1-1, Air Force Standards](#), Airmen at all levels of command have a role as wingmen. The Air Force culture is centered on the idea that a wingman will always safeguard his or her lead, and it adheres to the belief that a lead never lets his or her wingman stray into danger. All Airmen are encouraged to be good wingmen.

Being a good wingman means taking care of fellow Airmen—and taking action when signs of trouble are observed, especially in situations where Airmen appear as if they are about to make a poor decision, are in despair or show signs of hurting themselves or others.

Commanders also must recognize when their people need help and know where to send them to get it. Supervisors are the first line of defense for the well-being of the people they supervise. Often they are in a position to spot the first signs of trouble and are in the best position to listen and provide, or arrange for, needed assistance.

The following are general actions and roles that are applicable to most content areas discussed within the Airman's Guide. The general actions and roles are discussed in terms of **“Wingmen Action”** and **“Command Action”**. It should be noted that the guidance offered for “Wingmen” is equally applicable to “Command” because Commanders function as wingmen as well. Each content area within the Airman's Guide may contain additional, specific recommendations for supporting distressed personnel with regard to the specific situation discussed within that section.

All Wingman are encouraged to:

- Recognize situations that represent risk (i.e., potential stressors) and individuals who are displaying indications of distress.
- Inform others, including those in leadership positions, when potential stressors or distressed individuals are identified.
 - Actively take steps to mitigate potential stressors or assist distressed personnel.
 - Talk to someone who appears to be distressed.
 - Understand their situation and needs.
- Connect distressed personnel with appropriate helping resources.
- Monitor the potential stressor or distressed person to ensure that the issue has been resolved.
- Educate personnel regarding topics in distress such as the nature and impact of stressors.
- Ensure all personnel are aware of the availability of helping resources. Recommend the use of helping resources.
- Create a unit climate that encourages help seeking behavior and regards it as an indication of strength and resilience (i.e., reduces stigma).
- Create a unit climate that encourages communication in all directions.
- Remain vigilant for unhealthy coping mechanism such as use of alcohol or drugs.
- Encourage healthy lifestyle choices (e.g., exercise, positive social activities, volunteerism, etc.).
- Keep contact with personnel who are distressed, even after the current problem has resolved.

- Promote the use of Self-Care skills.
- Use BASIC Peer Support skills to assist others.

Commanders can assist distressed personnel in the following ways:

- Ensure adherence to Air Force and DoD policies that are intended to promote safety, improve health and reduce distress among personnel.
- Adjust unit policies to mitigate potentially distressing situations or assist distressed personnel.
- Consider duty changes/restrictions to ensure safety for individuals and proper custodianship of government material resources.
 - Consider restricting access to government and personal weapons as appropriate
- Consider information you may receive from coworkers and/or family members who express concerns about the emotional state of an individual.
- Facilitate attendance at appointments with helping resources.
- Recruit unit and community support for personnel who are in need.
- Remember that an individual's difficulties can impact their entire family unit. Assess for negative impact on the family and engage support as appropriate.
- Inform distressed personnel about appropriate helping resources, connect them to these resources and encourage voluntary participation with helping agencies.
- Request a Command Directed Evaluation as appropriate.
- Refer members to the Family Advocacy and Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment programs as appropriate.