



Medical/Mental Health

FOLLOWING UP WITH DISTRESSED PERSONNEL

For many problems, support needs to occur throughout the course of the stressor or treatment. This is particularly true for stressors that are severe or prolonged. In the case of severe stressors, the individual may become overwhelmed if another stressor is encountered. In the case of prolonged stress, the individual's coping resources may become exhausted due to the cumulative effect of additional stressors, even minor ones. Since the exhaustion of having just coped with one difficult situation may leave an individual unprepared for a recurrence of the previous stressor or the occurrence of new ones, it is important to continue to provide support even after stressful circumstances have initially resolved.

Signs Wingmen Should Know/Look For

- Those involved in involuntary processes (e.g., Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment (ADAPT) or Family Advocacy Program (FAP) treatment) or circumstances associated with increased risk for suicide (e.g., marital, legal, or financial problems).
- Recent discharge from psychiatric hospitalization.
- Experiencing prolonged stressors.
- Experiencing multiple stressors.
- Few social supports.
- Appear overwhelmed.
- Sense of shame, guilt or feeling like a burden might reduce the tendency to seek assistance.

Recommended Wingman Action

- Continue to monitor the status of distressed personnel, even after the worst of the situation seems to have passed.
- Remind the individual that he/she is a valued member of the unit, community, and/or family.
- Help them put current difficulties in perspective.
- Communicate any concerns to leadership.

Leadership Considerations

- Maintain awareness of how the situation is impacting the entire family unit, if applicable.
- Maintain communication with all involved helping resources throughout the entire stressful period from identification to post-resolution. Work with these agencies to create a tailored support plan as the individual's circumstances and related needs change.
- Consult with engaged helping agencies before significant changes that might be disruptive for the individual, such as deployment, PCS, or TDY.
- Consult with the Mental Health Clinic regarding the need for a Commander Directed Evaluation as appropriate.
- Consider safety issues and the potential need for duty limitation or restriction from weapons.