



## *Resilience Tactical Pause (RTP) Playbook*

**Background:** There have been 78 suspected Total Force deaths (as of 29 Jul 2019) by suicide in calendar year 2019, compared to 51 on this date in CY18. Without direct, targeted efforts, our current trajectory predicts we could lose 150+ Total Force Airmen this year to suicide (a 32% increase over the last 5 years). This trend cannot continue unchecked; inaction is not an option. The issue of suicide prevention is “Command Team business” that requires total leadership engagement. We are losing Airmen to an internal threat we must root out and crush... hopelessness.

Connectedness is necessary to prevent suicides and can also be beneficial to unit cohesion and morale. Leaders at all levels must make every effort to enhance unit connectedness, and create a climate that fosters total force resilience and optimal performance while promoting help seeking when necessary. Airmen (Big-A include the total force military and civilian) should be provided information and tools to increase their confidence and competence in recognizing signs of distress, and enhance their ability to seek help for themselves and others.

**Intent:** The Resilience Tactical Pause (RTP) is intended to provide an opportunity for leaders to engage their Airmen in a manner that fosters interpersonal connection. Through a Wing-level all call if desired, and unit-level small group discussions. Command Teams will make 100% contact with our Airmen. The RTP is not a “down day”, but deliberate time to promote trust and confidence in leadership, drive awareness, and to highlight the importance of candid feedback about how we can better support our Airmen. Use this effort to kick off your own campaign and gain valuable insight into the well-being of your Airmen. This is **not** a one-and-done effort, but the beginning of an ongoing, sustained effort to combat the challenge. Care should be taken to ensure facilitators and participants of small group discussions do not view this event as training. The RTP will foster discussion, connection, and identification of potential solutions to optimize Airmen performance.

### **Plan:**<sup>1</sup>

We will kick off the RTP with a video from CMSAF to introduce Air Force actions to address this issue and challenging us all to get after it. **Own the fight...are any of our Airmen hiding in plain sight?** The video can be found at:

- <https://www.dvidshub.net/video/700352/cmsaf-wright-resiliency-message-airmen>
- The RTP will kick-off at the Wing level on 1 August 2019; RTP sessions must be completed by 15 September 2019 in order to inform a more strategic Air Force approach.
  - Each Wing-level RTP should start with a message from the Wing Commander (e.g. All Call without making it training or education. This should only introduce the way ahead if done).
  - The CY19 Suicide Data Battle Board is the primary tool to stimulate the Wing-level conversation (Battle Board will be distributed by AF/A1Z and/or is available through the Wing Violence Prevention Integrator [VPI]). Key Battle Board features include:
    - Upper left area showing that 2019 is on pace to have the highest number of total suicide deaths when compared to the past 11 years.
    - Lower left box displaying year-to-date suicide deaths. This box shows a spike in deaths by suicide when compared to the same date in the previous 2 years.

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<sup>1</sup> Support contractor personnel may be encouraged to attend RTPs, to the extent allowed under the contract, so long as no conflict of interest or appearance of favoritism is created, and the government and contractor supervisors agree that this is an appropriate use of the contractor’s time under the contract. Since our support contractor personnel often work side-by-side with Airmen, contractor personnel are valuable resiliency Wingmen. Please consult with your servicing legal and contracting offices for specific guidance.

- Right side displaying demographics of those that have died by suicide. Data indicates enlisted, married, males ages 23-30 with relationship struggles are at heightened risk.
  - Content of the message at the Wing level should introduce the problem we are facing—loss of our Airmen to suicide, and transition to the promotion of protective factors and healthy behaviors (e.g., being good Wingmen, engaging in appropriate self-care such as exercise and ensuring sufficient sleep, seeking help early through resources like the Chain of Command, Airman & Family Readiness, Military Family Life Counselors [MFLCs], Mental Health, and Religious Support Teams).
  - Speakers may be brought in to share stories of resilience and/or provide an example of help-seeking behavior. Some potential speakers may include<sup>2</sup>:
    - Wounded Warrior Ambassadors: Warriors and caregivers who have gone through the Ambassador Workshop are prepared to share their stories of recovery and resiliency.
      - Contact Ambassador Program:
        - Tel: 210-565-0731
        - Email: [AFPC.DPFW.AmbassadorWorkflow@us.af.mil](mailto:AFPC.DPFW.AmbassadorWorkflow@us.af.mil)
    - Installation Resources: You likely have Airmen on your installation who have effectively overcome adversity and are available and willing to share their stories. Find and enable them to craft their message of resilience. It is recommended Wings avoid stories of tragedy and/or regret; the message should ultimately be one of resilience and effective help seeking. There are many sources of information on the installation; you are encouraged to find resources off your installation as well. One recommendation is the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors (TAPS), [www.taps.org](http://www.taps.org). They provide outstanding support to survivors of Airmen who died by suicide.
    - External Speakers (e.g., celebrity or athlete): With guidance from your local legal office, you may be able to invite speakers who fall into this category. Please contact your installation legal office for guidance and assistance in selecting and contacting any speaker not already affiliated with the Federal government.
- Unit-level small group discussions will follow the Wing-level message. Facilitators for small group discussions will be selected by unit leaders (see Small Group Facilitator Selection section below).
  - Small group discussions should generate conversation to strengthen unit connectedness AND obtain feedback on Airmen ideas for enhancing well-being.
  - 100% Airman contact required.
  - Feedback from the small group discussions is a required component of the RTP.
  - Encourage Airmen to provide feedback; their voice needs to be heard in an effort to evolve our approach to resilience.
- RTP will be the start of an enduring effort to reinvigorate connection among Airmen and drive feedback.

**Implementation:** Unit Command Teams will drive the timing of the RTP. Units will make this their own...personalize it...and stay on it. The RTP should focus on:

1. Connections among Airmen to increase resilience
2. Squadrons as the heartbeat of our Air Force, reinforcing a resilient culture
3. Building connection and encouraging Airmen to seek help
4. Fighting for Airmen feedback

The CY19 Suicide Data Battle Board frames the tactical problem and sets the conditions for follow-on discussions to build and sustain Airmen well-being. Right now, any Airman in your unit could be contemplating suicide...who are they, and how can you as a Wingman lead and connect them with the help they need?

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<sup>2</sup> Invitational travel *may* be an option for speakers who are not civilian or uniformed members of a Service. Please work with your DTS approving official and your local legal office for guidance.

Creating an environment with vulnerability and open conversation can increase unit connectedness, vector command climate, identify homegrown solutions for Airmen well-being, and decrease and/or remove barriers/stigma for help seeking. Leaders, at all levels, should preserve time to enable regular follow-up discussions, events, and team-building exercises in order for unit connection and resilience to thrive. Feedback received from the initial RTP is critical to help guide this effort to meet the needs of our Airmen and families.

The nature of the RTP discussions might distress some Airmen. Such responses must not be ignored or dismissed by leadership or the small group facilitators. It is recommended that existing helping resources (e.g., Religious Support Teams, Mental Health Clinic personnel, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Victim Advocates, Family Advocacy Program personnel, Military and Family Life Counselors, etc.) are available during the Wing Commander message and small group discussions. The RTP is an opportunity to reduce stigma associated with seeking helping. **Leaders are therefore encouraged to kick off the RTP with a statement about the importance of asking for help, and reinforce the local resources available.**

**Small Group Facilitator Selection:** Creating connections with others is one of the most important protective factors, so a key aspect of the RTP small group discussions is the selection of facilitators who are charged with building these connections during the discussions. The facilitators should be selected by leadership. They should be Airmen who are well respected, have a positive influence, and have some experience leading group discussions. Potential facilitators include unit Master Resilience Trainers (MRTs). **This event is NOT training** but an opportunity for our small group facilitators to create an environment of connectedness. Leadership should meet with facilitators prior to the start of the small groups to discuss any unit specific concerns, questions, or topic areas for the groups. Leaders should also provide guidance on how to best set up the small group discussions for the unit.

**Small Group Facilitator Instructions:** Small group facilitators are an essential part of the effectiveness of the RTP. Their role is to build connections among the Airmen and gather feedback to identify issues and areas for improvement within unit resilience culture to enhance Airmen well-being and performance. This playbook is a guide, not a script; each group will have unique needs, opinions, and direction. The included “*Resilience Tactical Pause Facilitator’s Play Sheet*” is a tool facilitators should use to guide small group discussions along with input from leadership and other resources including the Community Action Team members.

- **Facilitation Resources:** Utilize your resources prior to, during, and after the groups. In addition to your on-base personnel and peers, find online videos or websites that can help you lead small group discussions, enhance active listening skills, and build connections. Consider outside, publicly available resources to sharpen your facilitation and active listening skills such as:
  - <https://web.stanford.edu/group/resed/resed/staffresources/RM/training/facilguide.html>
  - <https://coachingforleaders.com/facilitate-great-conversations/>
  - [www.brown.edu/sheridan/teaching-learning-resources/teaching-resources/classroom-practices/learning-contexts/discussions/tips](http://www.brown.edu/sheridan/teaching-learning-resources/teaching-resources/classroom-practices/learning-contexts/discussions/tips)
  - [www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/active-listening.html](http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/active-listening.html)
- **Group Organization:** Consider group size and member selection that will encourage conversation, respects mission requirements, and values Airmen’s time. Ideal group size is 8-20 Airmen.
- **Preparation:** Prepare beforehand and start on-time. Select a comfortable space, be welcoming and positive, and explain the “why” of the RTP (provided in this Playbook and by your leadership).
- **Getting Started:** It is recommended you start with introductions and by sharing a favorite (e.g., movie, tv show, food, etc.) to increase comfort speaking and sharing in the group.
- **Encourage Conversation:** This is not a training or focus group. The facilitator sets the tone for how the discussion will go. You should talk less than 20% of the time, and limit your opinions. Encourage everyone to speak by asking quieter Airmen to share what they are thinking. Don’t let one person monopolize the conversation. Actively listen to the members and ask clarifying questions. If members start complaining, ask them to provide potential solutions.

- **Airmen in Distress:** If someone becomes distressed or shared a personal tragedy during the discussion, respond with empathy and be ready to provide connection to local resources. Let the group know if you are a mandatory reporter for certain disclosures (sexual assault, domestic violence, harassment, etc.) at the start of the discussion. If you are concerned someone might be having thoughts of suicide, pull them aside and ask them about it directly. Ensure Airmen who need help are escorted to leadership, Mental Health, or the Religious Support Team using the principles of ask, care, escort.
- **Providing Feedback:** Following each small group discussion, facilitators should complete and submit the feedback form located at the Air Force Resilience website: <https://www.resilience.af.mil/OpTHURSDAY>. Individual Airmen should be encouraged to submit anonymous feedback directly to HAF/A1Z via the same feedback form **or** if they choose, submit via email to: [usaf.resilience@mail.mil](mailto:usaf.resilience@mail.mil)
  - All feedback must be submitted by 15 Sept 2019.
  - The feedback form below can be used to capture Airmen feedback during discussions to facilitate online transfer at <https://www.resilience.af.mil/OpTHURSDAY>

Date of RTP: Installation:	MAJCOM: Unit:
<b>Feedback from Airmen: Insert Responses Characterizing Feedback from the Majority of the Small Group</b>	
How do you feel connected to your fellow Airmen? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If not, how can an increased connection happen within Squadrons?</li> </ul>	Ways to increase connectedness:
Who do we have trust and confidence in our leaders and why? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If not, how can we build trust and confidence?</li> </ul>	Ways to build trust and confidence up and down chain of command:
What existing resilience tools and resources do you know about and are they helpful? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Which tools and resources work best?</li> <li>• Which tools and resources could be improved?</li> </ul>	Helpful tools and resources:  Unhelpful tools and resources:
What can be done to break down barriers to seeking help?	
Where do you find information for to get help? How can we make this better?	
How are the helping agencies you are familiar with working to assist you?	
<b>Feedback from Facilitators:</b>	
What did you do during the RTP (i.e., speakers, topics, format for small group discussions)?	Please describe:
What do you recommend for future themes?	Please describe:

## *Resilience Tactical Pause Facilitator's Play Sheet*

**Goal of the Discussion:** Engage Airmen in a manner that fosters connection, encourages help seeking, and generates feedback related to how the Air Force can better support Airmen and families.

**Facilitator Tips:** This guide is a tool, not a script. Encourage Airmen participation & feedback. Leverage installation helping professionals if you recognize Airmen in distress (Religious Support Teams, Airman & Family Readiness, etc.). Contact your Community Support Coordinator or Violence Prevention Integrator for additional resources.

**Non-Attribution Statement:** **“To encourage free discussion in this group, please do not attribute statements made during this discussion to a particular person, without that person’s advance permission.”**

### **Build Connections**

- Talking Points/Questions:
    - How do you feel connected to other Airmen, friends, etc?
    - How do we demonstrate good Wingmanship daily?
    - Who do we reach out to when we are struggling with something big? Something small?
    - How do we demonstrate our loyalty to one another?
- \*Follow each with how can we do it different or better...*

### **The beating heart of the Air Force...Squadrons!**

- Talking Points/Questions:
    - How are you overwhelmed at work?
    - How does our mission make a positive impact?
    - How is our trust & confidence in each other & our leadership?
    - What can our unit do to improve our well-being?
- \*Follow each with how can we do it different or better...*

### **Barriers & Stigma to Care**

- Talking Points/Questions:
    - What stops you from seeking help?
    - What are we doing well in terms of helping resources?
    - Where do you go for information and help?
    - What base helping resources are working?
    - What can we do to help ourselves, our teammates and our families?
- \*Follow each with how can we do it different or better...*

### **Airmen Feedback Matters**

- Talking Points/Questions:
    - How do you like to provide feedback?
    - How do you like to receive feedback?
    - Where can the AF be more effective in this area?
- \*Follow each with how can we do it different or better...*

### **Discussion Notes:**

Build Connections:

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The beating heart of the Air Force...Squadrons:

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Barriers & Stigma to Care:

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Airmen Feedback Matters:

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**Providing Feedback:** Gathering feedback from Airmen will be critical to the success of the RTP and the tools that follow. Facilitators are therefore encouraged to take notes (or request the assistance of a Wingman in doing so) during the small group discussions. Following each small group discussion, facilitators should complete and submit the feedback form located at the Air Force Resilience website: <https://www.resilience.af.mil/OpTHURSDAY> Close each discussion by encouraging Airmen to submit anonymous feedback via same feedback form or if they choose, via email to: [usaf.resilience@mail.mil](mailto:usaf.resilience@mail.mil)

For Additional Tools and Resources, visit: [www.resilience.af.mil](http://www.resilience.af.mil)

