

# Suicide Prevention Talking Point

## BUILD CONNECTION

- ❖ **Meaningful connection to others** is a valuable tool in the prevention of suicide. Airmen must be active in reaching out, both to others who may be in distress and to resources for themselves and others. Please refer to the *Suicide Prevention Handout* for resources.

## SIGNS OF DISTRESS

- ❖ *Stress* is a normal part of our lives. Occasionally stressors overwhelm our ability to cope and may result in symptoms and trigger a state of *distress*. Common signs of *distress* include:
  - Mood changes, such as depression or anxiety
  - Irritability, agitation, or anger
  - Difficulties with sleep (too little or too much)
  - Withdrawing from family, friends, or others
- ❖ Identifying *distress* in ourselves and others is important to preventing negative effects. Examples of coping skills to implement when in distress include exercise, mindfulness, meditation, recognizing and expressing gratitude, engaging in creative activities, practicing resilience skills, and connecting with friends, family, or nature.

## A.C.E.

- ❖ Symptoms/states of *distress* may be overwhelming and lead to having thoughts of death, self-harm, or suicide. It is important to **ASK** someone directly “are you thinking about harming yourself, or of suicide?” Do not avoid this important question.
- ❖ The next step is to convey that you **CARE** about that person’s well-being and their answer to your question(s). This can be done through active listening (paraphrasing, clarifying, eye contact, attentive posture). Communicate empathy and listen to what the person is saying and feeling.
- ❖ **ESCORT** a person who has expressed current thoughts of self-harm, or suicide to get professional help to prevent suicide and demonstrate that you **CARE**. Empower a person (without overwhelming them) in this process by letting them choose from 2-4 appropriate resources (see *Suicide Prevention Handout*).
  - Most important is getting the person to *any* next level of care/resource. Do *not* leave a person in distress alone. Be sure to follow up in the days and weeks after a connection to help is made.

## Go SLO

- ❖ Building time and space between the Airmen in distress and their access to lethal means (including firearms and medications) can reduce the risk of suicide attempts and deaths. When you recognize Airmen in distress and use ACE, remember to also go “**SLO**” – help implement use of **S**afes, **L**ocks, or **O**utside of the home storage of lethal means.