

# Five Minutes to Thrive: 22-26 Apr 19

## We Don't Make Brownies

After college I worked as an administrative assistant in Pillsbury's marketing department. Late one night my boss came to me and said, "Go home! You can worry about this stuff tomorrow. Remember, we *just make brownies!*"

At times, I've appreciated sentiments like this from bosses, though the underlying message can be unclear. Even *well*-intended leaders occasionally say things that are invalidating, dismissive, or uninspiring. My boss was right, my family probably needed me more that night than the world did more brownie mixes. Had he chosen his words more carefully, I might have left feeling appreciated and motivated, instead of dismissed.



Take a look around you...we don't make brownies (which is sad because they are delicious). Our vastly more important missions, and the dynamics surrounding their execution require the best of us and our families on a daily basis. We need inspiring leaders at all levels who are sensitive to the risks our Airmen face – who motivate them to strive toward our vision in spite of these risks.

Why share this? Research shows that in addition to the day-to-day challenges of working in this community, our Airmen face "operational exposures" with greater frequency than experienced battlefield Airmen\*. Sadly, we hear statements from Airmen like, "***Why am I the only one that seems to have difficulty with this? After all, I'm just in a support role. It's not like I pull the trigger. What's my problem?***"

While the majority of challenges that our Airmen face aren't operationally specific, the above sentiments are troubling for at least a couple of reasons:

- 1) They don't allow for the range of *normal* reactions that people have to doing this work, and
- 2) They suggest a belief that only select people are "entitled" to certain feelings and experiences

These kinds of thoughts are often at the root of delays in help-seeking, and can keep people feeling stuck and crummy for extended periods.

### What can we do as Airmen and leaders?

- Continue to promote professionalism and "peer overwatch" among our brothers and sisters-in-arms
- Be sensitive to others' experiences, regardless of job duties, or role in the organization. Foster inclusive environments that enfranchise and value the experiences of ALL team members
- Be a mentor. Share your valuable experiences, especially with new members of our community
- Continuously work to instill a warrior ethos in others. Remind others that they aren't "*just*" \_\_\_\_\_, and we don't make brownies!

As we do these things, we'll honor the commitments and sacrifices of Airmen and families past, present, and future, and we ensure the health and vitality of individuals and our organizations.

\*Alan D. Ogle, Reed Reichwald & J. Brian Rutland (2018): Psychological impact of remote combat/graphic media exposure among US Air Force intelligence personnel, *Military Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08995605.2018.1502999>