

National Mental Health Awareness



May is **National Mental Health Awareness Month** with the week of **18–22 May** being **National Prevention Week** regarding substance misuse prevention and mental health wellness. According to the *American Hospital Association*, “(it) is a time to raise awareness of those living with mental or behavioral health issues and to help reduce the stigma many experience.” One such issue, depression, is prevalent among military service members. According to a 2020 report by the *World Health Organization*, “it is a leading cause of disability linked to negative outcomes for service members and veterans as it pertains to decreased operational readiness, premature military separation, and increased suicide risk.” Our friends at the *Center for Deployment Psychology* emphasize the significance of developing **healthy** automatic thoughts, **positive** underlying assumptions, and **balanced** core beliefs.

SCENARIO: You were not selected for promotion but two of your peers were selected.

Automatic Thoughts (AT) are “the moment-to-moment, unplanned thoughts that flow through people’s minds throughout the day” (Padesky & Greenberger, 2020, p. 30). These are best addressed by looking for **evidence** in a single situation.

AT: “They’re better than I am.”

Underlying Assumptions (UA) are “cross-situational beliefs or rules that guide people’s lives” (Padesky & Greenberger, 2020, p. 30). These are best tested by doing **experiments**.

UA: “I must be perfect.”

Core Beliefs (CB) are “absolute and dichotomous beliefs about the self, others, and the world” (Padesky & Greenberger, 2020, p. 30). These are best examined on a **continuum**.

CB: “I am a failure.”

Addressing mood and changing behavior requires more than simply “thinking positively.” So, although ATs and UAs can be identified on your own, a lot of context and exploration is required in order to change your CBs. So, what can you do? First, identify **strengths** which challenge unhealthy automatic thoughts. Then, **clarify** personal values contradicting negative underlying assumptions. Finally, **engage** professional help through medical support to find balance in your core beliefs, and seek out your unit’s embedded Airman Resilience Team to navigate the many resources available. Remember: “**You alone can do it, but you don’t have to do it alone.**”

For additional information contact:

25th Intelligence Squadron | Airman Resilience Team | Hurlburt Field, FL
Comm: (850) 884-1348 | DSN: (312) 579-1348 | Monday – Friday | 0800 – 1600

Reference

Padesky, C. A. & Greenberger, D. (2020). *The clinician’s guide to CBT using mind over mood* (2nd ed.). The Guilford Press.

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