



Bridge Chat Overview and Importance

Staying mission-ready means having a healthy, high-functioning mind. Mental fitness includes the integration and optimization of mental, emotional, and behavioral abilities and capacities to optimize performance and strengthen resilience. It is a state of having and maintaining a state of well-being and cultivating awareness of how we feel, think, and act.

Just as physical fitness provides us with the increased ability to respond to life's demands, mental fitness gives us the ability to pause and respond to a situation, whether that situation is a forethought, an external stimulus, or a feeling. As a result, we are less likely to sustain or cause emotional and relational injury. In the same way our physical fitness affects our mental health, our mental fitness affects our physical health and wellness.

Four main principles impact mental resilience:

Awareness is knowing and understanding oneself and others.

Decision making is the process of making choices.

Adaptability is the ability and willingness to cope with change.

Positive thinking is the practice of focusing on the good in any given situation.

Through these four principles, Airmen and Guardians must continuously observe and evaluate their **ABCs**: **A**ctivating event, **B**eliefs and **C**onsequences.

Slow down and analyze the consequences of your actions. Ask yourself: Is how you're acting getting you where you want to go, or is it interfering with your performance, values, goals or your relationships? Depending on your responses, you may need to look at your playbook and pick a new play.

Chat Reminders

- ▶ **Based on feedback from the field:** August 2019 resilience tactical pause feedback told us that our teammates overwhelmingly want continued, sustained and consistent opportunities to talk with their leaders.
- ▶ **Leaders have flexibility.** HQ ACC provides the topic, but the timing, delivery, and discussion questions are at the commander's discretion.
- ▶ **Cohesive teams built on trust and synergy are more effective**
Above all else... Demonstrate respect for human dignity

Mental Fitness

Bridge Chat Purpose: Create cohesive, high-performing teams that foster trust and connection through flexible and consistent small group discussions; in direct response to overwhelming feedback from the CSAF 21's Resilience Tactical Pause.

Getting the Conversation Started

VIDEO: Watch this video on Mental and Spiritual Fitness:

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/599006/resilient-leadership-being-mentally-and-spiritually-fit-part-5-15/> (6:57)

"No one escapes pain, escapes fear, escapes suffering. Yet from pain can come wisdom, from fear can come courage, and from suffering can come strength – if we have the virtue of resilience."

– CMSAF #18, Kalet O. Wright

Related Resources

1. Self-awareness is a critical step in self-improvement as it helps to identify when you are under stress, as well as how you can improve for the future. How you respond in your environment has implications far beyond just yourself. How mentally fit are you? Check out the Mental Fitness Obstacle Course Activity on <https://www.resilience.af.mil/Resilience/>.
2. Dr. Janelle MacAulay, retired military leader and pilot, academic, educator, and mother of two, shares her personal story of using mental fitness to help her overcome life stressors to achieve high performance:
https://www.ted.com/talks/jannell_macaulay_how_to_achieve_high_performance_under_stress (12:48)
3. Military OneSource provides direct, 24/7 access to professional help for those battling mental health issues, substance abuse and suicidal thoughts. <https://bit.ly/3uz7Yn2>.

"Building resiliency is often the result of making it through difficult circumstances. When you're going through difficult times, it's the community that lessens the pain."

– Ms. Kristen Christy, 2018 Air Force Spouse of the Year

Suggested Discussion Questions ▶

1. How would you define mental fitness?
2. How is mental fitness related to physical fitness?
3. Do you dedicate as much time to mental fitness as you do to physical fitness?
Why or why not?
4. What is currently taking up most of your headspace?
5. What kind of mental strategies do you employ to handle adverse situations?
6. How can a lack of mental fitness impact your performance as an individual, and our performance as a team?

