

SEEKING HELP IN HARD TIMES

One of nature's most fascinating displays is that of *herd behavior*. Many species of animals abandon individuality in favor of highly coordinated group movements (herds, schools, swarms, and flocks) for the various adaptive benefits they yield in terms of protection from predators, foraging, mating and child rearing, and energy conservation. This behavior ensures higher survivability to each animal within the herd, especially compared to individual, isolationist survival efforts.

Birds are especially fascinating; they alternate tasks within the flock depending on the needs and movements of the whole. When a flock leader becomes fatigued, it drops back and allows another bird to rotate into its place. And when a sick or wounded bird can no longer keep pace, it will fall out of the formation entirely so as not to hold up the rest of the flock. Amazingly, when this happens, a healthy bird will also leave the flock and follow the sick bird, staying with them until they recover.



We all experience tough times in our personal lives and no member of our human “herd” is immune. Sometimes we are able to manage life's struggles on our own using resilience skills. Other times our

burdens become more than we can handle on our own, and that's okay—in these times, we need support to aid us in recovery. There is no shame in relying on others for this support. Remember, our combined strength is much greater than any one of us on our own! Collectively we can make something greater together than we ever could do apart.

- **Take stock of your challenges.** What challenges has life presented you with? What are you struggling with *right now*? Expressly identifying these obstacles can often make it easier to find a confident way forward. Good self-care is also of utmost importance at these times!
- **Rely on people you trust for support.** When a burden is consuming your thoughts, it can be helpful to unload it with a trusted confidant. You may be surprised to hear other people have encountered something similar, and they may have advice for what has worked well for them.
- **Know your breaking point.** Even the leader of the flock must acknowledge fatigue; know when you need to take a knee, refocus your priorities, or attend to your needs. Only then will you be able to recover and resume the fight as strong as (or even stronger than) before.
- **Ask for help BEFORE you are in dire need.** Stop the boulder *before* it begins rolling down the hill, rather than waiting until it has gained momentum. There's a wealth of military resources available to assist folks in tough times, and you can always start with your Wing Chaplain or Wing Psychologist (contact info below) for guidance on how best to proceed!