

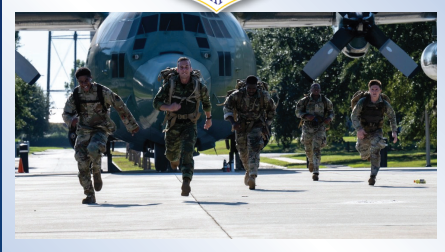


Create cohesive, high-performing teams that foster trust & connection through small group discussions.

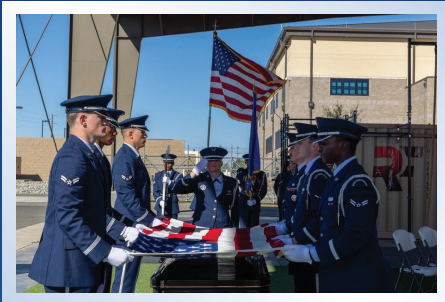


BRIDGECHAT
DISCUSSION GUIDE

A P R I L 2 0 2 6



Annual Norwegian Foot March at Moody AFB brings Airmen and local community together



Honor Guard at Beale AFB showcase their ceremonial skills during graduation

Unite Through Activity "Air Force Symbol Scavenger Hunt"

Create a scavenger hunt where teams find hidden pictures or representations of Air Force symbols such as wings, rank insignias, aircraft silhouettes, and unit patches around a designated area. Provide participants with a list of the items they need to find. The first individual or team to locate all the items on the list wins a prize or recognition. Make this activity more challenging by adding bonus points for those who can describe the meaning of the Air Force symbol(s) they locate.

Additionally, when there is an opportunity, consider attending another unit's traditional ceremony or event to learn more about their heritage.

Related Resources

U.S. Air Force Doctrine Publication 1 (videos included on website):
<https://www.doctrine.af.mil/Operational-Level-Doctrine/AFDP-1-The-Air-Force/>

Air Force Handbook 1, Chapter 24 – Military Customs and Courtesies:
https://static.e-publishing.af.mil/production/1/af_a1/publication/afh1/afh1.pdf

Airman Magazine; review articles and videos:
<https://www.airmanmagazine.af.mil/>

Air Force Historical Research Agency:
<https://www.dafhistory.af.mil/Our-Heritage/>

ROOTED IN TRADITION; DRIVEN BY HONOR

Military traditions and customs are far more than ceremonial formalities; they are the bedrock of unit cohesion and the cornerstone of effective military operations. For the Total Force, comprised of both uniformed personnel and Department of the Air Force (DAF) civilians, a shared understanding of these practices is paramount to building a strong, unified, and mission-ready team.

Traditions provide a vital link to the past, connecting the entire force to a lineage of valor and sacrifice. These rituals, often infused with symbolism, serve as constant reminders of the values, warrior ethos, and history that define the profession of arms. DAF civilians, serving alongside their uniformed counterparts, are also integral to this heritage, contributing their expertise and steadfast dedication to the enduring mission. Participating in traditions like change of command ceremonies or memorial services reinforces a sense of shared identity and belonging, fostering a strong bond between individuals and their unit.

Customs, such as adhering to established protocols and professional courtesies, reinforce discipline and mutual respect across the entire team. While the military relies on a clear rank structure, DAF civilians uphold a parallel commitment to that same structure and professional etiquette. This shared respect for the chain of command and established procedures ensures seamless collaboration, enabling orders to be executed promptly and efficiently. This shared hierarchical structure is essential for effective decision-making and coordinated action, especially in high-stress and rapidly evolving operational environments.

Furthermore, traditions and customs cultivate a powerful sense of camaraderie and esprit de corps. Lasting bonds are forged among all members of the team through a spectrum of shared experiences, ranging from daily collaboration and formal recognition to unit social events and solemn battlefield commemorations. These bonds foster deep trust and mutual support, which are critical for overcoming challenges and achieving common goals.

WATCH...

Air Force History

The U.S. Air Force celebrates its rich tradition and heritage every year on Sept. 18 to honor the date it became its own separate service.

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/976682/air-force-ball-2025-history-video> (2:17)

Operation Honor

A video about Honor Flight programs that recognize veterans' service by providing them the opportunity to reflect, remember, and connect with their history.

<https://www.dvidshub.net/video/988458/operation-honor> (2:57)

DISCUSS...

1. How can understanding Air Force history and the sacrifices of those who came before us influence our actions today so we can address challenges of the present and shape a stronger future?
2. How do Air Force traditions help to build a strong sense of identity and shared purpose, and how does that contribute to our commitment to upholding ethical standards?
3. What are some "unofficial" or less formal traditions within your unit or specialty that contribute to morale and unit cohesion?

“Our uniform reflects years of Airmen bound by a proud heritage and united in shared purpose. It connects us to those who came before and signals professionalism, discipline, and continued unity in today's force”

– General Kenneth Wilsbach, CSAF

“We are not merely a military organization. We are a force for good, bound by tradition, sustained by innovation, and driven by an unwavering commitment to honor.”

– General Mark A. Welsh III, CSAF 20



RESILIENCY TOOLKIT

Breathing Techniques for Stress Management

Building Airmen Who Bend but Don't Break

Your breath is your most accessible stress management tool—available anytime, anywhere, no equipment needed. When stress hits, your body's fight-or-flight response kicks in. Controlled breathing activates your parasympathetic nervous system, signaling your body to calm down. It's science-backed and mission-ready.

BREATHING TECHNIQUES TO TRY

4-7-8 BREATHING

1. **INHALE** quietly through nose for **4 seconds**
2. **HOLD** your breath for **7 seconds**
3. **EXHALE** completely through mouth for **8 seconds**

Repeat 3-4 cycles

Best for:
Relaxation & Sleep

BOX BREATHING

1. **INHALE** slowly for **4 seconds**
2. **HOLD** your breath for **4 seconds**
3. **EXHALE** slowly for **4 seconds**
4. **HOLD** empty for **4 seconds**

Repeat 4+ cycles

Best for: Focus,
Performance, & High Stress

WHEN TO USE

- Before high-pressure briefings or meetings
- After stressful events or difficult conversations
- During moments of frustration or anxiety
- Before making critical decisions
- Anytime you need to reset and refocus

THE BENEFITS

- ✓ Lowers heart rate and blood pressure
- ✓ Reduces cortisol (stress hormone) levels
- ✓ Improves focus and mental clarity
- ✓ Enhances emotional regulation
- ✓ Can be done discreetly-anywhere, anytime

CHALLENGE: Practice 2 minutes daily

Your breath is always with you. Master it, and you master your stress response.