



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



BRIDGECHAT

DISCUSSION GUIDE

F E B R U A R Y 2 0 2 5

STOICISM: Stoicism can teach us how to be resilient in the face of adversity without being overcome by our emotions.

Consider the story below:

The once-wealthy merchant had just lost everything. His ancient freighter shipwrecked off the Greek coastline stranding him thousands of miles away from home with no money or possessions. Overrun by despair and tempted to give up, this personal catastrophe did something quite unexpected. The merchant found a copy of Socrates' writings, read it, then went on to produce his own philosophy of life. His name was Zeno, and his worldview took on the name Stoicism. Zeno argued that the best possible human life is one that meets the world as it is, takes responsibility for what it has control over to improve the lives of others. Four cardinal virtues provide the means to pursue this good life: courage, self-control, justice and wisdom.

How might the virtues of Stoicism look like in our day, time and military culture? Maybe something like this:

Wisdom: Develop wisdom by staying informed, seeking perspective, and being open to feedback. As the saying goes, "Study to be ready when you need knowledge," emphasizing the importance of proactive learning and preparation to stay ahead of emerging threats and challenges. By anticipating challenges and preparing for uncertainty, military personnel can make informed decisions and stay ahead of emerging threats. Proactive learning and reflection enable them to adapt and improve, ultimately enhancing their ability to navigate complex situations with discernment and good judgment.

Self-Control: Effective self-control is rooted in prioritizing physical and mental well-being, setting boundaries, and avoiding impulsive behaviors. Healthy habits, such as regular exercise and balanced nutrition, combined with mindfulness techniques like meditation and deep breathing, help manage stress and emotions. By cultivating discipline and self-awareness, Airmen can maintain their overall health and resilience. Discipline is the foundation of all we do in ACC.

Justice: Treat others with dignity and respect, regardless of their actions or circumstances. Active listening and seeking to understand different perspectives can help resolve conflicts and address issues constructively. This, in turn, enables the team to work together more effectively, make better decisions, and achieve their goals with greater success.

Courage: Face daily challenges with clarity and integrity, remembering that courage is not the absence of fear, but acting heroically even when afraid. This means facing fears, taking calculated risks, and standing up for what you believe in, which builds confidence, resilience, and a sense of purpose. By demonstrating courage, we can inspire others, drive innovation, and ensure that our military remains ready and capable of responding to any threat or challenge, anytime and anywhere.

Applying these virtues of stoicism requires relentless focus on things within your control. A skilled archer has control over many things: training, personal fitness, aim, and the condition of the equipment. Once the arrow is released, however, the archer loses all control. The wind could gust, the target could move, or a defect in the arrow might cause it to wobble off course. Stoicism calls all of us in ACC to take responsibility for what we control in our lives with wisdom, temperance, justice and courage. For ages, practicing Stoics have reported a strong correlation between living by these four virtues and increased contentment with one's life. Zeno remarked that, "Well-being is realized by small steps, but is truly no small thing." Therefore, if you have room to improve at work, at home, or both, consider the approach to life Stoicism offers – and take the first step today.

WATCH...

The Man in the Arena (1:05) [DVIDS - Video - The Man in the Arena](#)

Fighting the battle: Creech Airman shares journey after almost deadly motorcycle accident (3:07)

[DVIDS - Video - Fighting the battle: Creech Airman shares journey after almost deadly motorcycle accident](#)

Nellis Airmen save Zion flash flood victims (3:02)

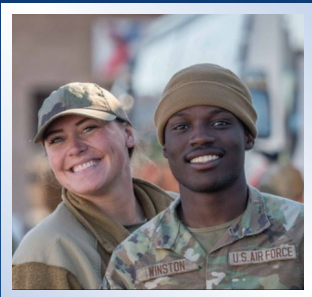
[DVIDS - Video - Nellis Airmen save Zion flash flood victims](#)

DISCUSS...

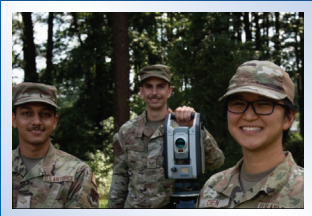
1. Recount a time where you saw someone respond to a difficult situation with one or more of the four Stoic virtues: wisdom, self-control, justice and courage. What was it about the Airman's response that demonstrated the virtue/s?
2. Stoicism is biased to action—we are not what we say, think or feel; we are what we do. In judging other people, is it more important to pay attention to what they promise or how they behave? Why?
3. Paying attention to how people behave could prevent much of the pain and misunderstanding that effect human relationships. Explain why you agree or disagree.
4. What difference would it make if the majority of Airman were committed to the four Stoic virtues?
5. If you actively practiced the four virtues would anything be better within the sphere of control you have responsibility over? If so, what and what will you do about it?

“How much more grievous are the consequences of anger than the causes of it.”

– Marcus Aurelius
(Emperor of Rome, 161-180 AD)



Airmen return from 11th ATF's First field training exercise, 355 WG



Civil engineers pave infrastructure for combat airpower, 4FW

Related Resources

- ▶ *Meditations*, Marcus Aurelius
- ▶ *Courage Under Fire*, James Stockdale
- ▶ *Letters from a Stoic*, Seneca
- ▶ *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl



**Connect. Detect.
Protect. Equip.**



Air Combat Command INTEGRATED RESILIENCE

SUPPORTING OUR TOTAL FORCE AIRMEN AND FAMILIES



PREVENTION TAKES ACTION

Learn new skills to improve your well-being such as self-care and resilience, healthy relationships, meaningful connections, effective communication. Act in ways to show your family and Airmen that you care and they matter. Proactive behaviors can be small things that create a positive culture in mitigating risks.

RECOGNIZE SIGNS OF DISTRESS

- Mood changes, such as depression or anxiety
- Irritability, agitation or anger
- Sleep difficulties
- Withdrawing from social activities, family, friends or others
- Lack of interest in activities that were previously enjoyed (hobbies, work, etc.)

ASK CARE ESCORT

Directly **ASK** the individual if they are having thoughts of death, self-harm, or suicide.

CARE about their answers. If they hesitate, or seem uncertain, ask follow-up questions to convey that you care about their well-being.

If the individual is having thoughts of suicide or needs help, **ESCORT** them to a qualified professional or leadership.

GO SLO

If someone demonstrates signs of distress, consider their access to LETHAL means including firearms, medications or other means of fatal methods. Airmen should remember **SLO** – use **SAFES**, **LOCKS** or store mean **OUTSIDE** of the home.

SMALL STEPS SAVE LIVES.
www.resilience.af.mil

HELPING RESOURCE	COMMANDER/ SUPERVISOR	MILITARY & FAMILY READINESS CENTER	MILITARY ONESOURCE/ MILITARY FAMILY LIFE COUNSELOR (MFLC)	CHAPLAIN	CIVILIAN EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM	MENTAL HEALTH (MH) CLINIC	EMERGENCY ROOM
CONTACT:							
CAN ASSIST:	All	All	Military and Family Members	All (full confidentiality)	Civ/NAF	Military	All
Suicidal Thoughts	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Relationship Problems	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Loneliness/Isolation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Workplace Stress or Problems	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Alcohol/Drugs	Must report to ADAPT			✓	✓	✓	
Fatigue/Sleep	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	
Anxiety/Panic Depression	✓			✓	✓	✓	
Grief and Loss	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Deployment	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Finances/Budget	✓	✓	✓ (One Source)	✓	✓		
Retirement/Separation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

ASK. CARE. ESCORT. QUESTIONS THAT CAN SAVE A LIFE

ANSWER QUESTIONS 1 AND 2	IN THE PAST MONTH	
	YES	NO
1. Have you wished you were dead or wished you could go to sleep and not wake up?		
2. Have you actually had any thoughts about killing yourself?		
IF YES TO #2, ANSWER QUESTIONS 3, 4, 5 AND 6. IF NO TO #2, GO DIRECTLY TO QUESTION 6		
3. Have you thought about how you might do this?		
4. Have you had any intention of acting on these thoughts of killing yourself, as opposed to you have the thoughts but you definitely would not act on them?		
5. Have you started to work out or worked out the details of how to kill yourself? Do you intend to carry out this plan?		
ALWAYS ASK QUESTION 6	IN THE PAST 3 MONTHS	
6. Have you done anything, started to do anything, or prepared to do anything to end your life? Examples: Collected pills, obtained a gun, gave away valuables, wrote a will or suicide note, held a gun but changed your mind, cut yourself, tried to hang yourself, etc.		

ANY **YES** MUST BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY. SEEK HELP FROM A FRIEND, CO-WORKER, CHAPLAIN AND INFORM YOUR SUPERVISOR/OTHER MEMBER IN YOUR CHAIN OF COMMAND AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

- If the answer to 4, 5 or 6 is **YES**, immediately **ESCORT** Wingman to the nearest Chaplain, Mental Health Provider, Unit Leader or Emergency Department.
- **DON'T LEAVE YOUR WINGMAN ALONE** even to go to the bathroom.
- **STAY ENGAGED** until you make a warm hand-off to someone who can help.

MILITARY CRISIS LINE 1 (800) 273-8255 24/7 - 365