



The Enlisted Perspective

By CMSAF James A. Roy

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Even one suicide is too many

An alarming trend is happening in our Air Force, and we need your help. We've had a drastic increase this year in the number of suicides among our total force Airmen - active duty, guard, reserve and civilians. Last year we lost 84 Airmen by suicides; this year, we've nearly reached that number, and it is only October. Even one suicide is too many!

We all take Suicide Awareness training, but that's just the first step - we must take immediate action and get involved. We need to look out for each other and understand that we're not alone. Be ready and willing to assist your Wingman and ask for help when you need it. We must all take the time to care about those around us. That's what good Wingmen do, and that's what our Air Force needs.

Supervisors at every level must act now. Get to know your Airmen better and understand their personal and professional challenges. This is not a time to sit idle and think this won't happen in your unit. No one is immune. Suicides range the spectrum of ages, locations, MAJCOMs and career fields. The two most common factors we've seen are problems with relationships and finances.

We need to be good Wingmen for others and also need to develop and maintain trusted relationships and friendships where we can talk openly and honestly about things happening in our own lives. We need to feel comfortable exchanging ideas, views and experiences with those who are closest to us. There is always someone available for you.

So many people care about you - more than you may think; family, friends, co-workers, supervisors, first sergeants, commanders, chaplains, medical professionals and senior leaders are ready and willing to listen and help. Just give them a chance. Don't ever think you are alone or that no one will understand. We will understand, and we will help you. It doesn't matter whether you write, call or e-mail, please reach out. We are an Air Force family and you mean a lot to all of us. If you feel you are at the end of your road, you are not - talk with someone. We care about you and will ensure you receive the help you need.

You should never be afraid of seeking help for fear of reprisal. Our lives should be the priority. The Air Force also has many resources to help. Military and family life consultants,

chaplains and medical professionals are all available. Also, Military One Source counselors are always available by calling 800-342-9647 or visiting www.militaryonesource.com.

With everyone's help, we can and must step up and reverse this devastating trend.




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