



FAMILY & RELATIONSHIPS DURING COVID-19

June 2020

The new normal due to the COVID-19 pandemic can make it difficult for families, friends, and community members to maintain healthy relationships. The stay-at-home and physical distancing requirements may feel overwhelming for families and isolating for friends and communities.

Amid this uncertain time, the Department of the Air Force maintains four top priorities for COVID-19 efforts, among them the health of families and communities:

- **Protect the health and safety of the force, their families, and communities**
- **Maintain readiness**
- **Support the government's response to this pandemic**
- **Develop strategies to thrive in a new operational environment**

Utilize and share the information below with fellow Wingmen to nurture healthy relationships and ensure the Total Force stays physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually fit under this new normal.

“To the families back home, thank you for sharing your greatest treasure with us.” - Chief of Staff of the Department of the Air Force Gen. David Goldfein

“Use today’s modern technologies in creative ways to keep in contact with family, friends, and coworkers.” - Space Force Chief of Space Operations Gen. John W. Raymond

Maintaining Healthy Relationships

SHARING PERSONAL LIVING SPACE

Staying within the confines of a home for extended periods may test even the healthiest of relationships. Consider the following tips to maintain a healthy relationship with others in the home, whether a significant other or a roommate.

- **Find time to recharge:** Set aside individual time to recharge, like going for a walk and/or practicing meditation. If space is limited, set up an area with partitions to physically create a private space
- **Focus on achievable goals:** Set short-term goals and develop plans together to establish a routine and help ground each other by focusing on what can be controlled, like how to safely grocery shop together
- **Focus on the positive:** Positively acknowledge the actions of each other. A few words of encouragement can go a long way in lifting spirits
- **Consider counseling:** Use virtual family or spiritual counseling services to maintain healthy relationships
- **Share common spaces:** Coordinate and set up a schedule to share living space and household responsibilities with living partners and/or roommates. Consider doing mutually enjoyed activities together, like watching a movie

RELATIONSHIP SAFETY

Social distancing and self-isolating at home may put pressure on relationships that could lead to or worsen intimate partner violence. Individuals who do not feel safe in their relationships might be unable to leave the house, while for other relationships the added stress resulting from the pandemic might bring out unhealthy or abusive behaviors.

Consider the following tips to stay safe and help fellow Air and Space professionals prevent and/or escape violent situations.

- **Call 911 in case of an emergency and/or call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-7233**
- **Stay informed:** Learn the signs and risk factors of domestic violence to recognize when help might be needed for self or fellow Wingmen. Learn more in the [Department of the Air Force Resilience's Leader Guide](#)
- **Be prepared:** Know the options available to prevent and/or escape domestic abuse situations. Review the steps provided by [Military OneSource](#)
- **Use available resources:** to help self or fellow Wingmen stay safe, including the [Department of the Air Force Medical Service](#) and [Family Advocacy Program \(FAP\)](#). For more, visit the [Resources section](#) below
- **Support each other:** Engage trusted advocates like friends and family, for support



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PARENTING AND FAMILY LIFE

Balancing parenting and family life during a pandemic can be challenging. Use these tips to help navigate and maintain a healthy family dynamic.

- **Set weekday schedules:** Keep the same weekday schedule for self and families. For example, schedule breakfast and lunch at the same time each day
- **Find new routines and embrace uncertainty:** Accept that disruption happens even with preset routines and adapt existing family routines for the new normal, like saving time in the day by keeping meals simple, but healthy
- **Manage screen time:** Manage screen time, as prolonged exposure to news and social media, might negatively influence the mental health of everyone, especially children and young adults
- **Spend quality time together:** Enjoy fun activities together, like watching a favorite TV show or playing board games. Be sure to be fully present during the activity and remove distractions like phones
- **Consider counseling:** Consider virtual family or spiritual counseling services to maintain healthy relationships, including [Military and Family Life Counseling Program](#), [Family Advocacy Program](#), or [Chaplains](#)
- **Practice faith and spirituality:** Enjoy a time of prayer or meditation together to create a time of connectedness. Families can find creative ways and activities to practice their faith together while at home

CHILDCARE AND HOMESCHOOLING

As distance learning and homeschooling present new challenges for parents and families, consider the following tips to navigate the new normal.

- **Designate a schoolwork space:** Set up a schoolwork-specific area for children, including combining schoolwork space into the home office for parents, which may prevent the chaos of switching rooms frequently
- **Take turns:** Alternate working and monitoring children's distance learning or childcare between parents/guardians if possible
- **Accept support:** Accept virtual help from relatives, including grandparents, who may enjoy reading to young children or helping older children with assignments. It's a nice time to bond and gives working parents a break
- **Use virtual tools:** Use available online tools for help in homeschooling, including [Tutor.com](#), which is available for free to service members, civilian personnel, and their dependents
- **Check in with kids:** Create designated times to talk and check in with kids who may need particular care and attention during this time
- **Use available resources:** Use resources to help with childcare and homeschooling, including [Morale, Welfare and Recreation \(MWR\) Digital Library](#) or Department of the Air Force's Personnel Center's [Airman & Family Division](#)

Building Resilience with Friends and Community

Maintaining ties with loved ones can be a source of strength, especially during trying times. Consider the tips below to nurture ties with friends and communities.

- **Celebrate milestones together:** Continue to celebrate occasions, like birthdays and graduations, by finding new ways to connect, including setting up virtual group celebrations, sending a card through mail, or doing a friendly curbside visit
- **Participate in virtual activities:** Schedule shared virtual activities, like dinners, movie nights, book clubs or worship service, to bring friends and community members together
- **Schedule times to connect:** Set up regular times to check in with friends via a call or a video chat
- **Switch to online community meetings:** Switch to virtual meetings to maintain ties with local community members, like video chats with religious study groups or live virtual workouts with a local gym

Refer to the Resources section on the following pages for available resources to maintain total fitness under COVID-19.

The appearance of hyperlinks does not constitute an endorsement by the Department of the Air Force, or the Department of Defense, of the external Website, or the information, products, or services contained therein.



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Emergencies

- [Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room](#)
- [Crisis Text Line](#): 24/7 confidential crisis support. Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a counselor
- [Military Crisis Line](#): 24/7 hotline offering confidential, immediate help and connects service members and families facing a crisis with trained counselors. Call 800-273-8255, then press 1; text 838255; or [chat](#) online
- [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#): 24/7 confidential support. Call 800-799-7233 or text LOVEIS to 22522 if you are unable to speak safely

COVID-19 Resources

- [Department of the Air Force](#) Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Website
- [Department of the Air Force Resilience](#) COVID-19 Resources Website
- [Department of Defense](#) Coronavirus: DOD Response Website
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) Coronavirus (COVID-19) Website
- [COVID Coach](#) for self-care and overall mental health support during the COVID-19 pandemic
- [Spiritual Care Resources during COVID-19 Pandemic](#) for traditional and spiritual needs
- [Veteran Affairs](#) Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Website

Spiritual Fitness Resources

- [Thought of the Day: Loneliness Video](#): Discusses loneliness and calls for increased social connection
- [Effective Ways to Stay Spiritually Connected](#): Refer to **Staying Spiritually Connected** product for tips on how to stay spiritually connected
- [Department of the Air Force Chaplains](#): Confidential counseling and spiritual and religious guidance

Mental Fitness Resources

- [Trusted advocates](#): Family members, fellow Wingmen, or Command Leadership can offer support
- [Family Advocacy Program \(FAP\)](#): Clinical and non-clinical services for Air and Space professionals and families impacted by violence, abuse, and neglect. Visit [MilitaryINSTALLATIONS](#) or call 800-342-9647 to contact the local FAP
- [Military and Family Life Counseling \(MFLC\) Program](#): Short-term counseling to Air and Space professionals and families. Call 800-342-9647 or contact the local MFLC
- [Military OneSource](#): Health and wellness resources, counseling services, and 24/7 confidential help. Call 800-342-9647 or [chat](#) online
- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#): 24/7 confidential support and prevention and crisis resources. Call 1-800-273-8255 or [chat](#) online
- [Safe Helpline](#): 24/7 confidential support to sexual assault survivors. Call 877-995-5247 or [chat](#) online
- [Disaster Distress Helpline](#): 24/7 confidential counseling support. Call 800-985-5990 or text 66746
- [Vet Centers](#): 24/7 confidential social and psychological services for service members, veterans, and families. Call 877-927-8387

Medical Care Resources

- [Military Treatment Facility \(MTF\)](#): Medical treatment options for Air and Space professionals. Programs are available to ARC Air and Space professionals when on active duty orders, approved Line of Duty, or in any emergency situation. Contact the local MTF
- [TRICARE](#): Medical care as well as regular COVID-19 updates

Apps

- [Breathe2Relax](#) for breathing exercises and skills
- [Calm](#) for meditation and sleep
- [Happify](#) for science-based activities and games to boost happiness
- [Human Performance Resource Center by CHAMP](#) for achieving total fitness and optimizing performance
- [Mindfulness Coach](#) | [Headspace](#) for meditation and mindfulness
- [Mood Coach](#) for enhancing mood
- [Move! Coach](#) for weight loss and management goals, including diet and exercise
- [MyPlate](#) for building and maintaining healthy eating habits. Download the [MyPlate app](#)
- [Parenting2Go](#) for navigating parenting challenges
- [VA FitHeart](#) for leading a healthy lifestyle



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Other Resources

- [Morale, Welfare and Recreation \(MWR\) Digital Library](#) for free online resources for children, teens, and adults
- [Tutor.com](#) for 24/7 on-demand, free, online tutoring for service members, civilian personnel, and their families
- [Department of the Air Force's Personnel Center's Airman & Family Division](#) for family support resources
- [The New Normal Podcast](#) for how to thrive under COVID-19, hosted by CMSAF Kaleth O. Wright
- [Department of the Air Force Resilience](#) for resiliency resources like the Community Support Coordinator
- [Department of the Air Force Invisible Wounds Initiative](#) for Air and Space professionals and families living with invisible wounds
- [Center for Traumatic Stress](#) for mental health resources
- [Blue Grit Podcast](#) for stories of resilience and mental health

BUILDING RESILIENCE IN RELATIONSHIPS



Use this guide to maintain and strengthen personal, family, and friends/community relationships. Customize the checklist for each Air and Space professional's own resiliency needs.

Personal Relationships

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| How will I set aside time to recharge? | What is a short-term goal I can achieve? How will I plan? |
| What plan can I make to share common space? | What are ways I can focus on the positive? |

Family Relationships

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| What activities will I plan to create connectedness? | What ways will I incorporate fun time with family? |
| What will my family and I do to recharge? | What will my family and I do to create a weekday routine? |

Friends and Community Relationships

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| How will I celebrate milestones with friends and community members? | How will I participate in virtual activities with friends? |
| How will I schedule time to connect with friends and community members? | How will I use virtual tools to stay connected with community members? |