

**Strength Through
Unity Tour**

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UNITED WE LEAD:

Creating a Culture of Conflict Competence to Build Resilient and Capable Teams



We need “high performing, mission-aligned programs at every level.”

**Personal Safety &
Mission Success**

**Deterrence and
Preventing Future
Conflicts**

**Protecting American
Values & Way of Life**



*DoD must focus on building the core capability of **transformation** because “the pace of change is moving faster than the pace of bureaucracy.”*



Culture



Processes



Leadership Styles



*DAF is evolving to become a more mission-focused force, better equipped to address the complexities of future warfare. This crucial evolution, known as “**Mission over Function**,” emphasizes readiness and lethality in contested and degraded operating environments by fostering **agility, critical thinking**, and **autonomy** at all levels.*

“Communication and collaboration across functional lines, collaborative problem-solving and teamwork”

The Inevitability of Conflict

Well-Managed Conflict

Reconcile multiple perspectives
Creativity & Innovation
Realize the benefits of change
Strengthen relationships
Unity of effort across functions

Poorly Managed Conflict

Active resistance
Costly delays and miscommunication
Disengagement
Performance deficits
Competition across functions

Critical Learning Points

- Rapid and effective transformation – *agility & critical thinking* - is essential for maintaining our strategic advantage.
- Conflict is an inevitable part of transformation and problem-solving, and effective mitigation is essential for success.



The Evolving Dimensions of Performance – Conflict Mitigation as a Key Driver

Performance Decline

Why is Performance Declining?

Increasing amount & pace of change.

Increasing complexity.

Increasing uncertainty.

Declining well-being.

And many other factors...

**BASIC
Perf Mode**

Basic Performance Mode

Industrial Era

**Top Performance Driver:
Focus**

BetterUp

**COLLABORATIVE
Perf Mode**

Collaborative Performance Mode

Knowledge Work Era

Top Performance Drivers:

Championing Others

Alignment

Consensus Building

BetterUp

**ADAPTIVE
Perf Mode**

Adaptive Performance Mode

Technology Disruption Era

Top Performance Drivers:

Creativity

Connection

Agility

BetterUp

*Collaborative and adaptive
performance depend on consensus
building and conflict mitigation.*



Preparing for the future fight...

Attack & Defend: Social media strategies using negative or harmful information to draw a response - manipulation



Cost of Conflict: Estimated \$350B lost per year to unresolved conflict; Leaders spend an average of 25% of their time here

Military EQ: Moving from the awareness of emotion to management – tough-minded leaders face challenges with determination

Global EQ: SixSeconds – Decreases in EQ (5.54%), Optimism (8.56%), Emotional Control (5.67%), Intrinsic Motivation (7.73%)

Impact of Coaching: BetterUp DAF surveys show increases of 16% in resilience, 14% in performance, and 14% in retention drivers.

Critical Learning Points

- The demands of high performance have evolved, requiring greater emphasis on interpersonal engagement, conflict mitigation, and fostering a culture of respectful dialogue.
- Investing in conflict mitigation skills is essential for building a workforce that can thrive in the face of rapid change and technological disruption.



Fueling the
Engine:
Motivation,
Optimism, and
Agency in a Time
of Uncertainty.

How does unresolved conflict “DRAIN THE FUEL?”

Motivation

- Energy depletion
- Reduced job satisfaction
- Decreased productivity
- Increased absenteeism and turnover
- Fear of retaliation or negative consequences

Optimism

- Constant stress and negativity
- Learned helplessness
- Cynicism and distrust
- Dwelling on the problem instead of focusing on solutions

Agency

- Erosion of self-efficacy
- Increased stress and cognitive impairment
- Limited growth and development opportunities
- Exclusion from decision-making
- Micromanagement

Deter the use of ADR Tools:

53% - I don't know how to access them

34% - I don't feel trained to use them

**21% - I don't know if it would
effectively resolve the conflict**

What do we need to improve:

60% - Marketing and availability

**40% - Equip leaders with the skills for
lasting solutions**

38% - Leadership buy-in to conflict res

Skill Area	Good to Go	Foundational Class	Masters Class	Tools / Checklists	Coach / Mentor
Negotiation Skills	11%	37%	52%	39%	54%
Securing lasting resolutions in mediation/facilitation	11%	41%	48%	44%	52%
Resolving conflict between members of my team	20%	34%	46%	44%	43%
Resolving conflict between myself and my team	15%	33%	52%	48%	37%
Influencing my senior leadership	13%	35%	52%	35%	54%
Building consensus with my peers	20%	39%	41%	46%	39%

STRENGTH STARTS WITHIN

Coaching Skills Development

Quality of Course: 4.64/5

Relevancy: 78% Very relevant

Recommend: 91%

Randolph: 33 live, 11 virtual

Lackland: 35 live, 57 Teams

136 TOTAL

UNIFIED UNDER PRESSURE

Conflict Mitigation

Quality of Course: 4.87/5

Relevancy: 84% Very relevant

Recommend: 100%

Randolph: 30 live, 24 virtual

Lackland: 35 live, 46 Teams

135 TOTAL

LEADING THROUGH THE FIRE

High-Emotion Conflict Mitigation

Quality of Course: 5/5

Relevancy: 84% Very relevant

Recommend: 97%

Randolph: 23 live, 41 virtual

Lackland: 25 live, 30 Teams

119 TOTAL

Follow-on Training Requests	SSW	UUP	LTF
Coaching Skills	32%	44%	55%
Conflict mitigation between myself and my peers	51%	88%	66%
Conflict mitigation between myself and my team	52%	88%	66%
Negotiation Skills	83%	44%	45%
High-emotion conflict resolution	61%	88%	66%



But how does conflict mitigation top off the fuel?



In a cohesive,
collaborative
environment,
Airmen can see how
what they do
impacts both the
mission and their
partners.

Giving individuals a
voice in decisions
that affect them
help them feel
heard and increases
the accountability
they feel for
securing the
outcome.



Effective conflict
mitigation skills
mean that the best
ideas are heard and
get to impact
decision-making,
not just the loudest
voice or most
influential member.

Critical Learning Points

- **The current environment may be causing strain on motivation, optimism, and individual agency, which are essential for high performance.**
- **Effective conflict mitigation can help to resolve these critical elements by creating a more agile, collaborative, and empowering work environment, and by addressing the risk of burnout among high-performing individuals.**



**Leading from the
Front: A Call to
Personal and
Organizational
Action.**

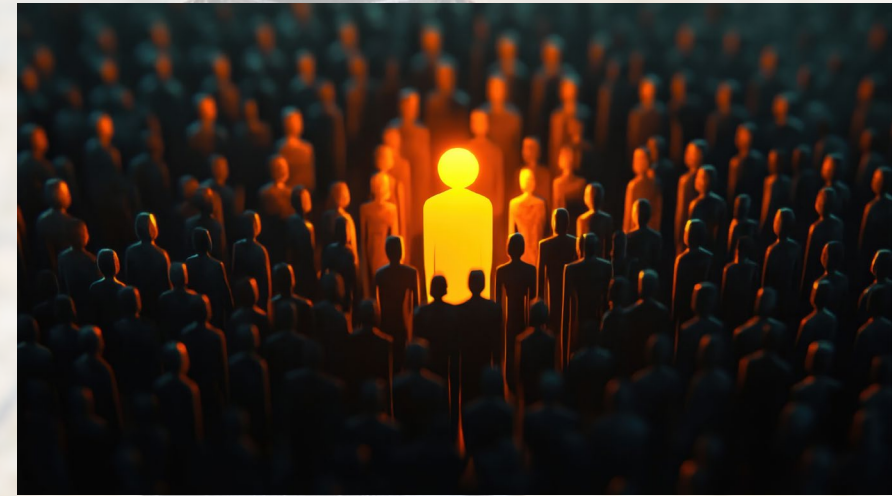
A tough-minded warrior ethos leverages conflict mitigation skills to face challenges and difficult situations with resilience, determination, and a strong will.

- ***It takes courage and determination to effectively lead a team through conflict, rather than avoid it.***
- ***Strategic empathy builds trust and genuine discussion ensuring teams can operate effectively under pressure.***
- ***For “high performing, mission-aligned teams at every level”, for an agile and capable force executing “Mission over Function,” we must lead through the fire.***



Awareness of the importance of conflict mitigation is not enough; effective leaders must set the tone and champion its execution.

- ***Recognize and reward leaders who demonstrate these skills***
- ***Hold leaders accountable for addressing conflict effectively***
- ***Consider a leader's skill in conflict mitigation and consensus building when charting their professional development***
- ***Prioritize conflict mitigation training and resources***



38% Called for more leadership buy-in for conflict resolution

Research from the Harvard Project on Negotiation highlights that most people far overestimate their skills in negotiation and conflict mitigation.

- ***The pace of change and technology disruption are accelerating the need for critical thinking, constant transformation, and consensus building.***
- ***Determination to thrive in adaptation and uncertainty is not enough; even the most experienced leaders can benefit from assessing and honing these skills.***
- ***The generations after us need to see us modeling behavioral norms that define a culture of warrior ethos.***

**20% Claimed they were
“good to go” in resolving
conflict amongst their team**



Maintaining composure in this turbulent environment is less about stifling reactions and more about responding strategically.

- ***Mental and emotional threats trigger amygdala hijack the same way as physical threats do.***
- ***A leader's ability to recognize, halt, and redirect hijack in the face of uncertainty, stress, and irrational behavior can be the difference between breakdown and breakthrough.***
- ***"Check in with Yourself" – what are your personal early warning signs of an amygdala hijack?***



Critical Learning Points

- **Leading by example is essential for creating a culture of conflict mitigation that supports transformation and high performance.**
- **Even the most experienced leaders can benefit from honing their interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence to model adaptive and collaborative high performance and foster a culture that invites the same.**