



**U.S. AIR FORCE**



# **Leading the Learning Mission: Your Foundation for Squadron Leadership**

**Dr. Wendy Walsh**  
**AETC- Chief Learning Officer**



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# Learning Objectives & Competencies



1. Understand the AETC Learning Mission and competency-based learning framework
2. Apply decision-making models to leadership scenarios
3. Identify how foundational competencies connect to daily leadership practice
4. Commit to one actionable practice for leading the learning mission



## Developing Self

- Accountability
- Perseverance
- Communication
- Decision Making
- Information Seeking
- Flexibility
- Resilience
- Initiative
- Self-Control

## Developing Others

- Teamwork
- Develops People
- Service Mindset
- Leadership

## Developing Ideas

- Analytical Thinking
- Digital Literacy
- Creative Thinking
- Fostering Innovation
- Influence

## Developing Organizations

- Resource Management
- Results Focused
- Change Management
- Strategic Thinking
- Precision



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# Leadership Paradox



Management  
*Doing Things  
Right*

Squadron  
Leadership

Leadership  
*Doing the Right  
Things*

Relevant Competencies: Self control, Resilience, Service Mindset, Develops People

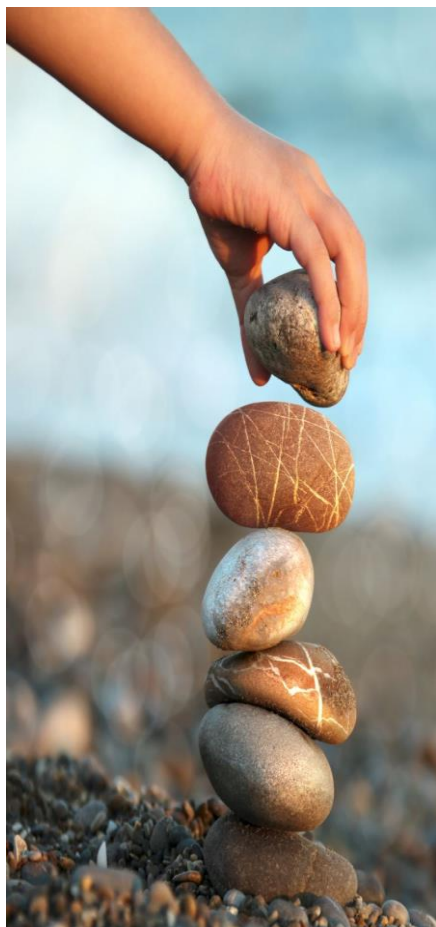


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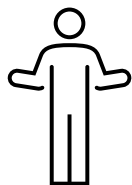
# Are We Mission Ready?



**Relevant Competencies:** Accountability, Perseverance, Communication, Self Control, Initiation Decision-making, Information Seeking, Flexibility...



***How are you holding accountable?  
Yourself?***



***Your Peers?  
Your Squadron?  
Your Leaders?***





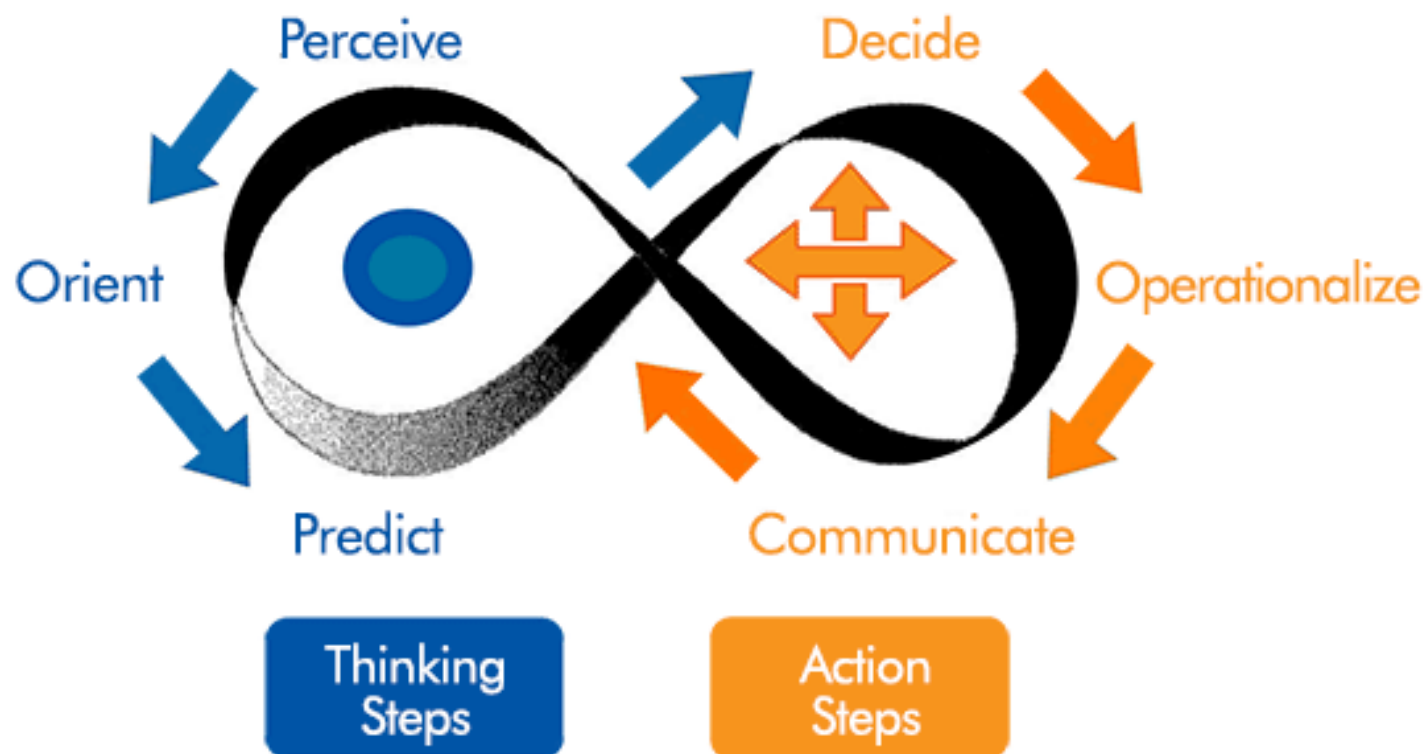
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# Decision Making Frameworks



## The POP-DOC Loop



Source: ©2019 You're It: Crisis, Change, and How to Lead When It Matters Most

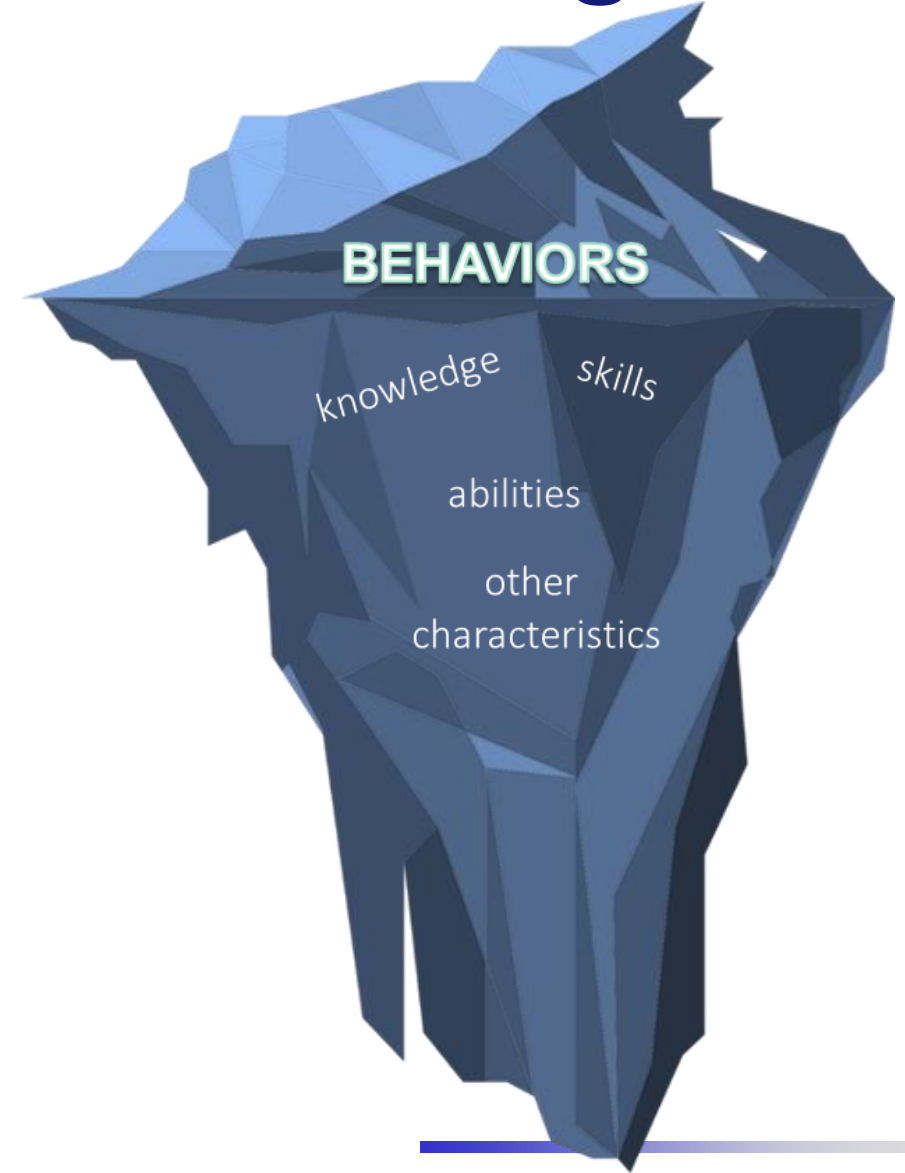
LEADERSHIP **NOW**



# *The Learning Mission – Competency-Based Learning*



- We are the first command- we build a culture of learning that lasts a career!
- Develop competencies, not just complete tasks
- Create a culture where learning accelerates readiness





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# Foundational Competencies



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# Foundational Competencies



Developing Self	ACCOUNTABILITY	
	<b>Definition</b> : Demonstrates reliability and honesty; takes responsibility for the actions and behaviors of self and team	
	Competency Levels	Example Observable Behaviors
	<i>Expert</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Models, guides or teaches</li><li>- Sustains application of competency on exceptionally complex situations</li><li>- Demonstrates influence beyond the organization</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Leads by example</li><li>- Models professionalism and excellence in every endeavor</li><li>- Take personal responsibility for unit performance</li></ul>
	<i>Advanced</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Sustains application of competency over time in complex situations</li><li>- Demonstrates influence across units</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Does the right thing even when it is unpopular or difficult</li><li>- Admits shortcomings and mistakes</li></ul>
	<i>Intermediate</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Sustains application of competency over time in a variety of situations</li><li>- Demonstrates influence across work center</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Follows through on promises and commitments</li><li>- Embodies the Air Force Core Values of Integrity, Service Before Self and Excellence In All We Do</li></ul>
	<i>Basic</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Sustains application of competency over time</li><li>- Demonstrates influence across individuals</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Adheres to Air Force rules and norms</li><li>- Looks after fellow Airmen and the families</li></ul>



Foundational  
Competency  
Kneeboards





## *Expected competency proficiency at the close of this course*



Competency	General Description	Expected Proficiency Level	Observable Behavior
Communication	Effectively presents, promotes and prioritized varied ideas and issues both verbally and non-verbally thought active listening, clear messaging and tailoring information to the appropriate audience	Intermediate	
Decision Making	Makes well-informed, effective and timely decisions that weigh situational constraints, risks and benefits	Intermediate	
		Advanced	
Teamwork	Collaborates effectively with others to achieve a common goal or complete a mission task	Intermediate	
Digital Literacy	Uses technology to identify, crucially evaluate and synthesize data and information; explore, create and manage digital content; and appropriately interact in a virtual environment	Intermediate	
Strategic Thinking	Considers and organizes activities and resources to achieve a desired goal, things on a large and small scale, long and short-term	Intermediate	

# Pathway to Competency Acquisition



Stability



Discipline



Transformation



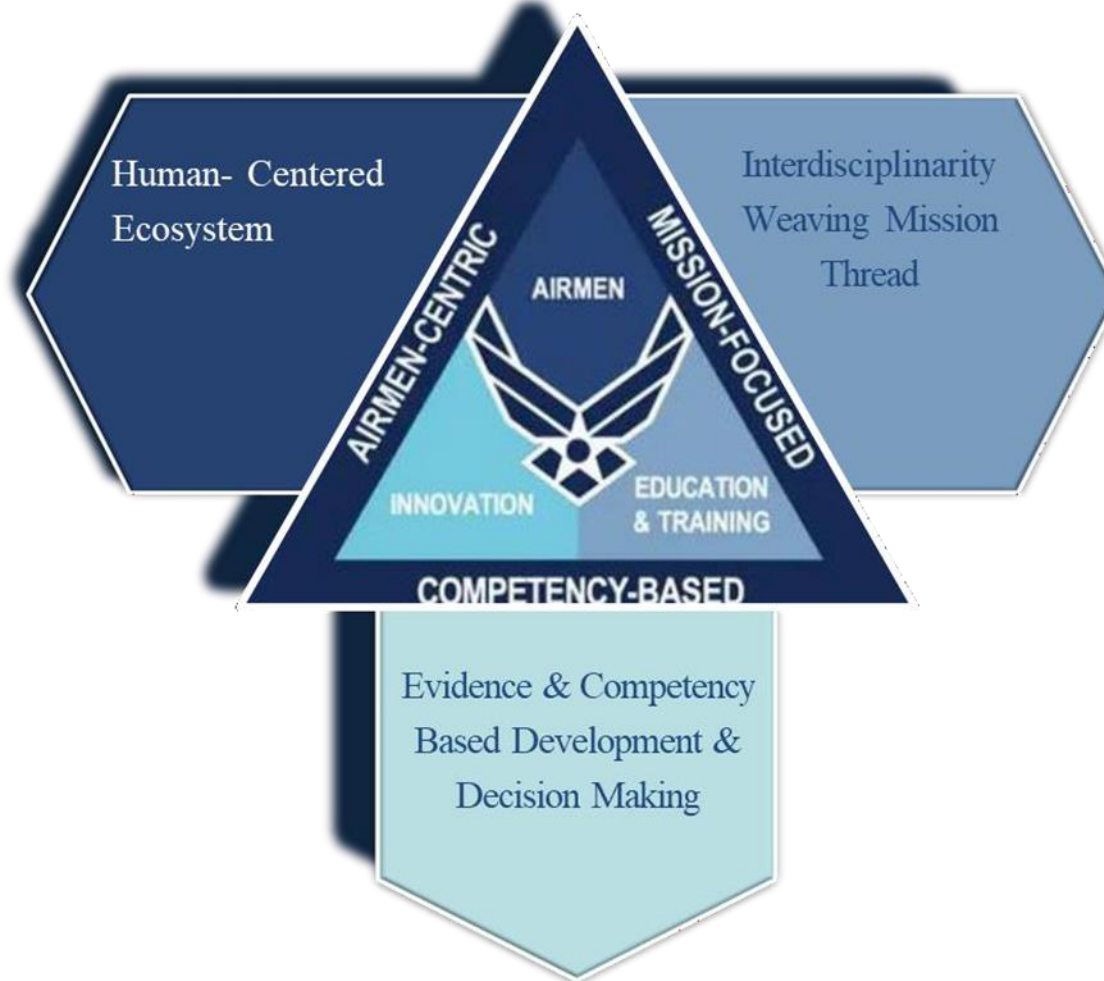
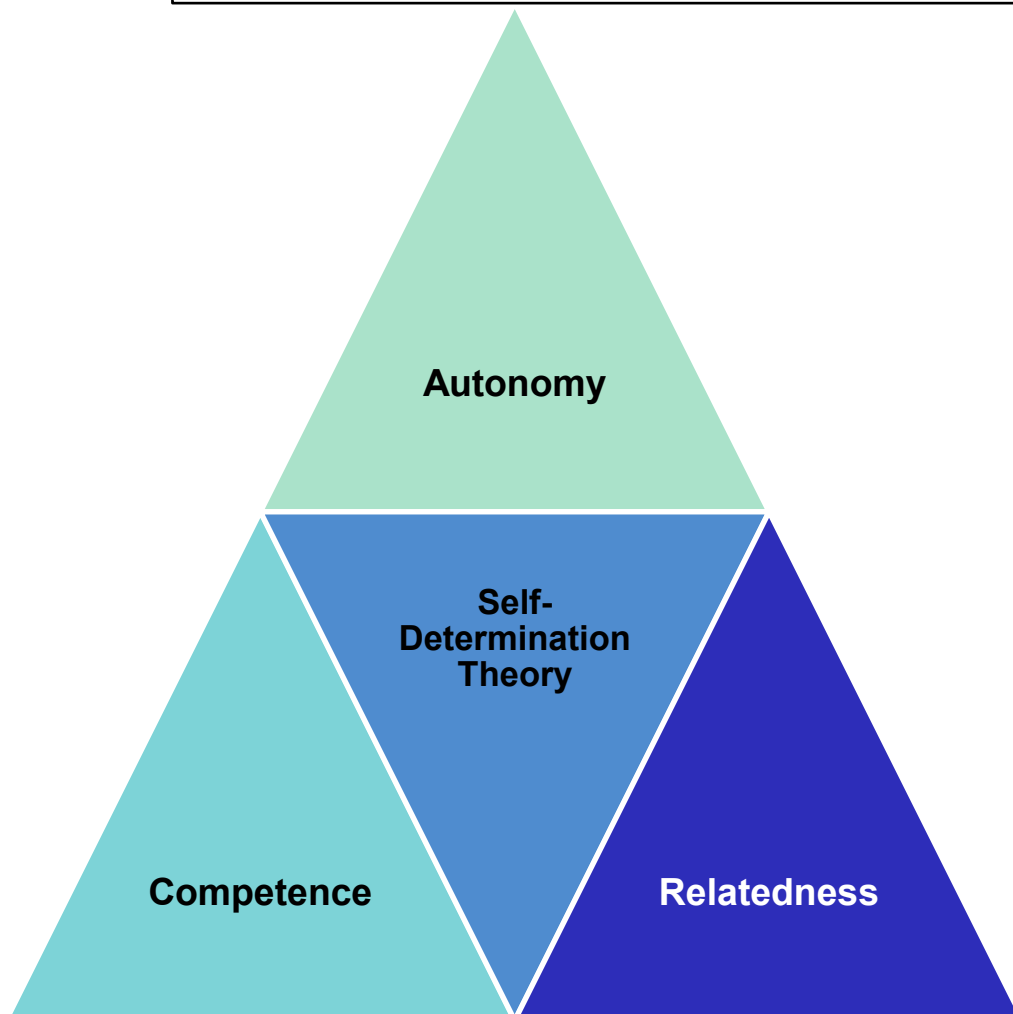


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# Motivation & Human Performance



**Relevant Competencies:** Develops People, Service Mindset, Leadership, Influence





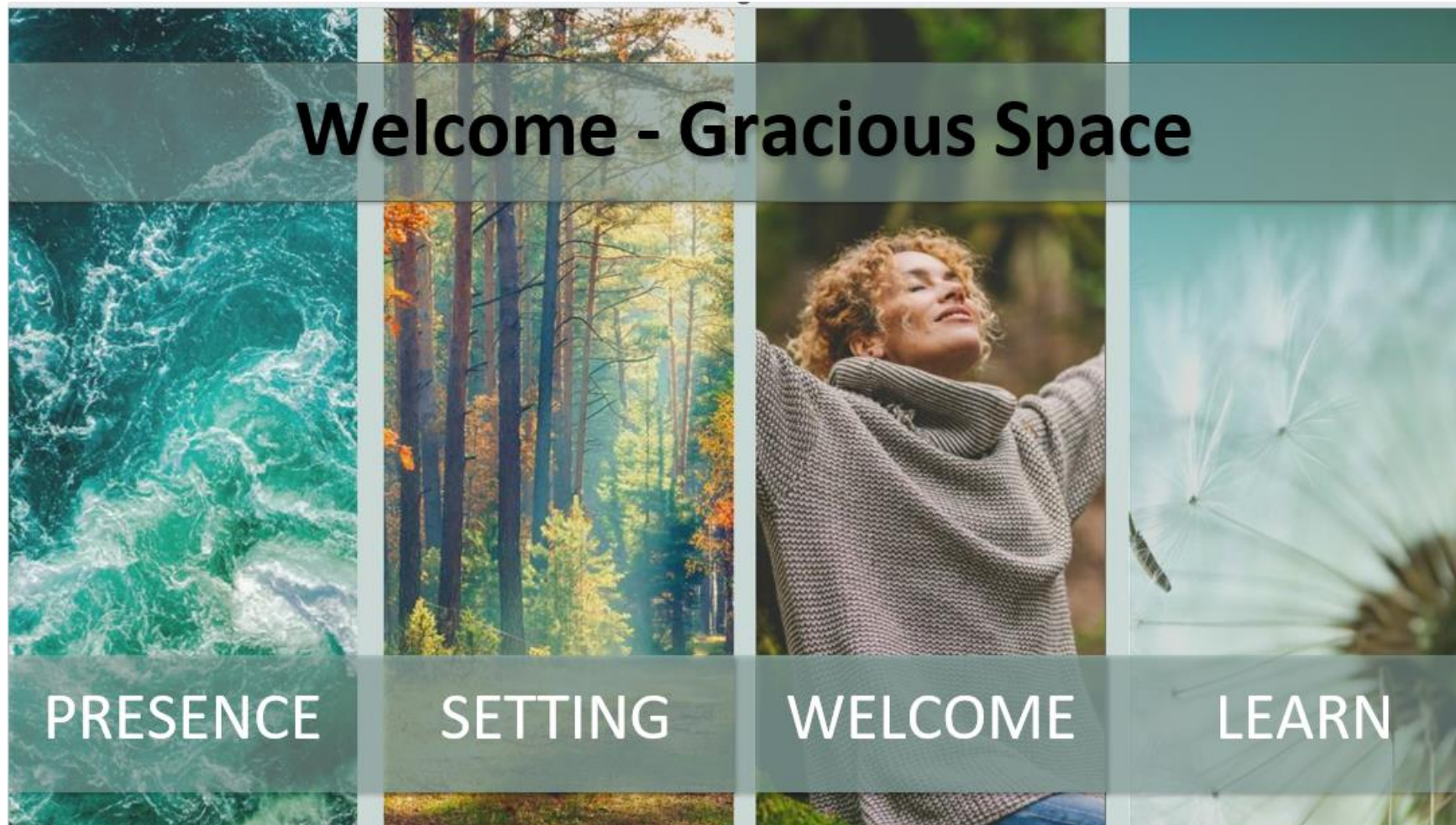
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# Gracious Space & Practical Leadership



**Relevant Competencies:** Communication, Teamwork, Service Mindset, Fostering Innovation

Center for Ethical  
Leadership:  
Gracious Space  
Toolkits







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# *Leadership as a Network*





# DAF LEARNING SYMPOSIUM



A 9-year strategy  
building knowledge to  
**optimize learning &  
support decision making  
for mission readiness**

## CREATING SPACE TO CONVENE, LISTEN, LEARN & IMPROVE



## Engagement Video Stories

2022



2023



2024



2025





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# Chief Caleb Vaden



- Airman Basic- February 13, 2001
- Airman First Class- March 30, 2001
- Senior Airman- January 30, 2003
- Staff Sergeant- August 01, 2004
- Master Sergeant- July 01, 2012
- Senior Master Sergeant- March 01, 2015
- Chief Master Sergeant- December 01, 2017

## R. CALEB VADEN HUSBAND, FATHER, AIRMAN

MY DASH ... MY WHY



PERSONAL VALUES: **INTEGRITY** | **LOVE** | **COURAGE** | **DISCIPLINE**  
I STRIVE TO **HELP** & **INSPIRE** PEOPLE ON THEIR JOURNEY

**faith & Family** centers and are the most important to me

- Amy and I have been married 25 years; and we have...
  - Four sons, Elijah (pictured here with his wife Jaeden) Noah, Christian, and Isaiah
- Hobbies: Anything physically demanding (sports, hiking, weightlifting etc...)
- Goals: Be a good man, husband, dad, Airman ... a good human
  - CARE for others and forgive often because everyone really is doing the best they can
  - Try to forget the things that are irritating but do not detract any value from people or the mission
- BTR: Breathe + Think = RIGHT Response

**service:** Support and Defend the Constitution of the United States ... **DO MY PART**

- I **LOVE** being an Airman ... a warrior ...years! PCSs x11 & Deployments x9 yrs total away/down-range
  - 2001: Entered the Air Force as a Civil Engineer, Heavy Equipment Operator (3E2X1)

**NEVER** Accept or Expect

- Illegal acts | Toxicity, Ethical or Moral violations
- NEVER expect more than I give, and I never give less than my **ABSOLUTE** best!

Tomorrow is **NOT** Guaranteed...This May Be Your **Last**, **MAKE IT COUNT!**

- Live like it – don't have regrets – don't be stuck up, be **HARD TO KILL** & **have fun!**
- PRES: Live in the Present & be **Psychologically Ready** & **Emotionally Steady**

CONNECT WITH ME AT: [HTTPS://LINKTR.EE/CALEBVADEN](https://linktr.ee/calebvaden)  
OR SCAN THE QR





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# ***Building Community A Learning Squadron***



Visionary

Daring

Tenacious

Resilient

“If someone truly visionary, daring, tenacious, and resilient joined your squadron, how long would their commitment last?”





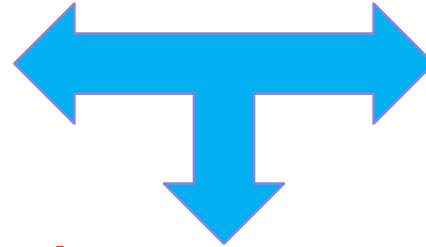
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# Commitment to Competency Based Learning



## MANAGEMENT Focus on COMPLETION

- Did you complete the training?"
- "Is it checked off?"
- "Everyone finished on time?"



## LEADERSHIP Focus: DEVELOPMENT

- "What competency did this develop?"
- "How will you apply this?"
- "Where else can you use this skill?"
- "How has your proficiency grown?"

**As a squadron leader, YOU activate competency-based learning when you:**



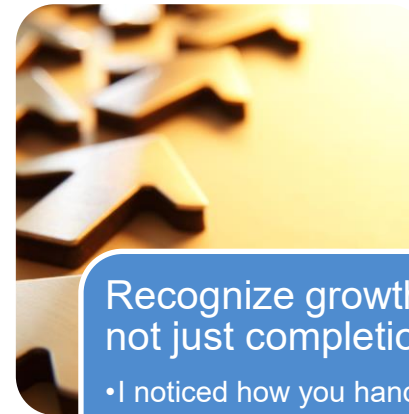
### Ask Competency-focused questions

- How will you use it?
- Which of your competencies grew stronger this week?
- Where do you want to develop next



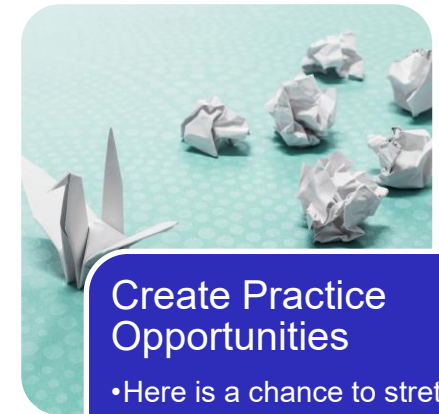
### Connect tasks to competencies

- This TDY will develop your strategic thinking and adaptability
- Leading this project builds your influence and change management skills



### Recognize growth not just completion

- I noticed how you handled that conflict- your communication competency is developing
- The way you approached that problem showed growth in analytical thinking



### Create Practice Opportunities

- Here is a chance to stretch your decision- making competency
- Who would like to develop their leadership competency by facilitating our next meeting or attending this training?



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# PRACTICE: Commit to ONE Thing



## NAME IT- One Concrete Practice

You're not adding more to your plate.

You're REFRAMING what's already on your plate through a competency lens.

That's the shift. That's leading the learning mission.



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# *Thank you! Questions & Feedback*

