**Introducing and Setting Ground Rules **

*"I am here to help us have a good discussion about what we can do better and differently to address the growing risk of suicide among us and our fellow airmen. We are here to learn from one another, to get a sense about how we think and feel about the air force and resilience, and to help us make stronger and deeper connections with one another. My job as facilitator is to help us have a good discussion where all views can be voiced in a safe and respectful environment. That doesn't mean that there won't be disagreement and some tension about important issues. I hope that you will say what is on your mind. I understand the challenge we all face in sharing some of our experiences and vulnerabilities with each other. To create a safe and respectful atmosphere we ask that all of us follow a few ground rules."*

**Establish ground rules** for the discussion so that the participants feel the environment is safe to speak about their ideas and feelings. Ground rules should be explicit. You need to take a little time to discuss the cultural relativity of these ground rules. Ground rules may not fit everyone because we have different cultural backgrounds. Ask the group if these rules make sense and if everyone can honor them. The following are some suggestions (add your own):

* We ask that you speak from your own perspective; personal **"I" statements** are useful ways for keeping your view points personalized, and keep you from generalizing about what others think or feel
* We ask that you respect the viewpoints of others--that you **listen respectfully** and attentively, and that you withhold judgment about other's views. Our goal here is not to persuade each other of our ideas, but to get ideas out on the table so people can make their own decision.
* We ask that you maintain **confidentiality** about what is said in the room during this discussion--that you don't talk about what others say here to others who are not part of this discussion.
* To show your respect for others in the room, we ask that you stay focused on the discussion and **avoid side conversations**. We ask that you make a conscious effort to listen actively to hear what is being said.
* We expect that everyone here will try to make this experience a good one; that **we are all responsible** for how this discussion goes.
* We ask that you be willing to voice disagreements, but we ask that if you disagree with someone's idea that you **criticize the idea, not the person**. With sensitive issues, people make take things personally. Please try to be sensitive to each other's needs and concerns. Try to speak up if you feel hurt in anyway. Avoid derogatory or sarcastic comments at the expense of others.
* We ask that you **don't interrupt** each other.
* **All questions are good ones**. We encourage you to ask questions of each other no matter how simplistic you might think they are. Chances are there are others who have the same question. The goal of the discussion is to learn and explore.
* We ask that you**limit your exchanges** with one person to no more than 3 exchanges. If it goes beyond three then others need the chance to express their opinion.
* We ask that you **don't make assumptions** about what others think or mean. Remember that others will not always attach the same meanings to words that you do or perceive the world the same way you do.