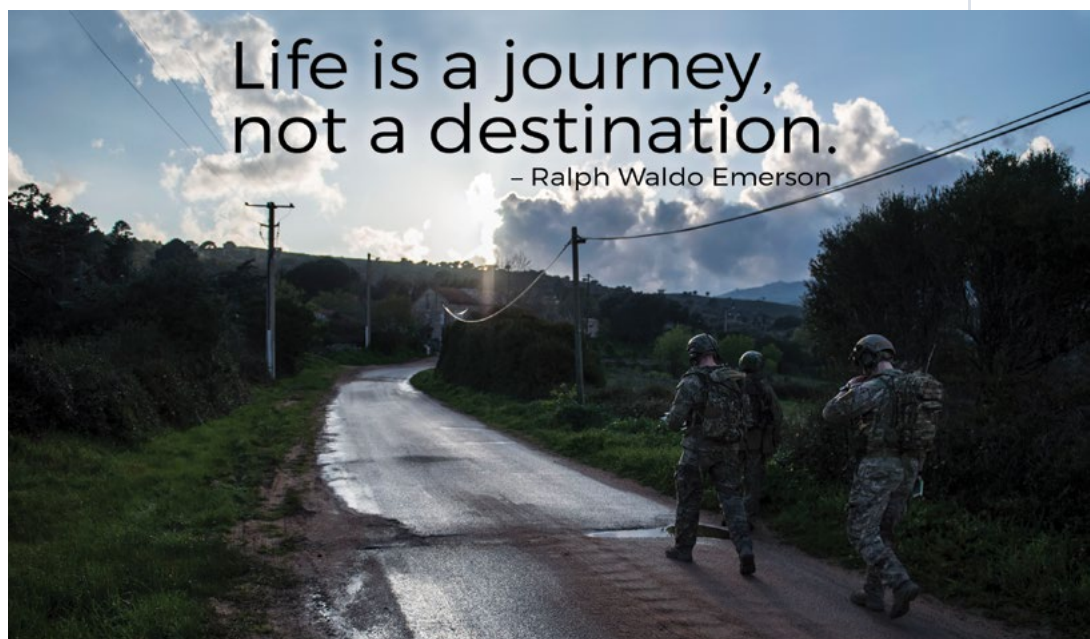


# The “Whole Airman Concept” – Perspectives from the Junior FM Force

by AIC Chad Dayton, AFSOC and AIC Sarah Cole, AMC

## AIC CHAD DAYTON'S PERSPECTIVE

The “Whole Airman Concept” isn’t a goal, nor a destination. It isn’t something that can be achieved overnight. What it is, however, is a journey. It’s the practice of consistently bettering yourself, those you come in contact with, and your environment as a whole. Being an Airman would then, by this definition, mean it’s your job to be a force for good, waking up each morning better than you were the previous morning. It’s making the most of your skills and talents by helping others, giving back to communities, and leaving your mark on the world by doing what you can by giving back and empowering others to make a change.



The average person spends about eight percent of their life at work. With that being said, why settle for lackluster? As a junior FM comptroller, I interact with people on a daily basis, some on their best days, some going through hardships. Regardless of their life circumstances, one constant exists—our paths have crossed for a reason, and it’s my job to do what I can to help them. Being a junior employee of any organization starts with followership. Each of us starts our FM career with a clean slate, a blank canvas to fill with the paint of knowledge. Knowledge offered by coworkers, supervisors, leadership, and most importantly, knowledge from experience. Use this knowledge to excel at your job, and to help those in need. What may seem as an ordinary issue for you may very well be keeping someone else up at night. Only after you truly understand followership, and you’ve learned from thousands of mistakes in that position, can you begin to grasp leadership. I say this because leadership is more than power, it’s more than a rank; however, in every organization I’ve worked in, (the Air Force being no different) I’ve found supervisors who don’t lead, and leaders who don’t (or can’t) supervise. Regardless of rank, leaders hold a true, unbiased respect for all, and do all they can to help others. A time will come when you’re all put into leadership positions, but until then, just do all you can to learn from those with more experience, both the good and the bad. Learn from them, because one day you’ll be in their seat.

If eight percent of the average person’s life is spent at work, that leaves around fifty percent (taking out the time spent sleeping and eating) in the hands of the individual to do with as they please. Most people I’ve met, especially first-term Airmen, always try to stay “busy.” This includes making plans with others, road trips every weekend, and setting their social life as their number one priority. I don’t say this to bash any of that, we all need time to unwind and relax. Instead, I say this as a reminder; our free time is all we have to truly develop ourselves. Try to stay productive, as opposed to just busy. Try to think in terms of where you want to be in five, or even ten years from now. If you want a PhD, start taking classes, start with your associate’s. If you want the body of a Greek god, curb the McDonalds, and get yourself to the gym. Your work doesn’t define you, nor does

# What Does It Mean to You?



who you used to be, nor your upbringing. What defines a person is their habits. Their conscious, continued actions that will ultimately lead them to success or regret. My advice, use your free time as an investment in yourself. Take every opportunity life gives you to push yourself ahead. Avoid a life of regrets, and wondering where you could have been. Do today what others won't, so tomorrow you can do what others can't.

No matter where you're at in life, it's important to remember that you didn't get there all by yourself. Along the way, you've had parents to raise you, teachers to educate you, friends to stand by your side, and communities to support you. Whether you're from a small town or a massive city, you were born into and raised in a community. By signing on the dotted line, and going through basic training, you then joined another. When you look at the grand scheme of things, the Air Force is really just one massive community; each base another, smaller community, with more to be found within any nearby town or city.

We can't exist without community support, and in many cases the opposite holds true as well. That being said, it's vital to give back. I'm a firm believer in Karma, that doing good for others will inherently instill goodness in them, so that in turn, they will pass along to others. This can all be seen on a smaller scale, too. Ever give someone a compliment and immediately see their face transform into a grin? How about that time you told your girlfriend she looked "fine" and with one word you ruined her whole night? Getting involved around base, or the surrounding communities is vastly rewarding and enriching. To know that small deeds can make someone else's life better, and then enable them to do the same, is both an utterly selfless and absolutely empowering concept.

The Whole Airman Concept is just that, a concept. It may mean something different to each person reading this, and that's ok. However, if there's a takeaway from this article, it's this: Take an honest look at your values, and live your life by them. Do what's right at work, for your customers. At work, do what's right for yourself and strive to be better each day. Last but not least, do what's right for your community, and leave the people around you better off than you found them.

## AIC SARAH COLE'S PERSPECTIVE

As a junior-level Airman, my perspective on the "Whole Airman Concept" is still being developed. The things that shaped my perception of the concept as a financial manager come from my personal experiences, as well as those of others in different stages of their military careers. I feel fortunate to be an Airman, even on the most hectic days, like during fiscal year close out or before the cut off days each month. I am fortunate to be part of a squadron in which the mindset is focused on fostering positive communication, honest feedback, and the growth and development of all Airmen as key members in this ever-changing total force.

We are sometimes "volun-told" to do things we may not enjoy; however, I strive to learn something from whatever task is thrown my way. I try to learn from the situation, as well as the people involved, and strive to truly understanding the values of my wingmen. The Whole Airman Concept to me means continuously working to be the best version of myself. This involves figuring out how to be a mom, wife, teammate, and wingman. I must prioritize my job responsibilities, along with additional duties, while giving equal time to the technical parts of my job and attaining higher education.

The best advice I have received in working to complete our mission and advance in my career is: **"Don't chase the promotions. Learn how to do your job to the best of your ability. Invest your time and effort into things that matter to you and the boxes will check themselves."** I have continually focused on doing things