

SPIRITUAL FITNESS



STEEL YOUR SPIRIT

“So that you can better deal with adversity. Prepare yourself so that you will be ready for the decisive moment in combat.”

- General Neller



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INTRODUCTION

“Steel your spirit so that you can better deal with adversity. Prepare yourself so you will be ready for the decisive moment in combat.” – General Neller (Message to the Force 2017: “Seize the Initiative”)

Question: Are your Marines steeling their spirit in order to be fully prepared for future challenges? Decisive moments will come in combat or in the daily struggles of life.

PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

1. To instruct Marine leaders (regardless of rank) on the concepts and framework of spiritual fitness.
2. To equip Marine leaders with tools to assist personnel in the development and exercise of spiritual fitness.



HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Understand the material: Read and think through every aspect of spiritual fitness. Use the “My Spiritual Fitness” boxes to personalize the content and define your own spiritual fitness.

Choose stories: Narratives are extremely helpful for explaining spiritual fitness. This book provides articles that are categorized according to the three elements of the spiritual fitness framework. Choose stories and questions to use as discussion starters with your Marines.

Go and lead: Once you understand the material well, have made spiritual fitness personal to you, and have selected stories and questions for discussion, go and lead your Marines. Ensure they are developing their own spiritual fitness in order to “Steel their spirit” in preparation for what the future will bring.

BACKGROUND OF SPIRITUAL FITNESS

Marine Leader Development (MLD) is a comprehensive approach to leadership development that seeks to foster development of all aspects of Marines' personal and professional lives. It is neither a philosophy nor a program rather, it is a framework to be used by Marines at all levels for themselves and subordinates. There are six Functional Areas of Leadership Development: **Fidelity – Fighter – Fitness – Family – Finances – Future**. Spiritual fitness is housed within the functional area of **Fitness**.

My Spiritual Fitness: Visit the Marine Leader Development website and become familiar with the resources available. Write down any notes you might share with your Marines regarding the website. At the time of printing, the web address is:

<https://www.usmcu.edu/li/marine-leader-development>

FIDELITY



"Fidelity" is faithfulness to one another, our Corps, and the Nation. It is expressed through our motto, "Semper Fidelis," meaning "Always Faithful," as well as our Core Values and Leadership Traits and Principles. The Fidelity resource page contains information on our heritage, Core Values, ethics, and Marine Corps Leadership Traits and Principles.

FIGHTER



"Fighter" refers to the cumulative skill-sets and knowledge that make Marines well-rounded warriors. The Fighter resource page contains information on Professional Military Education (PME), Military Occupational Specialty (MOS)/Navy Enlisted Code (NEC)/ Navy Officer Billet Classification (NOBC), interpersonal communication skills, and on and off-duty education.

FITNESS



"Fitness" is a holistic approach to physical, mental, spiritual, and social fitness. Truly "fit" Marines have far more than just high Physical Fitness Test (PFT) and Combat Fitness Test (CFT) scores. Ensuring holistic wellbeing boosts morale, cohesiveness, and resiliency – enabling Marines to execute the toughest challenges and recuperate in shorter time. The Fitness section contains information and practices to aid Marines in promoting, sustaining, and restoring fitness.

FAMILY



"Family" refers to the bedrock, fundamental social relationships from which Marines draw strength, and cumulatively make a stronger Corps. The challenges of military life require families to be resilient like the Marines they support. The Family resource page contains information on maintaining and strengthening family relationships, from marriage, parenting, and family readiness.

FINANCES



"Finance" refers to the disciplined practices of personal, financial responsibility. Marines and Sailors who pursue financial responsibility mitigate stress and are better prepared for deployments, family changes, and transition to civilian life. The Finance resource page addresses fundamentals of personal finance to include budgeting, saving, debt-management and investing.

FUTURE



"Future" refers to the practice of setting and accomplishing goals in all of the other five functional areas of leadership development. Goal-setting maximizes the likelihood of personal and professional success, which carries through to civilian life. The Future resource page contains information on goal-setting, time management, and transitioning back to civilian life.

COMMANDANT'S GUIDANCE

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ALMAR 033/16

MSGID/GENADMIN/CMC WASHINGTON DC DMCS//

SUBJ/SPIRITUAL FITNESS//

GENTEXT/REMARKS/1. Fitness is a vital part of being a United States Marine. Although we all understand the importance of being physically fit, it is also important to remember the other three aspects of overall fitness: spiritual, mental, and social. All of these aspects are essential to the well-being of each individual Marine and Sailor, and our Corps as a whole.

2. As Americas force in readiness, we must be prepared to answer our Nations call on a moment's notice. A large part of that ability is our capacity for resilience. Regardless of the battle we just fought, we must be ready for our next success. Research indicates that spiritual fitness plays a key role in resiliency, in our ability to grow, develop, recover, heal, and adapt. Regardless of individual philosophy or beliefs, spiritual well-being makes us better warriors and people of character capable of making good choices on and off duty.

3. Beginning in October, the Marine Corps will be emphasizing all components of fitness, particularly the physical and spiritual aspects. During this time, I ask each of you to reflect on what you and the Marines and Sailors you lead are doing to achieve and maintain an optimal level of strength and resilience. Your leaders and chaplains at all levels stand ready to engage with you in this task. By attending to spiritual fitness with the same rigor given to physical, social and mental fitness, Marines and Sailors can become and remain the honorable warriors and model citizens our Nation expects.

4. Semper Fidelis, R. B. Neller, General, U.S. Marine Corps,

Commandant of the Marine Corps//



My Spiritual Fitness:

1. Write down a few thoughts from this ALMAR. Prepare to help your Marines understand what the Commandant is communicating.

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

1. **Spiritual fitness is only for the Chaplain to talk about:** False. Spiritual fitness is a component of overall fitness within Marine Leader Development. It is the role of every Marine leader to develop future leaders who are mentally, physically, socially, and spiritually fit. Chaplains will work alongside to give voice in this endeavor, but they are NOT the owners of spiritual fitness.
2. **Spiritual fitness is about religion:** False. As you read through the framework of spiritual fitness, take note that religion is not the main focus, but it is a potential ingredient for any individual to source their spirituality. Religion is a matter of personal choice and is not a necessary component of spiritual fitness. Leaders will need to make this point clear in spiritual fitness dialogues.

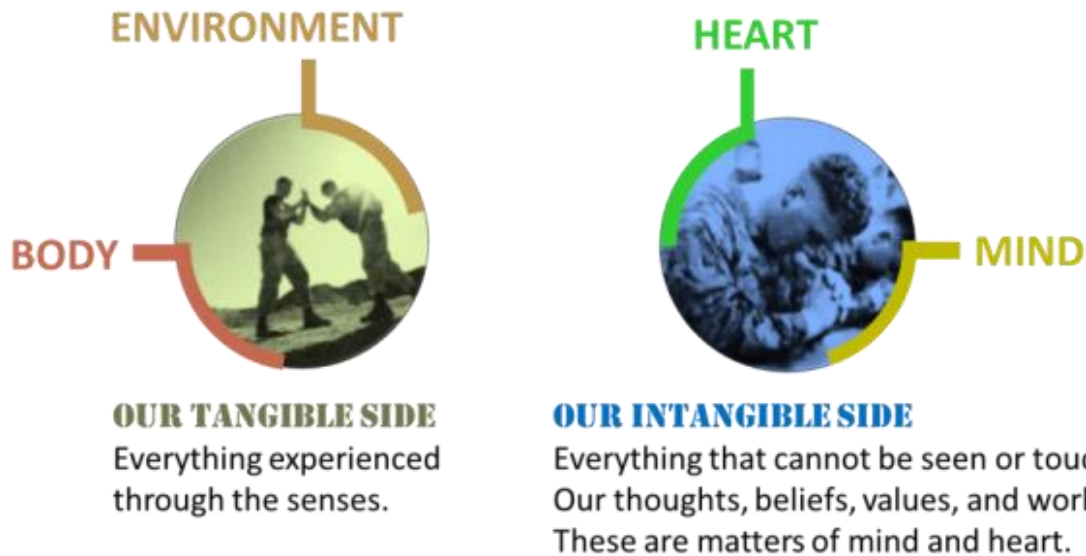


OVERVIEW OF SPIRITUAL FITNESS

Definition of Spiritual Fitness: The ability to adhere to beliefs, principles, and values needed to persevere and prevail.

How do Marines “steel their spirit” in order to achieve and maintain an optimal level of strength and resilience? The Commandant stated in the referenced ALMAR, “by attending to spiritual fitness with the same rigor given to physical, social and mental fitness, Marines and Sailors can become and remain the honorable warriors and model citizens our Nation expects.” When difficult times come, whether in combat or at home, a strong spirit will be necessary to persevere and prevail.

Spiritual Fitness Begins: Recognizing the Tangible and Intangible.



Pursuing spiritual fitness begins by recognizing that there are two dimensions to our human existence.

There is an intangible side that directly impacts what is tangible or physical. Intangible elements of mind and heart include such things as our thoughts, emotions, personality, behaviors, social skills, relationships, and our spiritual connections. The principles and values Marines choose to live by affects the decisions they make in the physical realm. Additionally, their ability to persevere and prevail in life will be impacted. The Marine Corps understands this to be true and therefore teaches core values that produce Marines of character on and off duty.

As a leader, how many times have you observed a Marine who began to perform poorly, only to learn later that the Marine had recently experienced the loss of a loved one, the ending of a significant relationship, or some other life impacting event? What they were thinking and feeling internally affected their performance as a Marine.



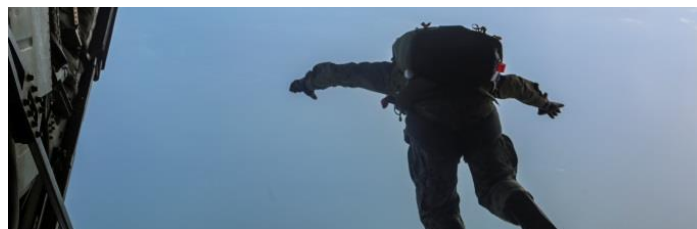
Do you remember being shown the benefit tags by your recruiter when you decided to join the Marine Corps? As you read through them below, you can see that some are tangible benefits, while others are intangible. Use this as a conversation starter when discussing this concept with your Marines.

- “I love the Marine Corps for those intangible possessions that cannot be issued: pride, honor, integrity, and being able to carry on the traditions for generations of warriors past.” Cpl Jeff Sorni, USMC <https://www.marines.com/who-we-are/our-values.html>

	PRIDE OF BELONGING	SELF RELIANCE SELF DIRECTION SELF DISCIPLINE
TRAVEL AND ADVENTURE	CHALLENGE	PHYSICAL FITNESS
COURAGE POISE AND SELF CONFIDENCE	TECHNICAL SKILLS	FINANCIAL SECURITY ADVANCEMENT AND BENEFITS
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT SKILLS	PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND OPPORTUNITIES	EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

My Spiritual Fitness:

1. Spiritual fitness is defined as, “The ability to adhere to beliefs, principles, and values needed to persevere and prevail.” Take a moment to write down the beliefs, principles, and values you have discovered that are necessary to persevere and prevail.
2. How have you experienced the intangible affect the tangible in your life? Do you have a good example you might use in discussion with your Marines?
3. Take a moment to review the Recruiting Benefits Tags. Do you recall which ones motivated you to join the Marine Corps? Which ones still provide value to you today? Which of the ones you have chosen are tangible versus intangible?
4. What examples and illustrations would you use to explain the concept of spiritual fitness to your Marines so that they will understand it?



Spiritual fitness is Influenced by: Self and greater than self

Every individual who earns the title United States Marine brings with them a unique set of influences that impact daily decisions. These influences generally fall into two categories: Self (factors internal to the individual) and greater than self (factors external to the individual). These lists provide a starting point to assist Marines in recognizing influences that may contribute to their spiritual strength and resilience.

<u>SELF</u>	<u>GREATER THAN SELF</u>
Abilities	Cause or Purpose
Achievements	Culture
Ambitions	Deity
Beliefs	Family
Education	Friends
Experiences	Leaders
Goals	Marine Corps
Knowledge	Mentors
Personality	Nation
Talents	Philosophy
View Points	Religion

Spiritual Fitness is Maintained: Exercising Three Elements – Personal Faith, Foundational Values, and Moral Living

Once Marines recognize the relationship between what is tangible and intangible and begin to understand what their influences are, the third step is to maintain spiritual fitness by exercising three fundamental elements: Personal Faith, Foundational Values, and Moral Living.

PERSONAL FAITH

FOUNDATIONAL VALUES

MORAL LIVING

PERSONAL FAITH:

The belief or trust in self, something or someone greater than self.

Marines have the ability to choose the source and degree of their faith. At a minimum, Marines need enough faith in themselves, their fellow Marines, and the Marine Corps in order to

accomplish the mission. This is first tested at the recruit depot during the Crucible event in which recruits are purposely placed in situations where they must put faith in themselves and the training they have received, as well as faith in their fellow recruits.

Ultimately, it is important that each Marine recognize the unique beliefs, principals and values that help that Marine persevere and prevail. Remember it is the choice of the individual Marine to identify the individual and personal sources of their faith. As a leader of Marines you have likely experienced a Marine lose faith in the Marine Corps and / or fellow Marines which resulted in them leaving the Marine Corps on a bad note.

My Spiritual Fitness:

1. What do you place personal faith in? Use the two lists of influences on page 9 to get you started.
2. How much faith do you place in those things?



FOUNDATIONAL VALUES

The values Marines choose to live by will directly impact their choices and actions, and the character they display on and off duty.

The principles and values instilled in each Marine are the building blocks for making the right decisions at the right time, both on the battlefield and off. In the chaos of war and in the daily tasks of life,

character matters. The Marine Corps' core values of honor, courage, and commitment define how all Marines are to think, act and fight. However, at the end of the day Marines make personal choices as to which values and ideals they will truly adopt and live by. Therefore, an essential element of spiritual fitness is guiding Marines to intentionally adopt the values that will produce choices and actions, that build character and resiliency.

To properly exercise this element of spiritual fitness, Marines need to articulate the foundational values that guide them. Additionally, they should look at the influences within self and beyond themselves that are the sources of those values and ideals. For example, if Sgt Smith, has very close family (an influence greater than self) and she values time with them, then how will that effect the choices she makes? Will her decision making trump card be, "how will this decision impact time with my family?" Taking the time to list out what truly matters will grant valuable insight to every Marine in pursuit of spiritual fitness.

My Spiritual Fitness:

1. What are your values? List as many as you can think of...
 - a. What are the sources of those values? Use the two lists of influences on page 9 to get you started.



MORAL LIVING

Marines make personal choices from the sources that guide their moral living and their decision making process. They must reflect upon and evaluate past decisions in order to inform their current and future decisions.

Marines choose how they make decisions. This personal process requires them to ask questions such as, “what does right look like?” At a minimum all Marines are held to the standard of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. If they violate that standard consequences

may ensue. In addition, Marines may personally choose a moral standard derived from an influence in their life (Self and Greater than self - page 9).

Once Marines have come to understand their personal code or standard for decision making, they engage in moral living by regularly evaluating past decisions and the consequences experienced in order to make course corrections as needed. Taking time daily to reflect on decisions made, meeting with a mentor for guidance and accountability, and setting goals for the future are just a few ways Marines can stay on their chosen moral path.

My Spiritual Fitness:

1. What are your sources for moral living? Do you have a process in place to reflect upon and evaluate past decisions in order to inform your current and future decisions? Use the two lists of influences on page 9 to get you started.



Spiritual Fitness Evaluated: The Spiritual Fitness Guide

As a Marine exercises the three elements, they regularly need to evaluate their level of spiritual fitness. The Spiritual Fitness Guide (SFG) (Page 14) is a helpful tool in this endeavor. It displays 7 Potential Indicators of spiritual fitness that are self-assessed according to 4 levels.

7 Potential Indicators	4 Levels of Fitness			
1. Life’s meaning and purpose.	FIT	STRESSED	DEPLETED	DRAINED
2. Hope for life and the future				
3. Sound moral decisions				
4. Engaged with family and friends				
5. Able to forgive self and others				
6. Respectful of others				
7. Engaged in core values and beliefs				

Spiritual Fitness Guide: This is a self-assessment tool to help service members determine their spiritual condition.

FIT	STRESSED	DEPLETED	DRAINED
<p>Potential Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Engaged in life's meaning/purpose > Hopeful about life/future > Makes sound moral decisions > Fully engaged with family, friends, and community > Able to forgive self and others > Respectful of others > Engaged in core values/beliefs 	<p>Potential Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Neglecting life's meaning/purpose > Less hopeful about life/future > Makes some poor moral decisions > Somewhat engaged with family, friends, and community > Difficulty forgiving self or others > Less respectful of others > Straying from core values/beliefs 	<p>Potential Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Losing a sense of life's meaning/purpose > Holds very little hope about life/future > Makes poor moral decisions routinely > Weakly engaged with family, friends, and community > Not likely to forgive self or others > Strong disrespect for others > Disregards core values/beliefs 	<p>Potential Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Feels like life has no meaning/purpose > Holds no hope about life/future > Engaged in extreme immoral behavior > Not engaged with family, friends or community > Forgiveness is not an option > Complete disrespect for others > Abandoned core values/beliefs

If you find yourself in need of support, do not suffer in silence. Seek immediately from any avenue of support.

Resources for Support

- Chaplain – Military and Family Life Counselors – Community Counseling Program – Family Readiness Officers – Leaders – Family or Friend – MCCS One Source – DSTRESS 1-877-476-7734

Your Chaplain cares about you and is committed to helping with your spiritual fitness. Absolute 100% confidentiality is guaranteed.

CHAPLAIN POC:

Command Guidance: How to use the Spiritual Fitness Guide

The U. S. Navy Chaplain Corps developed the Spiritual Fitness Guide (SFG) to help Marines/Sailors maintain a healthy spiritual life. The use of the SFG is voluntary and can serve as a referral tool to know when to seek out help and advice from a chaplain.

1. Make the SFG available to the Marines. The SFG is available in a full size .pdf document on the MLD website under Fitness.
2. The SFG is a private self-assessment tool. It can help a Marine know when it is time to get help. It is not designed for use by the chain of command to evaluate a Marine's spiritual fitness or readiness.
3. Commands should not mandate the use of the SFG or require a Marine to disclose self-assessment results.
4. Training by leaders on the use of this tool is encouraged. Utilize your unit chaplain as a subject matter expert as often as possible.

For concerns about a Marine's spiritual fitness or for further information about spiritual fitness, please contact a chaplain.

My Spiritual Fitness:

Use the spiritual fitness guide today and see how you are doing. Score yourself as fit, stressed, depleted, or drained within each of the 7 potential indicators.

If you find yourself other than fit in any area, seek assistance from one of these resources: chaplain, military and family life counselor, community counselor, family readiness officer, leader, family member, friend, MCCS One Source, or another helping resource.



PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

THE SPIRITUAL FITNESS INFOGRAPHIC

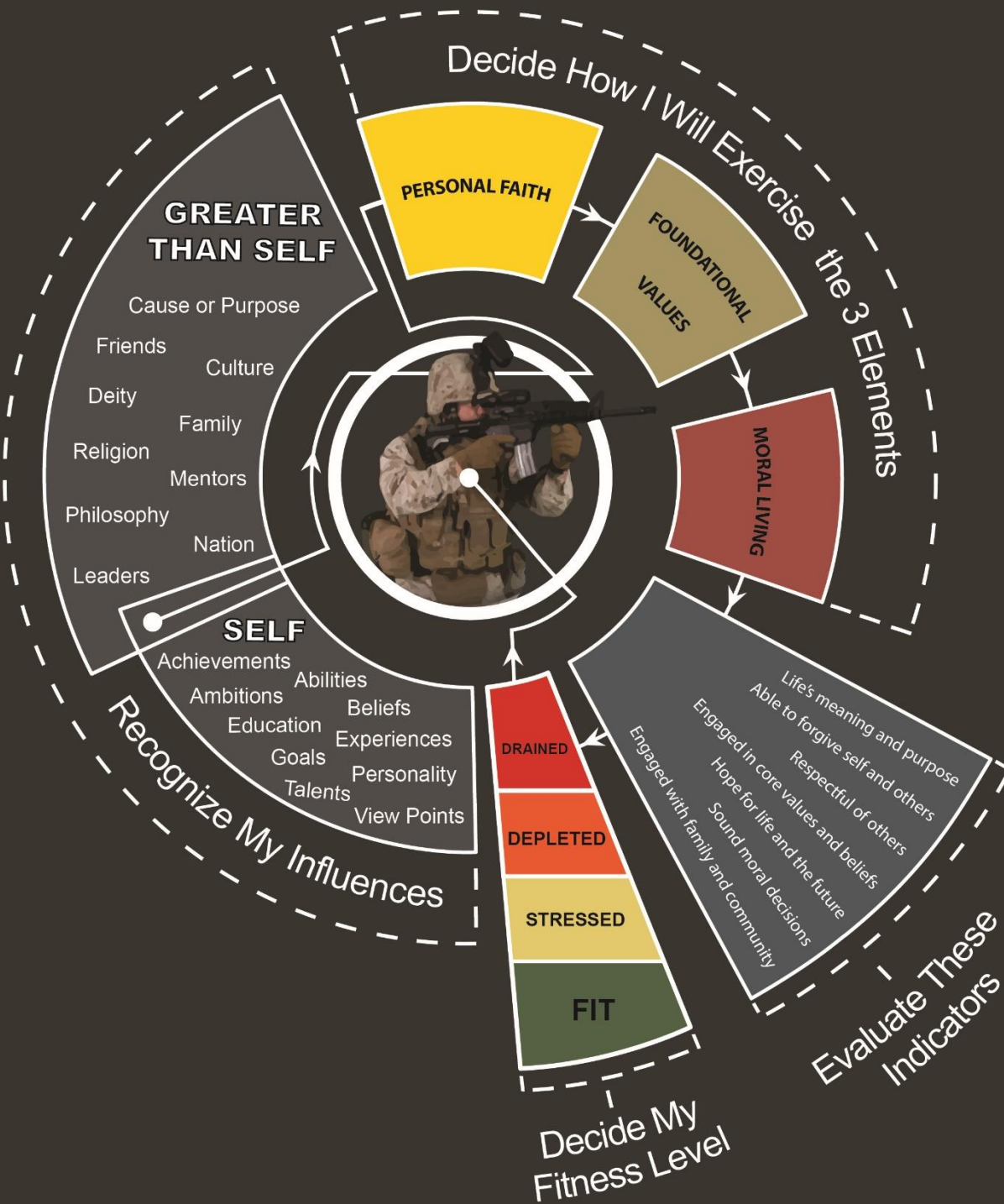
The infographic illustrates the spiritual fitness framework and shows the relationships that exist between the two areas of influence, the three elements Marines exercise, and the self-assessment tool.

The circular design indicates that spiritual fitness is an ongoing process of...

1. Recognizing the influences in my life: Self and Greater than Self.
2. Deciding how to regularly exercise the three elements of spiritual fitness: Personal Faith, Foundational Values, and Moral Living.
3. Continually evaluating my level of fitness by using the spiritual fitness guide.
4. Deciding what my level of spiritual fitness is and knowing when to seek help from a support resource.

SPIRITUAL FITNESS

The ability to adhere to beliefs, principles, and values needed to persevere and prevail.



USE OF STORIES TO DISCUSS SPIRITUAL FITNESS

A helpful way to illustrate and discuss spiritual fitness with your Marines is through the use of stories. Provided are articles that tell the stories of Marines exercising spiritual fitness elements that were previously published on the Defense Video Imagery Distribution System (DVIDS). Take time to read the narratives, personalize them, and choose which ones you think helpful to use with your Marines.

Keep in mind the following:

1. These stories are for illustration purposes only. They are not intended to instruct a Marine in “what” they must place their faith in. As an example, in the category of personal faith, there are stories of Marines that adhere to a particular religion. This is not telling Marines they have to be religious. Rather, it is simply illustrating how these Marines placed their personal faith in a religious belief system and how that choice strengthened their spiritual fitness. It will be up to Marines to choose the source of their personal faith and what they will place faith in.
2. These stories are meant to be discussion starters. They are intended to give you a small hip pocket library of stories to get the conversation going. In time, you will want to find stories that resonate with your Marines. You may choose true or hypothetical stories from Marines you know, books and articles you have read, or your own experiences. The necessary ingredient for each story must be a clear depiction of how the person exercised one or more of the three elements (personal faith, foundational values, moral living) and how it assisted the person in persevering and prevailing.



How to lead a discussion:

Take time to prepare. Read the story and understand how it illustrates spiritual fitness.

Use the infographic as a visual guide to explain how the Marine in the story connects the dots of the framework of spiritual fitness. Ask the following questions:

- What influences (self and greater than self) are impacting the person?
- Which of the elements of spiritual fitness (personal faith, foundational values, moral living) is the person exercising.
- How many of the seven indicators of spiritual fitness are seen in the life of the person in the story?

Select discussion questions:

- Read the discussion and reflection questions then answer them for yourself.
- Select which questions are most suited to use with your Marines.
- Think of additional questions that might resonate with your Marines.

Lead the discussion:

- Begin by establishing the following guide points.
 - Often times the word “spiritual” is automatically associated with religion. Spiritual fitness takes a much broader perspective and considers all beliefs, principles and values needed to preserve and prevail. Religion is not a necessary component, but is a matter of personal choice for pursuing spiritual fitness.
 - We want you to feel comfortable talking about any of the sources of spiritual fitness.
 - There are no right or wrong answers. This is for discussion and ultimately your contemplation for your pursuit of spiritual fitness.
 - We must not judge each other based on our individual responses.
 - There are questions that I will ask. Some will be for response and discussion, and others will be for personal reflection.
- Read or tell the story
 - Use questions you have pre-selected, being sure to let the group know when the question you are reading is for open discussion or personal reflection.

PERSONAL FAITH

How I got here: Master Gunnery Sgt. McLaughlin

Defense Media Activity - Marines

Courtesy Story

VIRGINIA - In 1992, a young woman decided to follow in her father's steps and stand on the yellow footprints to become a United States Marine.

Her down-to-earth leadership style and positive outlook made her successful no matter what challenge came her way. Now she is a master gunnery sergeant and the legal services chief at the Legal Services Support Section on Marine Corps Base Quantico, Va.

Here we borrow fragments of Master Gunnery Sgt. McLaughlin's experiences in her 22 years of service.

It began with my father. My father was a prior Marine, enlisted. Ever since I was small, it was more of a, "Mija, you're going to join the Marine Corps, right?"

I went to high school in El Paso, Texas. I loved school, loved sports but really wasn't looking at going to college. Sure enough, my junior year, I reached out to a recruiter.

When my mother and father found out, my dad was ecstatic and immediately contacted the recruiter and the recruiter was invited to dinner.

I went to boot camp on Parris Island in '92. That was my first experience on the East Coast.

I got orders for my first duty station. It turns out that I met my husband there. We got married in '96, but the Marine Corps realized, "Wait a minute, we haven't sent this Marine overseas yet." So, I went to Okinawa unaccompanied.

I had just gotten married. My husband got out of the Marine Corps, stayed in the Reserves, had a job, wanted to go to school, and that's the whole reason he got out — he wanted to go to school.

I honestly figured I was going to hate life, but I got to Okinawa, and that really opened my eyes.

I decided to re-enlist. I called back home, and I asked him, "Thinking about re-enlisting, you good with that?" He goes, "Yeah!"

So I ended up going to Kaneohe Bay, H&S Battalion and worked at that legal shop. My son and daughter were born in Tripler Hospital.

My husband's really sacrificed a lot. With all of my movements and what have you; he wasn't able to latch on to jobs, especially when we got here to DC. He had some hard times finding a job. The kids were newborns, and he's taken a big bite of the bullet on that one.

When I was in Hawaii, I arrived there as a sergeant and left there as a staff sergeant. My staff NCOIC was experienced as MSG and as a det commander. He told me, out of any other duty assignment that was the one. That was the breadwinner.

I went through school; it was a great experience. When it came down to identifying what was available for posting, you get options, just like with anything else. I gave it to my husband and said, "where would you like to go", and I think Stockholm was his fourth choice.

I'm from the southwest, I don't appreciate cold weather. Lo and behold, what do I get? Stockholm, Sweden, for 18 months.

There have been some hard knocks. Stockholm, Sweden as a det commander, that was tough.

After Stockholm, Sweden, another 18-month post was South America — Montevideo, Uruguay. I think that was our best post as far as being on the MSG program.

I deployed for just about seven months in 2010. That was rough for the kids. They were alone with dad. Within our MOS, it's very hard to deploy unless you're in the right spot. It helps

Each area has always been an experience — just being a Marine. Coming in daily to work, helping out and enjoying the time with my Marine Corps family.

Just enjoy every single moment, every day.

Master Gunnery Sgt. Lillian McLaughlin lists the top four achievements that helped shape her career.

Faith and Confidence

My major achievement is having the faith and confidence in my family and our Marine Corps family. To have the confidence and realization that the family will be there every step of the way means a whole lot in our lives. This is a direct reflection in the working/ethical relationships we establish within the Marine Corps family as well.

Self-Improvement

My secondary achievement is seeking self-improvement, not only within myself ... but with the unit cohesion concept as a whole. Working within the Legal Community, for me —

it became a matter of having a solid base to ensure Legal Services was continually met within the Corps. The leadership I worked for realized my full potential and allowed me to pursue my personal goals (Paralegal Degree via off-duty education) and formal schooling to advance in the ranks. I was taught that whatever you are faced and or doing in life ... to do your best, at all times.

Achievement

Achievement in participation as a detachment commander in the MSG Program and a Legal Services Chief both Forward Deployed and within the LSSS's. Overcoming Achievement in facing the odds, pursuing family goals and realizing there will be hardships. Being a witness to 9/11 (attached to JA Division within the Pentagon from June 2001 to Sep 2004), it was and always has been a personal goal of mine to enjoy life every single moment/day and not to look back.

Discussion questions:

1. MGySgt McLaughlin stated, "My major achievement is having the faith and confidence in my family and our Marine Corps family." What challenges do you think she faced in order to achieve that goal?

MGySgt McLaughlin stated, "To have the confidence and realization that the family will be there every step of the way, means a whole lot in our lives." What can you do to ensure everyone in our unit has someone they can put their faith in?

Personal Reflection questions:

2. Review the definition of "personal faith." What do you place your personal faith in? How does the source of your personal faith help you persevere and prevail?
3. On a scale of 1-10, how much faith do you feel you are able to place in your family and the Marine Corps family? If your answer is less than 10, what are some reasons for your answer?. Are there any other sources of personal faith that help you build your resilience?
4. Are you the Marine that others can lean on during trying times in life?

Faith drives excellence in NCO of the quarter

Story by Lance Cpl. James Gulliver

1st Marine Division

CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. — Sgt. Mendes stepped forward with confidence, raised his fist in the air and looked around the Petco Park as thousands of people in attendance cheered for him and his accomplishments.

His uniform was better kept and his confidence was more evident than the other non-commissioned officers highlighted during the game. They each stepped forward and responded to the applause with a wave and stepped back into their ranks.

Evan Mendes, a signals intelligence operator with 1st Radio Battalion, was named non-commissioned officer of the quarter of 1st Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters Group, for his hard work and dedication as the non-commissioned officer in charge of 1st Radio Bn., Alpha Company.

The San Diego Padres faced the Philadelphia Phillies while honoring service members and recognizing non-commissioned officers of the quarter in the San Diego area from each of the armed services. Mendes, 26, from Essex Junction, Vt., looked like he could be from a Marine recruiting poster with his perfect uniform and posture as he took the field for the big moment.

The Marine Corps has thousands of NCOs. Sergeants are often referred to as ‘the backbone of the Marine Corps’. Mendes, outshined his peers by following what he believes will bring him closer to God.

“As a Christian, I try to glorify God,” said Mendes, whose life revolves around his faith. “When I do a good job or not, I’ve done it for God.”

Mendes, who was raised in a family of eight children, attributes his work ethic to his family. His mom heavily influenced Mendes’ faith and his father taught him the values of hard work and honesty by his example.

“My dad is a man of his word,” said Mendes, who is recognized as someone with an incredible amount of integrity by his peers. “When he says he is going to do something, he’ll do it. He’s also a very hard worker. I get that from him.”

Verity Mendes, Evan’s younger sister, expressed how he takes care of his family and remains close even when he is thousands of miles away. She also expressed how he acts as kind of another dad. She also describes him as a protector and leader.

“He’s a great brother,” said Verity, who sounded excited to speak about her brother, a Marine of seven years. “He’s my favorite sibling.”

He loves meeting new people, engaging with them and listening to their stories, explained Verity. She describes him as a straightforward and outgoing person who goes for what he wants.

“He’s also a very religious person,” she said. “Even in the Marines where he is a leader, he is with God.”

Mendes tries to help his fellow Marines who are Christians or whom he says might be struggling in their faith. He participates in Bible studies with Faith Warrior Ministry, a religious program for service members, and invites his friends and peers along when the opportunity arises.

“Whenever I tell him yes, he’s very happy I’m there and he’s very welcoming,” said Jacob J. Wiseman, a signals intelligence operator with 1st Radio Battalion.

Wiseman, who served with Mendes in the Radio Reconnaissance Platoon, says that he helped him become a great swimmer. He describes Mendes as someone who isn’t afraid of a challenge and likes to take everything head on.

“He’s not afraid to ask for help, but he definitely tries to do it all by himself,” said Wiseman. “He’s pretty dedicated to his work.”

He went on to describe how Mendes, whose exceptionally organized desk is distinguished by his exercise calendar, never has something bad to say about anyone. Mendes’ peers have a lot of respect for him, explained Wiseman.

“He’ll go out of his way to help you out if you need something with no questions asked,” said Kevin Alsop, a signals intelligence operator with 1st Radio Battalion.

Mendes’ peers describe him as an example of an outstanding and hardworking Marine who is well deserving of the NCO of the Quarter’s recognition. Alsop also expressed how humble Mendes is and how he doesn’t seek the recognition, but just wants to get the job done.

“He’s really driven,” Alsop said. “Once he gets something in his head, he wants to see it all the way through, no matter what.”

His hard work and determination awarded him the opportunity to be recognized on the field and meet the San Diego Padres left fielder, Will Venable. He described it as an awesome experience he wasn’t fully prepared for.

Mendes, who is also known for his athletic abilities and as a bit of a fitness freak, is in the running with other unit’s NCO’s for NCO of the Quarter of 1st Marine Expeditionary Force this week.

Discussion questions:

1. What actions displayed by Sgt Mendes stand out the most to you, and why?
2. Sgt Mendes has chosen to follow the tenets of his religion as his source of personal faith to motivate him in the pursuit of excellence. His decision to pursue excellence is one aspect of his way of moral living. Are you motivated to pursue excellence in any areas of your life? If so, what is your motivation?
3. In what ways has Sgt Mendes adopted the positive values the Marine Corps upholds?

Personal Reflection questions:

4. Review the definition of “personal faith.” What do you place your personal faith in? How much personal faith do you place there?
5. How does your personal faith help you accomplish the mission(s) in your life?

Ramadhan teaches control and commitment

Story by Cpl. Adam Korolev

Marine Corps Base Hawaii – Kaneohe Bay

JOINT BASE PEARL HARBOR-HICKAM, Hawaii - Service members, their families and civilians attended a Ramadhan service on June 26 at the Hickam Chapel aboard Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

The Islamic holiday of Ramadhan is when Muslims partake in a month long fast, to demonstrate they are disciplined enough to respect Islam's ideologies. The ceremony offered Muslims and non-Muslims a chance to commemorate Ramadhan, a time of fasting, representing one of the five pillars of Islam.

Gunnery Sgt. Jimi Khamisi, the staff non-commissioned officer in charge of Marine Wing Support Detachment 24, led the ceremony, which began with prayers in Arabic. He then explained to the audience the conduct of the month long holiday. Other service members also spoke of the lunar cycle, and how Ramadhan's place on the calendar changes every year.

Navy Chief Petty Officer Abdulhalim Jones, a chief radioman stationed at Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam, said the practice of fasting is a form of repentance during Ramadhan.

"Fasting is what we do during the month of Ramadhan," said the San Francisco native. "In the Quran, (it) says to fast during this month so we can gain self-control, (with) a closer (connection) to God and consciousness. We fast (to be) mindful of necessities and desires, such as food, thirst and our relations with our spouses. Most importantly, though, the focus is on the spiritual connection between us and our Lord."

Before sunrise, and their first of five prayers throughout the day, Muslims may eat whatever they feel will sustain them until they break their fast. They are encouraged to eat dates and drink water. The fast is then broken as the sun sets, where they are urged to eat just enough to be satisfied until the following morning. After prayers, non-Muslims with questions could speak to Sheik Ismail Elshikh, a guest speaker at the ceremony, the fast was broken at 7:18 p.m. and attendees helped themselves to a buffet.

Along with fasting, other forms of self-restraint are practiced throughout Ramadhan. According to Khamisi, hunger and thirst lead to irritability, and controlling one's temper is an important practice among Muslims.

"When you fast, you are not supposed to show anger because anger yields bad decisions," the Oxnard, Calif., native said. "The Prophet advised Muslims to always control their anger."

Khamisi credits his faith in Allah and his religion's practices to his success at Marine recruit training. Marines are required to partake in a three-day event, known as the crucible. During the crucible, Marines engage in various individual and team-building exercises, and are given little food and sleep for a total of six hours.

“When I was becoming a Marine during the crucible, I realized I was able to adapt more quickly, due to the fact I had already been in that type of situation due to Ramadhan,” Khamisi said. “As far as being a Marine goes, I think Ramadhan humbles me. I am a gunnery sergeant in the Marine Corps. But at any time, if I am not in control of my own actions, I could end up as a lance corporal, or even get kicked out. It isn't just (the consumption of) food and water you have to control, but your character. Like the Marine Corps, Ramadhan also requires honor, courage and commitment.”

Discussion questions:

1. Chief Petty Officer Abdulhalim Jones talks about how the discipline of fasting during Ramadan has helped him to gain self-control. As a group share ways you have seen people use what might be considered a spiritual or religious practice to develop their ability to be a stronger person.
2. GySgt Khamisi stated, “It isn't just (the consumption of) food and water you have to control, but your character.” What do you think he means by that? Discuss how purposely choosing to discipline yourself (diet, exercise, etc) can impact character.
3. GySgt Khamisi stated that, “When I was becoming a Marine during the crucible, I realized I was able to adapt more quickly, due to the fact I had already been in that type of situation due to Ramadhan”. Discuss how going through difficult circumstances will prepare you for future hard times.

Personal Reflection questions:

4. GySgt Khamisi identified several benefits he receives from exercising his personal faith, such as self-control, greater focus on relationships, remaining humble, and strengthening his character. Review the definition of “personal faith.” In what/whom is your personal faith? What benefits do you receive from exercising your personal faith?
5. Does your personal faith have an impact on your character? If so, how?
6. Reflect upon difficult experiences in your past. Have they served to strengthen you, build resilience, and prepare you for future hardship? If not, consider seeking help from a helping resource.
7. Does your personal faith help you to persevere through difficult times? If so, how?

Marine officer expresses himself through poetry

Story by Cpl. Ed Galo

Regimental Combat Team 6

FORWARD OPERATING BASE DELARAM II, Nimruz Province, Afghanistan - Second Lieutenant Chad Grasmuck, 33, from Angels Camp, Calif., has been writing for most of his life, but while attending college through the Marine Enlisted Commissioning Education Program, he says it helped him find relief and satisfaction.

Grasmuck, supply officer with Regimental Combat Team 6, found that writing poetry and stories greatly helped him deal with the stresses he has faced during his deployments.

He has written a book of 47 poems and is working to have his work published. He is also writing a science fiction novel based loosely on his experiences and stories from people he has met in the Marine Corps.

"I have been writing poetry since I was a kid," Grasmuck said. "I was taking a class in college about poetry where my professor, who was also my mentor, really helped me get better at writing my poetry. Because of my professor, during my second year of college, my writing became more structured. When my writing became more structured, things (in my writing) came out that I was unaware of, and it sometimes surprised me."

According to Grasmuck, his poetry book titled "by the river gods' edge", followed Dante's trip through hell, purgatory and heaven. He relates his experiences in Iraq as an infantryman, his time back in the United States and his marriage as a metaphor for that trip.

"I wanted to show a growth of the protagonist, and that through love, faith and religion you can overcome almost anything," said Grasmuck, who is a devout Catholic. "I'm very faith based in my writing. Faith carried me through war and after at home. Greek mythology and the Bible play a big role in my writing.

"Each poem is independent," he continued. "Sometimes, he is married, sometimes he's not, but the character is almost always a sergeant."

Grasmuck says he usually keeps the protagonist as a sergeant because it's the favorite rank that he's held in his 12 years in the Marine Corps.

"As far as being a Marine, that's where I feel I achieved my manhood," he added. Grasmuck is so proud of earning the rank of sergeant that the name under which he writes his works is S.G.T. Grasmuck. "All my writings are defined by my experiences as a sergeant. The name I use literally means sergeant. I spell it that way so that people think it has more meaning, but at the end of the day, it's just a throwback to the best rank in the Marine Corps."

His latest project, a science fiction novel titled “I, Grunt”, is also about combat and war. In the book, the character and his group of fighters wake up years after a war to find that the people they wanted to defend have died. While on a journey to locate and learn more about their foe, they discover who their true enemies are and must deal with the uncertainties of an adversary who is not unlike themselves.

Although Grasmuck says he never considered himself a science fiction writer, he considered the idea after hearing a eulogy at a funeral for his priest’s mother.

“The priest painted a picture of a very real person,” he said. “He didn’t say the usual ‘She was a saint, she was an angel’ that you would expect at a funeral. He told all kinds of stories about his mother that described exactly who she was.”

After hearing that, Grasmuck saw a way he could talk about things without bashing anyone for their drawbacks or limitations.

“I wanted to talk about certain things but didn’t want to blast anyone or belittle anyone,” Grasmuck said. “Someone may be a great person, but not a good tactical leader. It’s not really their fault. So I thought science fiction would be a good way to paint a good picture.”

Just before leaving on his current deployment, Grasmuck entered his book of poetry into a contest that would help him publish it. He was recently informed that he did not win the contest but still remains hopeful and says he will try to look for other contests to enter his books into.

Grasmuck has shared his work with some of the Marines he has met over the course of his career.

“I think I have read all of (his poems), or at least the ones he’s cared to share or made public,” said 1st Lt. Jeremy Laux, 33, adjutant, 2nd battalion, 11th Marine Regiment, from New Orleans.

Laux, who met Grasmuck during their time in MECEP, talks about his two favorite poems.

“One is called ‘Monsters’ and the other is called ‘Armistice’,” Laux said. “They’re my favorites for a few reasons. They’re written as well as any poem or story from any famous poet or author you’ll find in a library or on a shelf in your favorite bookstore. They’re colorful; they paint a very vivid picture in your mind of a father’s interaction with his children, and you don’t quite know where the poem is going to lead until the very end. You don’t want it to end, but the ending is perfect. And I enjoy these mostly because I can relate. I’ve got children, and I’ve personally experienced the actions and feelings he describes.”

Discussion questions:

1. Grasmuck has taken a lifelong hobby of writing and merged it with his personal faith and life experiences to possibly inspire others and pass on what he has learned. What are some ways you have seen Marines use a hobby to do something to help themselves and others develop spiritual fitness.
2. Grasmuck mentions that Greek mythology and the Bible played a big role in his writing. What kinds of things do you see are greatly influencing Marines today? Of those influences, do you think they are adding to or detracting from spiritual fitness?
3. Grasmuck stated that he followed Dante's trip through hell, purgatory and heaven as a metaphor for his experiences in Iraq as an infantryman, his time back in the United States and his marriage. Is there a story you can share with the group that you have found to be inspirational and helpful that you relate to?

Personal Reflection questions:

4. Second Lieutenant Grasmuck's chose to place his personal faith in someone greater than himself within the Catholic religion. Review the lists of influences in self and greater than self on the Spiritual Fitness infographic. From those lists, identify where you place your personal faith. What are the sources of your personal faith? How does your personal faith help you through difficult circumstances?
5. How are you currently doing in maintaining your personal faith?
6. What are some of the ways your personal faith impacts how you live?
7. Do you have any sacred texts, motivational books, or other writings that have been a source of strength for you?

Pocket-Sized Pieces of Mind: Deployed Marines keep reminders of home, luck and faith close to their hearts

Story by Sgt. Justin Shemanski
1st Marine Logistics Group

CAMP LEATHERNECK, Afghanistan - The young Marine checked his gear for the last time just a few hours before he was to depart friendly lines. The plan was to leave under the cloak of darkness, bound for yet another remote outpost in need of resupply deep in the heart of Helmand province. Regardless of the somewhat safer guise of night, the Marine knew the enemy would be watching ... waiting for the perfect opportunity to strike, as they had so many other times during his last few combat logistics patrols.

He wasn't nervous though.

In addition to the hundreds of other well-trained Marines equipped with an arsenal of some of the world's most advanced weapons systems, he had a couple more personal items to include. Perhaps even more powerful than any rifle or rocket, he made certain these items accompanied him on every mission outside the wire — reminders of home.

Wrapping a brown leather-strapped watch around his wrist and stuffing a tattered letter into the right cargo pocket of his desert Marine Pattern Utility Uniform — both gifts from a loved one back home — were always the final actions the Marine performed before heading out. As far as he was concerned, these simple reminders of life beyond the combat zones of the Middle East were all he needed to keep mission accomplishment in his sights. Upon a closer look, it appeared he was not the only one who carried such items so close to the heart.

Warriors have carried personal tokens into battle since wars have been waged, and the practice continues among the Marines deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom.

Dangling from a piece of lightly "moon-dusted" trim within a Mine Resistant Ambush Protected All-Terrain Vehicle, a set of dog tags accompanied by a small silver and green cross and a photographic metal tag with an inscription that reads "Semper Fidelis — I will always love you" is found.

The items belong to Lance Cpl. Zech Stimson, a motor transportation operator with Combat Logistics Battalion 6, 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward), who figures it never hurts to have a piece of home around for good luck.

"My wife got it made for me right before I left," said the 19-year-old native of Lapeer, Mich. "I told her I would keep it with me at all times and so far it hasn't left my sight. I also keep a photo of her with me too."

When asked why troops carry such things with them, Stimson noted memories of friends and family as a strong motivation to press through the hardships common throughout combat tours.

"I think it's a comfort thing," he said. "When things get hard, or you get a little scared, it's good to have something familiar with you to put things into perspective; reminders of good times."

Fellow CLB-6, 1st MLG (FWD) Marine Lance Cpl. Nicholas Randolph, a logistics vehicle system operator, wears a pendant given to him by his mother for good luck.

"When I was home on pre-deployment leave, my mom noticed that I had two dog tags on the same chain and she asked why," said the 21-year-old native of Wayne, W.Va.

Randolph proceeded to spin the somewhat prolific yarn to her which details how the first tag is left attached to the primary chain around the neck, and the second "bag tag" is placed within a fallen troop's jaw for recovery at a later point in time. Naturally, his mother wasn't too thrilled to hear this, so she made him a deal.

"She offered to trade a pendant that she had always kept for good luck for my second dog tag, and when I get home, if all goes well, we will trade back," said Randolph. "I haven't taken it off since. We've always been really close and by keeping it with me, it feels like she is watching over me in some way. It makes me feel more secure out here doing what we need to do."

In addition to luck, some Marines, like Lance Cpl. James Vanvalkenburg, a motor transportation operator with Bravo Company, CLB-6, 1st MLG (FWD), look no further than their own faith to safely guide them through the valley of the shadow of death.

Two religious challenge coins, which he received during pre-deployment training at Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center Twentynine Palms, Calif., have accompanied him on each of the dozen missions he has participated in since touching down in country in late January.

"I've always been pretty religious. I attend church often back home, and as often as I am able to out here depending on operational requirements," said the 28-year-old native of Athens, Ga. "This is an easy way for me to always carry the Lord's blessing with me."

"It's easy to lose touch with your faith out here and this is a durable, tangible reminder for me."

To Lance Cpl. Mark Malarkey, a heavy equipment mechanic with Alpha Company, CLB-6, 1st MLG (FWD), trusty pieces of gear in the form of haggard boots and recruit training-issued dog tags provide him with more peace of mind than any higher power or gift of good luck.

"I wore these boots during a deployment to Iraq last year which included being mortared [several] times in one month, so I make sure I wear them every time I head out here," said the native of Brooklyn Park, Minn., as he kicked his visibly worn boots against his truck. "So far, so good..."

The variations of these precious items found here are endless, but they all seem to represent one common theme. Whether it's a symbol of a higher power from the Heavens or something a little more worldly in the form of well-worn combat boots, it appears nothing is ruled out when it comes to a safe passage through Helmand province and beyond.

Discussion questions:

1. What "precious items" have you seen taken into combat or other difficult situations by Marines, and what did those items represent to them?
2. The author wrote, "When asked why troops carry such things with them, Stimson noted memories of friends and family as a strong motivation to press through the hardships common throughout combat tours." Why do you think Marines carry "precious items" into combat? How does it motivate them to push through the adversity ahead?
3. Lance Cpl. James Vanvalkenburg stated "It's easy to lose touch with your faith out here and this is a durable, tangible reminder for me." Do you agree it is easy to lose touch with your faith in a combat zone? What other times and places in life might cause a person to lose touch with their faith.
4. A theme for the Marines interviewed in this article is that they all had an item that represented safe passage through Helmand province and beyond. How do you think a person might gain strength from a physical object?

Personal Reflection questions:

5. The Marines interviewed for this article made clear their personal faith was in something greater than self: family, luck, religion. Taking a look at the infographic as a visual guide, what are some of the sources of your personal faith? 6. What are some ways to remain active in your personal faith whether deployed or in garrison? Do you have any 'precious items' you use to help you through difficult situations? If so, what are they and what do they represent?

FOUNDATIONAL VALUES

Marine Overcomes Adversity, Shows Honor, Courage, Commitment

Story by Lance Cpl. Jorge Rosales

III Marine Expeditionary Force

CAMP COURTNEY, Okinawa, Japan -- The U.S. Marine Corps lists its core values as honor, courage and commitment. These are traits engraved into Marines, but some Marines' circumstances result in these values already residing in their personalities.

Sgt. Shelly Janecke is one of those Marines. Like her brothers and sisters in the Corps, she earned the title by completing the U.S. armed forces' longest and most challenging version of recruit training. And, like her fellow Marines, she continues a transformative journey that involves subjecting herself to mental, physical and emotional stress in order to harden herself for whatever challenges the Marine Corps throws at her.

However, the challenges that may have influenced her character the most did not come from work, but from home.

Janecke, the ammunition noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the Materials and Readiness Branch, G-4, supply and logistics, III Marine Expeditionary Force, juggles being a Marine, student, instructor, and a mother to Payton, her 5 year-old daughter. There is no such thing as a break for Janecke. Sometimes life becomes overwhelming, but she always pushes on to overcome her challenges one at a time, day after day.

"My daughter is my biggest motivation," said Janecke, an Eaton Rapids, Mich., native. "Everything I do as far as school and work is so that I can give her the best options in life."

Janecke's courage to overcome the challenge of tackling single motherhood helped establish a strong foundation for her leaders and mentors to build upon.

"The good NCO's and Staff NCO's I was really lucky to have along the way have helped, and they always showed humility," said Janecke. "They did what they were supposed to do and looked out for their Marines more than anything else, and that's always what I've strived to be like."

Janecke did just that when she heard about an open instructor billet for the Lance Corporal Leadership and Ethics Seminar with III Marine Expeditionary Force Headquarters Group, III MEF.

Gunnery Sgt. Marc Rodriguez, a former drill instructor and mentor of Janecke, recognized her leadership potential and asked her if she would be interested in instructing the course.

“She is one of those Marines who naturally wants to better the Marine Corps, better her Marines, and better herself,” said Rodriguez, the operations chief with G-4 food service, III MEF.

Rodriguez believes that courage is the attribute that sets her apart from her peers.

“I believe that out of the 14 leadership traits, courage is the number one because everything else is encompassed within it,” said Rodriguez. “You need courage to be decisive, you need courage to be tactful, you need courage to be enthusiastic and Sgt. Janecke has that.”

Rodriguez explains that Janecke’s courage comes from the personal challenges that she has confronted and overcome.

“I believe the source of her courage comes from the adversity she’s been through,” said Rodriguez. “She’s a single mother. I believe she uses that as motivation, to be a great mother and be a great example. That is what courage is about.”

Discussion questions:

1. 1Sgt. Janecke values her child and this gives her the motivation to push on when times are difficult. Looking at the infographic, how might the influences within self and greater than self help Marines push through adversity? Are there some words you would add to these lists?
2. Gunnery Sgt Rodriguez attributed the character trait “courage,” to Sgt Janecke. As a group discuss this question: What is courage?
3. “What role, if any, does adversity play in creating foundational values that guide/develop a Marine’s character?”
4. Discuss how a person’s foundational values impact how they make decisions. How have you seen this demonstrated? (Give positive and negative examples)

Personal Reflection questions:

5. List the foundational values you really live by. Where do your foundational values come from? How have they helped you accomplish missions and overcome challenges in your life?
6. How do your foundational values impact how you make decisions?
7. GySgt Rodriguez believes that Sgt Janecke gained her courage through the adversities she has lived through. “Has adversity shaped any of your foundational values? If so, describe how.

8. Of the 14 Marine Corps character traits, which ones do you think your mentors and peers attribute to you?

Justice	Judgement	Dependability	Integrity	Decisiveness
Tact	Initiative	Enthusiasm	Bearing	Unselfishness
Courage	Knowledge	Loyalty	Endurance	

The Values of a Marine

Story by Sgt Jon Holmes
6th Marine Corps District

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. - As a young man, Charles Krulak respected the values of his father – selflessness, moral courage and integrity. His father, Marine Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak, imparted in his son the same values introduced to him as a Marine.

Following in his father’s footsteps and making the transformation to become a United States Marine, Charles Krulak embodied these values. They are still a part of who he is today.

My father instilled in his three boys a solid foundation of trying to be men of character—being selflessness, having great moral courage and having integrity,” said Krulak, the 31st Commandant of the Marine Corps. “At the same time, taking those values and seeking to do the most good for the most people.”

That final piece led Krulak to his current post as President of Birmingham-Southern College. A position he says is one of the most challenging of his life.

Mismanagement and a growing debt foreshadowed the college’s future. Budget cuts cost students their educational programs and professors their jobs. Dropping enrollment, a demoralized faculty and a community that lost confidence in the school posed additional problems making Birmingham-Southern College’s future uncertain.

One of Krulak’s first decisions as the new college president was to refuse a salary.

“They were pretty surprised when I did that,” he said.

He also turned down the university vehicle and even lived in a dorm instead of the Birmingham-Southern College President’s house.

“Why,” Krulak asked. “Why turn down the salary? Because of the sacrifice everyone else had gone through. If all of the sudden I came in and had this salary and drove around in a college car and lived in the house of the president, I wouldn’t be doing what all Marine do – setting the example.”

Krulak continued that example by visiting every classroom on campus and meeting with the faculty, staff and students. He even spent time in the cafeteria serving food to the students- something he did for his Marines as an officer.

Former students who have returned to serve as staff to the college notice his actions.

“I was most impressed with his relationship with his students,” said Katie Glenn, the executive assistant to Krulak and graduate of Birmingham-Southern College. “He knows

them all and genuinely cares. He even delivered cookies to the students, just as he did for his Marines. He really cared about his Marines, and here, he cares about his employees and students.

For Krulak, his actions are not unusual. They are the actions of a man of character. They are from the values of his father and the Marines past, present and future who are bound together by their core values and ethos.

“You hear time and time again the Marine Corps made you the individual you are,” Krulak explained. “That transformation is forever. That ethos is in all of us for life.”

Discussion questions:

1. Charles Krulak’s values come from his father and the Corps. Take a look at the infographic and locate these two influences in the list “Greater than Self.” As a group, look at the other words in the Self and Greater than Self lists and discuss how a Marine can derive foundational values from them.
2. As a group, identify how specific foundational values build resiliency and the ability to persevere and prevail. Secondly, discuss possible sources for those values.
3. What can a Marine do if one of his/her foundational values is negatively impacting the ability to build resiliency and to persevere and prevail?

Personal Reflection questions:

4. What are the sources of your foundational values? List your foundational values and record their sources. Use the Infographic as a visual guide.
5. Of the foundational values that are currently guiding you, are they assisting you in building resiliency and your ability to persevere and prevail in difficult situations? If they are not, what do you think you should do?
6. What are the most helpful foundational values you learned from a parent or other mentor?
7. Are there areas of your life where you think you might benefit from a stronger application of your foundational values? If so, how might you accomplish that stronger application to those areas?
8. Charles Krulak’s value of “commitment” led him to refuse a salary, sleep in a dorm, and other actions that some may think odd, but others noticed as a positive trait. What actions do your foundational values lead you to? What do you do if others think those actions are odd?

From Queens to Marines

Story by Lance Cpl. Joseph Abrego
Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni

Brown eyes, six-feet tall and an athletic build, all traits of a man who grew up in the borough of Queens in New York, New York, decided average wasn't good enough and joined the world's greatest fighting force, the United States Marine Corps.

At 21 years of age, Cpl. Darius Jones, intelligence analyst with Marine Aircraft Group 12 on Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan, said his 16 years of growing up in Queens wasn't always the easiest of times, and although his family situation wasn't always right, he didn't see that as a reason to stop from bettering himself.

"The neighborhood was a cesspool of violence and corruption," said Jones. "On top of that, my father was in and out for years at a time leaving my mom with the sole responsibility of raising me. I had a chronic habit of getting in trouble with my friends who I thought were cool because they rebelled against authority."

Jones said one morning he had gone through a phase and identity crisis that teenagers have where he had no idea what he wanted to do and seriously considered his future.

"I found the passion and the drive to do better," said Jones. "Especially when I was growing up in bad parts of New York, and I knew that wasn't where I wanted to be."

Always making the best of every situation, Jones found a chance to put himself in a position where he can control his own success and the outcome of his actions.

After moving to Texas to finish his education, Jones came across an opportunity he couldn't turn down leading him to where he is at today.

"I saw a group of Marines when I was coming home from school one day," said Jones. "They were running back to their recruiting substation, and they looked tight. They looked aggressive, calm, collected, and moved me in a way the Marine Corps commercials couldn't. They were running in formation aligned to the right, and left and singing this cadence. The cadence just spoke to me. It spoke straight to my soul, and I knew that being a Marine is what I wanted to do with my life."

As a teenager Jones went to boot camp where he emerged a private in the Marine Corps. He went on to work his way up to Lance Cpl., a rank which he spent 8 months as before getting an opportunity to be meritoriously promoted.

After meritoriously earning the rank of corporal, Jones began to fill his leadership role, take charge of his junior Marines and set the example of how Marines should carry themselves.

“Cpl. Jones is what every senior leader wants in a junior Marine,” said Gunnery Sgt. Michael Merrill, intelligence chief for MAG-12. “A display of professionalism in all action that is taken and sought out after. His heart is in the development of every Marine from lowest rank to the top of the ladder. He personally strives to find ways to improve every situation for himself, his Marines, section, unit and Corps. He’s a very quiet fellow with a devotion to his organization and country deeper than any body of water.”

Jones has taken everything life has thrown at him and still manages to succeed and move closer to reaching his goals of being not only the best Marine he can be but to be the best person he can be.

“Cpl. Jones has a lot of ideas and dreams,” said Lance Cpl. Stephanie T. Allen, intelligence analyst and with MAG-12 on MCAS Iwakuni. “He is one of the few people I know that can make a dream a reality. He not only pushes himself to his limits and beyond, but makes sure he pushes his junior Marines. That, in every way, affects the morale and motivation of myself and other Marines I know in a positive aspect.”

Allen said the corporal embodies the Marine Corps values of honor, courage, commitment, and dedicates his time to bettering himself as well as his junior Marines by upholding himself to the highest standards possible throughout everyday life.

Jones takes what he’s learned through hardships and incorporates them into teaching points where he can help Marines learn to work through their struggles. He recently held a shop physical training exercise at the obstacle course followed by Professional Military Education on leadership.

“The obstacle course was the best way I could get the Marines into that combat mindset,” said Jones. “It was a modified obstacle course where they had two bowls of water that they had to maneuver through the obstacles. Sometimes we find problems where we have to be creative and get outside of our comfort zone. The bowl of water represents those problems that we have to maneuver around.”

Testing his Marines and how they handled problems, Jones analyzed their strengths and weaknesses to find where he could help them grow.

“My time with Cpl. Jones has taught me to always look at the brighter side of the situation,” said Merrill. “I have witnessed how his daily display for passion, ethics and motivation inspires all who he encounters in a positive direction.”

Merrill said Jones is one of the most unique Marines that he’s lead. When it comes to Jones’ commitment to the Marine Corps and his fellow Marines, Jones has a drive that surpasses his ability, and he can’t wait to see what he does.

Jones' biggest lesson that he strives to teach, not only to Marines but to anyone who can benefit from it, is to always look past what's stopping them from getting where they want and make their own path to get there.

"If you're struggling with anything, just remember there's always somebody doing worse," said Jones. "There's somebody in a worse position that wishes they could be in your position. There's a solution to your problems, and you can move forward and do bigger and better things in your life."

Everyone has different ways to cope with stress and overcome their own obstacles. Jones found ways that helped him in the worst of situations and used them to get where he is today.

"No matter how low I was in life, I always saw the light at the end of the tunnel," said Jones. "Music and my mom are what helped me through my issues. I'm grateful for those two things in life. Without those two things, I don't know if I would be here today."

Discussion questions:

1. The Marine Corps foundational values are Honor, Courage and Commitment. Discuss as a group how Cpl Jones' choices, actions and character reflect these values? What other foundational values seem to drive Cpl Jones?
2. Honor is a Marine Corps core value and it serves as a foundational value for every Marine. How does Cpl Jones exemplify this core value in his life?

Personal Reflection questions:

3. How do your choices, actions, and character reflect Marine Corps' foundational values of Honor, Courage and Commitment?
4. Which of your foundational values are most helpful to you when you are struggling?

Marine uses MCMAP to influence others

Story by Cpl. Paul Zellner

III Marine Expeditionary Force

OKINAWA, Japan - A tactical data network specialist with Communications Platoon, Headquarters and Service Company, Combat Logistics Battalion 3, based out of Okinawa and currently attached to 1st Marine Logistics Group (Forward), is using his Marine Corps martial arts program skills and family values to lead fellow Marines to the next level.

After his shift ends every afternoon, Cpl. Alfred J. Joseph, a 22-year-old native of Waterville, Maine, can be found at Camp Dwyer's Marine Corps Martial Arts Program pit, teaching Marines the skills they need to progress in the program.

"I became an instructor so I could help the other Marines grow as I did," said Joseph. "I think MCMAP helps build a lot of confidence in Marines while teaching them new skills."

Joseph takes his duties as a MCMAP instructor as seriously as he does his normal duties as a data network specialist and as a Marine noncommissioned officer.

"He's the first person who will lend a helping hand for anything, no matter how it inconveniences him," said Cpl. Gregory M. Baxley, a friend and fellow tactical data network specialist for Comm. Platoon, H&S Company, CLB-3. "I haven't seen a limit to the lengths he'll go to help someone out. He's a great leader who junior Marines can look up to because he leads by example."

Joseph says his motivation comes from what awaits him at home, when he's done assisting others here. Joseph is known by his peers and superiors to be reliable and believes his drive comes from a strong family bond.

A meaningful tattoo on his right arm is a reminder of his responsibility to the two special ladies who make him the man he is today.

"My wife and daughter are the driving force behind everything I do," said Joseph. "They're why I do what I do."

Joseph's strong family background at home plays a major role in how he cares for his Marine Corps family.

"We're a very close family ... my mom and dad still live happily in the same house my identical twin brother and I grew up in," said Joseph. "He's out living the American college-kid dream, and I'm proud of him for that because he's as dedicated to his choices as I am to mine."

Joseph's selflessness and dedication to those he cares for extends from his own home to the Afghan office where he assists his junior Marines and anyone else who needs help.

“The way I was raised, our community was one big family,” said Joseph. “You have the family you were born into and the one you were sworn into. You have to do your best to support both.”

As a leader, his peers and superiors agree he is motivated and someone who all ranks can look up to because of his work ethic and enthusiasm.

“Joseph is motivated and has the courage to take on any task no matter how challenging,” said Sgt. Ryan B. Jasman, data chief for Comm. Platoon, H&S Company, CLB-3. “He’s someone who not only the junior Marines can look up to, but also Marines higher ranking than him because of his leadership skills.”

Joseph’s friends, family and fellow Marines know that no matter their problem, great or small, Joseph is someone they can rely upon. Whether for instruction in the MCMAP pit or elsewhere as a friend, he is a brother-in-arms and a leader.

Discussion questions:

1. What are some of Cpl Joseph’s foundational values? How do those values impact his choices, actions and character?
2. Cpl Joseph leads Marines by example and is willing to stay after his shift to teach MCMAP. What values would guide someone to go above and beyond normal work hours to grow and develop others?
3. Cpl Joseph was raised to believe that, “You have the family you were born into and the one you were sworn into. You have to do your best to support both.” As a group discuss similar mottos or creeds that inspire Marines to live out the values that build resiliency and the ability to persevere and prevail in difficult situations.

Personal Reflection questions:

4. What foundational values do you have that help you achieve any goals you might set for yourself?
5. Are there any foundational values that you have that may be negatively impacting your ability to persevere and prevail in difficult situations?
6. Are there any foundational values you would like to adopt? If so, why ?
7. Is there someone in your unit you look up to that parallels Cpl Joseph? If so, what do they do that inspires you and what foundational values do you see reflected in their actions?

Marine officer leads with the values learned through Scouts

1st Marine Division

Story by Cpl. Joseph Scanlan

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – From core values to outdoor skills, Boy Scouts and Marines have much in common. A platoon commander serving with 1st Combat Engineer Battalion uses the Boy Scout values and skills he was raised by to lead Marines today.

Growing up as a Scout, 1st Lt. Michael Cooley was taught the values of good conduct, respect and honesty. As the years went on, he learned lifelong lessons in outdoor skills, first aid, proper manners and citizenship skills.

Cooley started Scouting when he was in kindergarten. Unlike many of his peers, he chose to continue Scouting and became an Eagle Scout when he was in high school. Even when he was in college, he volunteered at a local troop as an assistant scoutmaster.

“The thing I like most about the scouts is being outdoors,” said Cooley, a native of Algonquin, Ill. “I enjoy hiking, camping, fishing and shooting weapons. Also, we take the core values we learn growing up as a Scout and take them with us into the community and into the Marine Corps.”

Before he joined the Corps, Cooley felt a void after being involved with Scouts for so long. After he enlisted, he felt he had filled that void by becoming part of a brotherhood and something greater than himself.

“I come from a long line of family in the military from World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam,” Cooley said. “The transition of going from high school to the Marine Corps was kind of easy for me because I grew up with a structured life.”

After serving as an enlisted Marine since 2000, Cooley felt the need to lead at a different capacity and commissioned as a second lieutenant during 2010.

Now his son is a Cub Scout, and Cooley is involved in the Scouting community again as a den leader for his son.

“What he does is very honorable,” said Maj. Paul Bock, the former operations officer for 1st CEB. “He doesn’t have much free time because he’s always working with his Marines to prepare for this upcoming deployment.”

Like being a platoon commander, Cooley keeps accountability of his Scouts, develops plans to keep his Scouts engaged in recreational activities and gives classes on various outdoor skills.

“He’s with the Scouts every week and is very involved in what they do,” said Bock, a native of Frankestown, N.H. “I respect and appreciate what he does because I know it is an extensive commitment and requires a lot of time and dedication.”

Leadership is one of the many skills taught to Scouts. Cooley has led Marines both as an enlisted Marine and as a commissioned officer for 13 years.

“I really enjoy setting the example and leading Marines,” Cooley said. “I love being able to watch boys become men in the Marine Corps and watch children grow into men in Cub Scouts. I find complete happiness and enjoyment in mentoring and being there for people.”

Despite an extensive pre-deployment training schedule, Cooley plans to continue being a den leader for his son until he deploys with 1st CEB to Afghanistan during the fall.

Discussion questions:

1. 1st Lt. Michael Cooley adopted some of his foundational values from his time in scouting. Describe any foundational values that were formed in your childhood. How do those foundational values impact your choices, actions and character today?
2. What foundational values have you observed in the choices, action and character of good leaders?
3. 1st Lt. Cooley not only lives out his foundational values, but he also leads with them and shares them with the next generation. As a group discuss how you might share your foundational values to help the next generation of Marines build resiliency and the ability to preserve and prevail in difficult situations.
4. What are some ways people develop their foundational values? How do these ways differ and which one is most effective? How does one go about learning values from a person who is currently living them out?

Personal Reflection questions:

5. What are the sources of your foundational values?
6. Do your foundational values help the next generation of Marines build resiliency and the ability to persevere and prevail and difficult situations? If so, how?
7. Who is someone like 1st Lt Cooley whose foundational values have had an impact on you? Who do you look up to right now as a positive role model with foundational values you admire?

MORAL LIVING

15 Years of good conduct medals

Story by Cpl. Brady Wood

Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION BEAUFORT, S.C. - Good conduct is a pillar of the United States Marine Corps, a foundation of honor, courage and commitment.

A good conduct medal is awarded to each Marine every three years as long as they uphold the standards and regulations of the Uniform Code of Military Justice and do not receive any Non-Judicial Punishments within those three years. Therefore, if a Marine receives an NJP within those three years, the clock starts over.

Throughout her 15 years of service, Gunnery Sgt. Latrice Todd, the staff noncommissioned officer-in-charge of Marine Aviation Logistics Squadron 31 aviation supply response division, has proven that it is possible to stay on the right path and not sway from what is right.

"It's taking what your parents taught you and applying it to your career in the Marine Corps," said Todd. "It's those ethics and morals that help you uphold the fact that, as Marines, we do right even when no one is looking, and hold ourselves to higher standards than others."

The Corps' values of honor, courage and commitment help each Marine tune their personal moral compass.

But often, being a part of a group or organization encourages one to think of more than themselves and helps strengthen the basic values foundation laid in childhood.

"Most Marines will pay attention to how the people within their own shop behave and try to take the best part of each one and apply it to themselves," said Todd.

Todd warns that while emulating others can be effective in making good behavior decisions, it's smart to not follow someone doing the wrong thing.

"The bad part is that some Marines might see something that isn't considered right from someone who is a higher rank and think 'since it's OK for them then it must be OK for me,'" said Todd.

Remembering the drive to do the proper thing just because one should isn't enough; personal conduct affects what happens in the workspace and in one's career.

“With bad conduct you may have more formations and you might have to micromanage a little more. By the actions of one Marine everybody has to sit there and suffer for a while,” said Gunnery Sgt. Mauricio Gallego, the squadron gunnery sergeant for Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron.

All Marines are taught how to conduct themselves. These teachings should also be applied when one is on liberty.

“Some people believe that doing what’s right when no one is looking while at work is enough,” said Master Gunnery Sgt. Curt Denham, the operations chief for Headquarters and Service Battalion aboard Marine Corps Recruit Depot Parris Island. “A proper Marine would know that doing what is right even when no one is looking is continuous, whether you’re on or off duty.”

Being the recipient of five good conduct medals, Todd credits success to the support she receives from her family.

"My main motivation was my two girls and my immediate family," said Todd, a native of Birmingham, Ala. "They have supported me every step of the way. If it wasn't for them I don't think I would be able to do the things I do."

Throughout life most people personify qualities and ideas that are both taught and observed. These qualities affect our behavior and conduct.

The way people conduct themselves not only affects what others think about them, but it also affects the decisions that are made and the consequences of those decisions.

Discussion questions:

1. Gunnery Sgt. Todd’s parents and two girls were a source for her moral living and decision making processes. Take a look at the infographic and review the two sets of influences (self and greater than self) and discuss how a person’s moral decision making can potentially be sourced from each one.
2. Todd states, “A proper Marine would know that doing what is right even when no one is looking is continuous, whether you’re on or off duty.” As a group discuss whether you agree with Todd and, if so, what are some of the challenges to living this out.

Personal Reflection questions:

3. Todd states, "It's taking what your parents taught you and applying it to your career in the Marine Corps...It's those ethics and morals that help you uphold the fact that, as Marines, we do right even when no one is looking, and hold ourselves to higher standards than others." Discuss as a group how to become the kind of person GySgt Todd describes.?
4. What source(s) guide(s) your moral living and decision making?
5. Do you have a strong motivation for pursuing moral living? If so, what is it? How do our prior mistakes shape our present day moral living and future decision making?

Growing Pains

Story by Sgt. Ian Leones
Marine Forces Reserve

Samuel L. Posey is no stranger to trouble, much to the dismay of his mother Pamela. He recalls a time in the seventh grade when he was hanging out at Quail Pointe apartments in Spartanburg, South Carolina, a place his mother had warned him not to be.

“I ended up in the middle of a shootout,” said Posey, a 22-year-old with dark black hair and an easy-going smile. “When I got home, I didn’t tell my mom. She asked, ‘Where have you been?’ I said, ‘nowhere,’ with my heart beating out of my chest. The next day, it was on the news and my mom came to me saying, ‘I know you were over there.’ It was like she sensed something I didn’t.”

Eventually, Posey told his mother the truth and took her punishment.

“My mom didn’t play games,” Posey said. “She was a strong woman and she wanted to teach me to be a good person, but not to be a pushover.”

By the time he reached middle school, Posey had witnessed drugs, violence and the gamut of troubles that come with living in a rough neighborhood.

Posey, now a lance corporal in the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve and a rifleman with Company I, 3rd Battalion, 25th Marine Regiment, 4th Marine Division, Marine Forces Reserve, believes these experiences have shaped the man he has become and given him a reason to give back to the community.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, the middle child of three boys, Posey bounced around between New York and Spartanburg growing up. The son of an abusive father, Posey witnessed his mother getting beat and took a few beatings as well.

“Every time my dad would fight us, we would be out on the street,” Posey said. “But my mother was no bum. She would get a job to support us and soon enough we’d be back.”

To escape this environment, Posey’s aunt and uncle, Joanne and L.C. Rogers, would take Posey and raise him for months at a time in Spartanburg. Eventually, Posey’s mom left his father and moved to Spartanburg where she remarried.

“I did have a lot of hatred for my dad for a long time, but after a while I learned to let it go,” Posey said. “He wasn’t the best dad in the world, but if it weren’t for him I wouldn’t have met the people I met or became the person that I am.”

Even though Posey didn’t always have his parents around, he had parental figures in his life like his aunt and uncle.

“They taught me to be a ‘stand-up guy,’” Posey said. “They taught me to carry myself in a manner that, even though I didn’t have much, showed people that I knew how to act right.”

After graduating high school, Posey attended Morris College in Sumter, South Carolina.

“When I went to college, I was rowdy,” Posey said. “I was this kid from the hood who still hadn’t grown up.”

Towards the end of his first year of college, Posey got into a physical altercation with another student. After that fight, Posey came to the realization that he needed to mature and college was not the place he was going to do it.

“I asked myself, ‘Why am I doing this?’” Posey said. “It was the end of the school year and I knew I couldn’t come back next semester because of my grades and my attitude. I didn’t want my mama to ask, ‘Well, what are you going to do next?’”

Posey headed to a Marine Corps recruiting office.

“I remember I left my house in the middle of the day,” Posey said. “I went down to the mall and went to the recruiter’s office. I didn’t talk about it at all, I just went there.”

Posey couldn’t sign the papers that day, so he came back the next day, and this time he brought his mother as a witness.

“I wanted her to see me do it,” Posey said. “She just sat beside me with big eyes while I signed the papers.”

Attracted to the ideals of the Marine Corps, Posey signed a contract for the Marine Corps Reserve as an infantryman.

“I liked the fact that I had to earn the title, it wasn’t given to me.” Posey said.

While boot camp proved to be tough, Posey channeled the lessons he had learned growing up to get through it.

“I knew I would make it because of my childhood,” Posey said. “I knew no matter how bad it got, I had always been through worse.”

Having been in the Marine Corps Reserve for three years, Posey says he has grown from the experience.

“I’ve grown a lot compared to where I was,” Posey said. “My decision making is really different than what it was before. The fact is that someone can actually die in this job because of my failure to do something correctly or my inattention to detail. This has really changed how I look at other things in life.”

Other Marines in Posey's platoon have also noticed how he has grown as a Marine.

"I've known Posey for three years, since he got here," said Cpl. Robert D. Ray, a team leader with Co. I, 3/25. "He's a great Marine who is willing to learn and he excels at what he does."

Being in the Reserve Component, Posey has an opportunity to serve his community when he is not serving his country. Posey has been dancing with a group called Dance Over Everything, which helps less fortunate kids channel their frustrations through dance.

"We go out to schools so we can show these kids there is another way," Posey said. "Why not take that anger and frustration you have inside and put it into something constructive. They are young and might go out and do something stupid, but there is always time to fix it and grow up to be somebody."

Posey is now working toward an associate's degree in business marketing at Limestone College in Gaffney, South Carolina. As he looks to the future, he only hopes that his contributions make an impact on others.

"By the end of everything I do, I want to be able to say I made a difference," Posey said. "When someone younger who looks up to you asks you the question of what you did when you were younger, what can you tell them? You can tell them you were wild, drank, smoked and were out thugging in the streets. How many people get to say they served their country?"

Discussion questions:

1. Growing up in an environment that exposed him to dangerous and illegal gang activity, Posey eventually made a decision to pursue a safer, better life which led to his joining the Marine Corp. Discuss as a group what you think makes the difference between a person who chooses to pursue a better life as Posey did, or become a person who gets pulled into a life of illegal activity?
2. Discuss as a group how we can know what moral living looks like and pursue it? What are some of the potential sources for moral living? (Look at the two sets of influences, self and greater than self, on the infographic.)

Personal Reflection questions:

3. Posey stated, “My decision making is really different than what it was before. The fact is that someone can actually die in this job because of my failure to do something correctly or my inattention to detail.” Has your decision making changed over time? If so, what caused the change? Are you regularly reflecting upon and evaluating your past decisions in order to inform your current and future decisions? How can you use your past experiences and decisions to shape your decisions about how you will live your life?

Survival, celebration: Sergeant major retires

Story by Cpl. Katherine Solano
II Marine Expeditionary Force

CAMP LEJEUNE, N.C. — Three decades of service and faithful marriage, nine deployments and two tours on recruiting duty only skims the surface of one sergeant major's career.

The retirement ceremony for Sgt. Maj. Herbert Wayne Wrench, the sergeant major for 2nd Marine Logistics Group, took place aboard Camp Lejeune, N.C., March 16.

Two children, a grandson and countless friends surrounded the path and saturated the experiences leading to Wrench's retirement.

The site of the event itself, Marston Pavilion, was filled with family in suits and dresses, Marines in uniform, and retired, decades-old friends in motorcycle garb. The hour-long event was less of a traditional ceremony and more of a celebration, packed with anecdotes and stories that can only come from people who survived through years of war, service, dedication and hardship, and it celebrated love and good times together.

The tear-jerking moment came when Wrench spoke of how he and his family made it through the trials of the past few years. Diagnosed with stage-four cancer, Wrench is still undergoing maintenance chemotherapy. He credits his strength, in large part, to an unwavering faith, but he says the support flowing in from his family and friends was priceless, too.

"Whenever I was having a bad day, a friend just knew to call," said Wrench. "It's been the true test of friends. Some of them didn't even know I had cancer, they just called on the right day. During the five months of the initial chemo I had to go through, there were a lot of phone calls at just the right time."

Solid friendship was a consistent theme during the speeches, as well as when talking to Wrench's closest acquaintances before the ceremony.

"Everybody in this room, the extended family, the extended friend network, everybody prayed, everybody thought good thoughts, everybody cared," said Col. Mark Hollahan, the commanding officer of 2nd MLG, during his speech, specifically about the time following the cancer diagnosis. "The fact that [Wayne is] sitting here as a healthy man is a part of the investment of the strength of heart, undying faith, and a lot of love."

The devotion and love pouring forth from those who came to send Wrench ashore following a successful career was a testament to his strong character and his solid convictions.

“He’s the conscience of the regiment,” said Hollahan, a native of Atlanta. “He’s the guy who makes us do the right thing all the time. There’s no special ‘Wayne Wrench’ way of doing business. There’s the way the Marine Corps taught you, and he holds you to the standard.”

The stories came spilling out from both Hollahan and Wrench, with an emphasis on motorcycle riding, a favorite hobby of Wrench’s. Hollahan even joked that Wrench manages to keep his bike up on two wheels “most of the time.”

Wrench took the time to recognize a number of individuals in the crowd, many of them retired Marines. The cracks about riding, recruiting stories and recently-acquired beards lasted for much of the ceremony, but Wrench brought it all back home to close it out.

“I couldn’t have asked for any better,” said Wrench, a native of Fayetteville, N.C. “I couldn’t have asked for better friends, associates, better family members, extended family members. My door is always open at home for everybody. I’ve got a local number, a local home. I’m not leaving this place.”

Wrench spoke of his biggest supporter, his wife of almost 30 years, Jo Ann, many times.

“I appreciate her support for all these years,” he said during a meeting a few days before his retirement. “She is the backbone of the family and my career. She is the reason I’ve made it to where I am.”

Many who retire go on to start a second career, or to find a job that encompasses their hobbies. It’s not the case for Wrench.

“My intent is to ‘just’ retire and enjoy life,” Wrench said.

Riding motorcycles with Jo Ann and spending as much time outdoors as possible with his three-year-old grandson, Isaiah, are at the top of his retirement to-do list.

“[Isaiah’s] the one who’s gonna keep me energetic for the next 120 years,” he added.

In true fun-loving, humorous, down-to-earth Wayne Wrench fashion, he concluded his retirement speech with an invigorating “Semper Fidelis, peace!”

Discussion questions:

1. Sgt Maj Wrench is described as “the conscience of the regiment,” and “the guy who makes us do the right thing all the time.” Who in your unit would you describe in a similar manner? Is this a person who could serve as a source to guide your moral living and decision making?

2. The author mentioned that solid friendship was a consistent theme during the speeches at the retirement ceremony that day. Discuss the role of solid friendships when it comes to moral living.
3. Sgt Maj Wrench displayed strong character and solidly held beliefs, principles and values during his 30 years of service. Discuss as a group the relationship between a person's beliefs, principles and values, and their moral living.

Personal Reflection questions:

4. What are your sources for moral living? How do they guide you and your decision making processes? How do you reflect your moral living within your unit?
5. Do you currently have solid friends or family that guide you in moral living and decision making? If not, are you aware of available resources, if you wanted guidance?

The single military father: A balance of nobility

Story by Cpl. Thomas Mudd

Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center, Twenty Nine Palms

When Gunnery Sgt. Ira Heide first enlisted in the Marine Corps he never imagined he would become a father. As he quickly rose through the ranks, his focus was on being an exemplary Marine and having children wasn't ever in the cards. Everything changed at 4:01 a.m. the day before Halloween, when his son, Jessen, was born and he held him for the first time. Military careers change, as do family dynamics, but in the years to come, Heide would learn to master the craft of balancing the responsibilities of a Marine Corps gunnery sergeant and those of a single father.

"I didn't know what to expect, to be honest," explained Heide. "I always told myself that I never wanted kids. I didn't think that I was going to be prepared for it. The first time I held him everything sank in. It clicked. I'll never forget that feeling for the rest of my life."

Marines adapt to and overcome any challenge thrown their way. From the moment they step on the yellow footprints, Marines are taught an unwavering commitment to honor and doing what's right.

Heide was born in a small town in Utah and joined the Marine Corps believing it was the best fit for him. Feeling drawn to the brotherhood by which Marines are bound, he made a career out of his profession. He then took the experiences he learned from his time in Corps and applied them to all facets of his life.

Heide's primary military occupational specialty is fire-direction controller but throughout his career he has fulfilled many other billets and responsibilities such as working in civil affairs, as a combat instructor and staff academy instructor.

"What I consider to be achievements are some of the lessons I've learned," Heide said. "I have a better sense of self-worth, more confidence in my ability to do day-to-day tasks whether it's work-wise or personal."

After 16 years of service and seven years of fatherhood, Heide has strived to find the best way to manage his duties as a Marine and his obligations as a parent.

"It's kind of hard, you know, being a single father," Heide said. "You have to have a healthy balance. I go to work and then I leave it there. When I go home, that time is for him. I don't bring [work] with me. That is the biggest key to balancing the two and I think the biggest problem with some people, they can't do family things, it's just work, work, work."

Heide has worked hard throughout his Marine Corps career to keep the ideals of a good Marine and leader close to heart. The lessons he learned throughout his time in the Corps helped him overcome many of the challenges he now faces as a father.

“It’s helped me on a morality stand point,” Heide remarked. “What’s right and what’s wrong and what I expect out of my son. It has also helped me to be more compassionate. That is a big one I feel that our society today can be uncompassionate. The Marine Corps has definitely pulled me in that direction.”

Heide’s grasp of how other people think and his exposure to a myriad of psychologically, culturally and socially diverse Marines has given him the patience to be an empathetic parent.

“It allows me to be more understanding. We work with so many different people with mentalities, different backgrounds, not everyone is going to have the same thought process I do,” Heide said. “I also have to remember that my son is a little boy. There are a lot of things he doesn’t know. He’s going to have his moments and it took a lot for me to realize that he doesn’t think a certain way and the Marine Corps has definitely helped me work on that.”

Even before the Marine Corps, Heide was taught the importance of determination and a hard work. The experiences he had growing up and the lessons imparted upon him as a child helped him develop his outlook on being a thoughtful and effective father.

“To be honest, I never knew my natural father. I had my step-dad but my parents worked a lot,” Heide said. “When it comes down to it, I think the biggest father figure I had in my life was my grandfather. He was a World War II vet and a good man. He imparted a lot of good things on me like manners and an innate drive to be something and do something.”

Heide has worked hard to pass these values and ideals on to his son the same way his grandfather passed them on to him. Heide believes it is his responsibility as Jessen’s father, to raise him to one day be a good man.

“In my opinion, a dad needs to raise a boy,” Heide said. “I could never understand how, as a man, you can walk away from your own blood. I couldn’t imagine not being an active part of who will one day become.”

Heide makes a point to take Jessen to parks and spends time playing games and building epic projects out of Legos. At times, they spend hours together in the garage working on a shared passion, repairing and working on cars. All of this is part of a conscious effort to give his son the things Heide did not have growing up.

“I try to expose him to things that I never really got to do,” Heide said. “I try not to spoil him but I still want to give him the things that I never had growing up. I definitely want to impart on him that being a hard worker is a good thing.”

When Heide talks about his son, beaming with pride he describes a child that is bright, kind and thoughtful. He explains that even at the age of seven, Jessen excels in his mechanical skills and likes figuring out how to take things apart and building them anew. To Heide, his son’s potential opportunities are vast and he is determined to show him that he can aspire to anything.

“I want him to grow up and do what makes him happy,” Heide explained. “I don’t expect him to join the military or anything like that. If he keeps things up, I can see him going to college and doing something pretty spectacular with his life.”

Discussion questions:

1. GySgt Heide states that in regards to being a single father, “It’s helped me on a morality stand point...What’s right and what’s wrong and what I expect out of my son”. Discuss how becoming responsible for other people can cause you to take moral decision making more seriously.
2. The author states that, “Heide has worked hard to pass these values and ideals on to his son the same way his grandfather passed them on to him. Heide believes it is his responsibility as Jessen’s father, to raise him to one day be a good man.” What could leaders do to help their subordinates in moral decision making?

Personal Reflection questions:

3. What are your sources for moral living? How do they guide you in your decision making processes?
4. Who is currently mentoring you on moral living and good decision making? To whom are you passing along what have learned?
5. There was a point at which GySgt Heide decided to do what his moral decision making process informed him was best and take on the responsibility to raise his son. Is there a major decision point you are currently facing? If so, how will your past experiences, including advice from others, factor in your decision?
6. What relationships in your life currently challenge you to pursue moral living?

Drill Instructor a role model for recruits

Story by Cpl. Walter D. Marino II

Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego

SAN DIEGO - He was the first in his family to join the military and since his enlistment, two of his siblings have followed his footsteps. Sgt. Juan E. Duque, senior drill instructor, Platoon 1041, Company C, says he was a role model for his younger brother and older sister who have both joined the service.

“My sister definitely joined because I pushed her,” said Duque, a Medellin, Columbia native. “My brother played the same sports as me and looked up to me as well. He joined right after high school.”

Now a drill instructor, Duque has transformed his position as family role model to a role model for a recruit platoon. Although the number of people is higher, it appears Duque is leaving a lasting positive impression on the recruits aboard Marine Corps Recruit Depot San Diego, Nov. 2.

After selecting Recruit Troy G. Redman, Plt. 1041, as the guide, Duque has pulled him aside numerous times to give Redman advice on leadership and how to be a role model to the other recruits.

Redman explained that because he is only 18 years old many of the other recruits are older than him and it was stressful to try and lead them.

“My senior (drill instructor) is a role model for me. He told me that they all look at me and the recruits are going to do what I do,” said Redman. “He told me that instead of doing things for myself it’s more about working with and pushing the recruits.”

During his drill instructor career, Duque has had three honor platoons, received the Band of Brothers Award three times, awarded two Navy and Marine Corps Achievement Medals and was recently voted Moral Leader for his current cycle of recruits.

The respect doesn’t end in the recruit’s eyes, fellow drill instructors also feel Duque is an excellent leader who always puts taking care of fellow Marines first.

“He takes care of his team,” said Staff Sgt. Michael A. Garcia, chief drill instructor, Co. C. “He sends them home to see their families as much as possible. He has Marines that want to work for him because of who he is and not just because they have to.”

Garcia explained Duque regards honesty as a very important quality and sets the right example by his own actions, but also by giving honest opinion of his fellow drill instructors.

“He gives an honest assessment on what fellow drill instructors need to improve on,” said Garcia. “A big part of being a senior drill instructor is training the Marines under you

as well as the recruits. Recruits look up to him because he always sets the example of what a Marine is.”

Duque said making Marines had to do with his desire to leave his thumbprint in the Marine Corps.

“I wanted to instill good morals that I feel I was taught by my leadership during my life in the Corps,” said Duque.

Duque explained that after eight cycles of recruits, he has learned just how much influence a drill instructor can have not only in his recruits but fellow Marines as well.

“It’s a huge responsibility,” said Duque. “You see how recruits are inspired by your actions and how you treat your fellow drill instructors.”

Duque said that’s why he can’t have a negative attitude.

“If I had a negative attitude, it would reflect on the recruits,” said the 26-year-old Duque.

Although Duque says he joined the Corps to find purpose, it appears after finding it, the tables have turned. He not only inspires Marines in the making, but fellow Marines as well.

Discussion questions:

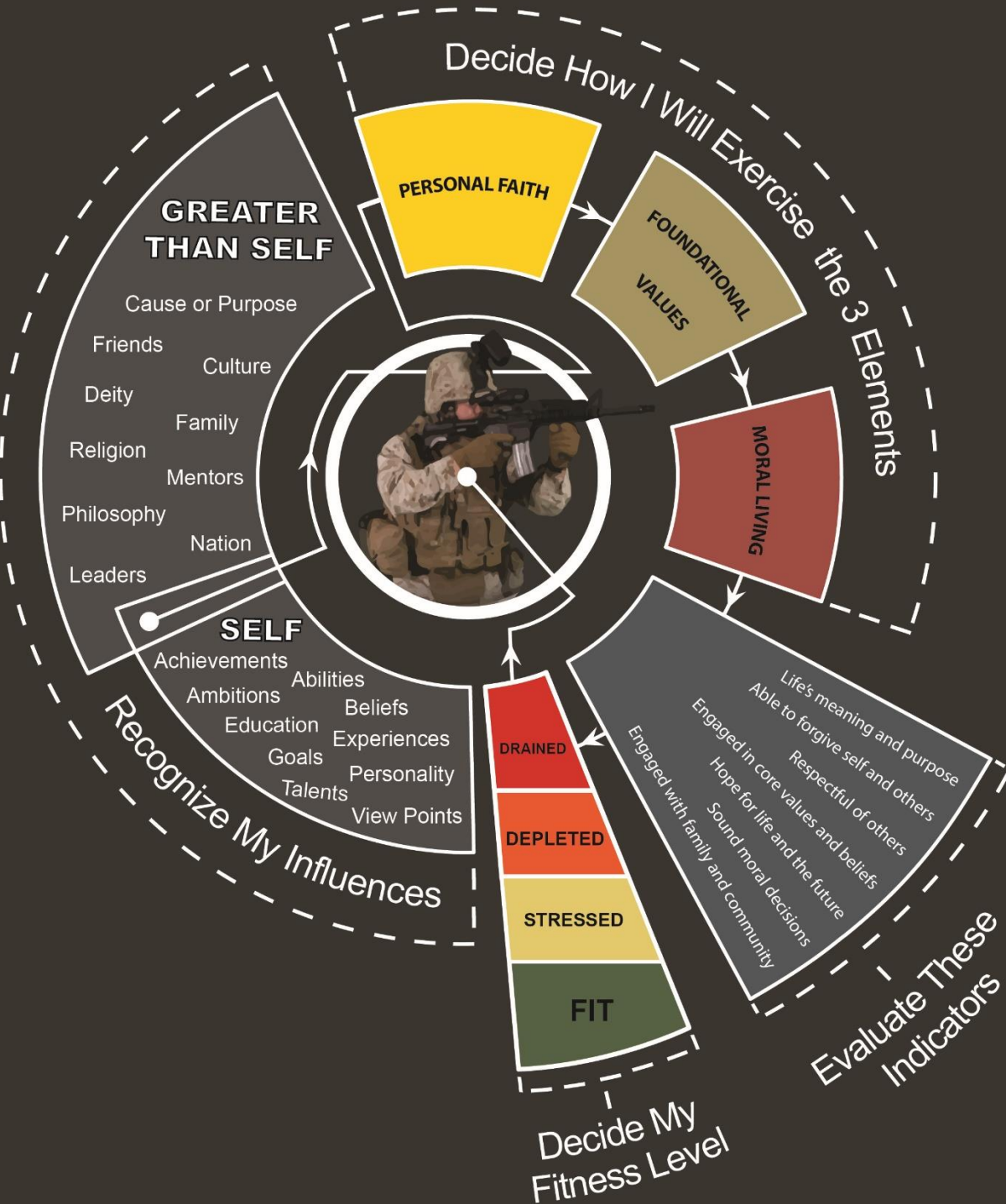
1. The author mentions that Sgt Duque was recently voted Moral Leader for his current cycle of recruits. Is there someone you know that you would describe as a moral leader? If so share about that person with the group. Tell how they have they inspired you as a moral leader. What tool do they use to reflect on the past and consider future decisions?
2. Discuss how a person’s decision to engage in moral living influences the people around them.
3. Describe a time when you used a difficult past experience to make a better decision in the future.

Personal Reflection questions:

4. Who has had the greatest impact on your moral decision making abilities? What did they do that was either helpful or unhelpful?
5. What are your sources for moral living? How do they guide you in your decision making processes? (Review the influences of self and greater than self on the infographic for potential sources of moral living.)

SPIRITUAL FITNESS

The ability to adhere to beliefs, principles, and values needed to persevere and prevail.



Spiritual Fitness Guide: This is a **self-assessment** tool to help service members determine their spiritual condition.

FIT	STRESSED	DEPLETED	DRAINED
<p>Potential Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Engaged in life's meaning/purpose > Hopeful about life/future > Makes sound moral decisions > Fully engaged with family, friends, and community > Able to forgive self and others > Respectful of others > Engaged in core values/beliefs 	<p>Potential Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Neglecting life's meaning/purpose > Less hopeful about life/future > Makes some poor moral decisions > Somewhat engaged with family, friends, and community > Difficulty forgiving self or others > Less respectful of others > Straying from core values/beliefs 	<p>Potential Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Losing a sense of life's meaning/purpose > Holds very little hope about life/future > Makes poor moral decisions routinely > Weakly engaged with family, friends, and community > Not likely to forgive self or others > Strong disrespect for others > Disregards core values/beliefs 	<p>Potential Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Feels like life has no meaning/purpose > Holds no hope about life/future > Engaged in extreme immoral behavior > Not engaged with family, friends or community > Forgiveness is not an option > Complete disrespect for others > Abandoned core values/beliefs

If you find yourself in need of support, do not suffer in silence. Seek immediately from any avenue of support.

Resources for Support

- Chaplain – Military and Family Life Counselors – Community Counseling Program – Family Readiness Officers – Leaders – Family or Friend – MCCS One Source – DSTRESS 1-877-476-7734

Your Chaplain cares about you and is committed to helping with your spiritual fitness. Absolute 100% confidentiality is guaranteed.

CHAPLAIN POC: