

SOLDIERS, LEADERS AND THEIR MORAL FOUNDATION

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All types of leaders –and the example they set– will also cause problems for our Soldiers, because it places them in an unethical dilemma. The Soldier wants to be loyal to his/her leaders, but he/she also wants to do what is right. All soldiers want to do what is right. Ethics are something first learned while we are young children. Our parents –and others that have an influence on us– instill what they believe to be right or wrong. However, not all parents practice ethical behavior and the consequences of this are reflected within our society today. Every day we see young people doing things that are not of an ethical behavior; in many cases, these problems stem from young people growing up in a single parent home. In many cases the cause for the home only having a single parent is due to one of the parents practicing an unethical behavior (e.g.: adultery). Often times this behavior has become ‘accepted’ in a family, and once this is accepted without punishment, the behavior becomes that young person’s norm.

Once we receive young Soldiers into the military, it is up to us to reinforce what parents have taught their children. In many cases, we have to start from scratch and help rebuild the moral foundation of our Soldiers. As part of this rebuilding,

we instill the Army values and ethics we want our Soldiers to possess as part of their foundation. This process starts with the Drill Sergeant. He/She is responsible for teaching and reinforcing these Army values to new recruits. The most important way he/she does this is by simply setting the example and living these values. There is no other one person in a new Soldier's career that has more of an impact on these soldiers and their behavior than the Drill Sergeant. Soldiers come from many different lifestyles with different values, morals and ethics. The Drill Sergeant is there to correct unwanted behavior and reinforce what is expected. On top of this responsibility is an additional challenge: setting a positive role model figure. Should non-commissioned officers (NCO) -who are supposed to set a professional example- demonstrate unethical behavior, the consequences will have a profound affect on the career and attitudes of impressionable recruits.

Once new recruits complete their time with Drill Instructors and we assign these Soldiers to their unit, the leaders of that unit will then have the responsibility to reinforce good behavior and correct unwanted behavior. Soldiers by nature want to do what is right; it is therefore our job to help them. As NCOs, we have the moral and ethical obligation to live by the NCO creed; it is both our watchword and helps to keep us honest with our selves. Our Soldiers will look for role

models to emulate themselves after; and as leaders to these men/women we need to be those models. As our Soldiers grow in maturity, they will do what is right, out of nature and habit, and not out of fear. If we, as leaders, do what is right and live the Army's values, we will not have a problem with unethical behavior from those we are responsible for.

There have been documented instances when we have had unethical leaders in charge of our nation's Soldiers. In some of those occasions the leader may have lacked integrity, and in almost every case this has resulted in problems for their units. In many instances, leaders place their Soldiers in unethical situations or dilemmas. They do this by telling Soldiers "I don't care how you get it done", or "Just make it happen." They say this knowing there is no possible way the Soldier can do what is morally or ethically right and accomplish the task. It is our job as leaders not to place our Soldiers into unethical dilemmas and to do everything we can to enforce the standards. We need to counsel our Soldiers on their professional conduct and not accept incorrect behavior. If we spot poor values in our Soldiers, we should do our best to correct this; and if we cannot, then we need to remove that soldier from the army.

Education is the key to success; we need to make Soldiers aware of current ethical problems within the Army. The Army has set specific guidelines for teaching our soldiers the Army

Values; these values are Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage. If we can get soldiers to live by these values without asking "what's in it for me", or "what do I get out of it", then we have done our job.

American Soldiers have always been –and will continue to be– a living example of morals, values, and ethical behavior upon which our nation lives by. Soldiers and their leaders are professionals; they can accomplish any task given them if offered a chance. So as leaders, let us continue to set the example, and create an environment that allows our Soldiers to do the right thing. I hope that one day all people can live a moral and ethical life. Our founding fathers wrote and based the U.S. Constitution on the values that they wanted our nation to exemplify and live by. These same values form the moral foundation that all Soldiers should live by; and as Soldiers, it is our job to both support and defend the Constitution of the United States, and to live by the values outlined within its text.