

ARI Research Note 2011-06

**Army Officer Counseling Training for Commanders:
Participant Manual**

**Michael J. Cullen, Hannah J. Foldes, Janis S. Houston,
Robert J. Schneider, Emily E. Duehr, and Jeff W. Johnson**
Personnel Decisions Research Institutes, Inc.



**Personnel Assessment Research Unit
Michael G. Rumsey, Chief**

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**United States Army Research Institute
for the Behavioral and Social Sciences**

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Introduction

Retention is a significant issue for lieutenants and captains as they contemplate remaining in the Army after completion of their first active duty service obligation (ADSO). It is also a significant issue for the Army, because the strength of the Army's officer corps is determined in part by whether or not company grade officers remain in the Army and advance from company grade officers to field grade officers and beyond.

In response to the need to improve retention among enlisted Soldiers and company grade officers, ARI instituted a research program entitled "Strategies to Enhance Retention" (referred to as "STAY"). The officer portion of the STAY program sought, over a three-year period, to improve the continuance of the Army's company grade officers. One purpose of the officer portion of STAY was to recommend, develop, and empirically evaluate interventions for improving the continuance of company grade commissioned officers. An overriding model of officer retention and 29 potential interventions were identified, and three of the interventions were chosen to be developed and evaluated during this three-year period. One of these interventions was a counseling training program for commanders that was designed to enhance company grade officer retention.

The development and evaluation of the counseling training program is described in Johnson, Houston, Foldes, Cullen, Stellmack, Ervin, Schneider, and Duehr (2009). This research note serves as an appendix to that report, containing the participant manual for training participants.

Reference

Johnson, J. W., Houston, J. S., Foldes, H. J., Cullen, M. J., Stellmack, A. L., Ervin, K. S., Schneider, R. J., & Duehr, E. E. (2009). *Development and evaluation of counseling training for commanders to enhance U.S. Army company grade officer career continuance* (ARI Technical Report). Arlington, VA: U. S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences.

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Introduction

Welcome to Counseling Training!

Retention is a significant issue for lieutenants and captains as they contemplate remaining in the Army after completion of their first active duty service obligation (ADSO). It is also a significant issue for the Army, because the strength of the Army's officer corps is determined in part by whether or not company grade officers remain in the Army and advance from company grade officers to field grade officers and beyond.

The Army has undertaken a series of efforts targeting officer retention. Not surprisingly, these efforts have revealed that officers' retention decisions are affected by a broad array of factors, which include individual characteristics, group dynamics, and organizational climate. In addition to these factors, however, interviews and focus groups conducted with officers indicate that company and battalion commanders play a powerful, pivotal role in these decisions. Specifically, officers report that the ***amount and quality of counseling they receive from their superior officers is a major factor impacting decisions to stay or leave.***

This key insight prompted the development of the training program you are participating in today. Along with other approaches, it represents one part of a broader response to addressing the issue of officer retention. This particular program is designed to improve commanding officers' counseling skills, as well as motivation to conduct counseling. Much of the material in this program was developed by Army officers themselves, in multiple interviews, focus groups, and workshops held across the country.

The information in this manual supplements other sources of counseling information available to officers. These sources include FM 7-21.13 (Ch. 6), FM 6-22 (Appendix B), and Army Counseling Online (<http://www.armycounselingonline.com/>). The information in this training manual does not contradict the information presented in these other sources. The primary differences between this training manual and these other sources are a greater emphasis on (a) detailed information on counseling strategies, and (b) informal counseling opportunities.

It is hoped that different versions of the program will be institutionalized and introduced into schools such as the Officer Basic Course and the Captain's Career Course. It is anticipated that over the long term, heightening awareness of the role of counseling in retention decisions in conjunction with training future senior leaders in this area will help create a culture shift that places more value on counseling in general. This will enhance officer retention, resulting in substantial cost savings, an increase in force effectiveness, and the sustainment of modular forces.

A Difficult Decision: Influencing Factors & Significant Situations

Rarely is it straightforward to make a decision about whether to stay in the Army or leave to pursue a civilian life and career. No single reason accounts for why officers decide to leave the Army after their initial active duty service obligation (ADSO). In fact, input from officers attending workshops and focus groups in the past year suggest that there are *multiple* factors that influence officer retention decisions. Below is a summary of the most-cited factors for negative and positive influences on retention decisions:

Most-Cited Factors That Negatively Influence Retention Decisions

- Family Strains:
 - High Optempo
 - Family dissatisfaction
 - Lack of predictability
- Frustration with work
- Lack of career development and opportunities
- Competing civilian opportunities
- Dissatisfaction with leadership
- Empty promises

Most-Cited Factors That Positively Influence Retention Decisions

- Security and benefits
- Supportive leadership
- Camaraderie
- Meaningful work
- Identification with Army
- Patriotism/sense of duty to country

Each of these factors is described in more detail in the following pages (see p. 10). We recommend that you become familiar with the kinds of issues that impact junior officer retention decisions. Knowing what the officers under your command wrestle with – especially in terms of negative influences on retention decisions – will better equip you to identify and counsel officers who are in the process of making a decision. Moreover, knowing the reasons why officers choose to remain in the Army is a good reminder of the many positive aspects of a life and career in the armed forces.

The factors that have been cited as negative influences on retention decisions can manifest themselves across a range of situations. Learning about these situations through informal discussions with your officers is often the first time you are made aware that they are thinking about leaving and why. Commanders cite 16 scenarios, listed on the next page, as being particularly tied to retention decisions. Again, simply knowing about the kinds of circumstances that provoke officers to think about leaving is important. This knowledge allows you to successfully engage your officers in a discussion about the issues or obstacles they face, how these things influence their decision, and what can be done to address them.

As you can see below, the 16 scenarios tie into the main areas of influence on retention decisions, such as family, career, leadership, and organizational support. These themes feature prominently in officer retention decisions across the board. Beyond these themes, however, there exist a variety of “critical events” that

can cause officers to unexpectedly question a longer term military career. Examples of such events include being approached by a headhunter, the death of a friend in combat, or learning that a peer has decided to leave. These circumstances, which often appear out of the blue, can be as influential (if not more influential) than those of family, career, and job satisfaction.

Retention Decision Scenarios

The following represent the primary *significant situations – or scenarios* – that commanders cite as most commonly generating retention-related discussions:

Family Issues (Balancing the Demands of Family and Work)

1. Officer is finding it difficult to meet a potential marriage partner to start a family due to the nature of Army life.
2. Officer's spouse has threatened divorce because of unwillingness to tolerate Army life any longer.
3. Officer's spouse is miserable because of need to put his/her career on hold.
4. Officer is finding it difficult to make a dual military career marriage work.

Professional/Career Issues

5. Officer is having difficulty locating a sufficient amount of information relevant to his/her career.
6. Officer is frustrated because s/he was unable to get into a desired Army career course or to obtain another desired educational opportunity.

Job Satisfaction Issues

7. Officer does not believe that s/he is being given a level of responsibility commensurate with his/her experience or expertise.
8. Officer does not believe that his/her skills are being utilized well in current assignment.
9. Officer is frustrated with benefits such as TriCare, dental, housing, and/or quality of schools on post.
10. Officer is experiencing a bad command climate due to poor leadership of company or battalion CO.

Organizational Support Issues

- 11.** Officer believes the Army has not kept its promises (e.g., regarding career potential, benefits, quality-of-life), and has become increasingly disenchanted with the idea of pursuing a military career.

“Critical Events”

- 12.** Officer is extremely upset because of excessive numbers of deployments.
- 13.** Officer is extremely upset because s/he is not being deployed with his or her platoon.
- 14.** Officer has been approached by a headhunter, and has been convinced to seriously consider pursuing another career after completing first ADSO.
- 15.** One or more of officer’s peers has decided to leave the Army after completing first ADSO, and officer is considering doing the same.
- 16.** One of officer’s close friends was killed or grievously wounded in combat.

The Role of Counseling

In the context of a retention decision, the role of counseling is relatively straightforward and can be summed up as the following:

- 1. Identify and address causes of leaving that can be remedied through counseling**
- 2. Counterbalance officers' reasons for leaving by explaining benefits of staying**
- 3. Advise officers who need help addressing career path, educational, or other issues**
- 4. Be a careful listener**

Formality, Timing, & Location of Counseling

Formality

The type of counseling that occurs most frequently in the Army takes place in the form of performance or incident-based counseling. In this context, counseling discussions are quite formal, involve prescribed procedures and forms, and occur infrequently. While some retention counseling may be more formal and conducted using this format, much of it is expected to be fairly *informal* in nature. That is, it will most often take place:

- outside of the office setting
- without arranging a specific appointment
- on an ongoing basis as more is learned about an officer's situation and thought process

This is not to say that more informal counseling requires any less preparation on your part. For example, there are certain times and locations that are more suited than others to this type of counseling (see below). Taking the time to think ahead about when these might occur will give you ample opportunity to counsel when it is most likely to be productive. In terms of preparation, you have an important role to play in simply establishing good relationships with your officers, gaining their trust, and actively learning about their families, motivations, and career aspirations. Ongoing attention to an officer and his/her career and family sends a strong message that you genuinely care. As you learn more about these things, you can prepare for even the most informal retention counseling discussion by doing things such as researching an officer's options ahead of time, reaching out to your network, and possibly exerting some influence (or appealing to those who can) about a situation that could be improved or remedied with action.

Another thing to bear in mind is that although retention counseling is often informal, its success nevertheless relies on the counselor – you – engaging in some basic principles and strategies that apply to counseling situations across the board. Among these is preparation, as was mentioned above, as well as interpersonal behaviors to establish trust and rapport, appropriate questioning and guidance, and eventually, planning. A set of 10 such strategies is presented in Section 2 of this manual. Many of these strategies will likely be familiar to you and may even seem fairly obvious or intuitive. But understanding their role and importance within the retention counseling context is important. In addition, we will give you the opportunity to apply the strategies, which are skills that improve with practice over time.

Timing & Location

When is the best time to counsel? There are many opportunities to engage your officers in informal discussions about their retention decision. What is most important is that you *create opportunities* to do so on a regular basis. This serves at least three purposes:

- 1) You will gather ongoing, relevant information so that even if an officer doesn't directly bring up the topic of retention, you will be alerted to any shifts or changes in their thinking about the decision or circumstances that may have an impact on it.

- 2) It will encourage officers to bring important information to your attention at their own pace and in their own way.
- 3) When/if they are ready to have a more formal discussion with you about their retention decision process, there will be a backdrop of more informal discussions from which to draw. These discussions are the foundation on which positive, productive action can be initiated.

One approach to ensure that you are having enough of these discussions is to set yourself a goal to talk with at least one officer per day in an informal setting such as the following:

- PT
- Qualification range
- Staff rides
- Motor stables
- Shared meals
- Social events

The specific setting for these informal discussions should ultimately reflect your judgment about where they would best take place. At a minimum, try to ensure a neutral environment. For example, if you are engaging in an activity with an officer, try to choose one that downplays the power differential that exists between you (e.g., don't pick a very fast run or racquetball if that's your strength, but not the officer's).

There exist ample opportunities to counsel your officers around their retention decisions – and considerable value in doing so. For some company grade officers, it can be a disconcerting and difficult process. They may for the first time be considering a life and career beyond the military. Talking about this with a senior officer could be the last thing they ever envisioned doing. This makes it all the more important that you take your role as counselor and mentor seriously.

Still, even with your guidance, help, and advice, some officers will ultimately decide to leave the Army. The role of retention counseling is not to convince every officer to stay in the Army. Each officer represents an individual case that calls for a unique outcome. Rather, the role of retention counseling is to ensure that each officer who considers leaving is listened to and embarks upon the process informed about the facts and various options, and assisted where possible. At times you may feel that the factors that negatively influence retention decisions and the situations in which they manifest themselves are difficult, if not impossible, to address by engaging in a few discussions “here and there.” While your role as counselor may sometimes seem small compared to deployments, family issues, career obstacles, and critical incidents, remember that officers who decide to stay in the Army report that the amount and quality of counseling they receive from their superior officers – as much as anything else – is a major factor impacting their decision to stay or leave.

Most-Cited Factors that Negatively Influence Retention Decisions

The following is a summary of the results of extensive focus groups conducted with company grade officers at a variety of posts between 2006 and 2008. In these focus groups, officers were asked what factors tend to have the most impact on decisions to leave the Army, based on their own experiences and those of others they have known. These results are not based on a large-scale survey of a random sample of officers, so these factors may not necessarily be the most important factors negatively influencing retention decisions. They should be thought of as potential factors that could influence how an officer you are counseling may feel about continuing in the Army.

- **Family Strains.** Several factors make it challenging for people to spend time with family members, creating individual and family stress.
 - **High Optempo.**
 - One-year deployments taking people away from their families, and reset periods not allowing sufficient recovery time and time with family.
 - Time away from one's children is particularly challenging, especially when officers perceive they are missing years of their children's lives.
 - The strain of being separated from family can be exacerbated by repeated deployment cycles. Both the frequency and duration of deployments can cause family strains.
 - Both time away during deployment and busy tempo when in garrison can be problematic.
 - **Family Dissatisfaction.**
 - Officers will be more likely to leave the Army if they feel their spouses and children are not happy.
 - Officers having to stay long hours on post, even if they have no work to do, restricting the time they have to spend with their families.
 - Families either having to adjust to the stress of repeated moves, or dealing with being separated from their Army spouse.
 - Limitations to the career opportunities of officers' spouses .
 - Perceptions that the family health care system is lacking quality and there is a lack of adequate day care.
 - Post locations that are inferior in terms of medical care, housing, and deployment cycles are a source of dissatisfaction, leaving officers feeling that their families are not cared for.
 - **Lack of Predictability.**
 - An inability to predict short-term and long-term commitments makes it difficult to plan personal or family activities.
 - Lack of information prevents vacation planning or visits home before deployment.
 - When uncertainty about training schedules makes it necessary to cancel weekend or evening plans, significant family tension results.

- ***Frustration with Work.*** A related issue stems from officers being asked to complete a high volume of the volume of tasks while in garrison, especially when a clear sense of priority is not communicated.
 - Being asked to perform work that is perceived as relatively less important and which consumes large amounts of time that they believe should be spent training troops.
 - Jobs that are not challenging, perceived as meaningless, or otherwise fail to meet expectations have a negative impact on retention, particularly if they are an officer's first position.
 - People in staff positions may have a difficult time seeing how their jobs contribute, undermining their sense of accomplishment.
 - Dealing with day-to-day bureaucracy during deployment (e.g., getting approval for missions) and dwelling (e.g., delays in receiving directives) can be frustrating and stressful.
 - Officers may have a sense that demands are coming from many quarters without coordination and communication, leaving them feeling they have an almost impossible task to accommodate all of them.
 - Feeling they do not have the resources (e.g., time, equipment/supplies) to get their jobs done and being frustrated that they lack up-to-date equipment for training.
 - Long hours and time pressure not only contribute to family strains, but also create high levels of stress, burnout, and frustration.
 - Even social events may be perceived as burdensome because they take away from private family time.
- ***Lack of Career Development and Opportunities.*** A common concern is the feeling that there is no systematic planning to achieve individuals' career and personal goals.
 - Development opportunities may not be realized due to short-term demands and a perceived lack of attention on the part of leadership to the needs and interests of individuals.
 - Limited opportunities can discourage officers from staying. Officers may feel constrained to stay in branches, units, or roles that do not fit their interests, and career paths may be unclear to officers.
 - Officers may leave if they cannot get company command early enough in their careers, are not eligible for the training or graduate school options they desire, or find themselves in positions that they perceive will not allow them to be promoted.
 - Lack of mentoring, counseling, and attention to career progression from senior leadership may leave officers feeling they are not valued by the Army. Some officers perceive they have to fight to receive training and have to learn things on their own, leaving them feeling unprepared for their jobs.
 - Some officers are concerned that mission is being emphasized too heavily at the cost of the individual Soldier, and that a more balanced perspective should be sought.
- ***Competing Civilian Opportunities.*** Officers research civilian jobs and may leave if they perceive there are better opportunities in the private sector.
 - Some officers perceive that there are no financial incentives to stay and that they are being paid too little for the hours they work.

- Many officers believe that in civilian jobs they would work fewer hours, earn more, have more predictable schedules, and have more opportunity to spend time with their families, particularly on weekends.
- Many officers feel their skills, particularly their leadership experience, are in high demand in the private sector.
- **Dissatisfaction with Leadership.** Command climate can affect officers' satisfaction with Army life.
 - Specific frustrations include leaders who do not respect their time, micro-manage, make poor decisions, do not tolerate mistakes, fail to treat officers as adults, or are abusive.
 - Perceived personality conflicts may lead to a poor evaluation, which can kill a career and discourage individuals from staying in the Army.
- **Empty Promises.** Officers are sometimes promised opportunities and new assignments if they remain in the Army. If these promises are not kept, this can create strong negative reactions, as do stop-loss orders given after permission to leave.

Most-Cited Factors that Positively Influence Retention Decisions

- **Security and Benefits.** The Army is consistently seen as providing job security, steady pay, and financial stability.
 - Many people think that this level of security is not always present in private-sector jobs.
 - Educational opportunities stand out as the most attractive benefit the Army offers.
 - Benefits such as early retirement, pensions, health care, leave time, housing, and low cost-of-living are perceived as clear advantages of military life.
 - The opportunity to travel is seen by some as an appealing aspect of the Army.
- **Supportive Leadership.** Officers cite effective leadership, particularly in their initial assignments, as important determinants of a desire to make a career of the Army.
 - Having senior leaders who provide mentoring and care about career development encourages officers to stay.
 - Good leaders both respect their subordinates' judgment and capabilities and inspire respect from them.
 - Officers seek role models and their retention decisions are positively influenced by senior leaders who appear to be enjoying their careers with the Army.
 - Leaders who take care of their Soldiers, take an interest in their professional and personal lives, provide feedback, are tolerant of mistakes, create a positive work environment, and offer counseling are seen as effective.
- **Comaraderie.** The shared experience of working closely and meeting challenges with others, as well as the general Army environment, create a strong social bond that positively impacts retention. Peers who enjoy their work have a positive influence on the outlook of others.

- **Meaningful Work.** Many cite the opportunity to do meaningful, satisfying, and fun work as a reason to stay in the Army.
 - Officers enjoy the experience of leading Soldiers, being responsible for training troops, molding a team, and influencing others.
 - Many cite deployments to Iraq as their most rewarding times in the Army, because of the focus on mission and the opportunity to do what they were trained to do. The other side of the coin is that officers in staff assignments may be bored and unchallenged, and this contributes to a propensity to leave the Army.
 - Some officers see the Army as a unique place to have an impact on society and be part of something bigger than oneself.
- **Identification with Army.** For some officers, being a member of the Army is a key part of their identity. They take pride in the Army and want to give back to it.
- **Patriotism/Sense of Duty to Country.** Officers cite patriotism as a key factor for staying in the Army. Serving with the Army is seen as an honorable and respectable position.

Strategies for Successful Counseling

In this section, you will find *10 strategies for counseling*. While these strategies reflect fundamental counseling principles, they were largely compiled from officers' reports about the kinds of behaviors that are important for successful retention discussions. The 10 strategies are shown in the figure below. Every strategy presented here represents a specific approach to help you positively and productively counsel junior officers around their retention decision. In the following pages you will find a list of key, effective behaviors for each strategy. For several you will also find suggestions for things to avoid saying and doing when discussing retention-related issues with your officers.



Tips and Recommendations

There is no single way to correctly handle the kinds of retention decision scenarios described earlier in these materials. However, by adopting many of the strategies outlined here, you will find you can apply them to almost *any* discussion. In doing so you will not only increase the likelihood of uncovering whether and why an officer is thinking about leaving, but you will also lay the foundation for generating a plan of action to address the situation or issue.

In the end you may find you prefer using certain strategies over others, or that some come more naturally while others develop with practice over time. A combination of strategies is likely to be most successful. It is important to remember that different approaches work for different officers and circumstances, so consider ways you can tailor your approach to the needs of individual officers and their unique situations.

In addition to the primary 10 strategies presented here, consider the following recommendations about how you can better counsel junior officers around their retention decision:



1. Regularly remind your junior officers that YOU, and the Army, want them to stay
 - a. The Army in general doesn't do a good job of reminding people of the benefits of being in the service.
 - b. You have access to your officers every day – there are many opportunities for discussion and you are uniquely placed to do it.
 - c. Help officers envision how they could have a satisfying Army life/career.
 - d. Find out what your officers' goals are and help them make a plan to achieve those goals.
2. Be honest about any biases you have towards retention
 - a. If you have decided to make a long term career in the Army, you may come across as biased about Army life.
 - b. Your biases don't preclude an honest discussion about facts distinguishing military from civilian life.
 - c. Try to be enthusiastic *and* honest about the Army in equal parts.
 - d. Challenge your junior officers to “verify for themselves” the truth of the facts you give to them.
 - e. This challenge alone lends enormous credibility to your role as counselor and leader in the discussion.





3. Make small, positive, frequent, and UNEXPECTED gestures

- a. These may be planned actions on your part, but your officer will find them pleasantly unexpected.
- b. Example: Show up unannounced at the motor pool and publicly commend a LT on his/her maintenance record.
- c. Example: Ask a CPT to have a cup of coffee with you, and take the time to ask how his/her daughter is doing in soccer.
- d. Other ideas: jot an email, pick up the phone, walk down the hall, tell your officer to take the rest of the day off to be with the family, sponsor a company barbeque.

4. Keep you and your officers informed with the best information

- a. Make sure your junior officers (and you!) know about and visit the junior officer retention website, view the 'Reflections' video, and stay informed about other available tools to help them make the best decision.
- b. This shows your officers that the Army feels it has nothing to hide about the desirability of a military career.
- c. This should be something you remind them of on a periodic basis.
- d. Open doors for your officers where appropriate by using your network to link them with individuals and/or opportunities they would not otherwise have easy (or any) access to.



5. Initiate a retention decision discussion, and keep having those conversations



- a. *Informal:* From the day your junior officers enter the unit to the time they leave you should be engaging them in discussions about their career and factors that influence it on a regular basis.
- b. *Formal:* Combine professional development, formal performance counseling, and career counseling into a regular, semi-annual session with each officer two levels down.

On the following pages you will find descriptions of each of the 10 strategies for successful retention counseling.

Strategy 1: Prepare

Definition Gathering/reviewing information relevant to the officer and creating a plan for counseling.

Effects Officer feels valued and respected, thereby setting the stage for meaningful exploration of retention-related issues.

Timing Prior to a counseling discussion, and especially when you will need to provide information to the officer (e.g., about career options).



Key Behaviors:

- a. Identify a time when you are unlikely to be disturbed
- b. Create a distraction-free environment (e.g., by turning off computer, cell phones, etc.)
- c. Learn about officers' interests/issues before counseling (e.g., from S3, XO), and determine how the Army can satisfy them (e.g., through job training)
- d. Prepare an informal agenda:
 - i. Organize your thoughts.
 - ii. Have a strategy.
 - iii. Formulate an appropriate opening statement that establishes a purpose for the discussion.
 - iv. Think about questions you want to ask.
 - v. Gather information you think will be useful to provide.
- e. Obtain information early enough in an officer's decision cycle that s/he can plan for and complete applications in time.
- f. The Planning and Documenting sheet on the following page can be used to aid in preparation and in documenting the counseling session.

Planning & Documenting Officer Counseling

Officer: _____

Gathering and Reviewing Information:

- ☐ Review Officer's records
- ☐ Explore any known issues/circumstances/interests. These include:
 -
 -
 -
 -
- ☐ Personal experiences that might be relevant to Officer's issues:
 -
 -
- ☐ Familiarize yourself with Officer's career options. These include:
 -
 -
 -
- ☐ Review counseling strategies. Approaches that may be especially relevant for this Officer are:
 -
 -
 -

Planning the Session:

- ☐ Prepare specific objectives for the session. What do you hope to accomplish (e.g., identify main issues, problems, goals, motivations, recommendations, action plan)?
 -
 -
 -
 -
 -
- ☐ Prepare tentative counseling questions based on stated session objectives and anticipated responses to these questions:
 -
 -
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 -
 -
- ☐ Prepare an agenda for the session:
 - Opening statement(s)/strategy (e.g., explain purpose, set tone of the discussion):

Planning the session, cont.:

- Points to cover:
 -
 -
 -
 -
- Closing the session:
 -
 -
 -
 -

Summary of Issues:

-
-
-
-
-

Summary of Recommendations or Decisions:

-
-
-
-
-

Summary of Agreed Upon Follow-Up Actions (Ensure these are concrete and achievable):

Action	Owner	Date
▪	▪	▪
▪	▪	▪
▪	▪	▪
▪	▪	▪
▪	▪	▪

Potential Obstacles to Achieving Action Plan:

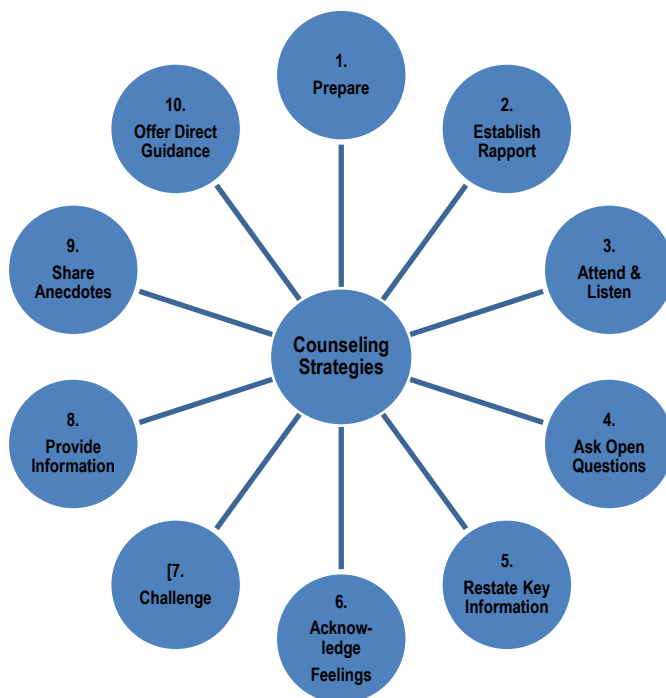
Obstacle	Solution
▪	▪
▪	▪
▪	▪
▪	▪

Strategy 2: Establish Rapport

Definition Setting the stage for discussion of retention-related issues by helping officer to feel safe, supported, and respected.

Effects Officer feels comfortable in a counseling setting, and feels safe exploring personal issues.

Timing At the beginning of the counseling session, as a means to set up a favorable climate for exploration of retention-related issues. Rapport needs to be maintained throughout the discussion.



Key Behaviors:

- Treat officer with respect.
- Establish trust (e.g., by finding ways to show officer you are “in his/her corner”).
- Demonstrate empathy (i.e., put yourself in the officer’s shoes).
- Demonstrate genuineness (i.e., be truly available to the officer, rather than being phony or inauthentic).
- Treat the officer as an individual (e.g., demonstrate interest in officer’s family).
- Suspend judgment when an officer’s opinions/goals differ from your own.
- Validate officer’s concerns (e.g., agree that officer’s reasons for wanting to leave the Army make sense).
- Make officer aware of his/her abilities and accomplishments and their value to you and the Army.

Avoid....

- ...Acting in ways that affirm the power differential associated with rank.
 - ...Punishing officer for giving you bad news.
 - ...Sarcasm; becoming defensive or adversarial.
 - ...Jumping to conclusions or stereotyping.
 - ...Being inflexible (i.e., by ignoring officer’s individual situation, needs, concerns).
 - ...Treating officer’s personal life and family as “out of bounds”.
 - ...Promising more than you can deliver.
 - ...Telling officer that his/her reasons for wanting to leave the Army are baseless.
-

Strategy 3: Attend & Listen

Definition Attending is orienting oneself physically toward the officer (e.g., eye contact, posture, gesture), showing you are listening and interested. Listening is capturing and understanding the officer's message, showing it has been heard.

Effects Officer feels counselor is listening and concerned, and is more willing to explore personal issues.

Timing Throughout the discussion.



Key Behaviors:

- a. Adopt an open, attentive stance (i.e., leaning towards officer, keeping arms and legs uncrossed).
- b. Maintain eye contact.
- c. Make moderate use of head nods.
- d. Use minimal encouragers: Sounds and words to keep the conversation going (e.g., "um-hmm" and "yeah" or "okay" let the officer know you are listening and interested).
- e. Invite officer to talk or continue talking (e.g., "please go on").
- f. Express appropriate emotion in response to what an officer is saying.
- g. Pay attention to officer's non-verbal behaviors (e.g., officers who are uncomfortable may cross arms, fidget, look away) as well as how s/he expresses his/her thoughts and feelings.
- h. Observe reactions to your own behaviors, and ask for feedback.

Avoid....

...Interrupting, or otherwise engaging in distracting behaviors, such as talking on phone, yawning.

...Talking too much; dominating the discussion.

...Adopting an interrogating approach (e.g., using an aggressive, antagonistic style).

...Offering advice in a heavy-handed way (e.g., being too directive, giving orders), especially early in the discussion.

Useful Open-Ended Questions



The following questions are examples of *open questions* that will help you uncover useful information about an officer, such as pressing issues and concerns, frustrations, interests and aspirations. These questions can be used to initiate an informal discussion, or help further open up a discussion that is already underway. Always be on the look out for signs of dissatisfaction and try to address them proactively. Especially during informal talks with your officers, routinely ask the following types of leading questions that can help evaluation satisfaction/commitment in key areas:

- What kinds of things do you like most and least about the Army so far?
- In what areas has the Army fallen short of your hopes and expectations?
- What kind of work have you enjoyed the most?
- What do you value and care about the most?
- What are your career interests and aspirations?
- What about the Army gives you the greatest sense of satisfaction and reward? The least? Why?
- How has your attitude toward an Army career changed since you were commissioned?
- How do you feel about your current assignment/work?
- What would an ideal Army career look like to you?
- What kind of obstacles do you encounter that make it harder for you to feel satisfied with your Army career?

If applicable:

- What does your spouse think of the military?
- How has your family adjusted to Army life?

Strategy 4: Ask Open Questions

- Definition** Open questions invite further discussion and ask officers to clarify or explore their thoughts or feelings.
- Example** “What is most important to you? or “Can you tell me how you feel about that?”
- Effects** Officer explores deeper thoughts and feelings, and clarifies important aspects of the retention issue.
- Timing** Primarily during the early stages of a discussion, when there is a need to focus or clarify officer’s thoughts or feelings.

Key Behaviors:

- a. Use open questions:
 - i. for clarification when officer is vague or unclear (e.g., “What did you mean by that?”).
 - ii. to obtain examples (e.g., “Can you give me an example of a time when you were frustrated by leadership?”).
 - iii. to help officer explore thoughts (e.g., “Tell me more about what type of assignments interest you?”).
 - iv. to help officer explore feelings (e.g., “How do you feel about your buddy deciding to leave?”).
- b. Vary the format of questions: what, why, how, when?
- c. Keep open questions short and concise.
- d. Focus on
 - i. one part of an issue at a time.
 - ii. officer being counseled rather than other people (e.g., “What was your reaction to his statement” rather than “What do you think his reaction was?”).



Avoid....

...Asking too many closed questions, which tend to permit a simple “yes” or “no” answer (e.g., “You must feel angry, right?”).

...Asking closed questions directly after open questions, without giving the counselee an opportunity to respond (e.g., “Tell me how you felt about your friend dying. You were angry, right?”).

...Asking “why” questions in such a way that would put an officer on the defensive (e.g., “Why would you say that to him?”).

...Exploring too many parts of an issue at one time.

Strategy 5: Restate Key Information

Definition Restatements involve repeating or rephrasing the content or meaning of an officer's statement using similar but fewer words. The restatement is more concrete or clear than the officer's original statement.

Example "You want more leadership opportunities" or "You believe your skills are not being utilized"

Effects Ensures you understand key issues, and makes officer feel understood.

Timing Primarily during early stages of a discussion, when there is a need to focus or clarify officer's thoughts, or summarize what an officer has said.

Key Behaviors:

- Summarize main thought concisely (e.g., "So, you want more leadership opportunities?").
- Restate tentatively to ensure accuracy.
- Vary the format.
- Pair restatements with open-ended questions to take the discussion further.
- Observe officer for signs the restatement is inaccurate, and ask for clarification if need becomes apparent.



Avoid....

...Attempting to summarize too many ideas at once.

...Parroting (i.e., repeating restated thoughts with the same words and format, such as "I hear you saying...I hear you saying...").

Strategy 6: Acknowledge Feelings

Definition Acknowledging feelings involves restatements that include an explicit identification of feelings.

Example “You’re angry about the number of deployments.”

Effects Officers begin to identify which feelings they have been experiencing. New feelings sometimes emerge with deeper exploration.

Timing Primarily during early stages of a discussion, when there is a need for officer to explore feelings about a retention issue more thoroughly

Key Behaviors:

- a. Summarize main feeling concisely (e.g., “You feel angry.”).
- b. Reflect feelings:
 - i. tentatively to ensure accuracy.
 - ii. with empathy.
- c. Vary the format and feeling words used.
- d. Observe officer for signs reflection is inaccurate, and ask for clarification if need becomes apparent.

Avoid....

...Trying to summarize too many feelings at once (e.g., “You’re angry, sad, confused.”).

...Parroting (i.e., repeating reflected feelings with same words and format, such as “You feel angry...you feel angry...”).

...Demonstrating an unwillingness to accept officer’s feelings.



Strategy 7: Challenge

Definition A challenge points out discrepancies, inconsistencies, or misperceptions in relation to a retention-related issue.

Example "I see you are upset by what you think is a lack of educational opportunities, but did you know..."

Effects Officer's misperception about retention-related issue is corrected, positively influencing retention decision.

Timing Once issues have been surfaced they can be examined in more detail. Challenges should occur as soon as possible after an officer has made an incorrect statement concerning an Army benefit, career, or about Army life in general.

Key Behaviors:

- Use challenges to correct officer's misperceptions (e.g., correcting misunderstanding of tasks performed in certain branches or functional areas to which he/she is assigned).
- Present challenge as soon as need becomes apparent (e.g., after officer displays ambivalence or confusion, or makes an incorrect statement concerning Army).
- Deliver challenges gently and respectfully.
- Pay close attention to officer's reaction to challenge, and ask for clarification if needed.
- Provide evidence if challenge is not accepted.
- Encourage collaborative, curious, problem-solving climate.

Avoid....

...Allowing incorrect beliefs to go uncorrected, especially when they may allow officer to form a negative opinion about his/her Army career

...Presenting a challenge at the wrong time (e.g., before officer makes incorrect statement about an Army benefit)

...Using a disrespectful or judgmental tone



Strategy 8: Provide Information

Definition Supplying data, facts, resources, and answers to questions in relation to a retention-related issue.

Example “You can find out about possible career paths for Captains on the officer retention website.”

Effects Officer has accurate information about retention-related issue, positively influencing retention decision.

Timing Primarily during examination of the key issues, after challenging an officer about a misperception of a retention-related issue.



Key Behaviors:

- a. Assess what officer knows about a retention-related issue.
- b. Indicate where relevant resources are located, including junior officer retention website.
- c. Make officer aware of benefits of staying in the Army past first ADSO that may outweigh costs of staying.
 - i. The financial benefits of staying in the Army (e.g., the opportunity to retire with a pension at 20 year mark).
 - ii. The educational benefits of staying in the Army (e.g., the opportunity to obtain credits toward a master's degree by completing certain military training, opportunities for fully-funded education in civilian colleges).
 - iii. The wide variety of career paths available to Army personnel.
 - iv. The benefits that the Army offers military families (e.g., providing free training to Army spouses who volunteer to provide needed services).
 - v. The Army's contributions to his/her quality of life.
- d. Maintain an impartial tone of information provider, rather than acting like an “expert”.
- e. Encourage officer to independently seek out information.

Avoid....

- ...Emphasizing financial incentives when doing so is unlikely to make a difference.
 - ...Offering a particular school for which officer is not eligible (e.g., because of GPA requirement).
 - ...Offering unavailable duty assignments.
 - ...Describing benefits that are not relevant to the officer's situation (e.g., describing family health benefits to an officer who is single).
-

Strategy 9: Share Anecdotes

Definition Sharing anecdotes involves the counselor presenting a personal experience (or one had by someone they know) relevant to an officer's retention-related issue.

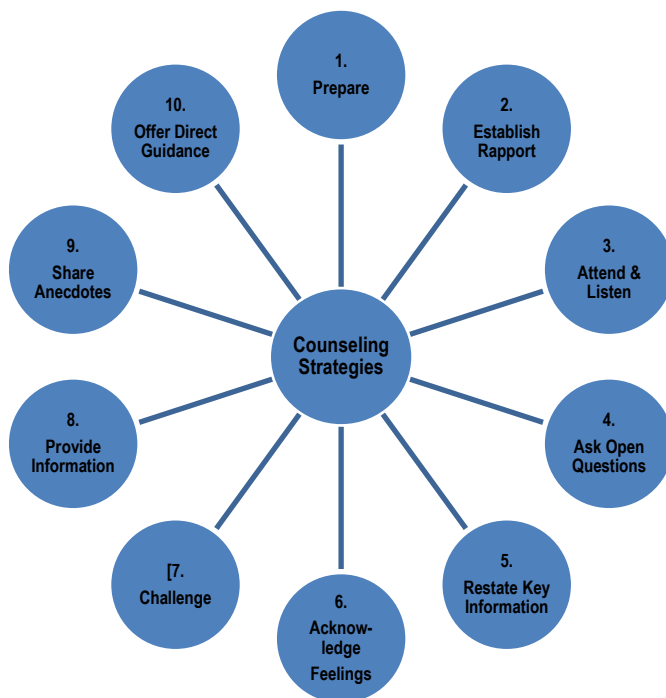
Example "Back when I was a lieutenant, a headhunter approached me too..."

Effects Officers recognize the similarity between their situation and others, understand that someone else has experienced the same thing, and gain more insight into their situation.

Timing Primarily during examination of the key issues.

Key Behaviors:

- Describe a relevant experience that is personal or about someone you know well.
- Keep disclosure brief, returning focus to officer as soon as possible (e.g., "When I was approached by a headhunter, I was impressed by the money he offered. How did you react?").
- Follow-up on disclosures with open questions and, if appropriate, by acknowledging feelings (e.g., "What is your reaction to what I told you?").
- Observe officer's reaction to disclosure, and use a different strategy if officer reacts negatively to it.



Strategy 10: Offer Direct Guidance

Definition Direct guidance refers to the counselor giving suggestions or action planning advice to the officer. Guidance may involve sharing personal strategies that were successful for the counselor in the past.

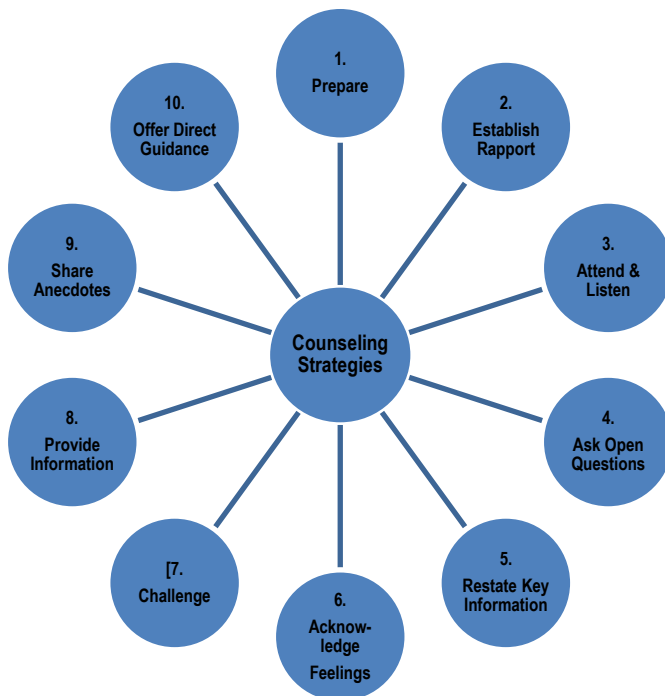
Example “Maybe it would make sense to look at that retention website and discuss it with your husband?”

Effects Officers feel they have a useful course of action for resolving a retention-related issue.

Timing Primarily when seeking to resolve retention-related issue through suggestions and action planning.

Key Behaviors:

- a. Provide suggestions about how to handle an issue, without becoming the decision maker.
- b. Create an action plan that includes mutually agreed-upon homework assignments (e.g., speaking with other officers who have decided to stay, visiting websites, talking to spouse).
 - i. Make action plans concrete and achievable, rather than vague and low-probability
 - ii. Identify any obstacles to completing the action plan
 - iii. Make sure that the counselee is committed to the action plan
- c. Use your influence and network, when possible, to address officer's needs (e.g., by finding a job for officer's spouse).
- d. Follow through on expressions of support and promises to help; keep counsees informed of your progress
- e. Provide ongoing help to make the action plan work (e.g., modify plan as appropriate, provide officer with resources and time to work on action plan, inform the chain of command and open doors through contacts)



Avoid...

- ...Moving too quickly from exploring to solving counsees' problems and concerns
 - ...Providing extensive feedback without also developing actionable ideas to address the problem
 - ...Providing recommendations that are obviously self-serving; be willing discuss moving outside of the branch, Active Army, etc., when necessary
 - ...Making naïve or unrealistic action plans (this will likely reflect inadequate preparation)
 - ...Making promises you can't keep
-

Sample Role-Plays

This section contains very short vignettes or scenarios, one illustrating each strategy covered in the previous section (except for the first strategy, Preparation, for which a scenario isn't really appropriate). These vignettes were taken from scenarios written by officers in the numerous workshops conducted during the development of this training program. The officers who wrote them were describing various situations they had encountered where a junior officer was in the process of making a decision about whether or not to stay in the Army, and was having some kind of retention-related discussion with a senior officer.

We have purposely isolated (and, in some cases, exaggerated) a portion of each scenario to demonstrate a particular strategy, and have marked instances of effective or ineffective retention-related counseling behavior with regard to that strategy in "comment" bubbles.

Please read through these short vignettes to gain a better understanding of each strategy, and how it may be effectively, or ineffectively, applied in a retention counseling discussion.

Strategy 2: Establish Rapport

Synopsis: One of the officer's peers has decided to leave the Army after completing first ADSO, and officer is considering doing the same.

Lieutenant Tina Jones	(knock on door) Hello, Sir. May I come in?
Major Cox	Come on in. How are things going? How's Tommy doing at school? I hear he's ready to lead his own platoon and he's only five!
Lieutenant Tina Jones	(laughing) You've got that right.
Major Cox	So, Lieutenant, what brings you here today?
Lieutenant Tina Jones	Have you heard that Jess decided to leave the Army? She separates in eight weeks.
Major Cox	(listening carefully, genuinely interested) No, I hadn't. That must be tough on you. You two are such close friends. She probably wants to have more kids. Am I right?
Lieutenant Tina Jones	(sounding a little upset) No, that's not it. It's her husband. Tim got an offer to go work in Japan as an international sales rep for a drug company. Apparently, the deal's pretty sweet and they're offering him a fortune.
Major Cox	(aggressively) What about their kids? It seems like a pretty bad time to take them out of school and move across the ocean. Doesn't sound like they're thinking about <i>them</i> too much, does it? And those expat assignments are brutal, especially in Japan. Doesn't Tim know that?
Lieutenant Tina Jones	I don't know. But, Sir, I can't help thinking it might be time for John and me to get out too. He has a ton of opportunities in the civilian sector, and he's getting tired of Army life.
Major Cox	(showing empathy) Tina, listen, I'm real sorry to hear about your friend. This must be difficult for you. But leaving the Army simply because a friend has decided to leave is rash and short-sighted. I thought you were smarter than that, Lieutenant.

Lieutenant Tina Jones	Yes, Sir. Thanks for your time.
Major Cox	Look, I want you to know I hear where you're coming from. You're one of my best officers, and I would really like you to stay. Would you like to schedule a time to bring John in here so we can talk this through together?
Lieutenant Tina Jones	(Encouraged) I would appreciate that, Sir. (gets up to leave)

Strategy 3: Attend and Listen

Synopsis: Officer is finding it difficult to meet a potential marriage partner and start a family due to the nature of Army life.

	<i>Lt. Stile and Cpt. Davis have just sat down at a picnic bench at a Company barbeque.</i>
Captain Davis	(Making eye contact, smiling, leaning towards Stile with open body posture and arms and legs uncrossed) Crazy weather this spring don't you think? I only just got my bike out for the first time last weekend. Before you know it I'll be putting it back for the winter! Anyway, how are things going with you these days?
Lieutenant Jim Stile	(looking unhappy) I dunno. I guess I'm feeling a little worn down, but I'm not sure if there's anything I can do about it. It'll probably pass.
Captain Davis	(Shifting forward in seat, looking concerned) You <i>sound</i> a little down. Can you tell me what's going on?
Lieutenant Jim Stile	I don't know, Sir. You know I love Army life, right? It's just that I'm so busy it seems like there's no time for anything else.
Captain Davis	Um hmm. I hear you.
Lieutenant Jim Stile	(speaking softly, slowly) Thing is, Sir, I've always wanted to get married, you know. And there's just no time to even meet anyone.
Captain Davis	(cell phone rings) Hang on, Jim, I've been expecting this call. It'll just be a minute. (continues to talk on phone for 5 minutes while officer waits). Where were we?
Lieutenant Jim Stile	(looking uncomfortable) Well, the thing is, I'm having trouble balancing day-to-day tasks with anything like a personal life. I basically have no personal life. There's always something that comes up and...
Captain Davis	(interrupting, laughing, speaking quickly and loudly) Jim, I hear you. I've been here ten years, and I've had two wives already. I tell you, it's just hard to have a decent relationship in the Army. But hang in there. I know you'll find someone.

Lieutenant Jim Stile	(fidgeting, looking away) Yes, sir. You're right, Sir. I know I will.
Captain Davis	You're one of my best officers, Jim. Don't let this get you down.
Lieutenant Jimmy Stile	Yes, Sir. I guess so. (Conversation continues on a different topic).

Strategy 4: Ask Open Questions

Synopsis: Officer's spouse has threatened divorce because of unwillingness to tolerate Army life any longer.

	<i>Finishing up at the qualification range.</i>
Lieutenant Colonel Olson	Hank, you've been distracted all morning. You're usually the best shot out there. What's on your mind?
Captain Hank Sherman	Really? Well, I guess that doesn't surprise me. To be honest, things haven't been going so well with Jane. We've had some pretty bad fights recently. A couple of weeks ago, things got so bad she took off and went to stay with her mother. And she took the kids, Jed and Laura, with her. Then she came back yesterday, and we had another blow out, and she began throwing stuff everywhere. It got pretty ugly. We said some things we shouldn't have.
Lieutenant Colonel Olson	Yeah, the heat of the moment. It's tough to hold things in. How do you feel about all this?
Captain Hank Sherman	I'm really upset, Sir. I love Jane, no question, but she's so unpredictable at the moment. I can't deal with her. And she complains that I'm never around, and that I'm stressed all the time. Her ultimatums are pretty hard to deal with!
Lieutenant Colonel Olson	What do you mean by her ultimatums? What's she saying?
Captain Hank Sherman	I don't know, Sir. She keeps telling me she's leaving me if I stay in the Army. I try to talk her down, but she flies off the handle every time I try. She doesn't seem to understand how important the Army is to me and threatens to do something drastic, like leave me.
Lieutenant Colonel Olson	How do you feel when she does that? Are you angry?
Captain Hank Sherman	I guess. I'm also thinking "What happened to you? You've been happy being an Army wife for the last <i>seven</i> years. What changed?"

Lieutenant Colonel Olson	Can you remember a specific time when her attitude first started to change?
Captain Hank Sherman	Yeah, one night a couple of months after Laura was born, we put her to bed and we watched a movie. I can't even remember what it was, but all of a sudden she started bawling. She said the Army wasn't the right place to raise kids.
Lieutenant Colonel Olson	Why do you think she started changing after Laura was born?
Captain Hank Sherman	I really don't know, Sir. She got cold feet about all the responsibilities, I guess.
Lieutenant Colonel Olson	What do you think the kids feel about all this? Are they upset? (discussion continues)

Strategy 5: Restate Key Information

Synopsis: Officer's spouse is miserable because of need to put his/her career on hold.

	<i>Walking over to the motor stable...</i>
Major Henderson	So, what's going on? How's everything going? How's Becky?
Lieutenant Sam Feldman	Alright, I guess. Becky hasn't been acting like herself recently, though. She just doesn't seem happy. She wants to go back to school to get her Masters in Public Policy. And she just feels stuck here. Like time is passing her by. It's getting hard to deal with.
Major Henderson	(pausing, tentatively) Like she's put her life on hold, is that what you mean by stuck?
Lieutenant Sam Feldman	Yeah, and she keeps reminding me of the sacrifices she's made for me. She keeps saying "What about me? You've been doing what you love for a long time now. When am I going to get a chance? Don't my dreams count?" And I tell her to hold on, where is all this coming from?
Major Henderson	So, she wants to know when she'll get her chance.
Lieutenant Sam Feldman	That's right. She just turned 27. And apparently, she has to go get her Master's soon, or she'll never be able to get into Public Policy. She wants to go out West to do it too. And I'm getting the feeling she's willing to leave me behind to pursue this dream.
Major Henderson	So what you're saying is that Becky feels like time's starting to pass her by. Unless she gets going with grad school quickly she won't be able to start her career. And you also think she's willing to leave you behind to pursue this dream because all the schools she's interested in are several states away. Hmm?
Lieutenant Sam Feldman	Yes, can you believe it? Wow, when you put it like that the situation seems like it's getting out of control. I mean, it's like I suddenly don't count anymore. I have to give up the Army so she can pursue this dream. It doesn't seem fair. What about my dreams? I want to stay in the Army and keep moving up the ranks.

Major Henderson	So from where you stand it doesn't seem democratic.
Lieutenant Sam Feldman	(looking confused) Democratic? No, that's not what I meant. It's not <i>fair</i> . She's blaming me for not being able to pursue her dreams. But it's not my fault. She knew what she was getting into when she married me. There has to be a way for us to make this work so we'll both be happy.
Major Henderson	So, she's blaming you for not allowing her to pursue her dreams, but you think she shouldn't blame you because she knew what she was getting into when she married you. (discussion continues)

Strategy 6: Acknowledge Feelings

Synopsis: One of officer's close friends was killed in combat.

Major Deeks	Come on in, Captain. What's up?
Captain Phil Blanchett	You may have heard I skipped dinner the last couple days. Even though it's been a few months I still can't get over what happened to Justin over in Iraq. He never had a chance with that new IED they have.
Major Deeks	(tentatively, empathetically) Phil, you sound really upset. I didn't realize this had thrown you so badly.
Captain Phil Blanchett	It did, Sir. I mean, I was right there. I saw the metal tearing through his leg and there was nothing I could do to help. There was blood everywhere, and he was crying out for help. And all I could do was sit there with this blank look on my face. I was pathetic. Useless.
Major Deeks	You feel like you're to blame for this.
Captain Phil Blanchett	Yeah, I mean, it was like I was paralyzed. If I could have reacted quicker, maybe a medic could have stopped the bleeding, and he wouldn't be gone. I can't even speak to his family. Jen, his wife, wants to get together to talk about this. And I just keep blowing her off. And I get angry and start shouting at her. Only she's done nothing wrong.
Major Deeks	So you feel angry. Go on...
Captain Phil Blanchett	(getting agitated) I'm angry at myself for not helping out Justin. And I'm tired of walking around here with everyone knowing what a pathetic loser I am. The next guy that looks at me and whispers something under his breath is going to get it. I think I just gotta get out of here, Sir. The Army's no good for me anymore.
Major Deeks	You feel angry right now.
Captain Phil Blanchett	Yeah, you just said that.
Major Deeks	I mean, it sounds like you feel people are treating you unfairly.

Captain Phil Blanchett	Yeah, I suppose that's it. I did the best that I could, and I know it wasn't enough. But you have to be there. Nothing can prepare you.
Major Deeks	(Gently) Come on, Phil. You're better than that. You need to move on. (discussion continues)

Strategy 7: Challenge

Synopsis: Officer is frustrated because she was unable to get into a desired Army career course or to obtain another desired educational opportunity.

Lieutenant Colonel Kiddell	Hello, Captain. I heard you were looking for me. What can I do for you?
Captain Betty Baker	Well, Sir, as you know, I've been thinking about getting my Masters degree in Criminology.
Lieutenant Colonel Kiddell	That's great! I do remember you telling me something about that. Were you thinking of doing that soon?
Captain Betty Baker	(sounding frustrated) Well, I would like to, but I just don't think the timing is right. You know how expensive these courses are, and I know the Army only covers part of the cost. They cover tuition, but the total cost is much more than that. I'm not sure what to do.
Lieutenant Colonel Kiddell	(empathetically) You sound frustrated, but I think there may be some assistance available to help you cover the costs the Army won't cover.
Captain Betty Baker	(crossing arms, looking suspicious) Really? I know there's tuition assistance available, but I heard it won't come close to covering the total bill.
Lieutenant Colonel Kiddell	(insistently) No, no, no, that's wrong, Betty. <i>Completely</i> wrong. There's a lot of misperceptions out there about this. You've heard about the GI Bill?
Captain Betty Baker	Yes, I have.
Lieutenant Colonel Kiddell	Well, thanks to some recent changes, Veterans Affairs may be able to pay you the difference between the total cost of the degree and what is covered by the Army.
Captain Betty Baker	I don't know, that just doesn't sound right to me, Sir.

Lieutenant Colonel Kiddell	(somewhat angrily) You think I don't know what I'm talking about?
Captain Betty Baker	No, that's not it at all, Sir. It's just that what you're saying seems so different from what I've heard elsewhere.
Lieutenant Colonel Kiddell	(gently) Like I said, I think there's some bad information out there. Tell you what, here's a website where you can check it out (gives website). How about you go take a look at that website, and we can get back together in a week and talk this over.
Captain Betty Baker	That sounds good! Thanks, Sir.

Strategy 8: Provide Information

Synopsis: Officer is frustrated because she was unable to get into a desired Army career course or to obtain another desired educational opportunity.

Lieutenant Colonel Haag	Melissa, Come on in. I hear you wanted to see me?
Captain Melissa Tam	Yes, Sir. You know how I wanted to get into Advanced Civil Schooling?
Lieutenant Colonel Haag	Sure. I remember. Did you get in?
Captain Melissa Tam	No. There aren't enough slots right now. So I have to wait.
Lieutenant Colonel Haag	I'm sorry to hear that, Melissa. I think you'd have done really well at that.
Captain Melissa Tam	Yes, me too. You know, Sir, one of the great things about the Army was supposed to be all the educational opportunities. But I'm starting to wonder whether they really exist.
Lieutenant Colonel Haag	Have you had a chance to look into opportunities other than Advanced Civil Schooling yet?
Captain Melissa Tam	Not too much, I guess.
Lieutenant Colonel Haag	You know, there really are all sorts of opportunities out there.
Captain Melissa Tam	Really, like what?

Lieutenant Colonel Haag	(proudly displaying knowledge of subject) Well, if you check out www.hrc.mil you will find information on all the available programs for officers, like the Expanded Graduate School Program, the Post Commissioning Program, the Degree Completion Program, and the Training with Industry Program for Officers. This last program provides extensive exposure to managerial techniques and industrial procedures to competitively selected officers.
Captain Melissa Tam	Wow. I had no idea there were so many options.
Lieutenant Colonel Haag	Sure. And many of them provide funding. You should check out that website. By the way, I know you're a little frustrated right now. You're not deciding to leave the Army, are you?
Captain Melissa Tam	Not really. But I have thought about it a little bit.
Lieutenant Colonel Haag	I understand, but you should definitely keep in mind all the benefits of the Army. Things like job security, financial security, friendships, and a feeling you're making a difference for this country. And then there's the family benefits and a pension after 20 years' service. Those are some serious benefits, Captain. You ought to check out our retention website at ari.touchpoint.net .
Captain Melissa Tam	You're right, Sir. I should. I'll definitely check that out. Thanks!

Strategy 9: Share Anecdotes

Synopsis: Officer has been approached by a headhunter, and has been convinced to seriously consider pursuing another career after completing first ADSO.

	<i>Walking out of a meeting together...</i>
Major Shulman	Captain. I'm going to grab a quick cup of coffee before our next meeting at 0930. Care to join me?
Captain Jeff Fisher	Sure! Sounds good. I could use the caffeine today.
Major Shulman	Late night last night? I saw you gazing off a million miles away while Colonel Baker was presenting in that last meeting.
Captain Jeff Fisher	Sir, I'm not sure if you are aware but many of us have been getting emails from a headhunter named Jones. Know him?
Major Shulman	No. Never heard of him.
Captain Jeff Fisher	Well, he's based in Texas. He's been sending emails to everyone telling us our leadership skills are a "hot commodity" right now.
Major Shulman	And what do you think about these emails?
Captain Jeff Fisher	Well, Sir, I know it's some guy trying to get rich. But he lists a lot of jobs that sound really interesting, especially given our experience. And some of them pay good money. He says he can hook us up with these jobs whenever we're ready to leave. Like I say, I don't want to leave, but he certainly makes civilian life sound good.
Major Shulman	Sure. I can understand that. There are a number of good civilian jobs out there. Back when I was deciding whether to stay or leave, I had to really weigh the pros and cons of staying in my mind. You know what I mean?
Captain Jeff Fisher	Mm-hmm.

Major Shulman	For me, the pros of Army life were the job stability, financial stability, friendships, serving my country, and a pension after 20 years. With civilian life, there was more money to be had in some cases, but maybe not as much respect or job security. What's going through your mind? Any of the same things?
Captain Jeff Fisher	(looking surprised by the disclosure) Hmm. That's interesting. It's hard to know what to think. Why did you decide to stay?
Major Shulman	Well, for me, the benefits of staying outweighed the benefits of leaving. Also, I think I would miss my buddies if I left, and the sense that I was helping my country.
Captain Jeff Fisher	Yeah, I hear you.
Major Shulman	You look surprised that I went through something similar.
Captain Jeff Fisher	Well, Sir. I'm glad you shared this with me. I really respect your opinion. I guess I have some things to think about. (discussion continues)

Strategy 10: Offer Direct Guidance

Synopsis: Officer does not believe that he is being given a level of responsibility commensurate with his experience or expertise.

Captain Freese	So Lieutenant, what can I do for you today?
Lieutenant Jason Newton	Sir, I'll be straight with you. I've been here two years now, and I'm thinking about leaving instead of taking the Captain's course.
Captain Freese	Well, I appreciate you being open with me. But I'd like to know how come?
Lieutenant Jason Newton	Frankly, Sir, it's the bureaucracy. It's driving me crazy. I joined the Army to learn to be a leader, but I'm not getting the development opportunities that really count. I don't feel respected or even really needed for the job I'm doing.
Captain Freese	Hmm...So what would you say your goal is? What kind of assignments would you like?
Lieutenant Jason Newton	Well, I'd like to have some decision-making authority for platoon training activities.
Captain Freese	What do you think the best strategy is for getting those opportunities?
Lieutenant Jason Newton	Well, I guess I have to convince you and the Battalion XO that I'm cut out for those duties.
Captain Freese	Maybe you need to show us you're ready to take the next step by demonstrating some leadership potential. How would you do that?
Lieutenant Jason Newton	Well, I could start by taking more of an informal leadership role.
Captain Freese	That's a good idea, Lieutenant. You could assume more of a leadership role with the other Staff Officers, maybe volunteering to head up some functions.
Lieutenant Jason Newton	Then, if I keep at it, hopefully that will be noticed?

Captain Freese	I should think so. How about you make a list of ways you could take on a leadership role in your current assignment. If you write those down, maybe we could talk about them next week? (Discussion continues)
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Exercise 1: Counseling Strategies in Action

Scene:	Characters:	Scenario:
One:	<i>CPT Mike Freeman</i> – a junior captain <i>CPT George Honeycutt</i> – a senior captain, Mike's Company Commander	Officers are on deployment in Iraq, just prior to returning home.
Two:	<i>CPT Mike Freeman</i> <i>LTC Pat McGuigan</i> , Mike's Battalion Commander	One month later. Officers have recently returned from deployment. BN commander is meeting with each of his junior officers to discuss/prepare for expected PCS 6 to 8 months from now.
Three:	<i>CPT Mike Freeman</i> <i>LTC Pat McGuigan</i>	Four days later. BN commander has done some additional research after speaking with an officer who has expressed interest in leaving. He takes advantage of an informal counseling opportunity walking between the company's motor pool and the staff duty office.

Scene One

Line	Character	Narrative Text
1	CPT Honeycutt	<i>[as if nearing the end of a meeting ...]</i> So, last item, Mike: Our deployment's almost over and the boss wants to take care of us, so he needs to know what your career goals are, family situation, things that will impact your decision to stay in or get out. So, what do you want me to tell him, Mike ... what do you want him to know?
2	CPT Freeman	Well, sir, the wife's career is doing great – Mary was recently promoted to Shift Supervisor at the hospital back home and she loves it.
3	CPT Honeycutt	Great. So what are you thinking? What's next for you?
4	CPT Freeman	<i>[hesitant]</i> ...Well, sir, to be honest, I'm really thinking I have to get out. Mary and I have talked a lot about this, and I'm just not sure about going to the Career Course. We don't want to relocate now that Mary's career is taking off, unless there was a comparable position for her, and I don't think that's doable if I go to the Career Course. I mean, I'd <i>like</i> to command, but I'm not really tied to that if it means my wife's career is going to be derailed.
5	CPT Honeycutt	Is it okay if I tell this to the boss? Maybe he can talk to the assignment officer to see if we can meet your career goals and Mary's too.
6	CPT Freeman	Yeah, sure.

Scene Two

Line	Character	Narrative Text
7	CPT Freeman	<i>[Knocks on LTC McGuigan's partially-open door.]</i>
8	LTC McGuigan	Come in, Mike, have a seat. How's it feel to be back home?
9		<i>[LTC McGuigan comes around from behind his desk and sits adjacent to CPT Freeman at a smaller, round table in his office]</i>
10	CPT Freeman	<i>[Grinning]</i> Great, sir, Mary's getting over the shock of having me around again.
11	LTC McGuigan	Yeah, I know how that is. Want some coffee? Just made a fresh pot.
12	CPT Freeman	No, I'm good, sir, thanks.
13	LTC McGuigan	<i>[Leaning towards officer, arms and legs uncrossed]</i> So, Honeycutt tells me Mary got a great promotion; Shift Supervisor, was it? What's her specialty area again?
14	CPT Freeman	She works in the neonatal intensive care unit, with premature newborns, and she loves it. She's pretty excited about the promotion, not to mention the raise. The hours will be better too.
15	LTC McGuigan	That's great! So tell me, Mike, what's next for you? <i>[More serious]</i> George filled me in on some of your thoughts, your hesitation about the Captain's Career Course, and your tentative decision to leave the Army. Come on, you're not really serious about this, are you?
16	CPT Freeman	<i>[Hesitant, a little uncomfortable]</i> It's what I'm thinking right now. Nothing's for certain yet.
17	LTC McGuigan	<i>[surprised, angry, almost condescending]</i> What's this all about? Don't you enjoy what you're doing?
18	CPT Freeman	<i>[Thrown off balance; fidgets in chair]</i> Well, sir <i>[brief pause]</i> I guess I'm just struggling with what to do next. My family is really important to me and, well, sir, I just think it's time to consider all my options, not just a career in the military. It's not that I've ruled out a military career....
19	LTC McGuigan	This sounds like doubletalk. Do you or don't you like the Army?
20	CPT Freeman	<i>[Increasingly uncomfortable]</i> I like the Army, I like what I do....I just don't know...

Line	Character	Narrative Text
21	LTC McGuigan	<i>[Sounding suspicious]</i> Who've you been talking to? A headhunter? I I don't know why you think you'll have any more flexibility in the civilian sector than you do here. You need to do a side-by-side comparison of a command position with a corporate job. <i>[leans back, crosses arms]</i> You'll see the grass isn't always greener.
22	CPT Freeman	<i>[Fidgeting, looking down]</i> I'm sure that's true, sir. But this is the right time to make a decision and I need to think about it seriously.
23	LTC McGuigan	<i>[subdued, disappointed]</i> Well, that's too bad. I remember when you got to the battalion. You were hard-charging. You should <u>want</u> to go to CCC. I never pegged you for quitter. <i>[Brief pause in conversation]</i> Fact is, I've always figured you for a future BN Commander, a future senior leader.
24	CPT Freeman	Sir, I haven't changed. I still want to serve. I just want to consider some other options.
25	LTC McGuigan	You need to realize that you're not just making a decision that affects you and your wife, Mike. You're making a decision that affects 120 Soldiers. If you bail, who's gonna command them? We need guys like you on the team; you're one of the few in this battalion with the skill to command.
26	CPT Freeman	With all due respect, sir, this decision is about me and my wife. I don't want to force Mary to derail her career, not after everything she's done to support my career; she's worked very hard to get where she is with her nursing and now I want to support her. <i>[Silence. Posture shows discomfort]</i>
27	LTC McGuigan	<i>[More mild]</i> Okay, okay. I hear this isn't easy for you. Is there anything else I should know about your family plans or career goals to help you figure out what your options are, what your next steps might be?
28	CPT Freeman	Well, Mary's willing to move, but it would need to be somewhere she can find a comparable position. Her dream job is to work at Walter Reed in DC, but that's not going to happen if I stay in and go to the Career Course.
29	LTC McGuigan	<i>[Head nodding]</i> I hear your concerns, and family is certainly important. Look, Mike, you are clearly one of the top performers here. You did exceptionally well in this deployment, and I'd like to make sure we're doing everything we can to keep our best leaders in the Army. I'd offer you a command today, but, as you know, you need to be a Career Course graduate for that. Have you considered all of your options in the Army?
30	CPT Freeman	My understanding is that I'm pretty much locked into the Career Course as a next step, sir, so I'm thinking I'll have to get out of the Army. With my wife's career finally kicking into gear, and we really can't deal with the uncertainty of PCSing to the Career Course and not knowing my follow-on assignment....

Line	Character	Narrative Text
31		<i>[Ping from computer, signaling incoming email. Pause while McGuigan stares at computer screen. McGuigan doesn't say anything about what s/he's doing, just stares at screen for a while and then finally turns back to Mike ...]</i>
32	LTC McGuigan	So it's the <u>uncertainty</u> around PCSing and what would follow <u>after</u> the course that's got you thinking?
33	CPT Freeman	<i>[CPT Freeman hesitates and frowns slightly]</i> Well that's part of it. But... <i>[tails off]</i>
34	LTC McGuigan	But...your wife's career is important too and you have to think about both careers these days?
35	CPT Freeman	Yeah. Mary's been pretty patient so far with the sacrifices of Army life, and this is a critical point in her career... <i>[hesitates]</i>
36	LTC McGuigan	Go on...
37	CPT Freeman	...I just don't think it's fair to ask her to blow that off.
38	LTC McGuigan	I understand. At the end of the day you shouldn't have to ask her to do that. Listen, now that I have a clearer picture of your situation, give me a couple of days to see what options might be out there. If there's anything we can do to keep you, Mike, it's worth spending some time looking into it. Does that sound okay?
39	CPT Freeman	Yes, sir. I'm definitely open to other options - if they exist. I'll let Mary know that we spoke today.

Scene Three

Line	Character	Narrative Text
40	LTC McGuigan	Mike, wait up! Do you have a minute?
41	CPT Freeman	Yes, sir. What can I do for you?
42	LTC McGuigan	I'm headed over to staff duty. Looks like you're going in the same direction. I wanted to let you know I called Branch and discussed your situation with the assignment officer. You do have some options here, options that take Mary's career into account as well as yours. Walk with me and I can lay them out for you.
43	CPT Freeman	Okay, sir, that sounds good.

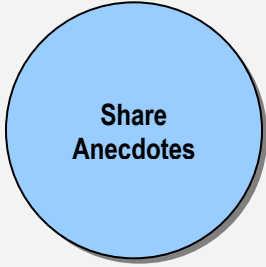
Line	Character	Narrative Text
44	LTC McGuigan	First, he said that there are several units open for your Career Course window, and 3 of these are in locations that have great hospitals: Ft. Lewis, Ft. Hood, and Hawaii. These are assignments that will sustain Mary's career while also giving you the opportunity to command. I think I can probably talk Branch into getting you assigned to one of those posts. I also learned that your wife would have to be registered in the appropriate state to take the Nursing State Board Exams, so if we can settle on your duty location, she could get registered for that right away. Another option is to try to work your coming back here after the Career Course. You'd be separated from Mary for awhile, but that option still might be a good one if transitioning to another state doesn't work for you two. A final option is to postpone the Career Course. There are several great hospitals in the DC area; in fact, some of them partner with Walter Reed. And there are a few pre-command positions in that location. These are assignments that wouldn't develop you as well in your field, but if you're thinking of changing career fields at the 7-yr mark, this might be the way to go.
45	CPT Freeman	Actually, sir, I am open to changing career fields and to be honest, I don't feel a compelling need to command in the Infantry. I mean, that would be a rewarding challenge, I'm sure, but it's not something I feel that strongly about. I just assumed that was the only road to promotion.
46	LTC McGuigan	No, not necessarily; there are a couple different tracks that will get you there. You don't have to have a command to receive a promotion. Hmm, in fact that last option sounds like a pretty good plan. I'll tell you what, tomorrow when the Brigade commander comes down for the patch ceremony, we can get him on board. I like it!
47		<i>[Officers have reached HQ and stop outside to finish up their conversation]</i>
48	CPT Freeman	Well, sir, I should probably go over all the options with Mary since....
49	LTC McGuigan	<i>[interrupting]</i> Right, right. Of course. <i>[Checking his watch]</i> What are your top priorities right now, Mike? Your wife's career, clearly, but along with that? Location? Do you want to stay in Infantry? It sounds like getting a command isn't such a high priority. So what are your goals?
50	CPT Freeman	I guess one of my top priorities is location, for the sake of Mary's career, but it could be any location with a suitable hospital. Command is not a priority for me, but I want an assignment that won't set back my promotional track. I guess Mary and I haven't really thought about all the places we'd be interested in moving to; I just assumed that the next step had to be Career Course or leaving the Army.

Line	Character	Narrative Text
51	LTC McGuigan	Why don't you talk this over with Mary or, better yet, bring her in here sometime – I haven't seen Mary for ages. I'd like for us to get some clarity around your goals, as a couple, and discuss some of these options. I'd also like you to speak with your assignment officer and look into the three options in more detail. There may be some I didn't think to ask about.
52	CPT Freemen	That sounds great, sir, I'll talk to Mary tonight and do a bit more research about assignments.
53	LTC McGuigan	Good - let's schedule some time together soon. If you two feel a move would be the best option, I'll have to try to tag the duty assignment at the location we decide on. I know the Commanders really well at 2 of the 3 locations I mentioned earlier, and I'm sure we can work something out if that's the direction you decide to take, but we can't wait too long to decide.
54	CPT Freemen	Roger that, sir. We'll get something scheduled for next week.

Exercise 1: Notes Page

Exercise 1: Behavior Identification Worksheet

Counseling Strategy	Behaviors	+/-	Line #
Prepare	1. <i>"Honeycutt tells me" Informed about CPT Freeman's issue</i>	1. +	1. 13
	2.	2.	2.
	3.	3.	3.
	4.	4.	4.
	5.	5.	5.
	6.	6.	6.
Establish Rapport	1.	1.	1.
	2.	2.	2.
	3.	3.	3.
	4.	4.	4.
	5.	5.	5.
	6.	6.	6.
Attend & Listen	1.	1.	1.
	2.	2.	2.
	3.	3.	3.
	4.	4.	4.
	5.	5.	5.
	6.	6.	6.
Ask Open Questions	1.	1.	1.
	2.	2.	2.
	3.	3.	3.
	4.	4.	4.
	5.	5.	5.
	6.	6.	6.
Restate Key Information	1.	1.	1.
	2.	2.	2.
	3.	3.	3.
	4.	4.	4.
	5.	5.	5.
	6.	6.	6.

Counseling Strategy		Behaviors	+/-	Line #
	1.		1.	1.
	2.		2.	2.
	3.		3.	3.
	4.		4.	4.
	5.		5.	5.
	6.		6.	6.
	1.		1.	1.
	2.		2.	2.
	3.		3.	3.
	4.		4.	4.
	5.		5.	5.
	6.		6.	6.
	1.		1.	1.
	2.		2.	2.
	3.		3.	3.
	4.		4.	4.
	5.		5.	5.
	6.			6.
	1.		1.	1.
	2.		2.	2.
	3.		3.	3.
	4.		4.	4.
	5.		5.	5.
	6.		6.	6.
	1.		1.	1.
	2.		2.	2.
	3.		3.	3.
	4.		4.	4.
	5.		5.	5.
	6.		6.	6.

Exercise 2: Developing Counseling Skills

The best way to learn a skill is to practice it. In this section, we will work through two role plays in groups. These will give you hands-on experience in applying the counseling strategies discussed today. The role plays are structured to give everyone an opportunity to practice and/or observe using the strategies and associated effective behaviors. For each of the two role plays there will be a counselee (played by one of the trainers), a counselor (played by one of you), and one or more silent observers. If you are an observer, your role will be to take notes on the counselor's performance and provide feedback at the end.

Each role play has been set up to give you an opportunity to use all of the counseling strategies taught today. Your goal is to attempt to use as many of the counseling strategies - and key behaviors associated with those strategies - as possible to help the officer resolve his/her issues and consider staying in the Army. It will not be possible to use *all* of the effective behaviors during a single role play, but you should do your best to use as many of the behaviors as appropriate. As a means of facilitating constructive feedback about the role play exercise, observers in your group will watch the counseling discussion and keep note of the strategies and behaviors you use. Following the role play, the group will discuss how the role play went.

STOP HERE UNTIL YOU RECEIVE FURTHER INSTRUCTION

Exercise 2: Role Play A

Role: CDR Pat Nelson, Counselor

Scenario:

You are LTC/CPT Pat Nelson. In an effort to conduct some career counseling, you have asked one of your junior officers, LT Karen Hanson, to join you for lunch today. LT Hanson has been assigned to the Quartermaster Branch for the last couple of years and has had a variety of successful assignments. There is every indication she will move up the ranks quickly, and you believe she will make an excellent battalion commander one day.

However, over the course of several informal discussions at PT and elsewhere, LT Hanson has given you some indication that she isn't entirely satisfied in QM. To date she hasn't said anything specific and you have yet to follow up directly about her situation. But LT Hanson's overall demeanor has given you the strong impression that she hasn't been giving 100% to her job recently. The last time she volunteered for an assignment was over 3 months ago, and during that same period she has been late to work a few times and doesn't seem as prepared for meetings and briefings as she typically is.

Beyond work you know she has been married for about six years to James Hanson, a mechanic at a local auto repair shop. They have two young children, Ethan and Gemma, who attend the elementary school on post. As far as you know, all is well on the home front. Nevertheless, it does occur to you that LT Hanson hasn't mentioned her husband or children very much in the past few weeks. She used to return to work on Mondays with lots of stories about what the family got up to over the weekend. Recently, there haven't been many stories.

You know that before too long, LT Hanson will complete her first Active Duty Service Obligation. You aren't really sure what she's thinking in terms of staying or leaving, but now would be a good time to start having those discussions with her.

STOP HERE UNTIL YOU RECEIVE FURTHER INSTRUCTION

Exercise 2: Role Play A – Notes Page for Counselor

Use this page to write down any notes to help you prepare for and/or conduct the upcoming discussion

Exercise 2: Role Play A

Role: LT Karen Hanson, Counselor

Scenario:

You are LT Karen Hanson. You are currently assigned to the Quartermaster Branch and have been there for the past two years. You have been happily married for the past six years to James Hanson, a mechanic at a local auto repair shop. You have two kids, Ethan and Gemma, aged 5 and 3, respectively. Your kids attend the elementary school on post. Although you have successfully completed several assignments in QM, you have recently become unhappy with Army life.

For one thing, you don't believe your skills are being put to their best possible use. You were a bio-chemistry major in college, and are worried about losing those skills the longer you remain in QM. You are thinking about transferring to the Chemical Branch but are unsure how to do it and whether you even *can* do that right now. Also, you have been hearing about all the high paying jobs you could get in the civilian sector, and you find these tempting. In fact, just last month you were approached by a recruiter for Dupont looking to fill positions at the company's new world-class industrial research and development facility in Wilmington, Delaware. Finally, to make matters worse, James is becoming increasingly discontent with Army life, and has been trying to persuade you to leave. James doesn't think Army life is the best life for the kids going forward. Although he's been happy as a mechanic for a few years, he's thinking about the future and wants more of a career. This will mean he needs a higher education degree – at least a master's – to pursue the field of civil engineering.

You have a lot on your mind, but haven't really talked it over with anyone other than James. Your first ADSO will be up in the next 18 months, so you're starting to think about whether to stay in the Army or pursue a civilian career. It doesn't help that there have been a number of pretty bad arguments at home recently, and James is putting considerable pressure on you to make a decision to leave. When the Dupont recruiter approached you it only made matters worse. You don't think he means it, but James mentioned "divorce" in the last argument.

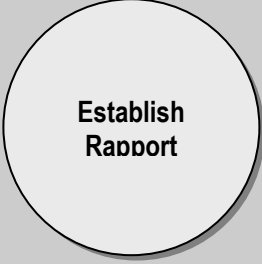
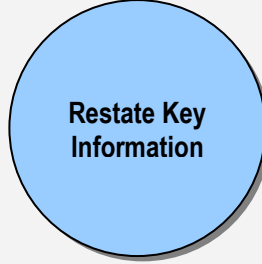
You have a good working relationship with your commander, LTC/CPT Nelson, who often inquires how things are going. He has asked you to join him for lunch today. He often does this with junior officers, and as far as you know there is nothing out of the ordinary about this latest invitation.

If role player gender needs to be switched, use Karl and Jane Hanson (an elementary school teacher who wishes to pursue a career in school administration, for which she will need a PhD).

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Exercise 2A: Behavior Identification Worksheet

Counseling Strategy	Behaviors
 Prepare 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.	
 Establish Rapport 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.	
 Attend & Listen 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.	
 Ask Open Questions 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.	
 Restate Key Information 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.	

Counseling Strategy	Behaviors
	1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.
	1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.
	1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.
	1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.
	1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.

Questions to Review upon Completion of Practice Role Play A

1. How do the counselor and counselee feel they did in their respective roles?
 - a. What do they think went well?
 - b. What do they think they could have done better or differently?
2. Which strategies and behaviors did the counselor use? Which were not used?
3. Which strategies and behaviors were used well? Where is there room for improvement?

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Exercise 2: Role Play B

Role: LTC Alex Johnson, Counselor

Scenario:

You are LTC Alex Johnson, a battalion commander in the Engineering Branch. You are wrapping up your second deployment in Iraq. At this moment you are walking with CPT Sam McNamara toward the company's motor pool during Transfer of Authority (TOA) approximately one week prior to redeployment. CPT McNamara's company commander has approached you with reference to CPT McNamara's decision to attend his Captains Career Course (CCC). It seems CPT McNamara received a Request for Orders (RFO) for CCC that starts five months after returning home.

CPT McNamara is currently a platoon leader in the Engineering Branch. You have always assumed (although never discussed this with him) that his career plans including commanding a line company and, possibly, a battalion. At present he is a solid, competent platoon leader and you believe he has the potential for a successful career in the Army. You haven't spent a lot of time talking informally with CPT McNamara over the course of the current deployment, but you recall that when he first got to the battalion he stood out as a hard-charging and enthusiastic officer. It would really surprise you to hear he might be considering options other than those that would involve leading troops, or even thinking about leaving. Other information you have gleaned about CPT McNamara includes: 1) he is a 2004 West Point graduate, 2) this is his second deployment – once to Afghanistan and once to Iraq (current), 3) he is single and dating a civilian back home, 4) he is an avid reader and particularly enjoys historical biographies.

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Exercise 2: Role Play B – Notes Page for Counselor

Use this page to write down any notes to help you prepare for and/or conduct the upcoming discussion

Exercise 2: Role Play B

Role: CPT Sam McNamara, Counselee

Scenario:

You are CPT Sam McNamara, a platoon leader in the Engineering Branch. You have been in the Army for 3.5 years. You are just wrapping up a second deployment to Iraq and will be returning to the US in a couple of weeks. Branch just sent you your Request for Orders (RFO) to attend Captains Career Course (CCC) in the next five months or so. Everyone expects you to give up your platoon shortly and head off to CCC. However, you're not sure of all your options and don't really know what to do next.

You are a West Point graduate and ever since graduation have been training, preparing for deployment, or deploying. Reaching the end of this latest deployment has given you pause and you frequently find yourself thinking about your goals. Upon reflection, you realize that while Army life has been fun and fulfilling, you've had very little time to focus on your *personal* goals, which are increasingly important. For one thing, you would like to pursue a Master's degree and, eventually, you see yourself going back to USMA to teach in the history department. Second, you would like to start a family. The problem is that in your experience meeting the right partner and having a lasting relationship is next to impossible. Your girlfriend, who you met 5 months before deploying, just broke up with you over email – even though you will be returning to the US in a matter of weeks. She told you she can't handle the distance and spends too much time worrying about your safety. You've heard this before from other women you have dated.

You're very concerned that deployments to Iraq and Afghanistan could continue for a number of years (in fact you read in Stars and Stripes just today that Secretary Gates anticipates deployments could continue for 10-15 years!). If this is the case, you simply don't see any of your personal goals being met by staying in the Army. You want to have kids and the idea of being an absentee father like your own father (he was a truck driver and then left his family when you were aged 8) is a major concern. You can't imagine putting your own kids through what you experienced as a child.

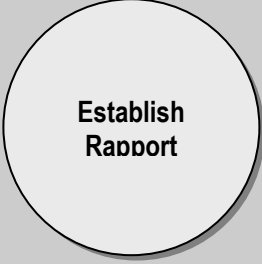
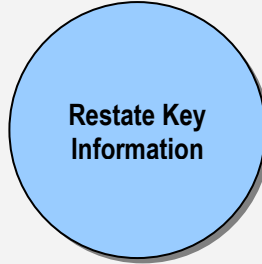
All in all, what you've learned about yourself during this deployment is that although you enjoy some aspects of leading a platoon, you're not highly motivated to lead troops for the rest of your career. The idea of being a company commander or even a battalion commander just isn't as appealing as it used to be; and these roles aren't compatible with your personal goals. Right now you see that you'll get six months at CCC, but then you're destined to go immediately back to a deploying unit.

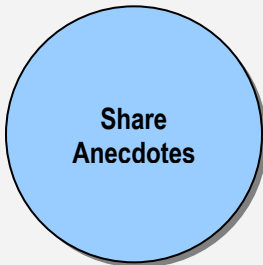
At this moment you are walking with LTC Alex Johnson toward the company's motor pool during TOA approximately one week prior to redeployment. You haven't spent much time with LTC Johnson, but have heard good things about him from others, including your own company commander.

STOP HERE UNTIL YOU RECEIVE FURTHER INSTRUCTION

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Exercise 2B: Behavior Identification Worksheet

Counseling Strategy	Behaviors
 Prepare 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.	
 Establish Rapport 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.	
 Attend & Listen 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.	
 Ask Open Questions 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.	
 Restate Key Information 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.	

Counseling Strategy	Behaviors
 Acknowledge Feelings	1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.
 Challenge	1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.
 Provide Information	1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.
 Share Anecdotes	1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.
 Offer Direct Guidance	1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6.

Questions to Review upon Completion of Practice Role Play B

4. How do the counselor and counselee feel they did in their respective roles?
 - c. What do they think went well?
 - d. What do they think they could have done better or differently?
5. Which strategies and behaviors did the counselor use? Which were not used?
6. Which strategies and behaviors were used well? Where is there room for improvement?

Exercise 2: Group Discussion

Now that you have had a chance to practice identifying and utilizing the counseling strategies, take a few minutes to discuss your experiences with the entire group. The instructor will facilitate this discussion, but think about the following questions:

What do you feel you did well? What came more easily to you?

What did you find challenging? What are some ways you might overcome those challenges?

Were there specific strategies you struggled with? Which ones? How come?

Using Goal Setting to Remember the Strategies

As you may know, it is very easy to forget what you have learned if you do not make a repeated effort to use the material.

We do not want you to forget this material. So, we want to give you some tips on how to remember the counseling strategies, and also how to actually use these strategies as you counsel others.

The best way to remember the strategies we learned today is to use them in your role as counselor as much as possible. More specifically, the best way to remember them is to **set specific goals for how you will use them**.

So, in the space provided on the next page, please take a moment now to write down some specific goals for using these counseling strategies. Try to think of **at least two** different officers you can use these counseling strategies with over the next month. Then, write down the names of these officers, and note which strategies deserve special emphasis for a given officer. In other words, for each officer, note what may be the most important counseling strategies to use for their individual situations. After you have finished with this exercise, consider what will be difficult about using these strategies for the officers you have identified. Thinking now about the difficulties you could encounter in these counseling situations will help prepare you to deal with these difficulties effectively later on. Use the worksheet provided to identify the obstacles to success for each situation, and how you will overcome them.

Officer	Which Strategies Deserve Special Emphasis with This Officer?
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Obstacles in Using Strategies with this Officer	How Will You Overcome Them?
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

Notes