



*"Be the change you want to see in this world"*

USNA  
2018 Ed.

# LIFE SKILLS HANDBOOK

Navigating the challenges of life beyond Bancroft  
Hall

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## INTRODUCTION

The USNA Mission Statement tells us that we are preparing Midshipmen physically, mentally, and morally not just for the demands of serving as a junior officer in the Naval Service, but also for the highest degree of citizenship. In 2016, the Commandant of Midshipmen identified the need to introduce life skills training to augment the robust military and academic development to enable Midshipmen to excel at life and citizenship. The desired end state is to have Naval Academy graduates who are well prepared to tackle life's challenges once they leave Bancroft Hall and to become the bedrock of American society.

Not all lessons can be learned in the classroom or inculcated by military training. The purpose of this handbook is to provide a resource for the key influencers in the lives of Midshipmen (Coaches, Faculty and Officer Representatives, Company Officers, Sponsor Families, etc.) who have unique opportunities to engage Midshipmen individually at the point of impact as they work themselves through the challenges of life. This handbook suggests critical conversations in which to engage with Midshipmen and provides background information and concepts to start valuable conversations in order to promote life skill development in Midshipmen.

Sixteen subject matter experts from across the USNA Faculty and Staff contributed to the 23 life skills topics in this handbook. We hope these topics, along with the resources provided, aide discussions and the development of life skills among the Midshipmen in less formalized and more personalized settings.





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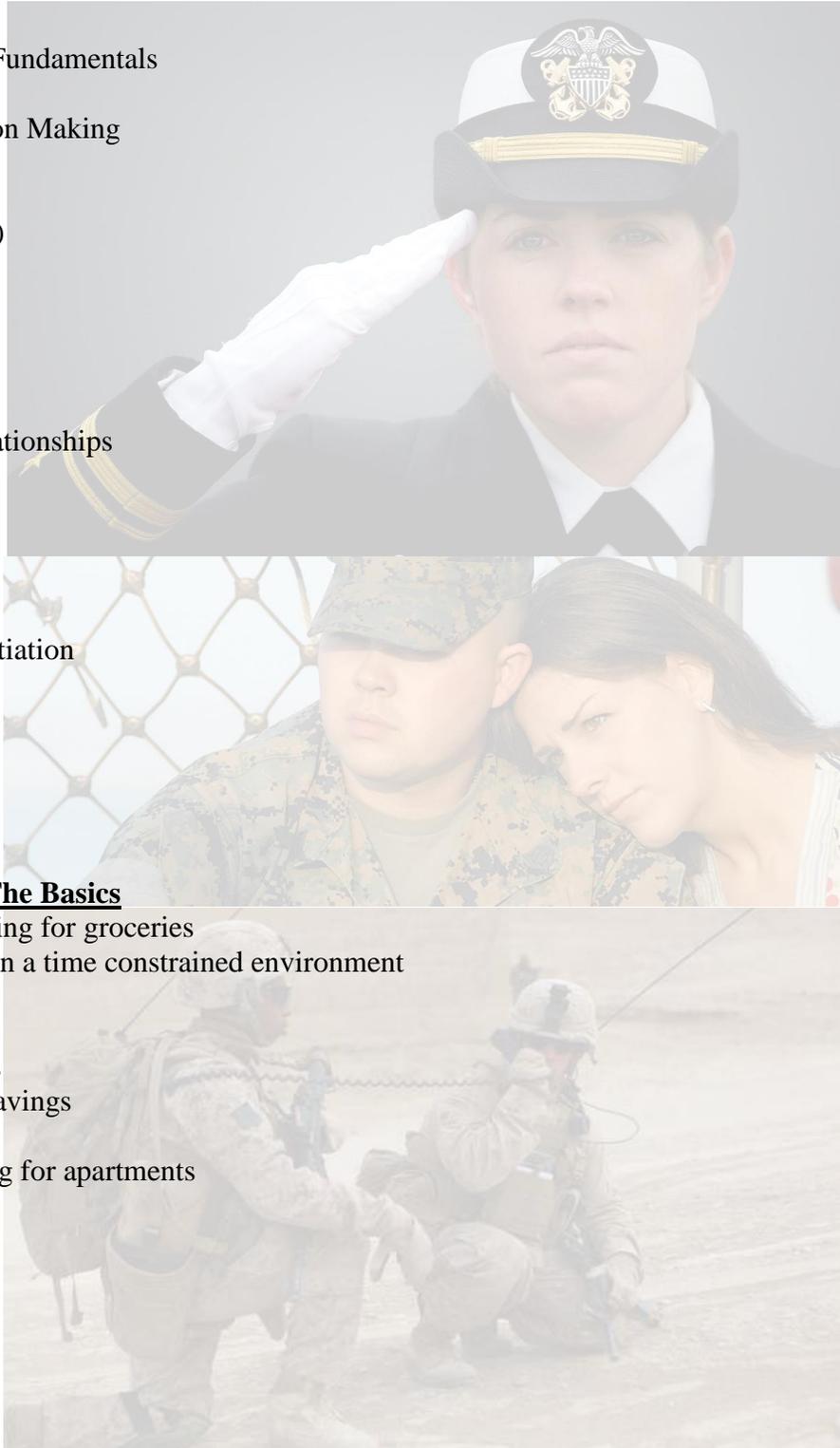
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# ***PERSONAL SKILLS***

*"Knowing others is intelligence. Knowing yourself is true wisdom. Mastering others is strength. Mastering yourself is true power"*

*-Lao Tzu*





## PERFORMANCE NUTRITION

*How do you fuel your bodies to maximize the performance of your duties?*

**What you should know:** Nutrition recommendations should be based on up-to-date, scientific research, not popular fads or anecdotal accounts from blogs, websites, social media, or health and wellness magazines. The bulk of current research points to more of a plant-based diet as supporting both health and preventing many of the chronic diseases that are the leading causes of death in the United States (i.e. heart disease, diabetes, cancer, etc.).

### 1. Eat Clean!

It's time to "get back to earth!" This includes mostly fresh, minimally processed foods with few ingredients, like whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean meats, low-fat dairy products and plant-fats and oils. Why? Because these foods usually are the most nutrient-dense – providing lots of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, phytochemicals and fiber – and have been shown to help with weight management, decrease the inflammation that often leads to disease, and promote optimal performance during exercise.



*The 80/20 rule can be helpful when guiding your food choices throughout the day. 80% of the time you should be choosing those nutrient-dense foods as outlined above. 20% of the time it's okay to have things that might be higher in calories, but give you pleasure to eat them. Life's too short not to have a little chocolate or even an occasional cheeseburger when you want it!*

### 2. Eat Often!

Eating more frequently throughout the day can help you feel more energized, prevent excessive hunger and binging, and also has metabolic benefits. For most people this means eating every 3-4 hours or so, but the best way to determine eating frequency is just honor your hunger cues.

### 3. Stay Hydrated!

Even elite athletes usually don't perform well when dehydrated, so maintaining a good hydration schedule is as important as providing adequate fuel in optimizing performance and feeling energized throughout the day. Most people need somewhere between ½-1 oz. of fluid per pound of body weight. If you sweat excessively you probably need the upper end of that range.

### 4. Have a Plan!

Healthy eating really boils down to planning for it and, in many cases, making those foods more readily available so that it's the easier choice. As little as 20 minutes of planning meals and doing minimal food prep in your down time can save you hours later! Think: What can I do to make these foods more available in my diet?

### Conversation Starters:

1. Are there certain food groups you might need to increase or decrease to improve the balance of your diet?
2. How often are you eating during a typical day? Are you skipping meals or having prolonged fasts? Do you often feel hungry in between meals? If so, how can you plan to have snacks available to honor your body's hunger cues?
3. What are some action steps you can take this week to support your meal planning and eating goals?



## HEALTHY SLEEPING HABITS

### *How is sleep key to success in combat and in life?*

**What you should know:** The importance of sleep to overall health, well-being and performance is increasingly appreciated by healthcare providers, military forces and sports populations. Sleep is frequently sacrificed in order to work harder in academics and meet the physical mission of the USNA, however, it is a critical component of meeting our mission. While most college aged students require more than 8 hours of sleep per night, the average sleep for a college student is 6.1 hrs; for a Midshipman, it may be even less. This sleep deprivation is cumulative and it is not possible to acclimate or adjust to sleep loss. With just 3 hours of reduced sleep a night for 7 days, some studies show a 50% reduction in performance on reaction time and cognitive tests. In a population of student athletes, those who slept less than 7 hours per night had higher rates of mental distress and fewer healthy days. Sleep researchers often remark that the biggest investment in productivity that humans have is sleep. With sleep education, students can see significant improvements in energy level, athletic performance, academic performance and mental wellness. Working to improve quantity and quality of sleep is an important part of meeting the mission of the USNA, morally, mentally, and physically.

### **Strategies for Success**

1. Get up and go to bed the same time every day
  - a. Make a schedule and stick to it. Set a bedtime alarm. Even on weekends when possible! When your sleep cycle has a regular rhythm, you will feel better.
2. Only use your bed for sleeping
  - a. Refrain from using your bed to surf the web on a laptop or phone, do work, or read. So when you get into your bed, your body knows it is time to sleep.
3. Develop a sleep routine
  - a. It is important to give your body cues that it is time to slow down and sleep. Listen to relaxing music, read something soothing for 15 minutes, have a cup of caffeine free tea, do relaxation exercises.
4. Seek help when it consistently takes you longer than 60 mins to fall asleep
  - a. If you have tried these tips and cannot fall asleep, seek out assistance from the Midshipmen Development Center. You need sleep to perform at a high level both physically and mentally.

### **Conversation Starters:**

1. What are your biggest barriers to getting adequate sleep at the USNA during 1/, 2/C, 3/C and 4/C year?
2. What might be some solutions to the barriers above?
3. What is one thing that you can do today to improve your sleep tonight?





## PERFORMANCE PSYCHOLOGY

### *How do I strengthen my mind as I would strengthen my body?*

Performance excellence is a result of both physical and mental factors. Just as one's physical conditioning can be improved through practice and training, resilience and mental conditioning can also be built and strengthened. Certain psychological characteristics have been found to be associated with performance excellence. These include high self-confidence and expectations of success, feeling in control, keeping one's focus in the moment, viewing difficult situations as exciting and challenging, having a positive attitude about performance, and high motivation.

These characteristics can be taught, and their development is critical to both personal growth and leadership preparation.

Situations do not cause a certain response, but it is our reaction to any given situation that leads to either a positive or negative response. Performance psychology helps us to gain control over our reactions so that we can achieve to our best ability consistently. The model below shows how this relationship works:

#### Strategies for Success:



1. Set goals: To achieve any outcome, you have to focus on the process. Write down what you want to achieve while focusing on the controllable aspects of how you can achieve it.
2. Know your ideal performance mindset: Think back to your best performances and identify your thoughts, feelings and behaviors that helped you achieve your outcome. Were you happy, excited, angry and/or motivated? Know that you can re-create this mindset at any time to achieve your best performance.
3. Develop self-talk: Self talk includes all purposeful and random thoughts that run through your mind. If guided correctly, it can help you react in a way that achieves your ideal mindset. Focus on what you want to happen, not on what you want to avoid. Remain in the present tense. Practice.

#### Conversation Starters:

1. When you are performing your best, what is your performance mindset (the ways in which you are feeling, thinking and behaving) that help you achieve your goal?
2. Can you remember a time when your reaction to a situation was not helpful and did not contribute to your best performance? What were you thinking, feeling or behaving then?
3. How might you become more aware of what your ideal performance mindset might be, so that you can help yourself react in a way that is helpful?



## ACTIVE COPING

**What is Active Coping?** Active coping includes all of the skills and strategies that help us build resilience and allow us to more purposefully confront the stress inherent in our lives. Stress is a natural response to potential threats in the environment – in most cases it helps us focus, and it prepares us to face dangers and challenges. However, our natural stress reaction can be problematic when we are faced with problems that can't readily be solved by more attentional focus and energy. Focus and energy are very useful when we don't want to be eaten by a lion, but they aren't as useful when one is worrying about service selection. Effective active coping helps us identify the sources of our stress, helps us understand how stress is helpful or harmful to our desired performance, and provides useful and appropriate outlets for our energy and focus. It is important for leaders in particular to develop active coping skills, build their own resilience, and serve as a resource for others who are dealing with stress.

### Active Coping Techniques

- **Controlled deep breathing** can help us recognize when we are feeling stress, and can provide a physiological interruption to the stress signals being sent to the body (<https://capepsychology.homestead.com/Vagal-Brake.html>)
- **Mindfulness** is the process of focusing intently on the present moment – of being aware of the moment without judgment. Studies conducted by the Marine Corps and the Naval Health Research Center have found that mindfulness training results in faster recovery following a realistic combat exercise, and leads to measureable changes in nervous system and brain functioning.
- **Meditation, reflection, and prayer** can provide structure for habitual and systematic engagement with one's fears and worries.
- **Setting realistic and achievable goals** helps us focus on things that we can control and provides a useful outlet for our energy.
- **Building and engaging with social support networks** gives us access to new perspectives on our problems, allows us to "crowdsource" our problem-solving, provides an opportunity to validate our feelings, and can, in itself, be an outlet for the energy generated by stress. Among deployed units in Iraq and Afghanistan, high perceived support and unit cohesion resulted in reduced physiological reactivity to stress, as well as increased self-esteem and self-efficacy.
- **Engaging in satisfying hobbies and meaningful work**, especially work focused on helping others.

**Strategies for Success:** Mental health experts often focus on three aspects of active coping.

1. **Practice self-care.** Sometimes people forget about their own well-being during times of stress. This often makes the stress worse. It's important to continue to prioritize your own health, so sleep, eat right, drink water, take showers, exercise, etc.
2. **Talk to others.** Staying engaged with others is a vital aspect of coping. In fact, isolating yourself can often lead to greater problems.
3. **Focus on what you can control today.** It is important to differentiate the aspects of any problem that are under your control from those that are not. When dealing with a problem, focus on what you can control. While the things you can't control can be a source of worry and sadness, acknowledging their uncontrollability can free us from the natural desire to change them or fix them.

### Conversation Starters:

**What are your greatest stressors? How do you typically deal with stress?** If you are not sure what causes you stress or how you deal with stress, then you are likely *reacting* to stress, not actively coping.

**How often do you engage in each of the coping techniques described above? Which ones are most effective for you?**



## RESPONSIBILITY AND LIFE DECISIONS

### *How do you take charge of YOUR life?*

#### **Responsibility:**

When we are young our parents made all the decisions for us. As we became older we asserted our independence and boldly took matters into our own hands, often with significant consequences. Sophocles has been recorded as stating: *"It is a painful thing to look at your own trouble and know that you yourself and no one else has made it."* Our ability (or inability) to make good life decisions affects us and all those around us. Taking responsibility for our own actions is a foundation to wisdom and maturity and is necessary for good leadership. Albert Einstein told said, *"Man must cease attributing his problems to his environment, and learn again to exercise his will – his personal responsibility."* It is easy to blame others for our problems, but with a little wisdom, we realize that we can't solve problems that we don't own. When we avoid responsibility, life becomes more frustrating and intransigent. When we blame others for the consequences of our decisions, we avoid responsibility and pass up an opportunity to learn from our mistakes.

#### **Professional Implications:**

Responsibility is the essence of officership. Many Navy junior officers will immediately upon reporting be assigned jobs such as "Electrical Officer." When the electrical distribution system has a fault, there is only one person whom the Commanding Officer is going to hold responsible. Regardless of why the fault occurred or how long the officer has been in the billet, the electrical officer is responsible to fix the problem. There is no point in trying to deflect the responsibility. Step up to the plate.

Good decision making is a hallmark of effective leadership. It is unlikely that leaders who are incapable of making good decisions in their own lives will make good decision for their units. Additionally, trust is a very fragile yet essential element in leadership. Subordinates who lose trust in leaders based on their day to day decision making will be hesitant to entrust their lives to their leaders. As aspiring leaders, Midshipmen should make all life decisions from the perspective of their role as professional military officers. Poor judgment might be forgiven, but will never be forgotten. Too much is at stake.

#### **Conversation Starters:**

- 1) Who are the best decision makers you know? How do they make their decisions? How do they account for other people in their decision making?
- 2) Who are the worst decision makers you know? Why are their decisions bad? How were others affected by these decisions?
- 3) Are the decisions you are making what you would expect from a junior officer? A Commanding Officer? An Admiral? At what point are you going to become the person that you need to be in order to be a professional military officer?



## CHARACTER

*Do you want to know what is the right thing to do is, or how to tell right from wrong?*

**Why is character important?** Do you want to live up to your potential? Do you want to know what is the right thing to do is, or how to tell right from wrong? Develop your character in accordance with your conscience and reason. Your character is the sum of your habits. We generally know when we have bad habits – what’s better, binge watching Netflix or going for a run? What’s better, copying your homework from your roommate or doing it yourself? What’s better, eating an apple or an extra piece of pie? Excellent behavior is the product of excellent habits. Do you want to be a person of integrity? Of courage? Of temperance? Then every time you have a choice which involves that virtue, select the option most in accordance with that virtue. Do you want to be a person of integrity? Then form your thoughts and opinions in accordance with your conscience and reason, then say what you think and do what you say. Do this all the time. Not sure what the right thing to think or do is? Ask around – ask your mentors, parents, and those who’ve been around the block that you respect highly. They can help you discern between two apparently equal choices to find what is really in accordance with virtue and in your best interests as you continue to build yourself into a person of Character.

War exposes the best and worst of those who are called to fight. I know of no man who lacked character in peace and then discovered his character in combat.

*-Major Dick Winters*



### Character and Officership

One of the missions of the Naval Academy is to develop midshipmen morally, but there is no magic course you can take to make you moral. You have to decide to become a person of character. Know that in the future you will be faced with difficult moral decisions and, if you haven’t formed your character, then you will fail the test and possibly end up on the front cover of Navy Times.

### Strategies for Success:

- 1) Have a discussion with that person you respect for being a person of character. Ask them how they formed their character.
- 2) Write down all of the decisions you had to make today. Which choices were good and which ones bad? What can you do tomorrow to make better choices?
- 3) Deliberately choose friends who help you become a better version of yourself. Ditch those who do the opposite. If you want to see your future, look at your friends.

### Conversation Starters:

- 1) What habits do you have that you are proud of? Which virtues are associated with those habits?
- 2) What are some of your bad habits? Which virtues are associated with those habits?
- 3) Who do you know that is a person of character? What do you respect about them?



## TEMPERANCE

*In the world of plenty, how do we moderate the pleasures in life?*

**What is Temperance?** According to Aristotle, temperance is moderation with regard to bodily pleasures. It can be seen as the mean between extremes of pleasure. It is a regulation of our sense appetites. The objects of temperance generally deal with the sense of touch – eating, drinking, and sex. There are three ways to go wrong in an excess of appetite for bodily-touch pleasure:

1. You can delight in the wrong thing.
2. You can delight in something too much.
3. You can delight in the wrong manner.

Aristotle says that self-indulgent people do all three.

**Why is Temperance important to professional military officers?** A cursory look at the reasons why Officers are dismissed for cause and Sailors are separated from the Navy will show you why Temperance is important. Let's begin with sex. Officers who have sex with the wrong people (i.e. adultery, prostitution, infidelity) break trust with those closest to them and show themselves unworthy of the nation's trust. Pornography consumption fills the coffers of human traffickers, leads one to see others as objects for use, and can create an addiction that can cause one to lose their job. Alcohol, if consumed in a manner that causes one to make bad decisions (i.e. driving, violence, infidelity) can lead to death, embarrassment, or an international incident. Food, if too much or too little is consumed, or not the right kinds of foods can lead to long term health problems and failure to meet Physical Fitness Standards. Social Media, if not controlled, can consume hours of your day to the detriment of your job and relationships.

### Strategies for Success:

- 1) Once you've identified an area of your life that needs temperance, identify someone who is already excellent in that area, and talk to them about how they do it.
- 2) Give up your favorite social media for a week. Reflect on how much extra time you have. Consider selecting just one day a week to view social media.
- 3) Make specific fitness and nutrition goals and keep them.

### Conversation Starters:

- 1) In what areas are you temperate?
- 2) In what areas are you intemperate?
- 3) What can you do to become more temperate in the areas of your life that need it most?

### Additional Readings:

(a) Nichomachean Ethics, Book 3, Chapter 10





## EUDAIMONIA – THE GOOD LIFE

### *How do you live YOUR good life?*

**The Good Life.** In his *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle asks, ‘What is the best way to lead our life and give it meaning?’ There are many visions of what the ‘good life’ means. Many visions of the good life entail material wealth and easy access to pleasurable things. Other visions of the good life entail contributing to meaningful causes and building quality relationships with others. Regardless of one’s individual vision of the good life, it is unlikely that the vision will be achieved accidentally or unintentionally. As aspiring military officers, Midshipmen are taught that leadership requires a vision of a desirable future to be achieved, but not all Midshipmen have taken an active role in leading their own lives by envisioning the desired destination of their own lives, their good life. In some ways, deciding where to go to college is at least an attempt to answer this question, but many Midshipmen need help looking farther down the road. The *Nicomachean Ethics* is Aristotle’s advice about how to obtain the good life and was dedicated to his son, Nichomachus; perhaps it was Aristotle’s attempt to help his son look farther down the road.

Aristotle’s methodology was to observe others in order to determine causes and effects. From his observations of others, he concluded that most people did what they did in an attempt to achieve happiness. He therefore argued that the ultimate purpose of a human life is to achieve happiness. He makes a distinction between happiness and pleasure, however. Since pleasure is temporary: we always eventually lose any feeling of pleasure, which gives us an experience of loss and perhaps pain. For this reason, pleasure is not sufficient as an end unto itself. Aristotle argues rather that happiness comes from who you are, not what you do. Specifically, he argued that happiness comes from excellence. Since the distinguishing characteristic of humans is our rationality, he argued that human happiness is rooted in a life that enables us to develop our reason and is lived in accordance with our reason.

### **Strategies for Success:**

- 1) Look for opportunities to help others, and then make a point of serving them, even if it’s inconvenient to you.
- 2) Perform random acts of kindness. If you can do these anonymously, even better.
- 3) Smile and greet everyone you pass by – you will be amazed at how your smile is infectious.

### **Conversation Starters:**

- 1) What moments in your life have brought you the greatest joy? What contributed to the joy you experienced in these moments?
- 2) Who are the best role models of a life well lived? How have these people structured their lives?
- 3) What would you do if you won the mega-lottery? Why? Would this make you happy?
- 4) Why did you come to the Naval Academy?
- 5) What would you want people to say about you at your funeral?

### **References:**

- (a) Nichomachean Ethics





# ***RELATIONSHIPS***

*"If civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships – the abilities of all peoples, of all kinds, to live together, in the same world at peace"*

*-Franklin D. Roosevelt*





## EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

### *Do I understand the impact of emotions on myself and others?*

Almost everyone has a basic concepts of emotional intelligence and recognizes that it is important to interpersonal interactions, and, as such, a valuable asset for leaders. Most people, however, either think that they are already emotionally intelligent or they think that they aren't emotionally intelligent and assume that there is nothing that they can do about it. Although some people are naturally more perceptive and/or attuned to emotions, emotional intelligence is a skill that can be learned. Everyone, whether emotionally in tune or not, can benefit from developing the skills of emotional intelligence.

One thing to recognize about emotional intelligence is that it can be applied in reference both to oneself and to others. In other words, we can understand the emotions that we are having and we can understand the emotions that other people are having.

**Strategies for Success.** Recent studies have demonstrated that Emotional Intelligence is not a single skill, but rather a series of skills that must be enacted more or less sequentially. To increase emotional intelligence, focus your efforts on each of the sub-skills:

#### 1) **Recognizing Emotions**

Self: Translating feelings into concepts → e.g., I feel sad. Pay attention to how you feel and develop a robust vocabulary to accurately describe your feelings.

You can then apply your self-understanding to the emotions of others.

Others: Being sensitive to cues of the emotions that others are feeling.

#### 2) **Understanding Emotion**

Self and Others: Identifying the relationship between a stimuli and the felt emotion. For the self, reflection and/or conversation is essential.

#### 3) **Accommodating Emotion**

Self: Acknowledging felt emotions, but not allowing them to drive behavior. You can't turn off emotions, but you don't have to let them be in control. If they are overwhelming, give yourself time and space. Breathe.

Others: Responding in a way that helps de-escalate the emotion. Simply understanding and validating without judgment can be very helpful.

#### 4) **Using Emotions**

Self and Others: Generating useful emotion, such as excitement.

**Conversation Starters.** As an influential person in a Midshipman's life, you have the opportunity to help them generate the key questions that can give them insight and control over their emotions. The questions are simple but powerful because emotions override the systems in the mind that generate the questions. When it comes to helping others deal with emotions, listening can be far more valuable than advice.

*How are you feeling?*

*What is making you upset/angry/sad/etc?*

*Are you making an emotional decision?*



## ACTIVE LISTENING

*How do you incorporate listening to be a better leader?*

### **What is it?**

Active listening is a powerful communication technique that is used in counseling, training, and conflict resolution. It requires that the listener fully concentrate, understand, respond and then remember what is being said.

### **Steps to Active Listening:<sup>1</sup>**

- 1) Face the speaker and maintain eye contact
- 2) Be attentive, but relaxed
- 3) Keep an open mind
- 4) Listen to words and try to picture what the speaker is saying
- 5) Don't interrupt and don't impose your own "solutions"
- 6) Wait for the speaker to pause and ask clarifying questions
- 7) Ask questions only to ensure understanding
- 8) Try to feel what the speaker is feeling
- 9) Give the speaker regular feedback

### **Active listening techniques include:**

- Building trust and establishing rapport.
- Demonstrating concern.
- Paraphrasing to show understanding.
- Nonverbal cues which show understanding such as nodding, eye contact and leaning forward.
- Brief verbal affirmations like "I see," "I know," "Sure," "Thank you," or "I understand."

### **Are there any ways I might practice or work on active listening?**

The best way to work on active listening is to practice. When engaged in a conversation, focus your attention on what the other person is saying. Often when we talk to others, we are too busy thinking about ourselves or other things to really listen. Some people are so busy thinking about what they want to say, that they fail to listen to the words being spoken at that moment. So as you are listening, summarize in your mind what the person is saying. When you have a chance, reflect back to them what you are hearing. This type of reflection not only lets the other person know you are listening, but it conveys to them that you really understand.

**Practice Exercise:** Talk to three people throughout the week using the above mentioned active listening techniques. How is it different from the way you usually interact with others?

<sup>1</sup> Diane Schilling, Ten Steps to Effective Listening, Forbes, Nov 2012





## HEALTHY INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

### *How do you develop great relationships?*

#### **Healthy Relationships**

*“No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main...”* John Donne highlights a basic truth: we are connected and our lives can either enrich or deplete one another. The foundation of a healthy relationship is friendship. Aristotle defined friendship as two people with goodwill for each other, consciously being aware of and contributing to that goodwill. Cicero described friendship as a mutual identity of understanding and compatibility of views and actions, *“an identity which is strengthened by mutual goodwill and affection.”* He went on to declare: (1) friendship is based on virtue; (2) one never asks a friend to do something wrong or dishonorable; (3) one never looks down on a friend; (4) friends make one another better, are willing to tell the other his/her faults, and are willing to hear about one’s own faults.

**The 60-40 Rule.** Relationships should be balanced. Any relationship that has one person feeling degraded, used, manipulated by, or lied to, is not healthy. Any relationship which brings shame or pain needs to be critically reviewed, changed and/or ended. A simple way to assess the balance in a relationship is to apply the 60-40 rule: a healthy relationship should be *at most 60%* ‘about’ one of the people and *at least 40%* ‘about’ the other.

Qualities of healthy relationships: Mutual Respect, Trust, Honesty, Kindness, Mutual Goodwill, Good Communication, Compassion, and Fairness.

Forces destructive of healthy relationships: Anger, Jealousy, Dishonesty, Manipulation, Meanness, Narcissism, and Abuse.

#### **Strategies for Success in Healthy Relationships: Intention versus Impact**

In relationships, the impact one’s words and/or actions have on the other is often different from what was intended. Conflict can arise because we judge our own actions based on our intentions, while we judge another’s actions based on their impact upon us. One way to reduce conflict is to have the patience and courage to tell others the impact that they are having on us without making accusations. Conversely, when other people communicate the impact that we are having on them, have the patience and courage to listen, without defensiveness and self-justification based on our “good intentions.” Accept responsibility for the impact of your actions and be willing to say *“I am sorry, that is not what I intended, and what can I do to correct or improve the situation?”* A positive and courageous habit of communicating about *Intention and Impact* provides an excellent foundation for a healthy relationship.

#### **Conversation Starters:**

1. What are your strengths and weaknesses as a friend? What are the “Good, the Bad, and the Ugly” qualities you bring to a relationship?
2. What virtues can you cultivate or grow in that would make you a better friend?
3. Why do people sometimes ask a friend to do something wrong or dishonorable?
4. Why do people in relationships sometimes ask the other person to do something that makes him or her feel uncomfortable, used or degraded? What were they thinking?
5. If you are experiencing conflict, consider some of the following: What are your intentions? What impact do you think you are having on the other person? What impact is the other person having on you? Being as generous as you can be, what do you think are his/her intentions?





## CIVILITY

### *How can we all get along?*

*"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."* In this deeply insightful sentiment, poet Maya Angelou captured the fundamental reason why civility, a demonstrated habit of treating other people with sincere respect and dignity, is such a crucial practice for effective leaders. Individual intentions matter because our intentions motivate our choices, shape our actions, and inform our habits. However, how one chooses to externalize intentions matters, also. Civility and incivility is in the mind and heart of the recipient. Winning over and shaping the hearts and minds of followers should be one of the key goals of any good leader. Much can be learned from considering historically celebrated leaders, like Sir Ernest Shackleton. He saved the lives of all 27 men stranded with him (for TWO YEARS) in the Antarctic. The majority of their time marooned was spent in very close living conditions and they were in peril constantly. It is easy to understand how and why civility would break down. From reading accounts of their time, lessons emerge that remain crucial today:

#### Do's:

- Challenge yourself to relate to others as a human being, not just as a Midshipman
- Tolerate others quirks and foibles in the same manner you hope your strengths and weaknesses will be appreciated
- Make yourself accessible to people so that you can genuinely get to know them and broaden your perspective, i.e. leave your comfort zone for others.
- Embrace hierarchy when it promotes order and routine, but do not rely upon it as a privilege or leadership crutch.

#### Don'ts:

- Publically mock or belittle others in a way that communicates a devaluation of the other.
- Remind others/subordinates of their standing or "roles" within our hierarchy in a thoughtless or purpose-less manner.
- Tease people in ways that are personal, sarcastic, or that "sting" emotionally.
- Take credit for a team win, but point out teammates' flaws when difficulties arise.

### **Strategies for Success**

1. Realize and embrace the truth that treating other people consistently with civility requires work.
2. Incorporate non self-centered questions and reflections into your daily thought patterns.
3. Engage with people outside your comfort zone and really listen to their perspectives and stories.
4. Be kind simply for the sake of kindness. Even the small ways counts! Hold the door for people as a way to practice considering others. Say "please," "thank you," and pass the time of day because it is nice; not only when you feel you must or sporadically, but all the time.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What leads you to be less than civil?
2. Do you think that being civil will cost you something?
3. Do you find yourself struggling with your emotional responses at certain times of the day?
4. What sorts of factors cause you to be less than your best, examples might include competition, stress, hunger, arrogance, unfair treatment, etc.
5. How do you hope others regard you?

#### Additional Reading:

(a) Mastering Civility: A Manifesto For the Workplace, by Christine Porath

(b) Shackleton's Way: Leadership Lessons from the Great Antarctic Explorer, by Margot Morrell & Stephanie Capparell



## PORNOGRAPHY

### *How is pornography harmful to your health?*

Pornography is prolific and easily accessible. Many people are exposed to it unintentionally as children. For many young adults it serves as the first and most comprehensive form of sexual education. Unfortunately, pornography is not intended as sex education, and thus consumption of pornography can lead to the development of unrealistic and unhealthy expectations of sexual behaviors. A high percentage of internet pornography depicts degradation and/or physical violence between partners. Due to the widespread availability and engagement with pornography both here and in the Fleet, additional personal education on the harmful and problematic intent and effect of today's pornography industry is warranted.

**Official DON/USNA Position:** The Naval Academy follows the policy and instruction guidance put forth by the Department of the Navy and Department of Defense. There is no formal prohibition on individual use of pornography per se; however, it is strictly prohibited on government equipment (OPNAV-M 5510.1). Additionally, sexually explicit statements, questions, jokes, or anecdotes, including pornography or "images of sexually explicit conduct," regardless of the means of communication (oral, written, e-mail, text messages, social media, etc.) are defined as sexual harassment and are prohibited in the work environment (OPNAVINST 5300.13 and ALNAV 021/17).

#### **Conversation Starters:**

- Is there a lot of pornography at the Naval Academy?
- If you are a consumer of pornography, how has it impacted your relationships and sexual experiences?
- If you are not a consumer of pornography, why should you care?
- Thinking of your friends, what is their relationship with pornography and how has that impacted you?
- Have you ever considered asking MDC and/or Chaplains about habits related to porn consumption?
- Where did you learn about sex and sexual relationships? How did this inform your expectations and understanding of what is "normal?"

#### **Additional Resources:**

- (a) Foubert, J., (2016). How Pornography Harms.
- (b) RebootNation: <http://www.rebootnation.org>
- (c) Your Brain on Porn: <https://www.yourbrainonporn.com/>
- (d) Fight the New Drug: <https://fightthenewdrug.org/>
- (e) Variety of TEDTalks, a few examples:
  - (1) Growing up in a Pornified Culture, Gail Dines
  - (2) Why I stopped Watching Pornography, Ran Gavrieli



# ***PROFESSIONAL SKILLS***

*"I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; and that I will well and faithfully discharge the duties of the office on which I am about to enter. So help me God"*

*-Military Officer Oath of Office*





## COMMUNICATIONS AND NEGOTIATIONS (CONFLICT RESOLUTION)

### *How do I resolve conflicts in a professional manner?*

"To listen well is as powerful a means of communication and influence as to talk well." John Marshall, famous Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, nailed the key to effective communication: **listening is of equal importance to speaking**. Regardless of our profession, education, or background, how we communicate is often the key to our success, professionally and personally. There are common ingredients to Communication, Negotiation, and Conflict Resolution.

- Do's:
  - **Actively listen, restate what was said, and ask if you heard/understand the point(s) clearly;** show you are seeking to understand the other side.
  - Work to: solve a problem, resolve a conflict, and find mutual agreement.
  - Stay calm and remember body-language is 80+% of communication.
  - Be honest, transparent, respectful, and open to questions.
- Don'ts:
  - Don't get personal; stay focused on reaching an agreement.
  - Don't make a hasty decision, or respond in anger or in reaction.
  - Don't ignore the other side, repeating the same thing over and over.
  - Don't view communication as a battle to be fought and won.

### **Strategies for Success:**

- 1) Ask friends/company-mates if they consider you a good listener, communicator, negotiator? Build on what is effective, and if need be, change what is not.
- 2) Practice being a more effective communicator; actively listening, restating what you heard, and asking if you have understood the other person's point(s) accurately.

### **Conversation Starters:**

- 1) Why do people "lose it" in professional and personal disagreements? Why get personal?
- 2) How do you want to be treated in a discussion, negotiation, or disagreement?
- 3) What have you experienced as the biggest obstacles to resolving conflicts or to reaching a mutually agreeable solution to some disagreement?
- 4) What personal qualities could you cultivate to be a more effective communicator, listener, and negotiator?

### **Additional Reading:**

- (a) **Verbal Judo: The Gentle Art of Persuasion**, by George J. Thompson
- (b) **Just Listen: The Secret to Getting Through to Absolutely Anyone**, by Mark Goulston, M.D.



## TASK MANAGEMENT

### *How do I successfully complete all the things I need to do with so little time?*

One of the hardest things you will have to do as a Naval Officer or in your life beyond the Naval Service is effectively manage tasks. There are only 24 hours in a day and 168 hours each week and unfortunately this never changes. This topic will offer some strategies on helping you find the best way to successfully complete your mounting “to do” list.

**Task Management at USNA and in the Fleet:** Midshipmen are already experiencing the challenges of too many things to do with not a lot of time. Hopefully, they have found ways to balance their time with academics, extra-curriculars, sports, yourself and family. Unfortunately, these demands only get more difficult in the Fleet. They will balance an array of tasks from annual training to specific training demands for a deployment. They may have a family of your own. It may be difficult to balance the work demands with their own needs of physical fitness, bills, personal errands. Ultimately, it will be up to them to either become more efficient or struggle through the realities of life.

#### **Strategies for Success:**

- 1) Establish Goals: Are they specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time bound?
- 2) Prioritize your goals. Create a to-do list. Is your to do list aligned with your goals? What tasks are more important? You can use the “Eisenhower Decision Matrix” to aid you in your prioritization. Military officers are constantly challenged with discerning priorities. Sometimes, the rank of the individual generating the priority is a useful guide in this regard.
- 3) Set Deadlines: Did your superior give you a deadline? Have you asked? Have you done the same for your subordinates? If there is no specific deadline, assign one for yourself to give you a sense of urgency and purpose.
- 4) Schedule your time: People who do not write down their schedule tend to struggle. Are your meetings written down in writing? PT? Time to pay bills? When we don’t write it down, we tend to push it off to the next day.
- 5) Manage Distractions: Friends, family, social media, etc can all get in the way. It may be helpful to schedule time for TV time, friends time, Facebook time, etc. When you do your work, put yourself in a situation where your distractions won’t get in the way of the task at hand. In the Fleet these stressors can materialize as coworkers wanted to chat. Subordinates wanting to voice a concern. Reading your emails. Etc.

#### **Conversations Starters:**

- 1) What are your goals? (“I want to improve my thermodynamics grade,” “I want to improve my pullups for my PFT...”)
- 2) Of these goals, what are your priorities? (“PT is most important so I want to invest more time into my pull-ups over my academics”)
- 3) What are current stressors that are hindering you achieving your goals? (“I lack the motivation to work on my PT”)
- 4) What can you do to mitigate those stressors? (PT with a friend, join a ECA that works on fitness)

#### **Additional Readings:**

(a) Advanced Learning Skills Handbook

<https://sslvpn.usna.edu/+CSCO+0075676763663A2F2F766167656E6172672E6866616E2E727168++/AcCenter/LearningSkills/AdvancedLearningSkillsHandbook.pdf>

(b) Eisenhower Decision Matrix (type in google)



## CRITICAL THINKING

### *Am I being reasonable and making good decisions?*

Leaders must make decisions. Good decision making is predicated on thinking clearly, a process commonly called 'critical thinking'. Midshipmen are trained in critical thinking techniques in their leadership courses and elsewhere, but the habit of critical thinking cannot be merely an academic endeavor. Key influencers can be especially helpful in this regard by helping them make the connections between the critical thinking skills that they have learned in the classroom and the real problems and challenges that they face in their everyday lives.

### **The Right Questions to Ask**

Effective critical thinking entails the ability to interrogate and critique one's own thinking in order to identify unsupported assumptions and illogical inferences. Thus, critical thinking can be achieved by taking the time to ask the right questions about the things one thinks and believes. The following are a list of questions derived from the Paul and Elder model of critical thinking taught in our leadership classes:

*What problem am I trying to solve?*

*Is there a specific outcome that I am trying to achieve? Is it the right/best outcome?*

*What is my point of view in considering this question and how might it differ from others?*

*What assumptions am I making in framing the problem?*

*Are the concepts, principles, models, or theories am I using appropriate to the problem I am trying to solve?*

*What information am I using to form my judgments? Is it credible? Is there information I am excluding?*

*Are the conclusions that I am drawing reasonable and logical? Would other people come to the same conclusions?*

*What are the implications and outcomes related to my decisions and actions?*

**Strategies for Success.** Thinking about one's thinking is hard work, but, as they say, that is why officers get paid the big bucks. One easy way to reduce your load in thinking critically is to talk to other people. Other people typically have a different perspective and don't necessarily share your assumptions and mental models. They do not share your self-interest. This is an area where diversity really pays off – smart people who are the least like you are likely most effective and helping you think critically.

**Conversation Starters.** Look for opportunities to engage with Midshipmen when they are wrestling with a problem or when they are not demonstrating critical thinking skills and ask them the relevant questions from above.

### **References:**

*Thinkers Guide to Analytic Thinking*, Linda Paul and Richard Elder



## FRATERNIZATION

### *How do you manage interpersonal relationships in a professional manner?*

Fraternization can sometimes be a confusing topic. Our MIDREGs state that it is circumstances prejudicial to good order and discipline that call into a question a senior's objectivity, result in actual or apparent preferential treatment, undermine the authority of a senior, or compromise the chain of command. What does this really mean? Admittedly, this can be a gray topic that warrants discussion. Fraternalization can tear apart a unit in ways those involved would have otherwise thought as harmless.

Fraternalization is not always sexual in nature—an undue relationship can permeate any work environment and it can be a result of three factors: 1) Perception and a “quid pro quo” relationship, 2) it can be associated to power—top down or bottom up, and 3) Professionalism and the lack thereof in the work place. At the USNA, and most certainly in the fleet, fraternization is a subject that you WILL face, and you must know what it is to be an effective leader. It is a *relationship* and not necessarily a single act.

#### **Official USNA Position:**

MIDREGs breaks down fraternization between four categories:

1. Upperclassmen-4/C relationships.
2. MIDN—USNA Staff.
3. MIDN—Enlisted.
4. MIDN—Officers.

Fraternalization can apply across the four categories. The conduct system states that Fraternalization of a non sexual nature is a major offense. Fraternalization of a sexual nature is a 6k level offense. The bottom line is that the perception or actual act of an unduly relationship that disrupts the good order and discipline of the organization is fraternization—whether in the operating forces or at the USNA.

#### **Strategies for Success:**

1. If you are ever in a questionable/gray situation always inform someone – your SEL/your superior.
2. If you can answer yes to the following questions you will mitigate fraternization:
  - Is the act/relationship right for yourself?
  - Is the act/relationship right for your subordinate?
  - Is the act/relationship professional in nature?

Think about the perception in every situation. If it can be perceived as fraternization, think of ways you can mitigate the situation (refer to step 1!).

#### **Conversation Starters**

1. Are there situations that may be perceived as fraternization, but in reality is a leader's attempt to understand his subordinates?
2. What are situations that fraternization is black and white? Situations that are gray?
3. What are ways you can mitigate fraternization within the brigade? In the operating forces?

#### **References:**

- (a) COMDTMIDNINST 5400.6T (MIDREGs)
- (b) COMDTMIDNINST 1610.2G (Admin Performance and Conduct System Manual)





## SOCIAL MEDIA

### *How can use social media in a professional manner?*

Social media can be used positively or negatively. Examples of positive uses include promoting responsible social change messages, networking, connecting with family and friends, and staying current in popular culture. Negative uses include employing social media as a tool for harassment (coercing, stalking, bullying, and threatening). According to SECNAV Instruction, nonconsensual distribution or broadcasting of an intimate image is prohibited and punishable under the UCMJ (ALNAV 0121/17).

#### **Strategies for Success:**

- Be aware of what you post and share on social media. Ask yourself simple questions before you post:
  - Who can see it?
  - How secure is this site?
  - Am I being respectful of myself and others?
  - How will this be perceived by others?
- Be a critical user and consumer of social media. Check sources and question all posts that use inflammatory rhetoric.
- Understand DoD Directive 1344.10, “Political Activities by Members of the Armed Forces on Active Duty”
- Never post/share anything that can be perceived as:
  - Defamatory (Including photos & videos)
  - Libelous
  - Obscene & Embarrassing
  - Abusive / Threatening
  - Racially or ethnically hateful
  - Otherwise offensive or illegal
  - Contemptuous of superiors

#### **Conversation Starters:**

- How would you describe your presence on social media?
- Would you be proud of your social media presence if it was the only impression a new command had of you?
- When was the last time you reviewed your security settings?
- What tools are available to social media users to address problematic interactions, e.g. trolls, harassers, stalkers, bullying?
- How do you talk with friends and colleagues about their social media presence?
- What is “revenge porn,” and what is the DoD policy governing it?
- What are appropriate responses if you encounter questionable (sexually demeaning, exploitive, etc.) social media content?



## HOME ECONOMICS – THE BASICS

*So all of this is great...but how do I do the basic life skills?*

At the start of this initiative, there was a great deal of discussions on teaching Midshipmen the real basics of life – home economics. What do I buy at the grocery store? How do I do laundry? How do I apply for a home loan? These topics were reinforced by numerous Midshipmen proposals to add these topics as optional or mandatory parts of the curriculum. Midshipmen often express their concern that they are not as developed in these areas as students with traditional university experiences.

Rather than write an instruction on how to write a grocery list or a step by step procedure on how to do laundry, etc, we thought it would be more profitable to provide key influencers with the list of topics for which Midshipmen say they want guidance and advice:

### **The Basic Skills**

1. Planning meals and shopping for groceries
2. Cooking nutritious meals in a time constrained environment
3. Doing laundry
4. Creating a budget
5. Managing and paying bills
6. Investing and retirement savings
7. Auto loans
8. Home buying and shopping for apartments
9. Mortgages
10. Buying insurance

