

United States Naval Academy



Life and Leader Points (LLP)

1st Set Detailers

INTRODUCTION

The USNA Mission Statement tells us that we are preparing Midshipmen morally, mentally, and physically, not just for the demands of serving as a junior officer in the Naval Service, but also for the highest degree of citizenship. 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 booklet is to provide a pocket resource for key influencers in the lives of Midshipmen (Detailers, Brigade Leaders, Company Officers, and Senior Enlisted Leaders) who have opportunities to engage Midshipmen individually as they work through the challenges of life and the unique transitions to and from USNA.

This booklet condenses information from the larger Life Skills Handbook, specifically focusing on topics related to moral development. We hope this booklet will help aid discussion in less formalized and more personalized settings (e.g., “gray space”). Keep it in your pocket as a handy resource.

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RESPONSIBILITY AND LIFE DECISIONS

“Knowing others is intelligence. Knowing yourself is true wisdom. Mastering others is strength. Mastering yourself is true power” -Lao Tzu

Responsibility:

As children 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 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 leadership. 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. Do not deflect the responsibility. Step up to the plate.

Good decision making is a hallmark of an effective officer. It is unlikely that leaders who cannot make good decisions in their own lives will make good decisions 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 them. 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 not 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?

Leadership Quotes:

“First, in order to lead under duress, one must be a moralist. By that, I don’t mean being a poseur, one who sentimentiously exhorts his comrades to be good. I mean he must be a thinker. He must have the wisdom, the courage, indeed the audacity to make clear just what, under the circumstances, the good is. This requires a clear perception of right and wrong and the integrity to stand behind one’s assessment. The surest way for a leader to wind up in the ash can of history is to have a reputation for indirectness or deceit. A disciplined life will encourage commitment to a personal code of conduct.”

~Admiral James Stockdale from a 1985 essay titled “Trial By Fire”

“A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others. He does not set out to be a leader, but becomes one by the equality of his actions and the integrity of his intent.”

~General Douglas McArthur

“Leadership is intangible, hard to measure, and difficult to describe. Its quality would seem to stem from many factors. But certainly they must include a measure of inherent ability to control and direct, self-confidence based on expert knowledge, initiative, loyalty, pride and sense of responsibility. Inherent ability cannot be instilled, but that which is latent or dormant can be developed. Other ingredients can be acquired. They are not easily learned. But leaders can be and are made.”

~General C. B. Cates, 19th Commandant of the Marine Corps

CHARACTER

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

Why is character important?

Would any Sailor or Marine want to be led by a cheater, a liar, a coward, or a fraud? Do you want to live up to your potential? Do you want to know what 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.

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?

Leadership Quotes:

“The key to our future leaders’ merit may not be ‘hanging in there’ when the light at the end of the tunnel is expected. It will be their performance when it looks like the light will never show up.”

~Admiral James Stockdale from a 1985 essay titled “Trial By Fire”

“The challenge of education is not to prepare people for success but to prepare them for failure. I think that it’s in hardship and failure that the heroes and the bums really get sorted out.”

~Admiral James Stockdale from a 1994 lecture titled “Conflict and Character”

“Circumstances are beyond human control, but our conduct is in our own power.”

~Benjamin Disraeli, Prime Minister of England

“Never esteem anything as of advantage to you that will make you break your word or lose your self-respect.”

~Marcus Aurelius, Roman Emperor

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 senses 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, fraternization) 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 might 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?

Leadership Quotes:

“What we need for leaders are men of the heart who are so helpful that they, in effect, do away with the need of their jobs. But leaders like that are never out of a job, never out of followers. Strange as it sounds, great leaders gain authority by giving it away.”

~Admiral James Stockdale from a 1981 commencement address at John Carroll University

"You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end -- which you can never afford to lose -- with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be."

~Admiral James Stockdale

“Self-control is the chief element in self-respect, and self-respect is the chief element in courage.”

~Thucydides, Greek Historian and Author of *History of the Peloponnesian War*

“He who reigns within himself and rules passions, desires, and fears is more than a king.”

~Poet John Milton, Author of *Paradise Lost*

"Discipline is the soul of an army. It makes small numbers formidable; procures success to the weak and esteem to all."

~President George Washington

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

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

Almost everyone has a basic concept 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, regardless of how "*emotionally in tune*," 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 stimulus 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.

5) **Reading the Body Language**

Self and Others: 80% of communication is body language, be aware of what one communicates non-verbally; be aware of what the other person does too.

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?

Leadership Quotes:

"You don't lead by hitting people over the head--that's assault, not leadership."

~Dwight Eisenhower, Supreme Allied Commander Europe and President of the United States

Admiral Stockdale reflecting on his years as a POW, *"By that time, I had learned that fear and guilt are the real pincers that break men's wills. I would chant under my breath as I was marched to interrogation, knowing that I must refuse to comply, and take the ropes: 'Your eyes must show no fear; they must show no guilt.' The North Vietnamese had learned never to take a prisoner 'downtown'-to the payoff for what our whole treatment regime was about-public propaganda exploitation-unless he was truly intimidated, unless they were sure he felt fear. Their threats had no meaning unless you felt fear. They had suffered the political damage of several, including myself, who had acted up, spoken up, and blurted out the truth to the hand-picked audience of foreigners at the press conference. Book IV of (Epictetus') Discourses: 'When a man who has set his will neither on dying nor upon living at any cost, comes into the presence of the tyrant, what is there to prevent him from being without fear? Nothing.' Fear is an emotion, and controlling your emotions can be empowering."*

~Admiral James Stockdale from "Stockdale on Stoicism I: The Stoic Warrior's Triad"

Notes: