

# UNITED STATES NAVAL ACADEMY



**LIFE & LEADER POINTS (LLP)**  
**Book 4**

# INTRODUCTION

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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 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.

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# TOUGHNESS

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This diorama from Memorial Hall depicts the famed “Ripley at the Bridge.” Esteemed Naval Academy Alumnus Col. John Ripley climbed a bridge for three hours carrying 500 pounds of explosives to prevent the advancement of 20,000 North Vietnamese troops.

*“Don’t give up the ship.”*

- Captain James Lawrence -

### **Conversation Starters**

What defines toughness in our culture today?

Do you think there are different kinds of toughness? If so, what?

How do you develop toughness in yourself? In your team?

Who has been the best example of toughness you can think of in your life?

### **Toughness at USNA and in the Fleet**

It is likely that Plebe Summer required of you a new level of toughness, not just physically, but mentally, spiritually, and socially as well. You can probably mark a radical difference in your physical toughness from day one of PEP, to the final PEP session. The instructions you

were given on I-Day may have felt very overwhelming, but you can take the same kinds of social interactions much better today. You may recall questioning your purpose during the most difficult days of Plebe Summer, but dug deep to find the grit needed to stand your ground and keep moving forward with determined purpose and direction. You may have found a new source of strength in your faith, or in the qualities and characteristics instilled in you by your parents.

Through the academic year you have learned to manage many tasks with limited time, and balance academics with ECAs or athletics and professional development. The Fleet requires toughness as well. You are laying a foundation of toughness here to build the kind of grit needed there.

That grit will get you through long days and challenging nights. It will also secure your leadership of the team even when you are exhausted, or have taken a hit yet need to keep fighting. The kind of grit needed is what earned the United States Marines the name, “Devil Dogs” during WWI, and sustained our POWs during the Vietnam War.

## Strategies for Success

- 1). Train Hard. Don't take shortcuts. Push yourself a little extra when doing tasks, from working out, to studying.
- 2). Find someone who inspires you, and ask them to hold you accountable if they see you cutting corners.
- 3). Know the Code of Conduct, and think about what those tenets mean to you.
- 4). Challenge yourself in new ways. Find new hobbies to learn, skills to develop. Do hard things.
- 5). Engage in your faith and think through how your religious beliefs change the way you view pain or endure trials.
- 6). Strengthen your family relationships, and draw from them inspiration, courage, and strength.

*“Toughness...our ability to take a hit, recover  
and keep going”*

- Admiral Richardson -

# PERFORMANCE PSYCHOLOGY

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The physical mission is pursued by many in the Academy gyms around the Yard, but also on the tracks, on the fields, and on the pool decks around Bancroft Hall.

*“I don’t count my sit-ups. I only start counting once it starts hurting. ”*

- Muhammad Ali -

### **Conversation Starters**

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?

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?

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 constructive?

## **Performance Psychology at USNA & in the Fleet**

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 act to the best of our ability consistently.

### **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.

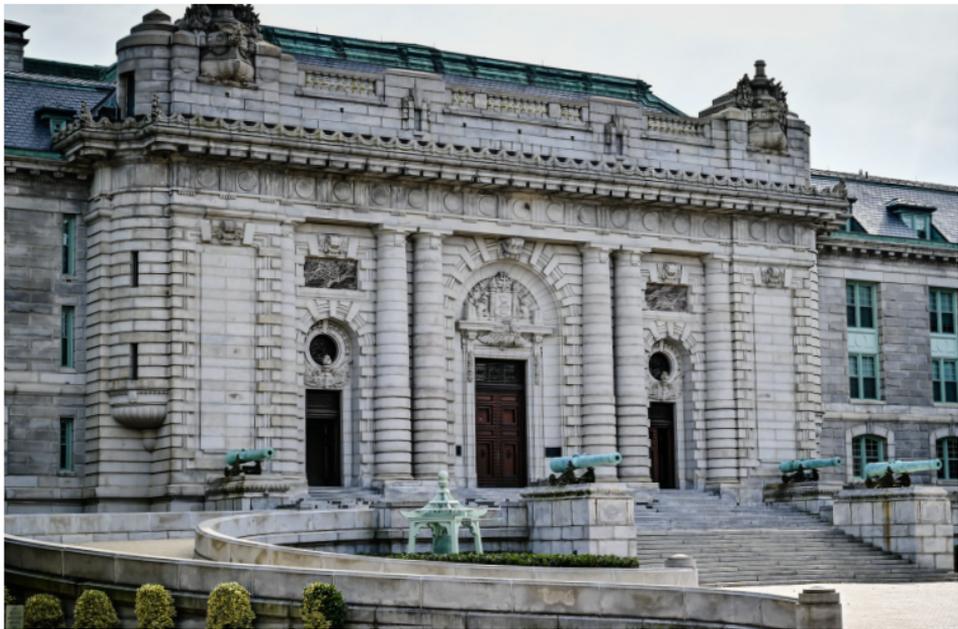
3) Develop self-talk: Self talk includes all purposeful and random thoughts that run through your mind. If guided correctly, it can help you react in a way that achieves your ideal mindset. Focus on what you want to happen, not on what you want to avoid. Remain in the present tense. Practice.

*“Accept the challenges so that you can feel the exhilaration of victory”*

- General George S. Patton -

# FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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Named after former Secretary of the Navy, Bancroft Hall has been the home to all Midshipmen who have attended the United States Naval Academy.

*“If we command our wealth, we shall be rich and free.  
If our wealth commands us, we are poor indeed.”*

- Edmund Burke -

### **Conversation Starters**

Your 2/C loan is burning a proverbial hole in the pocket. What is the first thing you will do with it? How do you come to that decision?

You're a squad leader and two Plebes come up to you with concerns because they overspent on their credit cards. How do you help them?

Held pay is not very much, but how can you use it to practice investing?

### **Financial Responsibility USNA & in the Fleet**

Midshipmen often obtain their first credit card, along with checking and savings account at the Academy. Wild possibilities come to mind, possibly beyond the means of what is already saved. How can we start out our financial lives on stable ground? Responsibility

is described as a required trait of a Naval Officer, but financial responsibility is just as important. It can be summed up in a three pronged way: 1) Take care of yourself, 2) Take care of the people who depend on you, and 3) Keep your promises. You must come up with a plan that takes care of your basic needs, as well as those who are under your care (family, etc). This is all manageable, as long as you make financial commitments that you can keep. By maintaining financial responsibility, you maintain stability in family and personal life.

Learning Financial Responsibility will be an indispensable skill to develop at USNA before heading to the Fleet, because your enlisted Sailors and Marines will be coming to you with financial burdens of their own. You will be expected to give them concrete and practical guidance, from investing well in a Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) to obtaining a low-interest loan. The lessons you learn now as a midshipman in financial responsibility will make you a better leader for your platoon or division.

## Strategies for Success

1) Build a budget, which tracks income and expenditures over a monthly period, and helps plan how much you can spend or how much you should save. Expenditures include everything from paying bills to paying a round of drinks at Dillo's. Laying it out on paper protects against over-spending on a credit card, which can lead to a bad credit report.

2) Invest early and often through a Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) or Roth IRA. Investing sets aside moneys that accrue dividends over time. Investments provide for financial security at retirement age.

3) Meet with your Command Financial Specialist (CFS) to set up an effective budget and investment plan for yourself/family. Send your Sailors and/or Marines to the financial specialist for their own security.

*“Financial Fitness is not a pipe dream or a state of mind. It’s a reality if you are willing to pursue it and embrace it.”*

- Will Robinson -

# BOUNDARIES

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The start of every Midshipmen's journey at the Academy begins with the Oath of Office taken on I-Day

*“Your personal boundaries protect the inner core of your identity and your right to choices.”*

- Gerard Manley Hopkins -

### **Conversation Starters**

You get a call from your parents. They are upset that you no longer seem concerned with their lives at home. How do you respond?

Your significant other (boyfriend/girlfriend) is surprised that you planned to go to the movies with friends without them. How do you each handle this?

The 3/C in your squad are joking that one of them is “in love” with a Plebe. The one “in love” says that he will just wait until the Plebe is a 3/C before doing anything. Should you sit down with the 3/C and discuss the matter?

## **Healthy Boundaries at USNA and in the Fleet:**

We recognize at USNA that boundaries are a healthy reality, on both personal and professional levels. Personal boundaries allow for a healthy understanding of the role that a young adult has in family life, especially as they exercise greater autonomy in setting his or her own schedule, and prepares for life as a junior officer. This healthy form of relationship allows for maintaining family relationships, without confusion or unhealthy influences. Personal boundaries are absolutely essential in military life, especially due to the rank structure. Fraternization is one prime example where boundaries go awry, but establishing healthy boundaries helps us discern which contexts permit romances to develop, or friendships to deepen in a more personal manner, versus when the relationship should always be strictly professional. Rank and position within a command helps to illustrate this important reality.

## **Strategies for Success**

- 1) In personal relationships:
  - a. Be responsible for your own happiness. Do not depend on another for it.
  - b. Do NOT be responsible for the happiness of others. That is on them.

- c. Maintain open and honest communication.  
This takes effort.
- d. Respect differences of opinion. You are different persons.
- e. Accept endings in relationships if it is necessary and healthy for all. Be willing to let go.
- f. Setting a boundary takes actual interactions.  
Practice it.

2) In professional relationships:

- a. Find a trusty mentor who can help you.  
Learn from and accept their input.
- b. At USNA---back each other up in what is taught as acceptable and unacceptable.
- c. At your first command as a Junior Officer—intentionally figure out which persons are ok to have a friendly relationships with, and which ones should always be kept strictly professional (hint: the officer-enlisted distinction, as well as chain of command, is a pretty clear boundary).

*“You have the right to say “No” without feeling guilty.”*

- Manuel J. Smith -

# NOTES: