

Section 3



ARMY LEADERSHIP— PRESENCE

Key Points

- 1 Military Bearing
- 2 Physical Fitness
- 3 Confidence
- 4 Resilience

... [L]eadership is not a natural trait, something inherited like the color of eyes or hair. Actually, leadership is a skill that can be studied, learned, and perfected by practice.

The Noncom's Guide (1962)

Introduction

The Army invests a tremendous amount of time, energy, and resources in training you as a leader because you will help set and maintain standards of excellence in the future. A major part of your task will be to develop a sense of *presence* that will inspire people to trust and follow you. Presence is not something you are born with, such as the color of your eyes and hair. Presence is something you can learn. This chapter will show you what it takes.

Sometimes being a leader with presence requires making a hard or unpopular choice, as one sergeant discovered at a post in Vietnam.

Rusty Rifles

While serving in the Republic of Vietnam, SFC Jackson was transferred from platoon sergeant of one platoon to platoon leader of another platoon in the same company. SFC Jackson quickly sized up the existing standards in the platoon. He wasn't pleased. One problem was that his Soldiers were not keeping their weapons cleaned properly: Rifles were dirty and rusty. He put out the word: weapons would be cleaned to standard each day, each squad leader would inspect each day, and he would inspect a sample of the weapons each day. He gave this order three days before the platoon was to go to the division rest and recuperation (R&R) area on the South China Sea.

The next day SFC Jackson checked several weapons in each squad. Most weapons were still unacceptable. He called the squad leaders together and explained the policy and his reasons for implementing it. SFC Jackson checked again the following day and still found dirty and rusty weapons. He decided there were two causes for the problem. First, the squad leaders were not doing their jobs. Second, the squad leaders and troops were bucking him—testing him to see who would really make the rules in the platoon. He sensed that, because he was new, they resisted his leadership. He knew he had a serious discipline problem he had to handle correctly. He called the squad leaders together again. Once again, he explained his standards clearly. He then said, "Tomorrow we are due to go on R&R for three days and I'll be inspecting rifles. We won't go on R&R until each weapon in this platoon meets the standard."

The next morning SFC Jackson inspected and found that most weapons in each squad were still below standard. He called the squad leaders together. With a determined look and a firm voice, he told them he would hold a formal in-ranks inspection at 1300 hours, even though the platoon was scheduled to board helicopters for R&R then. If every weapon didn't meet the standard, he would conduct another in-ranks inspection for squad leaders and troops with substandard weapons. He would continue inspections until all weapons met the standard. At 1300 hours the platoon formed up, surly and angry with the new platoon leader, who was taking their hard-earned R&R time. The Soldiers could

Critical Thinking

In SFC Jackson's decision to enforce minimal basic weapons standards in his platoon, what was he attempting to emphasize over his Soldiers' comfort and convenience? Why was such a stand necessary, despite its unpopularity?

hardly believe it, but his message was starting to sink in. This leader meant what he said. This time all weapons met the standard.

military bearing

projecting a commanding presence, a professional image of authority

physical fitness

having sound health, strength, and endurance, which sustain emotional health and conceptual abilities under prolonged stress

confidence

projecting self-confidence and certainty in the unit's ability to succeed in whatever it does; able to demonstrate composure and outward calm through steady control over emotion

resilience

showing a tendency to recover quickly from setbacks, shock, injuries, adversity, and stress while maintaining a mission and organizational focus

The impression that you make on others contributes to your success in leading them. How others perceive you depends on your outward appearance, demeanor, actions, and words.

Followers need a way to size up their leaders. This means they need to see you where they are. Good leaders are willing to go everywhere, including where the conditions are the most severe. They illustrate through their presence that they care. There is no greater inspiration than leaders who routinely share in team hardships and dangers. Moving to where duties are performed will allow you to have firsthand knowledge of the real conditions your Soldiers and civilians face. Soldiers and civilians who see or hear from the boss appreciate knowing that their unit has an important part to play.

Presence is not just a matter of showing up. It requires projecting an image. You convey presence through actions, words, and the manner in which you carry yourself. You convey your reputation by the respect that others show you, how they refer to you, and how they respond to your guidance. Presence is a critical attribute that you need to understand. Your effectiveness is dramatically enhanced by understanding and developing the following areas:

- **Military bearing:** projecting a commanding presence, a professional image of authority
- **Physical fitness:** having sound health, strength, and endurance, which sustain emotional health and conceptual abilities under prolonged stress
- **Confidence:** projecting self-confidence and certainty in the unit's ability to succeed in whatever it does; being able to demonstrate composure and outward calm through steady control over emotion
- **Resilience:** showing a tendency to recover quickly from setbacks, shock, injuries, adversity, and stress while maintaining a mission and organizational focus.

Military Bearing

Pride in self starts with pride in appearance. As an Army leader, you are expected to look and act like a professional. You must know how to wear the appropriate uniform or civilian attire and do so with pride. Soldiers seen in public with their jackets unbuttoned and ties undone do not send a message of pride and professionalism. Instead, they let down their unit and fellow Soldiers in the eyes of the American people. Meeting prescribed height and weight standards is another integral part of the professional role. How leaders carry themselves when displaying military courtesy and appearance sends a clear signal: I am proud of my uniform, my unit, and my country.

Our quality soldiers should look as good as they are.

Julius W. Gates

Sergeant Major of the Army (1987-1991)

Skillful use of professional bearing—fitness, courtesy, and proper military appearance—can also aid in overcoming difficult situations. A professional presents a decent appearance because it commands respect. Professionals must be competent as well. They look good because they are good.

Physical Fitness

Unit readiness begins with physically fit Soldiers and leaders because combat drains people physically, mentally, and emotionally. Physical fitness, while crucial for success in battle, is important for all members of the Army team, not just Soldiers. Physically fit people feel more competent and confident, handle stress better, work longer and harder, and recover faster. These attributes provide valuable payoffs in any environment.

The physical demands of leadership, prolonged deployments, and continuous operations can erode more than your body. Physical fitness and adequate rest support mental functioning and emotional stability, both essential for sound leadership. You must be prepared for deprivation. It is difficult to maintain a high level of fitness during fast-paced, demanding operations. If you are not physically fit before deployment, your mental and emotional fitness will suffer as well. Combat operations in difficult terrain, extreme climates, and high altitude require extensive physical preconditioning. Once you are in the area of operations, you must make every effort to sustain physical readiness.

Preparedness for operational missions must be a primary focus of the unit's physical fitness program. Fitness programs that merely emphasize top scores on the Army Physical Fitness Test do not prepare Soldiers for the strenuous demands of actual combat. As a forward-looking leader, you develop a balanced physical fitness program that enables Soldiers to execute the unit's mission-essential task list. (FM 7-0 discusses the integration of Soldier, leader, and collective training based on the mission-essential task list.)

Ultimately, the physical fitness requirements for Army leaders have a significant impact on your personal performance and health. Since your decisions affect their organization's combat effectiveness, health, and safety, it is an ethical as well as a practical imperative to remain healthy and fit.

... I am obliged to sweat them tonight, sir, so that I can save their blood tomorrow.

LTG Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson

Confederate Civil War General (1861-1863)

Confidence

Confidence is the faith that leaders place in their abilities to act properly in any situation, even under stress and with little information. Leaders who know their own capabilities and believe in themselves are confident. Self-confidence grows from professional competence. But too much confidence can be as detrimental as too little confidence. Both extremes impede learning and adaptability. Bluster—loudmouthed bragging or self-promotion—is not confidence. Truly confident leaders do not need to advertise their gifts because their actions prove their abilities.

Confidence is important for leaders and teams. Your confidence is contagious and quickly permeates the entire organization, especially in dire situations. In combat, you can help Soldiers control doubt while reducing team anxiety. Combined with strong will and self-discipline, confidence spurs you to do what you must in circumstances in which it would be easier to do nothing.

Resilience

Resilient leaders can recover quickly from setbacks, shock, injuries, adversity, and stress while maintaining their mission and organizational focus. Their resilience rests on will, the inner drive that compels them to keep going, even when exhausted, hungry, afraid, cold, and wet. Resilience helps leaders and their organizations to carry difficult missions to their conclusion.

Your resilience and will to succeed are not sufficient to carry the day during adversity. Your competence and knowledge will guide you to pursue courses of action that lead to success and victory in battle. Your premier task is to instill resilience and a winning spirit in subordinates. That begins with tough and realistic training.

Resilience is essential when accomplishing your mission. No matter what the working conditions are, a strong personal attitude helps prevail over any adverse external conditions. You will experience situations when it would seem easier to quit rather than finish the task. During those times, you need an inner source of energy to press on to mission completion. When things go badly, you must draw on inner reserves to persevere.

The following story of an intrepid Army helicopter pilot in action illustrates how he showed resilience and discipline when faced with the most difficult combat conditions.

MAJ Bruce Crandall at Landing Zone X-Ray

MAJ Bruce P. Crandall distinguished himself by extraordinary heroism as a Flight Commander in the Republic of Vietnam, while serving with Company A, 229th Assault Helicopter Battalion, 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile). On 14 November 1965, his flight of 16 helicopters was lifting troops for a search and destroy mission from Plei Me, Vietnam, to Landing Zone X-Ray in the Ia Drang Valley. On the fourth troop lift, the airlift began to take enemy fire, and by the time the aircraft had refueled and returned for the next troop lift, the enemy had Landing Zone X-Ray targeted.

As MAJ Crandall and the first eight helicopters landed to discharge troops on his fifth troop lift, his unarmed helicopter came under such intense enemy fire that the ground commander ordered the second flight of eight aircraft to abort their mission. As MAJ Crandall flew back to Plei Me, his base of operations, he

determined that the ground commander of the besieged infantry battalion desperately needed more ammunition.

MAJ Crandall then decided to adjust his base of operations to Artillery Firebase Falcon in order to shorten the flight distance to deliver ammunition and evacuate wounded soldiers. While medical evacuation was not his mission, he immediately sought volunteers and with complete disregard for his own personal safety, led the two aircraft to Landing Zone X-Ray. Despite the fact that the landing zone was still under relentless enemy fire, MAJ Crandall landed and proceeded to supervise the loading of seriously wounded soldiers aboard his aircraft. MAJ Crandall's voluntary decision to land under the most extreme fire instilled in the other pilots the will and spirit to continue to land their own aircraft, and in the ground forces the realization that they would be resupplied and that friendly wounded would be promptly evacuated. This greatly enhanced morale and the will to fight at a critical time.

After his first medical evacuation, MAJ Crandall continued to fly into and out of the landing zone throughout the day and into the evening. That day he completed a total of 22 flights, most under intense enemy fire, retiring from the battlefield only after all possible service had been rendered to the infantry battalion. His actions provided critical resupply of ammunition and evacuation of the wounded. MAJ Crandall's daring acts of bravery and courage in the face of an overwhelming and determined enemy are in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

On 26 February 2008, President George W. Bush awarded MAJ Crandall the Medal of Honor.



CONCLUSION

To be an effective Army leader, you need a commanding presence. Through conscientious efforts to improve and maintain your military bearing, physical fitness, confidence, and resilience, you will attain that sense of presence. Others will become aware of it and be influenced by it. And you will become a leader the Army and the nation will be proud of.

Learning Assessment

1. What are the four main elements of Army leadership presence?
2. Why does pride in your appearance help you to lead others?
3. Physical fitness and mental fitness go hand in hand. Explain why.
4. How are bragging and self-promotion different from real confidence?
5. Why is resilience an important leadership trait in a combat situation?

Key Words

military bearing

physical fitness

confidence

resilience

References

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Medal of Honor: Major Bruce P. Crandall. (n.d.). Retrieved 17 July 2008 from <http://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/crandall/>