
Chapter 3.

Junior Enlisted Marines

A SOLID FOUNDATION

When building a house, the first step is to lay the foundation. When building up the career of an individual in the Marine Corps, that foundation is laid during recruit training. Entry-level training brings severe culture shock. Civilians arriving at either of the Marine Corps Recruit Depots to the harsh shouts of a drill instructor find themselves facing panic and fear. Dozens of individuals trying to live without their accustomed privacy and autonomy in the first days find themselves weeks later huddled together in the squad bay, each holding an identical Marine Corps emblem in their hand. On graduation day, that same drill instructor's voice bellowing out, "*DISMISSED!*" makes the new Marines stand tall with pride. Their pride allows them to overlook their struggles and minimize the physical, mental, and emotional pain it took to get to that moment.

If the transformation that begins in recruit training is not sustained, the pride and motivation stemming from that accomplishment may wane, and growing pains may overpower it. The transformation process all Marines experience throughout their careers is the first part of a continual cycle of growth, maturation, and personal development bolstered through military

experiences. Marines must ensure they are taking the necessary steps to set themselves up for success by sustaining their transformation or they risk straying from the strong foundation they built. Individuals who join their first unit demonstrating responsibility and discipline (e.g., wearing sharp uniforms or arriving on time to formations) enable the receiving command to continue developing and sustaining individual transformations.

Receiving orders to one's first unit represents the completion of the initial entry-level training stage of a Marine's career. It is a physical manifestation of that Marine's initial motivation to meet with a recruiter. It is the time for Marines to start building on the solid foundation that forms the bedrock of the rest of their careers. It is when a Marine's perception about what the Marine Corps is meets the reality of the Fleet Marine Forces. The first days, weeks, and months are critical. Their reception and integration begins to shape how they view their roles in the organization. New Marines can enter a positive command climate that continues to sustain the transformation and helps them understand how their unique skill set contributes to the unit's mission, or they can enter a negative command climate where they are met with dismissal.

Although a junior enlisted Marine's journey begins with extensive education and training before arriving at their first duty station, the time for learning is far from over. All Marines, regardless of rank, continue to accrue expertise that can increase their effectiveness as warfighters and leaders. The expectations placed on junior enlisted Marines are different than those placed on the other ranks in the unit. Junior enlisted Marines are expected to

learn their military occupational specialties (MOSs) to the best of their ability and to maintain the standards and skill sets taught throughout their initial training. Junior Marines can expect their responsibilities to align with their growing level of knowledge and skills while they prove they have the ability and perseverance to hold themselves accountable for the betterment of the team. One of the best things junior Marines can do to start their careers on the path of success is to understand the Junior Enlisted Promotion Evaluation System (JEPES). Junior Marines are directly responsible for 75 percent of the areas in which they are considered for promotion. These scoring areas promote physical and mental discipline, therefore, ensuring superior performance within the JEPES system hinges on personal accountability.

Regardless of their rank or time in service, all Marines are expected to adhere to standards—fitness standards, uniform and grooming standards, or training and performance standards. In recruit training, every minor mistake was corrected without the Marines having to think about them. Instant corrections were made, and instant obedience was expected. With occupational specialty training came more rules to remember, more accountability in adhering to them, and an expectation of self or peer correction when the mark was missed. Leaving the heavily scrutinized schoolhouse environment removed the close supervision and put more responsibility on the Marine to self-correct and maintain the standard. It is important for Marines in the receiving unit—from the commanding officer to the newest noncommissioned officers (NCOs)—to set clear expectations and enforce the standards for the new-join Marines.

Junior Marines are often hesitant to make corrections due to a lack of confidence in their own knowledge, or not wanting to seem like a stickler among their peers. However, adhering to rules and regulations shows that Marines take pride in their service and in the Corps. Some regulations have obvious connections to safety or job duties, but others are about upholding standards. For example, the reason rips and holes are not permitted on Marine uniforms is a matter of pride. As written in the *Marine Corps Uniform Manual*:

*Wearing the uniform should be a matter of personal pride to all Marines. Marines will maintain their uniforms and equipment in a neat and serviceable condition and will, by their appearance, set an example of neatness and strict conformity with these regulations. Marines are not known just for their battlefield prowess, but for their unparalleled standards of professionalism and uncompromising personal conduct and appearance. It is a Marine's duty and personal obligation to maintain a professional and neat appearance. Any activity which detracts from the dignified appearance of Marines is unacceptable.*¹¹

So long as it is done in a constructive manner, correcting peers or junior Marines can have a positive effect on their careers. In this stage of a junior Marine's career, learning these standards and how to stay within them is imperative.

A SENSE OF IDENTITY AND BELONGING

With the transformation to Marine comes a new sense of identity and community that some Marines may not have previously experienced. Recruit training makes Marines out of people from every walk of life and gives them a common identity. Junior Marines can continue to build and solidify that new identity and sense of belonging within their units by meeting and exceeding clearly communicated expectations from their leaders and peers. Knowing themselves and how this transformation individually affects them is an important part of the transformation. Gunnery Sergeant Charles F. Wolf, Jr. wrote, "To observe a Marine is inspirational. To be a Marine is exceptional."¹² Most Marines would agree with that statement. The journey of a junior Marine incorporates this new sense of identity.

There is a balance between maintaining individual strengths and traits and embracing the uniformity of becoming a Marine. There are certain times when Marines must let go of individualism and understand they are part of an organization that requires conformity. This can be a difficult adjustment to make in the beginning as personal ego competes with the greater needs of the unit, but there are a few ways to appreciate an organizational identity over that of the individual. The first way is to understand the organizational identity. Most Marines do this without realizing it. What does it mean to be a Marine? It means living up to the reputation created by adhering to high standards. Many in the world see the Marine Corps as a strong, capable force with the highest morals and ethical character, and a symbol of hope and power. Individuals who embrace the organizational identity

take on the reputation set by those who served before them. Most Marines, if they reflect back to their time as a “poolee,” (i.e., one who has enlisted but not yet reported to basic training) admired this reputation. For many, it is what prompted them to be a part of the organization and earn the title of Marine. To abandon that in favor of individualism is to abandon a root motivator for service.

Secondly, one can value the organization’s identity by learning its history of service and the legacy left by prior generations. There are endless stories of Marines who have demonstrated courage, superb judgment, and ingenuity in mission accomplishment. Marines of every background have contributed to the Corps of today.

Finally, Marines can foster their organizational ties by recognizing the contributions of the Marines around them. By observing the selfless actions of their fellow Marines, individuals can better understand their own roles in making the same selfless contributions. In contrast, they can also see the effects of Marines who make selfish decisions and how those decisions ultimately affect the team.

There are times for individuality. Becoming a Marine does not mean giving up independent thought or personality. Instead, each Marine brings unique perspectives, ideas, experiences, and talents to the Corps, thereby creating a diverse organization. Diversity encompasses much more than traits like skin color or gender; it is also about variations of thought, beliefs, and knowledge. A great example of this is found in 1stLt Alfred A. Cunningham’s story.¹³ While most Marines know him as the first Marine aviator,

Cunningham's role in shaping the Corps evolved from his individuality and ideas he brought to the Marine Corps "table." He used his connections with a local flying club to influence Marine Corps leaders to invest in aviation as a new technology. He was personally passionate about flight and believed it could be useful to the armed forces. The Marine Corps, which had no aviation role until that time, sent him to learn how to fly. His contributions launched the Corps' now-robust aviation program.

Every Marine has the ability to shape the future of the Corps, and while they cannot expect the Corps to adapt to each of their individual goals, they can use their personal goals to fit the Corps' needs. The Corps will not pass Marines with failing grades in their military occupational specialty school. They will instead direct those Marines to a field that better aligns with their abilities for the good of the organization. However, Marines who set specific goals and put in the work to rise above their individual shortcomings to accomplish them will strengthen their team and the organization as a whole. The victory and growth comes when challenges are overcome through developing coping skills and perseverance.

Marines can contribute their own unique talents to affect everything from their small unit to the entire Marine Corps. The story of Corporal Riki D. Clement is an example of a Marine's individuality and talents making a unit and organizational difference. When he was still a lance corporal, he reverse-engineered a cord made to connect radios to vehicles and adapted it to attach to a radio tester unit. Each cord would have cost approximately \$64,000 to replace, and his work is estimated to have saved the Marine Corps \$15 million. In addition to the costs,



Corporal Ricki D. Clement

each cord would have taken 6 to 8 months to replace. Now, Marines are able to make the changes within their own shops.¹⁴

TRUST IN LEADERSHIP

Junior Marines begin developing a reputation upon arrival at a new unit. However, the way they are integrated by the unit's members determines the level of trust those Marines have in the unit and the institution. How the unit receives, treats, and leads the new Marines within the first 30 days significantly affects those Marines' performance and morale. A proficient receiving unit sets the conditions for the new Marines to be successful through welcome aboard packages, briefs from relevant agencies,

and involved NCOs. At the same time, the new Marines will be evaluating their surroundings. Does the unit uphold standards? Are Marines tested with fairness? Are the best interests of junior Marines advanced? The answers to these critical questions can foster or erode a Marine's trust in the unit.

Trust within a unit is forged through challenging but fair training, guided by objective training goals. In the absence of their own experience, Marines must rely on the knowledge and experience of others. With proper leadership, junior Marines in a training environment increase their proficiency, gain trust in their own abilities, and gain confidence in their small unit. Marine officers plan and lead unit training, while staff noncommissioned officers (SNCOs) and NCOs supervise, teach, and mentor during training evolutions. Effective Marine Corps leadership fosters trust within the unit through training that builds competency and unit cohesion, removing unnecessary obstacles for Marines, providing clear guidance, and fairly enforcing standards. Noncommissioned officers observe, provide feedback, and are the first line of defense against many of the possible issues that arise. Trust and communication between the NCOs and the junior Marines are crucial elements to sustaining the new Marine's transformation. Unit cohesion instills the sense of purpose and belonging that many Marines sought when they joined the Corps.

CAMARADERIE AND UNITY

Camaraderie and unity are the results of time spent together, whether in garrison or deployed, and both on and off duty. While similar, these two terms hold distinct meanings. Camaraderie is

the mutual trust and friendship among people who spend a lot of time together. It is forged during the morning hours of the Crucible in the unforgiving swamps of Parris Island or seemingly never-ending hills of Camp Pendleton. It is the driving factor behind a Marine's decision to run out from cover into the indiscriminate wall of enemy fire to retrieve a fallen comrade, overriding all rationality and years of hard-wired self-preservation instincts. It is one of the desired outcomes of entry-level training. By undergoing the transformation from civilian to Marine together, Marines forge the bonds that can sustain them through the hardest times. Unity, on the other hand, is a harmony between two or more people or elements and is what Marines feel when they are sure of their place in a unit. They understand how they fit into the bigger picture, and willingly cooperate with those around them to accomplish the mission. Unity is a key trait of a group of Marines who work efficiently together and achieve a high success rate as a team. The combination of camaraderie and unity is cohesion.

It is possible for a Marine to feel a sense of camaraderie with fellow Marines without feeling a sense of unity with their unit or the Marine Corps as a whole. It is also possible that a Marine feels united with the institution yet lacks a sense of camaraderie. As junior Marines progress in rank, time in service, and experience, the bonds of unity and camaraderie they formed during their first months and years in the Marine Corps evolve in positive and negative ways. The Marine might receive orders and have to leave friends for another duty station—but also to new adventures. A Marine's best friend may marry, and subsequently move out of the barracks to live off base. A fellow Marine may

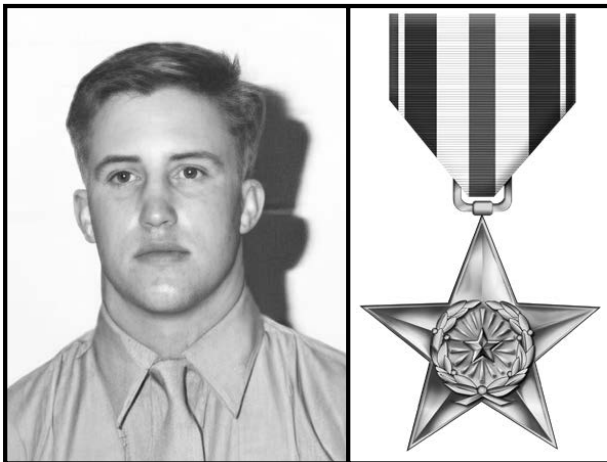
be promoted to corporal, dedicating more time and effort to their new leadership role and its associated responsibilities. Regardless of the reason for change—whether it is temporary additional duty, a new duty station, marriage, or even death—Marines must remember that while familiar faces come and go, the feeling of unity and camaraderie established through good times, tough experiences, and hardship will never truly dissipate. One needs to look no further than an interaction between two long-lost platoon mates at a reunion to see that this is true. Marines must also realize that camaraderie and unity can be found anew at any time. It requires only a willingness to engage with those around them. While a sense of culture established by a unit or specific community may change a Marine’s perception, all Marines are unified in the sense that they are working toward a singular goal: defending this Nation.

RESILIENCE AND PERSEVERANCE

Resilience is the capacity to recover quickly from difficult or negative experiences. Whether it be a negative counseling, a difficult family event, or losing a fellow Marine in combat, there are numerous situations in and out of the Marine Corps that require one to be resilient. However, resilience is only one piece of the puzzle. Marines must also have perseverance. Whether they call it persistence, “stick-to-it-iveness,” or even stubbornness, perseverance is the continued effort to succeed despite difficulties, failure, or opposition. Everyone experiences difficulty throughout their lives; it is a part of the human experience but should not be the entire experience. Overcoming

difficulties and moving through them requires the persistence to pursue solutions and see them through to resolution or recovery. The story of LCpl Kasey A. Krock highlights one Marine's perseverance in battle.

On 6 December 1992, LCpl Kasey A. Krock was presented the Silver Star for his "conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action" during combat operations against the enemy in Operation DESERT STORM. He was serving as a combat engineer when a line charge fired from his amphibious assault vehicle failed to detonate. Without hesitation, he left the safety of the vehicle and manually armed and detonated the charge. When the second line charge failed, he repeated the daring task a second time. Once the breach was complete, the assault element was able to successfully move through the lane and defeat the opposing forces. Speaking



Lance Corporal Kasey Krock

later about his actions, LCpl Krock stated, “I feel the success of the breaches is a direct result of adequate training and everyone knowing their job. Even though the repetitious training seemed tedious at times, it was definitely worth it. It was the most rewarding feeling I've ever had.”¹⁵

Resilience is not developed by continually being broken, but rather by gathering the tools to repair oneself when it happens. The Marine Corps addresses four types of fitness and how to increase each area for better resilience (see Four Areas of Fitness on page 3-14). Similarly, perseverance is not suffering in silence, but rather maintaining commitment to a better outcome. Great improvements have been made in military mental health services and understanding the all-around needs of individual Marines. Marines must do the preventive work to strengthen their physical, mental, spiritual, and social fitness levels so they are as fully prepared as possible for all contingencies. To do so, they will need to rely upon support systems such as significant others, family, mentors, community groups, and religious groups.

From the early days of training, every Marine learns the Corps' Values: Honor, Courage, and Commitment. Marines start their careers with only official definitions for these words, but over time they develop personal meanings and applications for them. No longer just terms echoed back to a drill instructor or stenciled on a staircase, each word reminds Marines of a time when they were tested and either succeeded or fell short.

Perseverance is the manifestation of commitment. Developing perseverance is not simply a matter of never quitting anything. If

Four Areas of Fitness

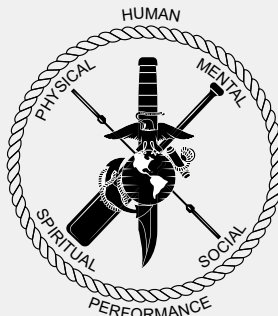
Resilience is an important aspect of a Marine’s personal and professional life. It ensures that when faced with the challenges Marines experience in and out of combat, they will be able to meet those challenges, drawing from internal and external sources of strength and support. Marines with a high degree of physical and cognitive performance build and maintain resilience in these four areas of Marine fitness:

Physical Fitness: In addition to regular PT and exercise, this area includes proper nutrition, injury prevention, and recovery to maximize performance.

Mental Fitness: Includes one’s mindset, attitudes, and practices that help deal with various stressors that impeded overall performance.

Spiritual Fitness: Identification of personal faith, foundational values, and moral living from a variety of sources and traditions help Marines live out Core Values of Honor, Courage, and Commitment, live the warrior ethos, and exemplify the character expected of a United States Marine.

Social Fitness: Building a solid skillset that fosters cohesion, belonging, and trust in one’s personal and professional relationships.¹⁶



that were the case, everyone would marry the first person they dated, stay at their first job, and never move from their first apartment. Instead, it is about following goals and decisions through to their satisfactory completion, even when it may not be easy or comfortable.

Angela Duckworth, an American psychologist, writes extensively about perseverance in her book, “*Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance*.”¹⁷ (This book was on the 2019 Commandant’s Reading list.) Duckworth explains that, like any other skill or ability, perseverance must be developed and strengthened over time. This is accomplished by continually pushing through challenges that arise, realizing failure is not final, and maintaining a hope for a better outcome or result. Every Marine has demonstrated perseverance by the simple fact that they earned the Marine title. Those who face the grueling challenge of entry-level training are not guaranteed success. Many people *almost* became Marines, but those who wear the uniform are the only ones who know what it takes to see it all the way through.

Becoming a Marine and learning a new occupational specialty presents challenges beyond the individual’s capabilities. No matter how prepared they may be for the rigors of training, defeat and setbacks are inevitable. Persevering through the challenge—not giving up when it becomes difficult—is the only way to succeed as a Marine. However, that does not mean relentlessly pushing without thought or perspective. Persevering through any mission—following through on promises and following through to the end—should be a well-thought-out endeavor. If one approach does not work, try another. Reach out to other Marines

for guidance and motivation. Bring others on board to ease the burden. There are many ways to see a task or goal to the end, but the most important is to not stop until it is done.

Marines are often challenged and pushed outside their comfort zones, whether in stepping into a new billet, being promoted to a new rank, transferring to a new unit, or laterally moving to a new occupational specialty. Many times, as soon as a job feels well in hand, the situation changes. Other times, Marines may face adversity through their own errors. Poor decisions or other personal shortcomings may lead to administrative or judicial punishment or delay an achievement. No matter the cause, all Marines eventually face failure. In some way, they will not measure up to the standard or expectation they hold for themselves or those held by others. Such events mark pivotal moments when Marines must choose to either drop their packs or tighten the straps and stay committed. Perseverance is choosing the latter.

Perseverance is continuing to move forward despite obstacles, taking each step with thoughtful consideration. No matter the task, it is the individual Marine who must see it through to the end. However, they do not have to do so alone. The key time to reach out to others is when the task at hand feels too difficult. Reach out to a senior leader who has the experience to provide guidance in skillsets. They can often provide a more effective and efficient way to get the job done. Reach out to a supportive family member or friend for motivation and reinvigoration. Lean on peers and fellow Marines who are facing similar challenges for understanding and camaraderie.

When a Marine struggles to see a personal goal or obligation through to completion, perseverance comes from revisiting the “why” behind the commitment. Goals can become distorted as they encounter challenges and setbacks. Marines should identify the greater purpose of the goal to renew the commitment. When focusing on the short-term reasons for pursuing a goal, it is easy to say it is not worth the effort. An easier option will always exist. Why pursue higher education when I have made it this far without it? Why build a savings account when I could just use credit cards? However, the satisfaction and promise of a better future make the more difficult route worth the effort. In the words of Angela Duckworth, “Being a ‘promising beginner’ is fun, but being an actual expert is infinitely more gratifying.”¹⁸ Not only is the end state achieved, but the satisfaction of seeing it through to the end sweetens the reward.

Similar to the “sets and repetitions” used to develop one’s physical fitness, Marines need to establish a routine to develop their mental fitness. Marines who are solution-oriented and find ways to accomplish the mission, even in the presence of challenges and setbacks, can find a greater sense of purpose and pride in overcoming difficulties. Marines who appreciate hard-earned rewards through delayed gratification grow through failure by taking responsibility for their own actions. Continually finding new ways to build and strengthen perseverance has profound effects on sustaining the transformation to Marine.

SUSTAINING SELF

Mental Fitness

Marines take tremendous pride in their service and history. Marines often say, “We stand on the shoulders of giants.” However, they must be careful they do not fall into *riding* on these shoulders. In other words, Marines work to uphold and strengthen the reputation built by earlier generations. Marines at every rank must understand that the Corps’ reputation as an elite force can be lost through *their* actions. The continued existence of the Corps, its reputation, and the trust bestowed upon it by the United States is not guaranteed. Stories of valor in combat are not what keep the Marine Corps thriving, it takes selfless dedication to the core values and institutional ideals. Adhering to the basics in every aspect builds proficiency, which in turn, builds confidence and pride.

Pride is a feeling of self-worth which finds its source in satisfaction from past accomplishments, motivation in present endeavors, and inspiration springing from future aspirations.

—Zell Miller, Retired Marine, Governor, and Senator¹⁹

Junior enlisted Marines jump-start their success by maintaining the skills and character traits they learned during basic training—discipline, adaptability, and professionalism, to name a few. Traits like these guide Marines as they encounter new environments, challenges and opportunities. Through mentorship,

instruction, and repetition, their sense of pride and confidence continues growing through the School of Infantry, MOS school, and at their first unit. Learning, practicing, refining, and growing continue with the added assistance of peers and more experienced Marines. Junior Marines increase their self-confidence and fulfillment through learning and more senior Marines do the same through teaching. In every topic of instruction, the purpose of training events is to build confidence. It requires exposing one's weaknesses and shortcomings in a constructive way to identify where instruction is needed. In a training environment that keeps safety at the forefront, Marines can learn from their mistakes and the mistakes of others. Marines should not be so afraid of failure that they stop trying.

Military Training

Even though it can be intimidating at first, learning a new skill increases self-confidence, fosters future growth, and builds team unity. In the first few years of service, Marines are expected to learn a daunting amount of information; this learning process is progressive and compounding in nature. Each skill or piece of knowledge learned adds to the previous piece, but rarely does it move in a neat and linear path. There will be many moments of doubt; however, the moments when training “clicks” help build confidence. Experiencing small victories along the way is critical. If training is becoming overwhelming or discouraging, return to the basics. Reinforcing the basics and practicing what has already been learned not only reminds Marines of how much they have learned and how far they have come, but that they are capable of getting it right with enough practice. After continued and focused

practice, a skill that was once challenging becomes second nature and the cycle repeats with the next skill. With each new skill, Marines increase their own effectiveness, thereby increasing their unit's effectiveness. It is crucial that Marines continue to engage in learning. Becoming stagnant in the process for any reason can lead to erosion of that confidence, and Marines might begin looking for validation, satisfaction, or recognition in other places—some of which might not be healthy. Marines deeply involved in training and development find a sense of pride and accomplishment and have reason to protect what they've earned. They are, therefore, less likely to engage in behaviors that will cut their careers short and discredit the Corps. Expertise is a lifelong pursuit that helps sustain the transformation from civilian to Marine.

Professional Education

One of the easiest ways to continue learning and gaining confidence is through attending professional military education. For junior Marines this includes the Lance Corporal Leadership and Ethics Seminar, annual training briefs, MOS-specific courses, and their annual tactical training requirements. Learning and adapting in the MOS field is important because they build on new skills. However, a well-rounded education is also necessary. Rank-specific training helps each Marine make the most of their current rank while preparing for their next one. It ensures that they are growing and developing at their current level and helps them broaden their support networks with their fellow Marines.

Aside from the professional military education realm, additional annual training briefs are provided to remind Marines about personal resources available to them and common behavioral pitfalls to avoid. Some of this instruction covers operational security, sexual assault prevention, and suicide prevention and awareness. Revisiting this information reminds Marines of consequences to bad choices and allows leadership to reinforce positive behaviors and practices.



**Marine Corps Enlisted
Professional Military Education Logo**

Marines undergo many different forms of training. All training serves the purpose of sustaining Marines' transformation throughout their service. It is up to each Marine to make the most of the training and education opportunities provided to them. Staying current on basic skills training like the gas chamber, rifle range, water survival and Marine Corps Martial Arts Program (MCMAP) helps reinforce the confidence Marines have in themselves and their fellow Marines. Working with subject matter experts to complete annual training requirements and develop a stronger, faster and more competent Marine in the process, instills a sense of team unity, confidence and lethality in all Marines.

Healthy Lifestyle

Few professions in the world require strict physical standards as a condition of employment. For the military, health and fitness are not just a requirement, they can mean the difference between life and death. A lot of focus is placed on body composition, strength and endurance, but there is much more to being healthy than those metrics alone. Many poolees and recruits admire the Corps for its physical fitness demands, as well as the inherent challenges they present, and aspire to achieve the standards for themselves; however, donning the Eagle, Globe, and Anchor does not magically transform Marines into top performers. In or out of uniform, reaching high levels of functional fitness requires hard work and commitment. Although Marines are not required to have a regimented gym schedule or research the nutritional data in every meal, every Marine should make a point to learn about and practicing healthy choices and eating habits to remain within standards and ready for the demands of the job.

Being healthy and fit goes beyond the hour of platoon exercise in the morning or the hour in the gym over lunch. It includes the other 23 hours spent away from it. There are many times when Marines need to function on little sleep. They may have a long patrol mission, a 24-hour duty posting, or a mission to provide operational support throughout the night. For this reason, every Marine should strive for a healthy sleep schedule whenever possible. Chronic lack of adequate sleep can lead to impaired judgment, mood disorders, unhealthy weight gain, and potentially fatal accidents.²⁰ All of these can have long-term effects on Marines, their relationships, and their careers.

Making healthy food choices can also have dramatic effects. A poor diet can lead to key nutrient, vitamin and mineral deficiencies. It may seem simple; however, there is a reason a corpsman's first question is usually, "What have you eaten today?" or, "How much water have you had today?" Dehydration or electrolyte imbalances can cause cramping, dizziness, and fainting. Other nutritional deficiencies put Marines at higher risk of injury or a slower rate of recovery, and they can lead to more long-term illnesses, such as diabetes or high blood pressure. Making healthy nutritional choices ensures Marines perform at their best. Choices regarding alcohol can also have dramatic effects for the individual Marine. For those who are underage, drinking alcohol not only affects their physical and mental state; it can also lead to legal ramifications. Those who are legally able to consume alcohol must develop an understanding of their personal limitations and exercise moderation to develop healthy habits. Exercising good judgment, self-control, and avoiding peer pressure will help Marines maintain a healthy body and serve as an asset to themselves and their fellow Marines.

*Be careful whom you associate with. It is human to imitate the habits of those with whom we interact. We inadvertently adopt their interests, their opinions, their values, and their habit of interpreting events.*²¹
—Epictetus

SUSTAINING OTHERS

Social Fitness

Social Fitness cannot be underrated. Those progressing through recruit training have little time for developing friendships. Marines moving through School of Infantry and MOS school have more time and opportunity, but their pool of potential friends is limited. At the Marines' first unit, the floodgates open; they meet fellow Marines at work, and they meet others through volunteering or through mutual friends. At this critical juncture, Marines must carefully consider every relationship they engage in, as their relationships can directly affect their level of social fitness. Social fitness is building a solid skillset that fosters cohesion, belonging, and trust in one's personal and professional relationships. Just as Marines are influenced by those with whom they spend their time, they can, in turn, serve a meaningful role in their fellow Marines' careers.

Every Marine is a Leader

Regardless of rank, and in the absence of any other Marines, all Marines are at least leaders of themselves. Marines are rarely alone, though. Every interaction they have with their fellow Marines is a chance to influence and affect behavior. While junior Marines may not have a lot of say or influence in the grand scheme of the unit's operational tempo, they can directly influence others with their attitude, words, and actions. Marines who work to sustain their own transformations in the ways listed in this chapter also have the ability to sustain that same

transformation in others. Intentionally choosing friend groups based on common interests and goals can help Marines keep each other accountable. Whether it is a Marine's goal to achieve a perfect physical fitness score, read a new book each month, better manage emotions, or reach a higher MCMAP belt level, Marines who support each other in their goals are more likely to achieve them. If Marines associate with peer groups who do not support their goals, or worse, discourage them entirely, they can be pulled away from their own success. Whether it be through peer pressure not to pursue a particular goal or to make impulsive decisions, or even to embark on new, positive endeavors, friend groups are among the most significant influences in a young Marine's life. It can be intimidating to walk into a new unit and wonder whom to befriend. The good news is that everyone has something in common from the first day—everyone is a Marine. When new Marines join a unit, it is a chance for everyone in that unit to reach out and welcome them. It is okay to shift friendships as interests and commitment levels change. What matters is that Marines recognize the influence they have in their friends' lives, and the effect their friends have on theirs. Marines are individually responsible for their own successes and failures, and the friends they surround themselves with, both for encouragement and to encourage, are key factors of that outcome.²²

Aside from choosing friends and friend groups, Marines must develop healthy relationships. Whether it be a casual friendship, a professional working relationship, or a potential romantic partner, dysfunctional relationships can wreak havoc on individuals and their units and cause emotional turmoil that can manifest in ways

like lack of focus, outbursts, or feelings of immobilization. Conflict between Marines who work together can break down trust or cause a division of “taking sides,” neither of which is good for unit cohesion. The Marine Corps offers great resources to assist in life skills, such as forming healthy relationships, setting boundaries, improving communication, showing appreciation, and understanding personality differences. There are many courses, classes, and activities available to Marines and their dependents through the Marine Corps Community Services. Marines can take advantage of these courses just as they would schedule time for the rifle range and college classes. As peers,

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<h3 style="text-align: center;">DEVELOPING HEALTHY BLENDED FAMILIES</h3> <div style="text-align: center;"> <h2 style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">11,262</h2> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">Step children in the Marine Corps (2014 Force Data Worksheet, FY15)</p> </div> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin-top: 5px;">85% SPOUSE & 70% SERVICE MEMBERS report being “extremely happy” with being “step” in the military. (2014 Blue Star Report)</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">TOP TIPS FOR BUILDING A HEALTHY RELATIONSHIP</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; font-size: 0.7em;"> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Turn toward read and respond if asked</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Consider each other's preferences and feelings</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Make decisions together</p> </div> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p>Solve your sovereign problems</p> </div> </div> <div style="text-align: center; margin-top: 5px;"> <h2 style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">2.6%</h2> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">Overall divorce rate in the Marine Corps (Marine Corps Demographics June 15)</p> </div>	<h3 style="text-align: center;">INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION</h3> <div style="text-align: center;"> </div> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin-top: 5px;">Top 4 Communication Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Communicate clearly and concisely ■ Listen actively ■ Stay calm ■ Speak confidently 	<h3 style="text-align: center;">BASIC ANGER MANAGEMENT</h3> <div style="text-align: center;"> <h2 style="font-size: 2em; margin: 0;">28%</h2> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">of people say they worry how angry they feel sometimes. (Marine Corps Organizational Status Report 2016)</p> </div> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin-top: 5px;">BASIC STRESS MANAGEMENT</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">36% Active Duty Military Spouses and 35% Active Duty Service Members reported feeling “stressed” most of the time. (2014 Blue Star Report)</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin-top: 5px;">FAMILY CARE PLAN</p> <p style="font-size: 0.8em; margin: 0;">Elements of a successful family care plan Prepare a will and designate a guardian Ensure guardian has access to necessary funds Sign up for SGLI or a similar group life insurance</p>
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 30%;"> <h4 style="margin: 0;">CONFLICT MANAGEMENT</h4> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p style="font-size: 0.7em; margin: 0;">U.S. employees spent 335 million working days (2010 billion in paid hours) dealing with conflict.</p> </div> </div> <div style="width: 30%;"> <h4 style="margin: 0;">SOCIAL NETWORK SAFETY</h4> <div style="text-align: center;"> <p style="font-size: 0.7em; margin: 0;">More than 12 million people were victims of identity fraud in 2013 due to less security and accessible personal information.</p> </div> </div> </div>		

Marine Corps
Family Team
Building

Learn. Grow. Lead.

Marine Corps Community Services Offerings

Marines can reach out to Marines who may be struggling and help them resolve conflicts or break contact.

New Marines are eager and excited to arrive at their first duty stations; however, meeting standards, earning promotions, and making new friends can be overwhelming. The transformation that begins in recruit training must continuously be nurtured and tended to be sustained. Marines should take responsibility for their own transformation; however, they should know they are not alone.