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## **Chapter 4.**

# **Noncommissioned Officers**

The tiered structure within the United States Marine Corps' enlisted ranks contains meaningful milestones that provide clarity in obligations and responsibilities. After their first experiences in the ranks of private through lance corporal, Marines close a chapter of their service, and reach the milestone of becoming a noncommissioned officer. This transition to a new peer group is a pivotal point in every noncommissioned officer's career. Noncommissioned officers become both mentee and mentor, student and teacher, younger and elder sibling. This is a critical time when NCOs begin developing their own leadership style and accrue additional skills and tools to aid them in their duties. Earning a promotion into the NCO ranks is a significant accomplishment, one that necessitates returning to the reasons for serving and a fresh look at how to forge ahead.

The primary responsibility of junior Marines in the early months of service is to learn by observing and practicing their MOS skills all while becoming accustomed to the Marine Corps way of life. As an NCO, these requirements become less passive (receiving) and more active (seeking). An NCO must take the initiative to seek out leadership and instruction opportunities. This is a time when Marines should seek additional guidance from their mentors and leaders and devote additional time to self-reflection

and learning. Because promotions come at different times for each Marine, there are often conflicting emotions surrounding them. On one hand, the Marine is eager to be promoted and take on additional responsibilities, increased authority, and more opportunities. On the other hand, many of their friends might remain in the junior ranks, making the transition to a professional separation difficult. The separation from junior Marine to NCO is not about cutting off friends or being superior. It creates a new obligation to provide instruction and guidance. Some Marines believe they can continue to act as they always have and that the NCO leadership and conduct mindset will come to them, but they must pursue this; ownership is one of the characteristics that separates a junior Marine from an NCO.

### **FROM STUDENT TO TEACHER**

Becoming an NCO is a transition from student to teacher. Most Marines are promoted to corporal sometime in the second half of their first enlistment contract. They will have accumulated experience and knowledge to pass on to the Marines who are coming behind them.

Junior Marines will emulate their NCOs. An NCO's leadership influences how a junior Marine retains new skills and strengthens character traits obtained during training. Every interaction an NCO has with a junior Marine should stem from the realization that NCOs shape, guide, and mold the Corps. Every conversation, counseling, and correction must foster the warrior ethos within their Marines. To create warriors, NCOs must be warriors themselves. In addition to training, NCOs can earn trust in myriad

ways, like following through on promises, assisting Marines with their personal and professional development, recognizing their achievements, being bold and unflinching in the face of challenging decisions, and being reliable problem solvers.

Taking on the teacher role helps corporals step into their new ranks and distinguish themselves from their previous ranks and the junior Marines around them. During routine work tasks, corporals are given endless opportunities to pass on their knowledge and experience. One example is teaching another Marine an unfamiliar task. In the tried-and-true teaching method, the corporal explains and demonstrates the task before supervising task execution and making necessary corrections. Then the corporal repeatedly observes the Marines completing the task until they fully understand. As a result, the overall skill level of the entire unit is increased.

Another way to teach junior Marines is through professional military education. Corporals can take the initiative to lead periods of instruction (commonly called “hip pocket classes”) and teach skills before the need to perform them arises. This may be related to training and readiness tasks or ancillary tasks like filling out Navy and Marine Corps (NAVMC) forms, record keeping, standing operating procedures, and troubleshooting. For example, the time to teach a private first class the concept of “tap-rack-bang” is not during urban combat; infantry Marines should be taught remedial actions and given the opportunity to conduct drills during close-quarters battle training. If a Marine struggles in one aspect, developing and devoting time to that shortcoming strengthens the whole Marine. In the end, owning

one's successes and failures and learning from them strengthens and empowers young leaders to improve not only themselves, but their units as well. However, Marines cannot teach what they do not know. Noncommissioned officers must continue to learn, seeking knowledge where they are lacking. Learning can come from a multitude of sources. Senior NCOs, SNCOs, and officers will provide guidance and education from their positions of greater experience. Frequently referencing manuals, orders, policies, and MARADMINs (or Marine administrative messages) helps NCOs understand current Marine Corps rules and regulations. By treating every moment as an opportunity to learn, they continue to develop their own mental fitness, credibility, and knowledge, which they can pour into the Marines around them.

Corporals can continue their mentorship roles during the off-duty hours. Junior Marines need education on and off the job. Corporals should understand their position as role models for appropriate conduct. Many junior Marines are away from home for the first time. They have most likely left their families and friend groups, hobbies, and activities, and may struggle to settle into the new Marine Corps life. A corporal can take the initiative to reach out to new Marines and welcome them into the unit, the base, and the area. There are plenty of ways to do this without crossing the bounds of fraternization. When new Marines check in, a corporal

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*You are responsible for the accomplishment of your assigned mission and for the safety, professional development and well-being of the Marines in your charge.*

—NCO Promotion Warrant

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should step up to make sure they know where to get the basic necessities. Does the new Marine know where the messhall is and the hours they are open? Did any of their luggage get lost at the airport? Do they know where the nearest exchange is? Do they have sheets, pillows, and blankets on their beds? This is particularly important for Marines who check in to the barracks on a weekend. Even with the ease of access to web searches, food delivery, and ride sharing companies, NCOs should ensure that junior Marines feel welcome and their immediate needs are met from the start.

Corporals are in the perfect position to establish themselves as a leader, mentor, and trusted member of the new Marine's unit. After seeing to their immediate physical needs, the corporal can then introduce them to a peer Marine or two who can provide social connection. Noncommissioned officers can facilitate a connection to other reliable Marines who will set the new Marine on the right path. Corporals who know their Marines will be able to connect Marines over shared hobbies or interests, similar hometowns, common faiths, or other similarities that can make a new Marine feel welcomed and create a sense of belonging. While this can be accomplished by any Marine at any rank, the corporal is near enough to the new Marines to be accessible but has the authority and seniority to influence action. That corporal becomes a trustworthy source for future assistance to those new Marines and quickly gains their respect.

### SEEING THE BIGGER PICTURE

The obligation to serve as a teacher does not end with corporals. By the time Marines are promoted to sergeant, they should be well-established as NCOs. It is expected that they grow past the loyalties to friendships in the junior ranks and begin looking at the larger Marine Corps picture. Increased responsibility, experience and training, as well as involvement in unit operations means the sergeant begins to see how the Marine Corps functions at a higher level. This expanded view should include all the areas of influence previously discussed in this chapter, but also build on the way they lead, teach, and make decisions about their own service and attaining the next rank.

As an NCO, sergeants have the continued responsibility of teaching the Marines in their charge, particularly serving as mentors to the corporals stepping into the role of NCO for the first time. Since they typically have more time in service and a wider variety of experiences, sergeants can see the bigger picture of how they, their Marines, and their unit contribute to the greater Marine Corps mission. With this knowledge they can lead and teach with perspective.

Noncommissioned officers are translators of the commander's intent. They must speak two languages: the commander's language, and the junior Marines' language. Noncommissioned officers serve to take the task and purpose from the commander and present it to their Marines in such a way that every Marine knows their role and how to accomplish their assigned task. As junior Marines, they may have been able to influence those

around them through their actions, and now they are also able to influence through the authority conferred by their rank. “Leading by example” is a principle used commonly when talking about how Marine leaders should conduct themselves. Noncommissioned officers should conduct themselves in

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*I am the backbone of the  
United States Marine Corps.*

*I am a Marine  
Noncommissioned Officer.  
I serve as part of the vital  
link between my commander  
(and all officers) and  
enlisted Marines.*

—NCO Creed

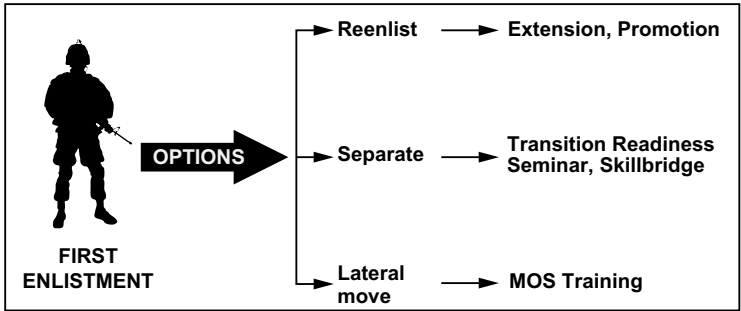
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a manner that drives and motivates others to reach the highest standard. This merging of leadership and personal accountability contributes to command climate and instills small-unit leadership values among those junior Marines who are watching.

## CONSIDERING REENLISTMENT

Do I stay or do I leave? Choosing the next step in service is a turning point in a young Marine’s career. By the nature of the enlistment contract, Marines eventually face the decision of whether or not to reenlist. This decision should prompt a significant amount of reflection on the past, present, and future.

Marines should not assume they know which path they will take without giving the decision careful thought and consideration. Revisiting not only why they joined, but also why they might want to stay, is important to the decision-making process. There is no single answer to the question; however, each Marine should take time for introspection, as well as seek guidance from a



**Options After the First Enlistment**

mentor. Mentors who are further along in their military careers can help a young NCO examine all sides of the equation.

Below are some questions Marines can answer for themselves or discuss with a mentor as they consider their options for the future:

- What do I want to contribute to the Marine Corps and have I accomplished that already?
- Do I provide valuable service to the Corps, and does the Corps continue to serve me well?
- Have I left it better than I found it?
- If I were to get out tomorrow, would I be satisfied with that decision?
- Are there goals I still want to accomplish in the Marine Corps?
- Are there goals I want to accomplish outside the Marine Corps that will be impeded by another enlistment?

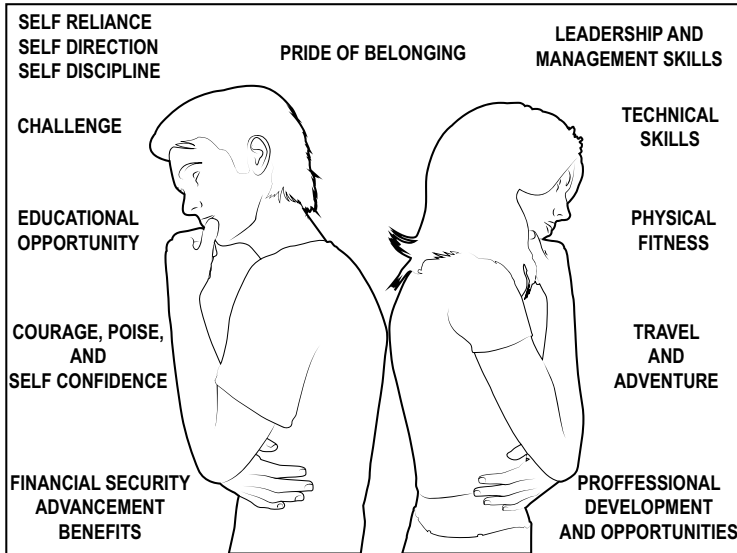
Throughout the deliberation process, a Marine will eventually have to answer two core questions: “Will other Marines benefit



from me staying in?” and, “Will I benefit from staying in?” For many young Marines deliberating for the first time, it is natural to think that the second enlistment will be a repeat of the first. They may be hesitant to re-commit based on experiences with senior leaders, entry-level training, or the culture shock of their initial transformation from civilian to Marine. Some Marines feel as if “the grass is greener” on the civilian side when it comes to obligations, benefits, or lifestyle choices. However, with a new enlistment comes a new duty station, new billets, new ranks, and new opportunities. No two enlistments are alike because of these influencing factors. The paragraphs below dive deeper into some of the questions listed above.

### **Why Did I Become a Marine?**

Every Marine has different reasons for joining the Marine Corps. Some of those reasons are tangible, such as physical fitness, pay, and benefits. Other reasons are more intangible, such as pride of belonging, courage, and self-confidence. Most Marines remember going through the “benefit tags” (i.e., reasons to enlist) with their recruiter during their first meeting. Some Marines may join for the tangible benefits, but later discover that the intangible benefits matter more to them. Others may join for intangible benefits, then later find stability and security in the tangible ones. Looking into why we pursued the title in the first place may help us understand whether reenlistment is the logical next step.



**Reasons to Become a Marine**

**What Did I Hope to Achieve?  
Have I Done it? If Not, Why Not?**

Whether or not our original goals were achieved, it is expected that our personal and professional goals and motivations will change over time. Reevaluating these areas can produce strong indications of whether reenlistment would be the right choice.

Marines should remember their original reasons for joining without judgment, cynicism, or resentment towards their pre-service selves. Some Marines may judge themselves harshly, criticizing their lack of understanding surrounding military

service as a civilian. The goals and desires expressed for service were set with pure intentions, not ignorance. Whether those goals were achieved or not can be assessed without bias. For example, a Marine who joined with the intent to pursue educational opportunities may choose to leave active service to the educational benefits they've earned. Another Marine, who joined to build self-confidence, may choose to stay to continue building the confidence of others. Some Marines may have joined with one goal in mind, but found a new goal to pursue along the way. Marines who make an open and honest assessment of whether or not they have reached their goals can more easily determine whether continued service would benefit themselves, their Marines, and the institution.

### **What Role Have I Played in My Successes and Failures?**

If, after assessing their needs, motivators, goals, and priorities, Marines decide they have missed the target, it might be time for further reflection. How much of that outcome was their responsibility? Many Marines leave the Service after one enlistment because they feel disappointed in unmet expectations. Marines must take an honest assessment of their roles in their own experiences. If they wanted education, did they take the initiative to enroll in classes? If they wanted to belong, did they participate in events and organizations that would help them build a network? If they wished to travel, did they make themselves competitive and available for training and deployment? Many times, Marines have a projected image of what it will look like to accomplish their goals, and if it does not unfold exactly as they imagined, they consider it unsuccessful. College does not always

look like a semester on a campus with lecture halls and classmates. World travel is not limited to long vacations in distant locations. A sense of belonging can begin with something as simple as sharing an evening around a fire pit. It is up to the Marine to take advantage of available opportunities.

Marines who believe their goals and desires were not accomplished could re-examine the role they may have had in the pursuit. Perhaps the traditional expectation for meeting goals did not materialize. Would another enlistment help see those ambitions through, or do they have new goals to pursue outside military service? Table 4-1 offers some alternative methods of reaching goals through military opportunities.

**Table 4-1. Considerations for Attaining Goals.**

<b>Goal</b>	<b>Traditional Expectation</b>	<b>Military Alternative</b>
Higher Education	Formal classes taught in classroom setting	Online classes, on-the-job training certification, college equivalency exams (DANTES/CLEP), credit for military training
World Travel	Vacations in far-off locations	Local tourism, TAD assignments, deployments
Sense of Belonging	Frequent social engagement	Support through shared hardship, mutual accountability, encouragement through challenges, membership in military organizations

### SUSTAINING SELF

#### Mentorship

Stepping into the role of an NCO for the first time, a Marine may be at a loss regarding how to start. This is where a mentor can help. Mentors come in many forms. Whether a first-term Marine planning to leave the Corps, or one who is choosing to make it a career, finding an appropriate mentor is vital to success in all areas of life. Finding a mentor starts with two questions: “Where would I like to see myself?” and, “Who is a role-model I would like to emulate?” After answering these questions, the process of finding a mentor may still take some time. Everything from our personality, to goals, access, and leadership style can sway the choice. It is helpful to have multiple mentors for different parts of life. A professional mentor can give advice on the next steps for a Marine’s career. A spiritual mentor can provide support and accountability. A financial mentor can give insight and provide suggestions for managing assets and making financial goals.

For those looking for a mentor, it can be intimidating to seek out someone above one’s respective peer group. However, those are exactly the individuals whom we should reach out to. If they have achieved something we want to achieve, what better way to get there than to learn from someone who has done it?

Whether a Marine sits down and speaks to a mentor face-to-face on a weekly basis or calls monthly, each relationship will differ. Mentorship is ever evolving, and one can have many mentors over time. Additionally, it is okay to find a new mentor if the current relationship changes, if life circumstances change, or if the relationship is not a good fit. Junior Marines may have mentors to help them navigate the early years of their careers, whereas senior NCOs may find a veteran mentor to assist in their transition out of the Marine Corps. An important factor to consider in mentorship is keeping an open mind. Mentors can be found in unexpected places, and may not be like us at all, except that they've accomplished what we'd like to accomplish. A good mentor may be of a different faith, a different gender or race, in another branch of Service, or not in the military at all. Marines should evaluate their own biases to keep from missing out on valuable guidance and mentorship. Just as each Marine's service looks different, the mentor-mentee relationship is also uniquely individual.

Mentorship is beneficial at every level. In the process of finding one's own mentor, remember that a good NCO may also mentor junior Marines. Junior Marines may select an NCO mentor for many reasons, such as anticipating their own transition to the NCO ranks, trying to improve physical fitness, or trying to improve their MOS-specific tasks. The NCO may also deem it beneficial to find a mentor who can teach them how to mentor.

### Creating Quality Goals

Marines' goals change over time. Taking time to review, assess, and update goals periodically will help Marines sustain their transformation for many years. When creating their goals, Marines should try to answer the five "W" questions: What do I want to accomplish? Why is this goal important? Who is involved? Where will it take me? Which resources or limits are involved? The goal should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-based (more commonly referred to as "SMART" goals). They should be—

- Specific. Provides clarity for the desired end state.
- Measurable. Tracking one's progress keeps an individual motivated and focused.
- Attainable. Reasonable goals that challenge the boundaries of one's current position or abilities, increase wisdom, experience, and personal growth.
- Realistic. Underestimating the effects of schedules, interruptions, and military priorities can diminish enthusiasm and jeopardize chances of success.
- Time-Based. By setting time limits and mile markers individuals can more easily recognize whether or not the desired end state has been achieved.

Goals for the Marine beginning entry-level training typically center on performance and achievement. Initial goals include completing recruit training as the honor graduate, achieving a first-class physical fitness score, and completing an associate's degree during one's first enlistment. Beyond that, as Marines

grow in their careers and commit to greater responsibilities, their goals will also evolve. Well-defined and thought-out ambitions help Marines sustain their transformation by keeping their heads in the game. Noncommissioned officers should strive to hold themselves to higher standards and reach outside their comfort zones for their next goal. Additionally, they should step back and look at the bigger picture to see how their goals might help them, their Marines, their family and friends, the Marine Corps, and the world around them.

Many Marines have a goal to deploy at some point. While obtaining deployment orders is beyond one's control, an NCO who has not yet had the chance to deploy can set MOS-relevant goals to be ready when the opportunity arises. That could mean learning to be a squad leader, earning relevant certifications, or gaining experience through unit exercises. The first step should be the training and readiness manual for the Marine's individual MOS, their occupational field, and Marine Corps common skills. Developing proficiency makes Marines competitive for deployment and prepares them for whatever will be asked of them while they are forward. Marines should also prepare in their personal lives to be ready for deployment, particularly in the following areas:

- Financial Stability. A deployment will usually mean reduced access to financial systems and resources, and liberty can spur a change in spending habits. They should strive to automate bill paying to the greatest extent possible before departure, minimize debt and allocate savings to be set aside for emergencies. The Service Member's Civil Relief Act can provide some assistance with contractual obligations, but it is



on the individual Marine to ensure they do not return home from deployment to foreclosures, repossessions, or collections claims due to unpaid bills. A Marine with dependents is responsible for their well-being. That means making sure they have the financial resources to provide the necessities and maintain their standard of living.

- Relationships. Long distances, months of separation, reduced communication, and the worry of safety and well-being can strain relationships. Whether it is a significant other, a relative, or some other close connection, Marines need to ensure they can be focused on the job required of them while forward-deployed. Relationship conflicts back home can distract Marines and reduce their ability to perform the job their team is relying on them to do.
- Resilience. The Marine Corps is engaged in various operations around the world. As discussed in previous sections, Marines must be prepared for anything from combat to humanitarian aid to evacuations. Deployments can bring life-threatening unknowns or frustration-inducing monotony. Knowing how to identify one's own stress responses—and reduce any negative effects from them—is an important skill to develop before entering a high-stress environment.

Another quality goal Marines can set for themselves is improving their physical fitness level. Marines should challenge themselves beyond annual physical fitness and combat fitness tests. Increasing one's belt levels in MCMAP opens the door to becoming an instructor and instructor-trainer. The associated courses are not only physically demanding, but also require a mental toughness that will serve the Marines who excel and their

units. Earning certifications as a high-intensity tactical training (HITT) level-1 or -2 instructor, or a force fitness instructor can help Marines expand their personal fitness abilities while increasing their knowledge and understanding of human performance. For those who enjoy team sports and athletics, each Marine base provides ample opportunity for leagues and organized competitions. The annual HITT competition is an event that brings the top Marine athletes from each region to be challenged on both their mental and physical capabilities. The events include strength and conditioning activities that mirror the seven foundational movements within the HITT program. These combined events develop Marines while simultaneously making them more versatile and impactful within their units.

Marines seeking greater challenges and opportunities to expand their experiences might consider applying for a special duty assignment as a recruiter, drill instructor, or embassy guard. (See Special Duty Assignments in Chapter 5 for more information).

Marines seeking greater leadership responsibilities, opportunities to influence decision making at higher levels, and the education and financial stability that comes with such responsibility, may want to consider setting a goal to transition to the officer ranks. The Marine Enlisted Commissioning Education Program provides NCOs an opportunity to complete Officer Candidates School, attend college funded by the Marine Corps, and obtain a bachelor's degree. Upon meeting the requirements, they commission as a second lieutenant. The Enlisted Commissioning Program allows Marines of any rank who have already completed a 4-year degree to attend Officer Candidates School and earn a commission.

### Support Network (Friends, Family, and Influencers)

Each enlistment brings highs and lows, challenges and successes, failures and victories. These may be small moments or entire seasons that require growth and adaptation in unforeseen ways. Through each of these events, it is important to exercise social fitness by building, maintaining, and relying on a strong support network, aside from mentors. A support network consists of friends, family, peers, and leaders who can share tears and laughter. Thanks to technology, a support network can include people living nearby and at great distances. Today's Marines can use a cell phone to vent frustrations or celebrate a victory with their support network. A support network is the scaffolding that keeps a Marine upright despite the winds that may blow around them.

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*There are only two kinds of people who understand the Marines: Marines and the enemy. Everyone else has a second hand opinion.*

—General William Thornson<sup>23</sup>

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Bonds inevitably form among Marines who serve together. Lifelong friendships are forged in recruit training and in the dark of a midnight fire watch. The demands of life as a Marine can sometimes be understood only by fellow Marines. Having peers in one's support network can help sustain the transformation when uniquely Marine Corps-related challenges arise. Peers share an understanding of achievements that may not directly translate to the civilian sector. However, support can come from anywhere, and that includes those who were present before one's

transformation to a Marine, such as relatives, high school teammates, youth group pastors, former co-workers, etc.

With a support network, a Marine does not have to face any day alone. Many cultures and religious works have some version of the phrase, “Grief shared is grief divided. Joy shared is joy doubled.” Others phrase it as “Your joy is my joy; your sorrow is my sorrow.” No matter how it is said, these speak to the importance of having a support network that can empathize with the experiences of military service and life in general.

### **Off-Duty Education**

General James Mattis is quoted as saying, “If you haven't read hundreds of books, you are functionally illiterate, and you will be incompetent, because your personal experiences alone aren't broad enough to sustain you.”<sup>24</sup> His emphasis on education was well known, and many previous Marine Corps leaders have emphasized its importance as well, such as Major Hazel Benn. In 1955, Major Benn was head of the Education and Information Section in the Headquarters, Marines Corps Special Services Personnel Department. A principal architect of the Serviceman's Opportunity College, she helped develop the concept that removed the traditional academic barriers in the areas of residency, transfer of credit by examination, and acceptance of Service schools and Service experience for academic credit. She opened the path to college degrees for countless Marines. Major Benn received the Legion of Merit upon her retirement in 1975 for formulating innovative educational programs for Marines. In 2019, the college path she established became the DoD Voluntary



**Major Hazel Benn**

Education Partnership, which continues today, providing education benefits for active duty and veteran Service members.<sup>25</sup>

The Marine Corps' 29th Commandant, General Alfred M. Gray established the Marine Corps University in Quantico in 1989. The university combined five different warfare and leadership schools from across the Marine Corps. Continuing education has been encouraged throughout the years and continues to grow in importance with each generation. Whether on- or off-duty, learning is just one more way Marines can improve their overall mental fitness and sustain their transformation throughout their service. Higher education allows for incremented rewards of

achievement, increased opportunities, and higher levels of competence in many fields. Whether Marines pursue a military-related education or a subject of personal interest, education will help sustain them.

## SUSTAINING OTHERS

### Sense of Purpose

The NCO Creed calls corporals and sergeants “*the backbone of the Marine Corps.*” The “backbone” is the support—the framework that keeps everything else in place. As small-unit leaders, they identify and clearly communicate to Marines their purpose within the unit and the mission. Noncommissioned officers, as fire team leaders, squad leaders, or platoon sergeants, interact with their Marines on a regular basis and should be closely familiar with each one’s particular skills, personality, and shortcomings. They should know what each Marine brings to the team and help them realize their value within it. Additionally, they can help Marines identify and understand their greater purposes in life. This can be accomplished by starting with a few questions, such as:

- What makes your day worth getting up for?
- When you are away, what do people miss about you? What is left undone because of your absence?
- What would the biography of your ideal life say?
- What would you do for no pay? What would you pay to do?

Every Marine should have a reason for putting on the uniform and embracing their purpose as a Marine. Periods of rest and recovery and leisure time are necessary for a healthy life. Noncommissioned officers can help ensure Marines sustain their transformation by helping them maintain a healthy work-life balance and by reminding them of their purpose as a Marine.

### Leadership Traits

- Judgment
- Justice
- Decisiveness
- Integrity
- Dependability
- Tact
- Initiative
- Enthusiasm
- Bearing
- Unselfishness
- Courage
- Knowledge
- Loyalty
- Endurance
- Empathy

### Influencing the Next Generation

Just as recruiters and drill instructors are entrusted with making the first impression on those aspiring to become Marines, the NCOs around the Corps set the example and establish expectations for those in their sphere of influence. Everything they do or do not do can influence the next generation of Marines. Noncommissioned officers who are positive influences in the unit uplift the entirety of the team. Conversely, a negatively influencing NCO can degrade the unit's trust and confidence in its leadership. Many Marines who stay in the Corps can pinpoint positive and negative leaders they had throughout their enlistment. This shapes Marines' outlook on the future when they ask themselves questions such as, "Do I want to be like my NCOs

because they empowered me? or, “Do I want to be a better leader than my NCOs, because I feel they failed me?”

Positive and negative attitudes are equally infectious in the workspace. Marines who believe they have little-to-no influence on the Marine Corps as an institution should focus instead on their ability to affect those they come in contact with every day. Through positive influence, an NCO might help a Marine struggling to adapt, to learn their MOS, or otherwise settle into their Marine Corps role. There is power in being able to identify gaps and fill them, and to turn a potentially negative experience into a positive one.

The best way to influence Marines is to lead by example. The last sentence of the NCO promotion warrant reads:

*You will lead your Marines with firmness, fairness, and dignity while observing and following the orders and directions of your senior leaders and enforcing all regulations and articles governing the discipline of the Armed Forces of the United States of America.*

Through trial and error, and the example of their own leaders, NCOs expand their arsenal of leadership qualities. As they develop a baseline rhythm of communication, discipline, expectations, and technical proficiency, NCOs refine their personal leadership style to not only achieve mission accomplishment but to maintain a high and consistent level of *esprit de corps*. Working on improving oneself, whether in the Corps for four years or twenty years, shows a level of commitment and dedication Marines will want to emulate.