Resiliency and Engaged Leadership; Force Preservation Combined Arms

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Introduction

Health and well-being cannot be viewed from a singular lens. The Force Preservation Combined Arms approach instills the holistic (mind, body, spirit, and social) approach coupled with a council applying a strengths based approach (Rideout, 2019). This perspective enables us to look at frequently experienced challenges and issues from a broad angle with a wealth of experience sitting at the table to offer solutions. Exploring influencers, individuals and groups that impact Marines, and how these protective factors can increase resilience of the individual. Additional perspectives include the applications of the six F's of Marine Corps Leadership Development: Fidelity, Fighter, Fitness, Family, Finance, and Future as well as Marine Total Fitness for all Marines. This combined arms approach is a proactive and preventive approach to combat critical incidents and suicidal behavior among service members and their families.

Methods

Using observed data and collected critical incident data, needs assessments, and program analysis results in the recommendation of why a holistic approach to resilience is important for service members and their families. Applying the social-ecological model which represents the interplay between the individual, those with whom they have close relationships, and the community. It is determined that these factors can increase or decreases the likelihood of experiencing behavioral health issues. Factors from one level can influence factors from another level of influence.

Discussion

Resilience is defined by the Marine Corps as the ability or capacity to successfully adapt in the presence of adversity and or risk (CG, 2019). Warriors possess grit, toughness, and the determination to persevere, however they also require a balance or total fitness approach to not only adapt but flourish. The combined arms approach to force preservation offers additional lenses to view and tackle the behavioral health issues. Using a holistic view of mind, body, spirit, and social; each area is of equal importance as physical strength does not outweigh mental strength nor spiritual growth and resilience; just as healthy peer relations are of equal importance as well.

Implementing the six functional areas of the Marine Corps Leadership Development, combined with total fitness, and SMITR offers the perspective of the Marine as a total human. Fidelity, Fighter, Fitness, Family, Finance, and Future incorporate the six functional areas. When applied holistically these areas then become a natural evaluation and reference point.

Building resilience means that we continue to challenge our Marines, strengthen their protective factors, build their skills and abilities, teach them to go farther than they've gone. Through this total fitness approach we mitigate challenges as they arise, teach and mentor positive coping strategies, and actively utilize those resources that increase performance and readiness.

All the while recognizing that there will be times when an individual may need to take a knee, and SMITR (Strengthen, Mitigate, Identify, Treat, and Reintegrate) will bring them back in the fight.

There are threat examples in each Marine's life and they fall into three categories. These threats are ever present and tie directly into preserving the force.

- **INDIVIDUAL:** Career, transitional, combat or operational stress, physical injury, psychological injury, alcohol misuse, financial problems, familial concerns, relationship concerns, et al.
- **UNIT:** Interpersonal conflict, leadership deficits, operational/training tempo, turnovers, et al.
- **FAMILY:** Financial, health, deployment/training tempo, infidelities, external support systems, et al.

This approach is a direct catalyst for mission readiness, and will assist leaders in identifying/mitigating personal and professional stressors in order to preserve the force, their families, defined as more than spouses or children but rather born into, sworn into, and married into-the people they love and those who love them, and maintain combat readiness. The ultimate end state is to prevent casualties, mitigate negative physical, psychological, spiritual, and behavioral issues from stressors, increase individual health and problem solving skills, improve unit cohesion and combat readiness. All of this can be accomplished through: early recognition, holistic solutions, healthy work-life balance and leadership engagement.

Conclusion

Resilience and leadership engagement go hand in hand and the interconnectedness of force preservation and is also intertwined with family readiness. The total Marine approach views Marines as human beings and in turn they are the most valuable asset in the Marine Corps. To increase total fitness of the individual and the unit, as well as the institution, we must build and sustain a sense of community with belongingness. Our warriors are tough, and as we continue to strengthen them in mind, body, spirit, and social capacities we must recognize how important the individual, unit, and family are in the service member's continued success.

Disclosure:
'The views expressed are *those* of the author and do *not* reflect the official policy or position of the *United States Marine Corps*, Department of Defense or the US Government.'

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