

EMPATHY

SMART CARD

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."
 Maya Angelou



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PURPOSE

"Never judge another man until you have walked a mile in his moccasins"
 Cherokee tribe proverb

The capacity for empathy is an important attribute for leaders to possess. Empathy is about one's willingness to understand but it is critically dependent on another's desire to be understood.

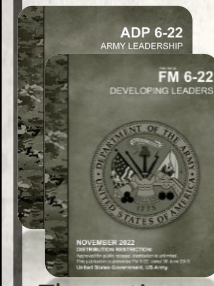
Empathy allows a leader to anticipate what others are experiencing and feeling and provides insight into how decisions or actions affect them.

Leaders with a strong sense of empathy understand people at a deeper level. Empathy enhances understanding and enables an Army leader to better interact with others.

Empathetic leaders are also better communicators, helping others understand what is occurring, and inspiring others to meet mission objectives.

During operations, Army leaders gain empathy when they share hardships to gauge Soldier morale and combat readiness. They recognize the need to care for soldiers and provide reasonable comforts and rest periods to maintain morale and accomplish the mission.

LEADERSHIP DOCTRINE




Doctrine provides a common **framework** in language and expectations for "what right looks like", and it does that through a set of attributes and competencies common to all and required at all leadership levels.

The nation and the Army articulate their expectations of Army leaders through this model, which also serves as a reference point for Army professionals, military and civilian.

This framework aligns leader development activities in **institutional, operational and self-development** domains. Doctrine aligns Army Warfighting with Joint requirements and prepares leaders for uncertainty, complexity, and decentralization.

"A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others."
Gen. Douglas MacArthur

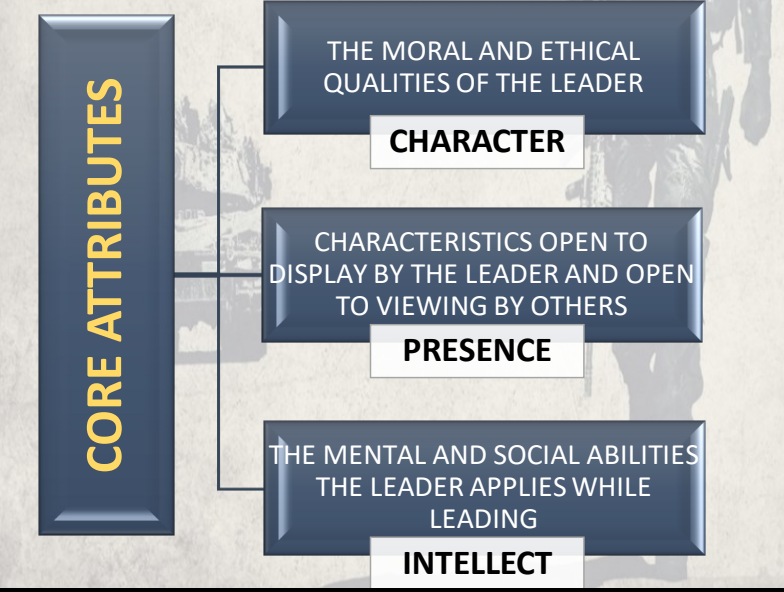


CORE LEADER ATTRIBUTES

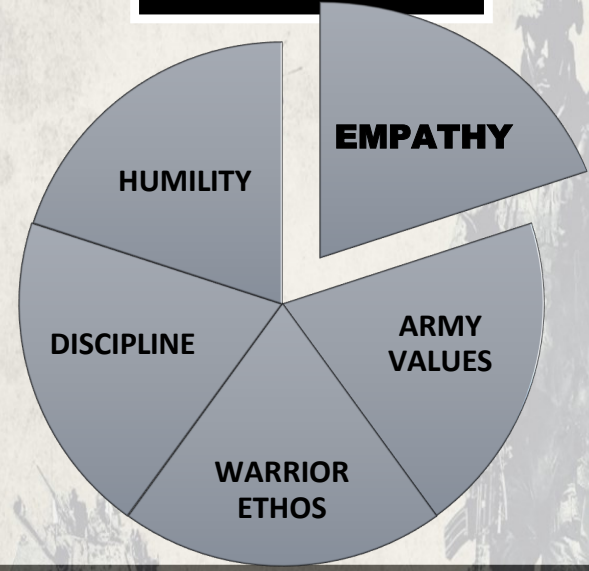
Attributes are characteristics internal to a leader. They are qualities that define who a person is and are molded through experience over time.

Unlike skills which can be trained, attributes require an individual effort to develop and enhance.

Attributes affect how an individual behaves, thinks, and learns within given conditions.



CHARACTER



Empathy is part of the attribute category of Character, which also encompasses the Army Values, Warrior Ethos, Discipline, and Humility.

Character is a person's true nature, comprised of one's morals, values, conscience, and sense of purpose.

This makes up one's core and the moral foundation behind actions and decisions. Leaders of character share many attributes, **empathy** being among them.

OVERVIEW

Army doctrine defines Empathy as the ability to share and understand someone else's feelings. Empathy is not a feel-good element or something nice to have but a **strategic imperative**.

Empathy is about **shifting perspectives** and being open to another's needs.



Empathy also requires **Being** present physically and emotionally and having the discipline and humility to listen actively.

When framing empathy, **Knowing** is the drive which allows it to materialize. Having interpersonal tact and mental agility allows a leader to anticipate what others are experiencing and envision how decisions or actions affect them.

Leaders with a capacity for empathy understand, anticipate and take care of Soldiers by **Doing**, hence balancing mission requirements and welfare of Soldiers.

BASIC FACTS

To really understand what empathy is, we need to first recognize what it isn't.

Empathy is not:

- About you
- Sympathy – feeling sorry
- Compassion
- Giving advice
- Intellectual understanding
- Judging people
- Just about hardships

It is the ability to **comprehend** another person's actions, emotions and reactions.

It is an **awareness** of another's problems, without putting the spotlight on them.

It is about giving someone **strength** and helping another **open-up**.

It is about entering someone else's **world**, regardless of the emotion (positive or negative).

It is about making one feel **understood, seen, valued, heard**.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

Listening is the gateway to another's thoughts and feelings, allowing respect, trust, and long-term relationships to flourish. To truly develop this skill and maximize return on investment, be ready to commit both time and energy to this endeavor.



Empathetic listening

- Be genuine - listen to understand
- Don't listen with the intent to reply
- Remain nonjudgmental
- Provide nonverbal responses - a smile, a nod
- Use an encouraging and supportive tone
- Reflect back verbally and non-verbally - "Wow, that's amazing!"
- Appreciate - "I am glade you came to me!"

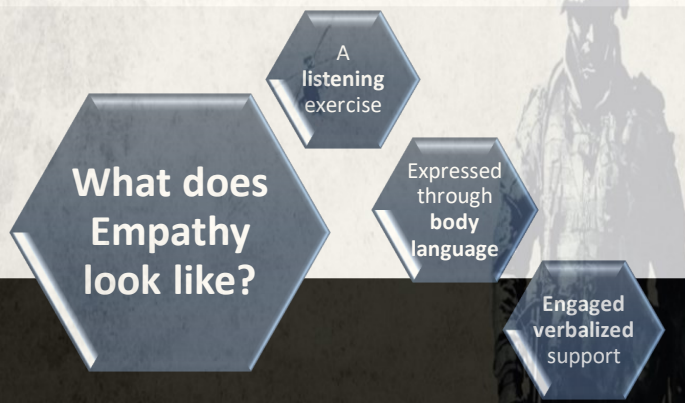
People express information about their emotional state through verbal and nonverbal cues. The ability to read body language is a critical skill that needs to be developed alongside our efforts to build on our empathy.



- Facial expressions** - worried, smiling, frowning
- Eye contact** - wide eyes, staring, rapid blinking
- Voice** - vocal tone, rate of speech
- Posture** - tense/relaxed shoulders
- Gestures** - speed, intensity, open, closed

Body language

COMMUNICATING WITH EMPATHY



Leaders have a responsibility to accomplish the mission and improve the organization, which includes adhering to the Army Values and caring for subordinates. Empathy plays a critical role in the leader competency, *Communicates*, and is a key component of effective leadership.

- **Shape your communication** – have the other person’s perspective in mind
- **Tailor the message** – meet the other where they are
- **Ask for clarification** – have them elaborate
- **Paraphrase** – deepen/confirm your understanding of a situation
- **Verbalize** – replicate that emotion and demonstrate that you understand
- **Validate** – “I understand why you feel that way!”

GETTING THE BEST FROM THOSE YOU LEAD COMMAND CLIMATE

Army doctrine stresses upon leaders the need to generate conditions that ensure a positive environment, build trust and cohesion, encourage initiative, demonstrate care for soldiers, and enhance Esprit de Corps. Empathy is a **force multiplier** that creates the environment that helps produce the above-mentioned desired outcomes. Empathetic employment of interpersonal skills is crucial to building trust, growing relationships and leading teams.

Empathy improves morale, climate, decision-making, and readiness.
FM 6-22, para 4-17

Taking an empathic outlook results in:

- **Leaders** that remain open to new information, insights and perspectives.
- **Leaders** that identify with others’ challenges (feel united and share a spirit of collaboration through hardship).
- **Leaders** that develop inner strength and always reflect on their own and others’ decision-making process.
- **Members** that are invested in improving command climate and how members feel about the organization (valued, trusted, have a stake).

MILITARY CONSIDERATIONS

Mission command principles (*Competence, Mutual trust, Shared understanding, Commander’s intent, Mission orders, Disciplined initiative, Risk acceptance*) reduce uncertainty, allowing leaders to act decisively. This makes for an adaptable, agile and situationally aware leader. **Empathy is a leadership tool that allows one to gain understanding and make sound moral decisions that will benefit the organization and play a vital role in Mission success.** Empathy is relevant to the profession of arms during peace but is pivotal in a time of war.



- Leaders can be better prepared to win in complex environments that are shaped in part by human interactions.
- Empathy impacts shared understanding and team-building, which creates an opportunity for trust to develop.
- The ability to glimpse someone else’s experience, whether friend or foe (emotions, beliefs, worldview, intentions), creates a strategic advantage.

“No one cares how much you know, until they know how much you care.” Theodore Roosevelt

Despite being a critical character attribute, leaders can be hesitant to express empathy because they don’t know how or there may be a lack of understanding about its purpose. Empathetic leadership is consistent with the ethical values of the U.S. Army, and is a catalyst for relationship building and trust, which make up the bedrock of our profession.

EMPATHY AND PREVENTION

Taking care of Soldiers means nurturing both body and mind and seeking a preventive approach. The aim of prevention is to put an end to harmful behavior such as sexual harassment, sexual assault and suicide. One of the ways to get there is reinforcing things like trust, that corrosive behavior erodes. Research has shown that empathy is a powerful protective force that can serve to alleviate, if not remove, many of these ills.

- Empathy and trust. “A person who experienced sexual harassment may feel that they can’t report what happened to them, no one will take their situation seriously or no one will believe them. These beliefs affect the Army’s culture of trust” (Kase, Army Resilience Directorate).
- Empathy prevents isolation. “Gestures of empathy and support can have a profound effect on people going through tough times.” Empathy creates a protective environment that can reduce suicidal ideations and behaviors (US Naval Institute).
- Empathy as a shield against harmful behavior. “Diminished capacity for understanding others relates to victim blaming, coercion, ostracism and sexual objectification” (Tara Davis, Army Resilience Directorate).

Do you really see your troops?

EMPATHY AND EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Effective leaders give the U.S. Army a strategic advantage, and for this reason the Army commits to providing its people the highest quality education and training of any nation. **Effective leaders follow suit by securing the best possible conditions for continued learning for their subordinates.** An effective leader also ensures that he/she are involved by interacting with subordinates and emulating this leader attribute called empathy. An effective leader also recognizes that the most productive developmental experiences occur during daily engagements with subordinates. An effective leader chooses an empathetic approach strategy because he/she values putting others first.



Humility, is a key ingredient for empathy. Army doctrine reminds us that humble leaders have integrity, honesty, and character and can recognize that humility helps one extend more empathy and compassion to subordinates. Together, **empathy** and **humility** help facilitate active listening, drive meaningful communication, nourish mindfulness, develop presence and build a state of awareness.

CULTIVATING YOUR EMPATHY THROUGH COMMITMENT AND CONSISTENCY

Feeling a connection with someone who appears hard to know from your perspective, demands curiosity and diligence.

If you never had an opportunity to practice or incorporate this skill, start at your own comfort level and demonstrate empathy using effective techniques with either a friend or a trusted coworker. Above all, make space for it in every conversation. Similar to athletic conditioning, practice this powerful skill called empathy.

Immersive experiences can be a powerful way to build on this skill. Engage in difficult yet respectful conversations by stepping out of your comfort zone. Train yourselves to be empathetic by sharing in someone’s experience. Examine your biases and refrain from jumping to conclusions; allow yourself to see the full picture.

Glimpse into someone else’s reality, by incorporating learnable and teachable skills, at the small-team level. Use this smart card to conduct an impromptu Leader Professional Development (LPD) exercise. Practice behavioral skills, to include applying reflective listening, recognizing non-verbal cues and verbalizing support. The end-result will be a team that becomes increasingly stronger, more cohesive and efficiently collaborative.

THE DESIRE TO CARE

Empathy is not only for caring professionals such as counselors, physicians or chaplains. Leaders who employ empathy understand, anticipate, and take care of Soldiers. They also value the balance between mission requirements and welfare of their soldiers. This approach leads to better decision-making and improves morale, climate and overall readiness. Recall that empathy is about doing, therefore modeling it for others is a critical task for developing future leaders.



Taking care of subordinates is a solemn responsibility not just for maintaining long-term operational effectiveness. The nation entrusts Army leaders with its most precious asset, and Army leaders welcome this obligation by demonstrating the necessary care and well-being.

- ❖ Soldier care includes preparing them for future challenges and adversity and overcoming unique obstacles.
- ❖ Empathy builds rapport, trust and team loyalty and is the foundation for a strong team.
- ❖ An empathetic leader also stands up for subordinates and monitors their morale.
- ❖ Empathetic leaders connect on a personal level with their subordinates - they communicate that they care.

CAL TRAINING AND EDUCATION RESOURCES

<https://cal.army.mil>