

**Talk Like a Leader:
How to Have Effective Conversations with Soldiers**

Training Guide

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Talk Like a Leader Overview

Soldiers' choices about mental, physical, and relationship health strongly affect their performance. Because of this, it is important that leaders have good communication with Soldiers about these areas. Talk Like a Leader (TLAL) uses empirically-validated approaches adapted to the Army to promote more effective interactions with Soldiers across a wide range of domains that influence performance and readiness.

TLAL draws from psychological approaches including motivational interviewing, the Transtheoretical Stages of Change Model, Self-Perception Theory, and Self-Determination Theory. Motivational interviewing is a guided approach where leaders and Soldiers work as a team to produce a positive outcome. Rather than using only external pressure, motivational interviewing looks for ways to build internal motivation to increase the Soldier's engagement in goal-oriented behaviors. TLAL also draws from the Transtheoretical Stages of Change Model which describes the stages people go through when changing behavior. Motivational interviewing borrows from Client-Centered counseling in its emphasis on listening and respect for personal choice. It also draws from Self-Perception Theory, which says that people become committed to behaviors based on how they talk about them. Finally, Self-Determination Theory says that people who have internal reasons, who feel confident, and who have supportive networks, are more likely to make positive, lasting changes.

Language plays an important role in motivational interviewing. The "relational" part of motivational interviewing includes listening strategies such as open-ended questions, affirmations, reflections, and summaries (OARS) to engage Soldiers in conversations. Open questions are those that ask for longer answers or elaboration. Affirmations call attention to positive progress or evidence of strength and competence. Reflections are restatements or summaries of what a person is saying or thinking. Reflections range from simple repetition (uses similar words), to paraphrases (uses different words), to double-sided reflections (captures both sides). The best reflections capture the person's meaning, rather than just repeating back their surface language. Finally, summaries help remind a person about major discussion points and the plan of action. These listening strategies can be used in a variety of settings.

The "technical" part of motivational interviewing uses strategies to draw out "change talk" from Soldiers about their desire, ability, reasons, need, and commitment to change. Increased change talk, in turn, makes behavior change more likely. One way to increase change talk is to evoke this kind of talk from Soldiers. A second way to increase change talk is to follow up on language that is already supportive of positive change. The goal is for a leader to shape a Soldier's language—and behavior--in the direction of positive change.

People are more likely to follow through with things they have talked about in detail. Leaders can help Soldiers develop goals that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time bound (SMART). The Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle provides a framework for setting goals, implementing plans, monitoring progress, and adjusting plans based on feedback. Thinking about the behavior from beginning to end can help a Soldier anticipate difficulties and develop a contingency plan.

TLAL is the noncommissioned officer (NCO) training that supports the use of the Counseling Enhancement Tool (CET). The CET was developed at the request of Combined Arms Center as a tool to enhance the developmental counseling process for junior enlisted Soldiers. The CET consists of a Leader and Soldier form that produce a collaborative, two-way conversation. The CET and TLAL are being evaluated for their effectiveness and impact. Based on independent piloting of both the CET and TLAL in 2020-2021, we are confident that using TLAL to support two-way conversations during the CET can lead to improved Soldier development, job performance, and other positive gains for individuals and their organizations.

Talk Like a Leader * Background

Soldiers watch what their leaders do. You can give them classes and lecture them forever, but it is your personal example they will follow.

Gen. Colin Powell

Set the example.

US Army Principles of Leadership, #4

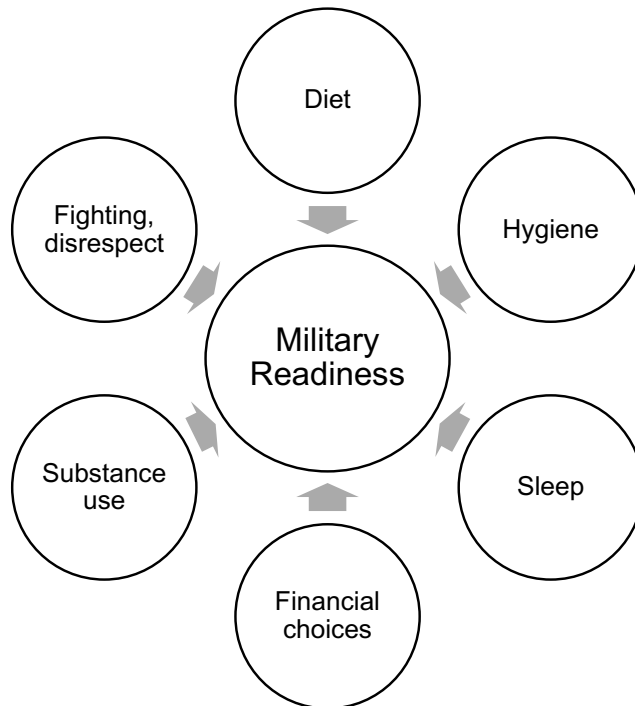
Introduction

Gettysburg was a decisive battle in the Civil War. On the first day, it looked like it would be another great Confederate victory. But Lee, the Confederate General, was cautious. He could see that the enemy held the high ground to the south and he suspected the rest of the Union Army was speeding towards Gettysburg. He ordered an attack on Cemetery Hill, but his orders were vague, and were misinterpreted by his commanders. Lee did not check with his commanders to see if the orders were understood; his commanders did not check with Lee to clarify the message. As a result, the Confederate Army did not attack and the Union won the battle two days later. It was the beginning of the end for the Confederacy.

Communication is the lifeblood of a team. Without good communication, messages can be misunderstood, errors can occur, and opportunities can be lost. Good communication does not happen by chance. It is a skill that can be learned, measured and improved. This guide introduces an evidence-based communication style called motivational interviewing. This communication style is considered “evidence-based” because research suggests that, compared to other communication styles, it can improve a person’s motivation and commitment to action. Most of the examples in this guide focus on health behaviors like diet, sleep, substance use, leisure time activities, and other activities that align with our Army’s values and affect military readiness. The strategies in this guide can also help leaders to be more effective mentors in broader areas like career, goals and family relationships.

In the worst-case scenario, a leader uses dysfunctional language to intimidate, coerce or unfairly punish subordinates. This might accomplish short-term goals, but it leaves the team worse off than before. In contrast, an effective leader leads through a commitment to shared values and the use of indirect influence in situations where clear lines of authority do not exist. Effective communication can take time, but the goal is to build internal motivation and commitment, rather than relying only on external pressure.

* Note: Portions of this guide have appeared previously in research manuals and other public domain sources. For more information about the source material, see Appendix A.



This guide begins by describing different kinds of leader-Soldier interactions. It then discusses evidence-based models of communication that can improve motivation and readiness. It concludes by showing how leaders can build motivation and commitment, particularly around behaviors that affect military readiness. This approach helps produce resilient Soldiers who have the mental, physical, and emotional ability to cope with adversity.

This guide can be used to train new leaders, as part of continuing education for more seasoned leaders, and as a resource for others who are interested in the topic.

Communication and Readiness

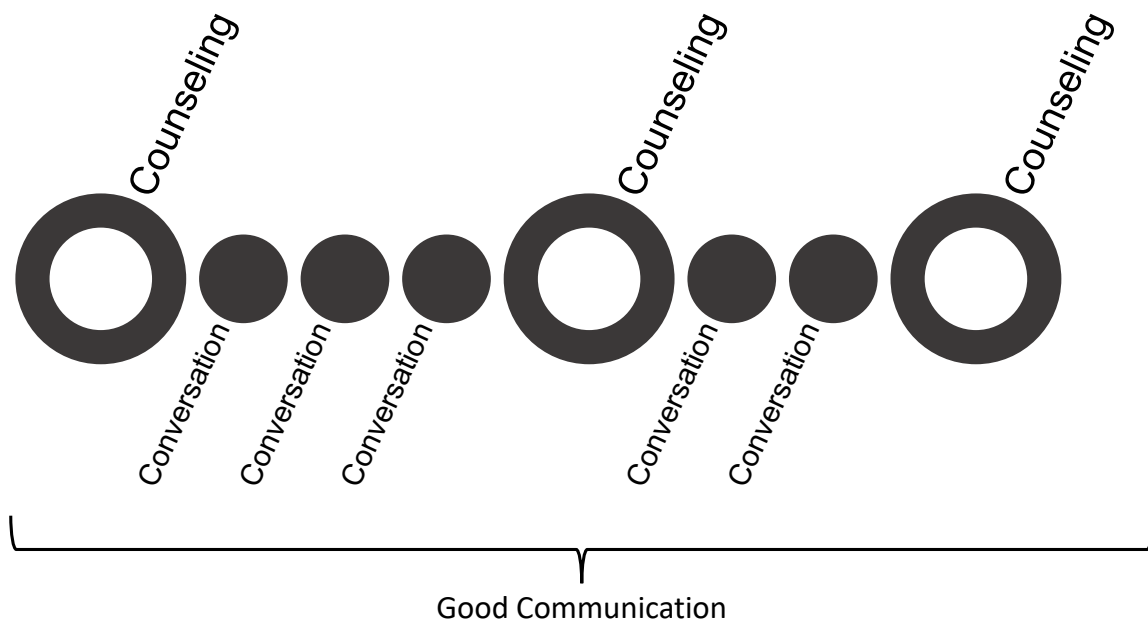
Your squad receives two new Soldiers this month:

The first Soldier (Soldier A) is returning from deployment. While deployed, he had a reputation as being smart and a natural leader. However, when he was previously in garrison, he had episodes of poor performance that resulted from heavy drinking. Although you did not know him well, you recall that he was a poor influence on other Soldiers. A previous leader had to retrieve him from jail after he was arrested for driving under the influence. You have no idea whether drinking is still a problem for him, but you want to be able to intervene before problems occur. You know he is married and has two young children. He has been on time to formation this week, but he looks worn out.

At the same time, another Soldier (Soldier B) is newly enlisted. You're surprised he met enlistment standards. When asked to speak in formation, it was difficult to understand his point. In addition, he

seems to lack a lot of basic life skills. With his signing bonus, he went on an expensive vacation and has nothing left. He puts very little effort into his training and spends his evenings eating junk food and playing video games. You're afraid some of the other Soldiers with stronger personalities might be a bad influence on him. You are keeping an eye on him, but it seems like this is going to be a full-time job.

Noncommissioned officers (NCOs) play an essential role in Soldiers development. NCOs provide the daily coaching and mentorship that helps Soldiers become more capable and resilient, while also helping Soldiers to understand how they can contribute to the team. Regular counseling helps to increase predictability and clarity. The Counseling Enhancement Tool (Appendix H) was designed to help NCOs have quality conversations during developmental counseling. In addition, NCOs have many day-to-day opportunities to speak with Soldiers about their personal and professional goals. For instance, an NCO might recognize that one Soldier has been drinking more on the weekends, while a second Soldier has begun to use humor that other Soldiers find offensive, and a third Soldier seems distant and depressed. Some of these behaviors might be addressed during developmental counseling, but they might also be raised during smaller, informal conversations before or after training, meals, or work assignments.



These everyday conversations are particularly important for young Soldiers who may not have a lot of life experience. In fact, the concept of emerging adulthood means that most people--Soldiers included--are still developing psychologically well into their 20's. For this reason, it is important that NCOs and other leaders have the knowledge and skills to be able to communicate with Soldiers about a broad range of behaviors, even before behaviors become a "problem".

Evidence-Based Communication

Dan McCall served as a Battery Commander in Afghanistan and Iraq. Early in his career, he was asked to conduct an After-Action Review (AAR) following a training exercise. He spent an hour lecturing the trainees, giving them all the advice they needed to fix the problem. Afterward, his commander, who had been watching by video, told him it was the worst AAR he had ever seen. The commander explained that McCall's job was to facilitate the discussion, not to dominate it. In taking this approach, he had not helped Soldiers develop the skills they would need to fix the problem on their own. As McCall tells it, "If the platoon was to improve, they had to identify the failures and commit to making the necessary changes themselves."

Leaders use different styles when communicating with Soldiers; some leaders use a more direct style, while other leaders use a more laid back, listening style. Most people use a combination of the two, and different situations might lend themselves to different styles. This continuum is similar to the "Directive vs. Combined vs. Nondirective" distinction described in ATP 6-22.1 (The Counseling Process).

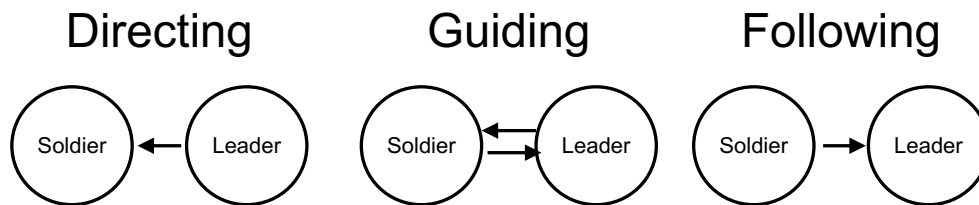
Directing ←————→ Guiding ←————→ Following

A directive style is best where you need to give clear, concise instruction. A directive style says, "I know how to solve this problem. Here's what you should do." Sometimes, the urgency of the mission may make this approach necessary. However, the drawback of a directive style is that the Soldier does not learn very much. The leader's desire to "fix" the problem can crowd out the development of important skills the Soldier will need later. It's important that Soldiers learn how to solve problems on their own. In addition, when addressing behavioral issues, a directive style tends to treat the symptoms rather than the causes of behavior. A direct "fix it" style is not a good fit for all situations.

On the other end of the continuum, a nondirective/following style is best when there is not a clear resolution or when the Soldier needs to come up with the solution on his or her own. A following style says, "This is a hard situation. I don't know what the answer is, but I trust you to make the decision that's right for you." A non-directive approach can be helpful when there is not a clear goal, for instance if a Soldier is speaking about relationships or other personal issues. Just talking through a situation can sometimes be helpful.

The middle style, guiding, uses a balance of the two styles. In this style, the leader serves as a mentor to help the Soldier think through the best way to address an issue. The parties work together to find a solution. The goal is to help the Soldier develop skills to solve problems on his or her own.

Flow of Information



Practically, the styles use different skills: A Directing style uses more advice and instruction, while a Following style uses more careful listening. Guiding tries to balance the two styles, by using the expertise of the leader to help the Soldier come up with his or her own ideas. Guiding can take more time since it requires the leader to be patient with the Soldier’s way of working through the problem. In a guided style, both people are speaking, and the leader is trying to understand the other person’s perspective. The two parties are working as a team to solve the problem.

In “hot” decision-making, a person’s actions are strongly influenced by his or her emotional state. Strong emotions can convey the seriousness of the situation and make the person more invested in the outcome. “Hot” decisions can be useful when clear actions are needed quickly, for instance in emergency or battlefield situations, or when time is a limiting factor. However, “hot” decisions are poorly suited to most everyday behaviors because they tend to evoke strong emotions and use all-or-none decision-making. Things like Soldier diet, exercise or time management may affect readiness, but they are probably not emergencies right now.

Hot Decision-Making Process

Strategy	Response
Draws sweeping conclusions	<i>He always does this! He’s just lazy.</i>
Emotion drives decision	<i>This really pisses me off!</i>
All or none response	<i>I’m going to let him have it! Everyone knows what a sloppy worker he is!</i>

Most everyday behaviors respond better to a “cool” decision-making process that gathers evidence, considers the significance and context of the behaviors, and delivers a proportional response.

Cool Decision-Making Process

Strategy	Response
Gathers evidence	<i>This has happened a few times, and mostly towards the end of the day.</i>
Considers the significance	<i>Since they worked in a team, someone else made him aware of the mistake.</i>
Proportional response	<i>Re-doing the work is a reasonable response.</i>

In his book on leadership, General James Mattis advises leaders to think about Soldiers as individuals: "...what makes them tick and what their specific goals are. One is striving to make corporal, another needs a letter of recommendation for college, another is determined to break eighteen minutes for three miles." Likewise, US Army Principles of Leadership, #5 says "Know your people."

- *What motivates this person?* One Soldier might be motivated because of future job prospects, while another is more concerned about his reputation with other members of his unit. Almost all Soldiers are motivated by positive feedback. Many times, simply listening to what a Soldier talks about most often can tell you what is important to him or her.
- *How ready is this person for change?* People who are very motivated might benefit from a "change-focused" discussion, while people who are less motivated may need time to weigh all the options. The goal in any single conversation may be to "plant a seed" for change or raise motivation a little bit.
- *What kind of communication style will be most effective?* Some Soldiers benefit from frequent, detailed feedback, while others work well with a more "hands off" style. Effective leaders adapt their style based on what is best for the Soldier. In the same way that leaders work to deliver the right person to the right assignment at the right time, they should strive to have the right conversations with the right person at the right time.

Steve Jobs was once asked which one of his inventions made him most proud. The interviewer assumed that he would talk about the original Macintosh or the iPhone. Instead, he explained that these were all team efforts. A single person could not create these products. What he was most proud of, he said, were the teams he had assembled to develop these revolutionary creations. The Army's greatest asset is its people, and thus a leader's job is to maximize a Soldier's ability to contribute to the mission of the team.

Why do People Change?

Motivation is not a fixed trait. It can be raised or lowered based on a person's experience. If leaders understand how motivation works, they can use their conversations to increase motivation and commitment to positive behaviors. We know, for instance, that:

1. *Motivation predicts behavior.* Motivation predicts how likely a Soldier is to initiate and carry through with an action. Motivation is not a guarantee, but it does increase the likelihood that a Soldier will work hard at something.
2. *Motivation is behavior-specific.* People often have different motivation for different behaviors. For instance, one Soldier may be very ready to complete training (because it will help future job prospects) and save money (because it helps family), but not be ready at all to attend a substance abuse evaluation (thinks it's not a problem). It's important to consider each behavior separately.
3. *Motivation is changeable.* Motivation is not a fixed trait like height or eye color; it can be increased or decreased. For example, people frequently make changes after a

significant event like a birth, marriage, or death of a loved one. Motivation can also be raised or lowered as a result of conversations between people. For instance, positive recognition by a leader might make a Soldier work harder next time.

5. *Motivation can be affected by both internal and external factors, but internally motivated change usually lasts longer.* Internal reasons include personal goals (How important is this to me?) and beliefs about competence and ability (Am I going to be able to do this well?).

Internal and external forces work together to produce positive change. Change might begin because of external pressure but might be continued for internal reasons. A Soldier’s training helps facilitate this process. Soldiers already possess a range of talents, abilities, skills and resources. Engaged leaders “draw out” these desired behaviors rather than “put in” something the Soldier doesn’t have.

Stages of Change

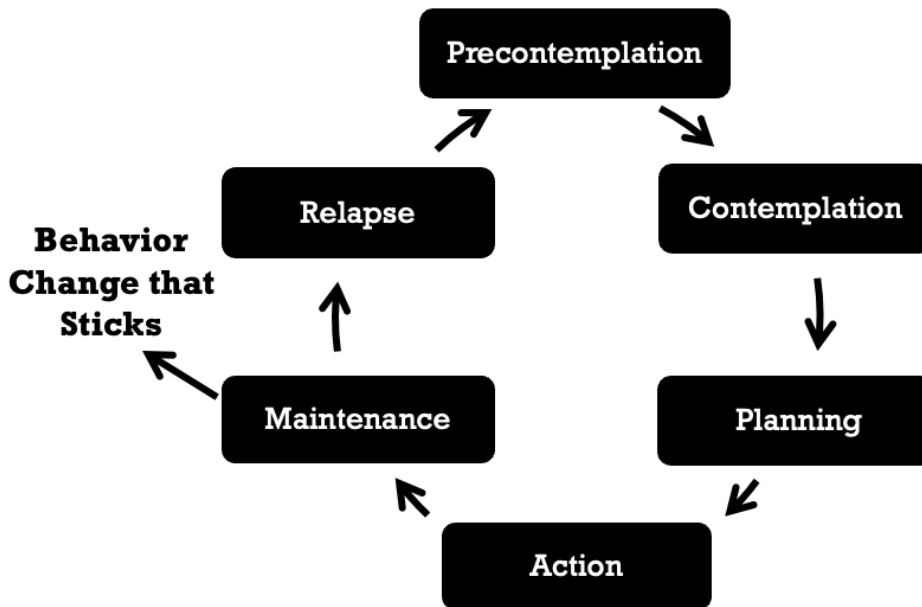
Imagine three Soldiers who are asked this question: “How important is PT in military readiness?” In response, they give three answers:

<i>PT is the worst part of my day. And now I have to go to profile PT in addition to regular PT! What’s that supposed to achieve?</i>	<i>Other people complain about it, but it’s not that bad. Do my three, get my GI Bill, get on with my life.</i>	<i>Honestly, I’m in the best shape of my life. If you think about it, the Army is paying you to exercise.</i>
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What explains why some Soldiers are very motivated, while other drag their feet and do the bare minimum?



The “Stages of Change” shows how people become more ready for change. According to this model, people can range from having no interest change (precontemplation), to having some awareness or mixed feelings around change (contemplation), to preparing for change (planning), to having recently begun changes (action), to maintaining changes over time (maintenance). The examples at the beginning of this guide (Soldier A and Soldier B) describe people who are probably at the earlier stages of change.



You can often tell people’s readiness by listening to how they talk. Consider a Soldier who is talking about drinking. Here’s what that Soldier might say at each of the stages:

Stage of Change	What the Soldier might Say
Precontemplation	<i>I work hard during the week. I deserve to have a good time when I’m off duty.</i>
Contemplation	<i>I like to go out on the weekend, but I can definitely overdo it at times. If I’m hung over, I’m really dragging the next day.</i>
Planning	<i>When I move off base, I’m definitely slowing down. I need to get serious about my college credits so I have my associate’s degree by the time I’m done with active duty.</i>
Action	<i>I’ve been drinking a lot less the last couple weeks. I just look for something else to do on the weekend.</i>
Maintenance	<i>The first few months I hit it pretty hard on the weekends, but since getting promoted, I’m more careful how I spend my free time.</i>

There are three factors that move people through the stages of change. The first factor is developmental. People’s priorities change over time. For instance, people in their 30’s often have different goals than people in their 20’s. The second factor is experiential. Many times, a personal experience such as a marriage, birth of a child, or a promotion will motivate a person to make different choices. The third factor involves system-level efforts like training and experiences that help instill Army values.

Looking at change this way gives four insights:

1. *Change is often a process.* Some people make changes quickly, but for most people change is a process that takes time as they become more aware of personal and professional goals. People might need time to gather information, weigh the pros and cons, or experiment with different options before committing to something.
2. *Certain kinds of approaches are more helpful at different stages.* When talking to people who are not interested in change (precontemplators), the goal may only be to raise their level of awareness. People in the middle stages (planning, action) may need help to develop a plan. In the later stages (action, maintenance), when people are more committed, advice and problem-solving can be helpful.
3. *Relapse to old behaviors is a normal part of the cycle.* Change is a trial-and-error process for most people. People often make several attempts before the new behavior sticks.
4. *Although we would like to see a Soldier move through all of the stages quickly, the goal of any particular conversation may only be to “plant a seed” or raise motivation a little bit.* Each conversation helps a Soldier become a little more committed to making changes.

The Stages of Change model can make conversations more efficient because it suggests better ways of talking to a person. For instance, if a Soldier is already making positive progress, we lose ground by pointing out old problems. On the other hand, if a Soldier is not yet interested in change, we waste time by giving advice and suggestions to someone who is not yet convinced they need to change.

Self-Determination Theory

The Stages of Change model describes *how* people change, but it doesn't tell us *why* people change. We might assume that people weigh all their options and think rationally when making a decision. Unfortunately, this logic doesn't always hold up; people don't always behave rationally. For example, a Soldier might decide that the small immediate benefits of continuing to drink at a bar with friends are more important than the larger future penalty for violating curfew.

Another model called Self Determination Theory (SDT) explains why some changes stick better than others. SDT first assumes a range of motivation. Like the Stages of Change, people can range from having no interest in change to being very interested in change. People on the lower end of the scale have only *external* reasons for change (“I might fail tape”), whereas people on the upper end may also have internal reasons such as family, health, or personal pride (“I want to take care of myself”).

When people have *internal* reasons for change, they try harder, are more satisfied, and stick with those changes longer than when they make changes for external reasons. The more we can

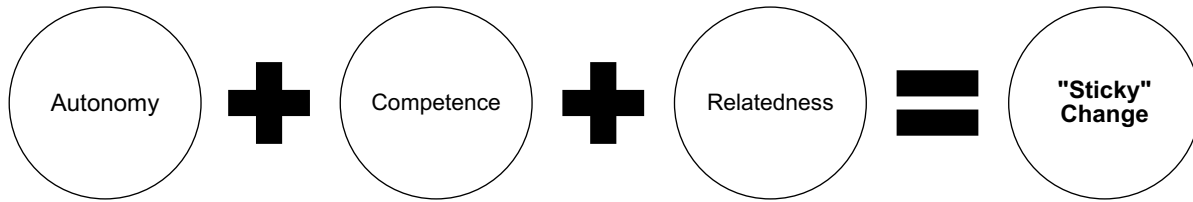
help a Soldier “own” and “take credit for” positive behaviors, the more likely he or she is to keep doing those things. The Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu once said, “A leader is best when people barely know he exists. When his work is done, his aim fulfilled, they will say: We did it ourselves.”

Here are two ways Soldiers might describe vehicle maintenance. Based on their statements, the Soldier on the right has more internal motivation and is probably going to work harder.

	External Motivation	Internal Motivation
Soldier Statements	<i>The equipment’s old and always breaking. It’s just got to make it through dispatch, and then it’ll be someone else’s problem.</i>	<i>I’ve learned a lot from doing PMCS on the equipment. I’d like to get more training so I can work on aircraft engines one day.</i>
Quality of Effort	Low	High

Gen. Dwight Eisenhower said, “Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something you want done because he wants it done.” Eisenhower knew that internal motivation produces better quality work. SDT says that leaders can increase Soldiers’ internal motivation by highlighting three factors in their conversations—*autonomy*, *competence*, and *relatedness*.

- *Autonomy is a Soldier's perception of him- or herself as the determining agent of an action* (“I want to do a good job”). A leader can build autonomy by “normalizing” difficulties (“It can be hard to get it right the first time. It often takes practice”), providing options (“There’s a couple things that might help here”), and emphasizing personal choice (“What’s your best option?”). This gives the Soldier some choice and ownership over the outcome.
- *Competence involves beliefs about ability* (“I can do this”). Some Soldiers come from backgrounds where expectations are low, and examples of prosocial behavior are hard to find. Helping Soldiers to set realistic goals, emphasizing personal strengths, and giving positive feedback on progress (rather than only pointing out what a Soldier has done wrong) can increase his or her sense of competence. In fact, encouragement from a leader may be the only positive feedback that some Soldiers receive with any regularity. When feasible, demonstrating the task or behavior can help people build confidence.
- *Positive, lasting change is more likely when Soldiers believe that it will benefit his or her social group*. For instance, a Soldier might practice a drill because he wants to contribute to the performance of his unit, while another Soldier might complete an online course or save money because she wants to make life better for her family. This highlights the importance of well-thought-out “battle buddy” teams that will complement and learn from each other.



In sum, Soldiers who have internal reasons for change, who feel confident about new behaviors, and who have others to support them, are more likely to make lasting changes. This kind of positive attitude enables a leader to assign more trust and responsibility to a Soldier, which in turn, helps the Soldier to develop further.

What is Motivational Interviewing?

Motivational interviewing is a structured way of talking with people about change. Motivational interviewing arose during the 1980s from alcohol counseling research. Research began to suggest that certain types of *brief counseling interactions* were as effective as more lengthy interventions and that a certain *provider style* was better at helping people change. In a review of research studies, motivational interviewing was significantly better than other approaches in three out of four studies, and outperformed traditional advice-giving 80% of the time. Motivational interviewing has been used effectively to address a range of behaviors, including alcohol and drug use, gambling, diet and exercise, medication compliance, and criminal behavior.

Rather than using *external* pressure, motivational interviewing looks for ways to build *internal* motivation for change. The goal is for a leader to speak in a disciplined way so that his or her words positively influence Soldiers' motivation and commitment. Motivational interviewing borrows from Client-Centered counseling in its emphasis on listening and respect for personal choice. It also draws from Self-Perception Theory, which says that a person becomes committed to something based on how he or she talks about it. Thus, a Soldier who talks about the benefits of change is more likely to make that change, whereas a Soldier who argues and defends the status quo is more likely to continue in that behavior. Finally, motivational interviewing is also connected to the Stages of Change Model, which says that people go a change process. For most people, ambivalence--mixed feelings, reluctance, arguments against change--is a normal part of the process. This communication style can be useful in everyday conversations, as well as integrated with formal developmental counseling. Although motivational interviewing can work throughout the change process, it is especially useful with people who are resistant, reluctant, or otherwise early in their thinking about change.

Motivational interviewing is a *guided* approach where leaders and Soldiers work as a team to produce a positive outcome. Although motivational interviewing suggests some tangible strategies, it is better to think about it as a set of principles:

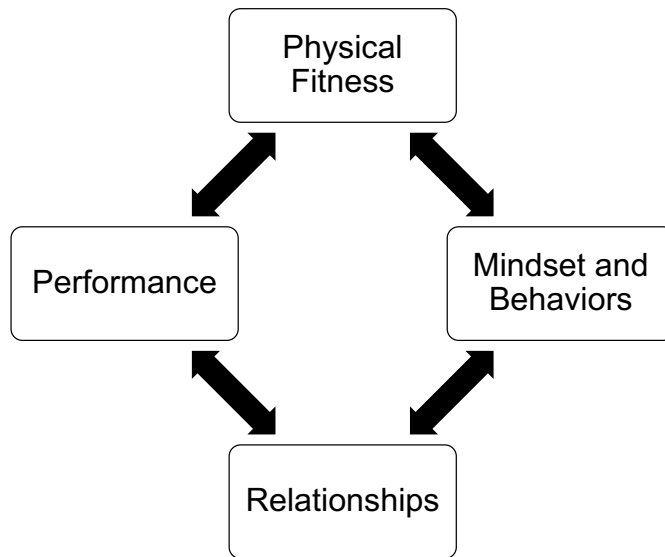
- *Express Empathy.* Empathy is about good rapport and a positive working relationship. Empathy is not the same thing as sympathy. It doesn't mean you share the same experience as the person. Rather, empathy means that you are trying to understand the person's point of view, even if you don't agree with it.
- *Roll with Resistance.* It is normal to have mixed feelings about change. Because of this, "rolling with resistance" means avoiding arguments when possible. Instead, we look for other ways to respond when challenged.
- *Develop Discrepancy.* Discrepancy is the feeling that one's current behavior is out of line with personal values or goals. Rather than telling people why they should change, we try to help them come up with their own motivation for change.
- *Support Self-Efficacy.* A person is more likely to make changes when they feel confident. Therefore, we help people come up with their own plans and affirm positive progress.

People are more likely to make lasting changes when they think through, and talk about, their plans for change. Thus, the best kind of interaction is one where the *Soldier* does most of the talking. The way a leader talks sets the tone for how a Soldier talks, which in turn, influences the way the Soldier acts. A Soldier may start a conversation with a certain level of motivation, but how a leader speaks determines whether that motivation goes up or down over the course of the conversation.

Focusing

The ancient Greeks said that people should strive for "a sound mind in a sound body." They recognized that a person with a healthy mind can act quickly and decisively. Likewise, General Ann Dunwoody, the former Commanding General of U.S. Army Materiel Command said, "A high-performing organization is one that does routine things in an outstanding manner."

Military readiness is strongly affected by small, day-to-day behaviors. For instance, if a Soldier gains too much weight, he or she may perform poorly during an exercise. If a Soldier has trouble sleeping, that can affect concentration during the day. For most people, the areas are interrelated. Poor sleep can lead to weight gain or depression. Family problems may cause issues with attitude or work performance.



Some behaviors help to maintain *fitness and bearing*:

- *Healthy Diet*: Soldier consumes a proper amount and good balance of healthy food
- *Adequate Sleep*: Soldier obtains regular, restful sleep
- *Good Hygiene*: Soldier appears healthy and well-groomed; maintains Army standards per regulation
- *Avoiding Problem Substance Use*: Soldier avoids using substances excessively or in situations that might put the Soldier or others at risk

Some behaviors focus on *behaviors and mindset*:

- *Good Attitude*: Soldier uses positive language; follows orders; exhibits self-control and discipline
- *Good Concentration*: Soldier is alert and attentive to details; demonstrates understanding when receiving communication and passes along information in a timely manner
- *Healthy Recreation Choices*: Soldier engages in activities that contribute to physical and mental wellbeing
- *Wise Financial Choices*: Soldier makes financial choices that contribute to long-term well-being; manages money and fulfills obligations to others

Some behaviors promote *good relationships*:

- *Respect for Others*: Soldier is considerate of others' person and property
- *Teamwork*: Soldier treats others with respect; offers assistance without being asked; puts in effort to achieve team goals
- *Family/Marriage/Children*: Soldier has positive relationships with loved ones; fulfills commitments to family and friends

Some behaviors encourage *performance and discipline*:

- *Good Work Product*: Soldier completes work with minimal oversight; completes work

- assignments even under challenging conditions; asks for help when needed
- *Prompt to Assignment*: Soldier plans ahead in order to arrive promptly to assignments; does not make others late
 - *Education and Training*: Soldier looks for opportunities to learn or improve performance
 - *Personal Discipline*: Holds self and others to Army values and standards

Conversations about performance are most effective when they address one or two areas at a time. Thus, a leader needs to decide which behaviors to talk about right now and which can be left for later. While there are standard follow-up periods for developmental counseling, leaders should be sensitive to how frequently (daily, weekly, monthly) they should follow up. Good leaders are also familiar with resources to help Soldiers who are experiencing more serious problems (e.g., suicide, sexual assault). Leaders should feel empowered to seek information or refer Soldiers when the topic is outside their expertise.

The Counseling Enhancement Tool (CET; Appendix H) provides a way to review these behaviors through seven sections: *Tactical and Technical Proficiency*; *Communicates Effectively*; *Exhibits Effort*; *Exhibits Personal Discipline*; *Contributes to the Team*; *Exhibits Fitness, Military Bearing, and Appearance*; and *Manages Personal Matters*. The CET is designed to maximize opportunities for NCOs and their Soldiers to share observations, discuss expectations, and develop collaborative plans.

Engaged Leadership

In 2012, Google began a project called Project Aristotle. They interviewed hundreds of people to determine the “secret sauce” in productive teams. Interestingly, they could find no particular mix of background or personality that made a team more effective. According to one of Google’s project managers, “The who part of the equation didn’t seem to matter.” One variable that did matter was the extent to which team members listened to each other. Groups that took turns during a conversation tended to be more cohesive and effective.

In a talk on leadership, Gen. Mark Welsh said, “Leadership is a gift. It’s given by those who follow. You have to be worthy of it.” This kind of engaged leadership starts with a good working relationship. Four ingredients--Open Questions, Affirmations, Reflections, and Summaries (sometimes called “OARS”)—form the basis of this disciplined listening and speaking style.

Ask (O)pen Questions

Closed questions ask for yes/no or limited-range responses, while open questions ask for longer answers or elaboration. Closed questions are better for getting short answers or verifying understanding. Open questions are better at pulling out detailed information and encouraging a person to think about the answer.

Closed Question	Open Question
Do you have any questions about this?	<i>What questions do you have about this?</i>
Is there anything you could do to remind yourself about the new assignment next Monday?	<i>What could you do to remind yourself about the new assignment next Monday?</i>
Is there someone you could talk to about this?	<i>Who could you talk to about this? How would that help?</i>
Anything else?	<i>What else?</i>

Closed questions are weak ways to structure a conversation because they don't invite a person to talk through their response. The Soldier's experience must also be considered when asking questions, as he or she might feel embarrassed if not able to give the "correct" response. Open questions are better for structuring conversations because they ask for longer, more thoughtful responses.

Consider the difference between these two basic questions: "*Anything else?*" vs. "*What else?*" Changing one word increases the quality of the response. The first question asks for a simple yes or no. The second question invites a more detailed answer.

Open questions keep a person talking--they pull out speech. For instance:

- *What questions do you have?*
- *What do you want to do after you're done with active duty? Where do you want to be long-term?*
- *What other ideas do you have? What else might work for you?*

Questions like these encourage a Soldier to think through the answer. Open questions can also help a Soldier arrive at a specific plan of action:

- *There are a few things that people do here (provide a short list). Which of these do you think would work for you?*
- *Who would (or will) help you to...?*
- *What worked for you in the past?*

This approach requires leaders to be patient, to avoid jumping in and finishing sentences or drawing conclusions too quickly. As Stephen Covey says, "Seek first to understand, then to be understood." Similarly, William Ury says, "Effective negotiators listen more than they talk." Disciplined listening helps a leader to understand a Soldier's perspective and helps a Soldier to think through his or her responses as part of the learning process.

Affirm

In his classic book on business management, Dale Carnegie writes about his reasons for picking

Charles Schwab as the first president of U.S. Steel. Schwab had a remarkable way of getting things done that made him well worth his million dollars a year salary. At the heart of Schwab's genius was his ability to motivate people through encouragement. Schwab said, "I am anxious to praise...If I like anything, *I am hearty in my approbation and lavish in my praise.*" Schwab went out of his way to recognize positive efforts.

Unfortunately, many people do just the opposite--they criticize what bothers them and stay quiet when they see something they like. Some leaders avoid praise because they believe that Soldiers should not be rewarded for doing what they're ordered to do. However, if a leader believes that his or her role involves helping Soldiers develop new skills, positive reinforcement must be part of the equation. Good leaders go out of their way to call attention to positive progress or evidence of strength and competence. Furthermore, "disciplined initiative" will only happen if positive behaviors are reinforced. If only negative behaviors are identified, then initiative and growth for both Soldiers and the organization will cease, as it will create a risk-averse culture where people put in only the minimum amount of effort.

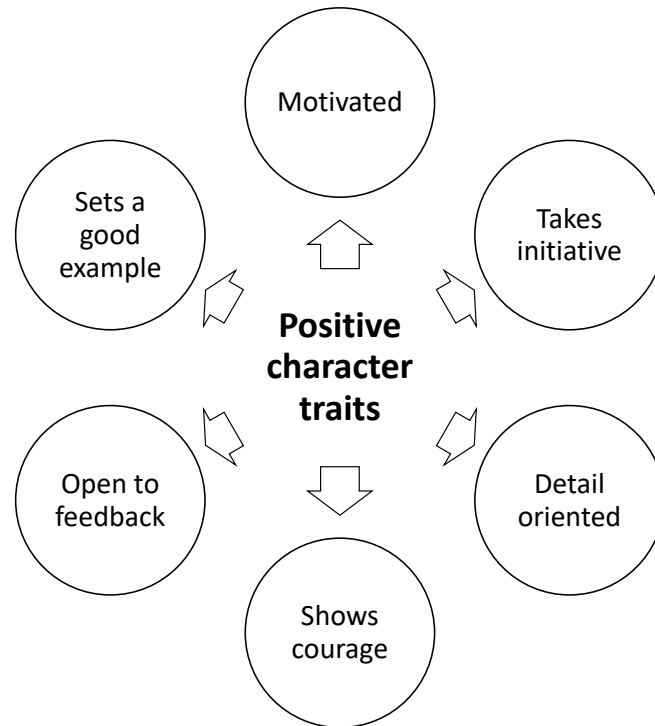
One kind of affirmation highlights something a Soldier has done well:

- *This is really great work. The detail is excellent.*
- *You're making great progress.*
- *Things are much improved.*

Another kind of affirmation calls attention to character strengths:

- *You care a lot about your work product. I think you'll do well as a sergeant.*
- *You have a lot of leadership qualities. People listen to you.*
- *That's a really smart observation.*

Character strengths become evident when people do things repeatedly. For instance, staying late to complete work ("I appreciate you staying late to finish this up") might be evidence of integrity or work ethic ("I appreciate the good example you're setting for others"), while seeking feedback ("I'm happy to provide feedback here. Thanks for asking") might be evidence of motivation or initiative ("This is great initiative. You're always trying to do better.").



Some research suggests the optimal ratio for positive behavior change is around four affirmations for every critique. At minimum, leaders should *use as many affirmations as possible, and affirm any behavior that you want to see again*. Engaged leaders take time to learn about a Soldier's families, hobbies, and strengths so they can show a genuine interest in their personal life. Knowing what drives your Soldier is a key part of the affirmation process.

Another affirmation strategy is to "blame" Soldiers for their successes. Rather than dwelling on failures, this involves calling out personal successes. "How" questions can reinforce positive efforts and build confidence:

- *This is great. How did you figure it out?*
- *How did you know that would work?*
- *You've done a good job putting all of this together. How did you manage to do that?*

Emphasizing positive qualities helps Soldiers to think less about their deficiencies and more about their capabilities. As General Colin Powell once said, "Perpetual optimism is a force multiplier."

Reflect

New leaders sometimes underestimate the importance of repeating back what people are saying. In fact, reflections are a frequent part of counseling, negotiation, and sales techniques. For instance, in William Ury's bestselling book on business negotiation, "Getting Past No," he suggests starting a business negotiation by reflecting and summarizing what the other person is

saying: “They need to know that you have heard what they have said. So reflect back what you hear.” Likewise, in his “On-Scene Guide for Crisis Negotiators,” Frederick Lanceley writes, “It is far more effective for the negotiator to demonstrate understanding through active listening than to say, ‘I understand.’”

Reflections (sometimes called “brief backs” or “closed-loop” communication) are restatements of what a Soldier is saying or thinking. Reflections may repeat or rephrase what a Soldier has said, summarize an emotion, or point out mixed feelings. The best reflections use slightly different words to demonstrate that the leader understands the point the Soldier is trying to make. Some reflections help to “connect the dots” or draw a conclusion.

For instance, here are some ways a leader could reflect a Soldier’s statement: “We just found out my girlfriend is pregnant again. Finances are already stretched so thin, I’m not sure how we’re going to make it work.”

Repeat/Rephrase (use similar words)	<i>It sounds like you’re concerned about how the baby is going to affect your finances.</i>
Paraphrase (use different words)	<i>That’s a tough spot to be in. You’re not sure what to do. [adds meaning]</i>
Double-Sided Reflection (capture both sides)	<i>So there’s some joy about the new baby, but also a lot of anxiety about what this will mean.</i>
Reflection with a Twist (reflect back part, with a slightly different emphasis)	<i>So you’re really going to have to get creative to figure out how to make this work within your budget. [agrees with part of statement, adds meaning]</i>

All of these reflections restate what the Soldier has said, either using the same words or using different words. Because the leader says it back, it’s clear that he or she understands what the Soldier is trying to say.

- *That’s a tough spot to be in.*
- *You’re really worried.*
- *You don’t know how you’re going to make it work.*

On the other hand, responses that give the leader’s view or opinion are not reflections. Here are examples of responses that would not be reflections:

- ***I understand*** what you’re saying. (lacks Soldier content)
- ***I understand*** how difficult that is. (emphasizes the leader’s understanding)
- ***You’ll be fine.*** When we had our second child, we figured out how to make it work. (dismisses Soldier’s view)

Imagine a Soldier who says, “I’d really like to get started on my associate’s degree.” Responses on the left are not reflections because they don’t restate or paraphrase what the Soldier said. Responses in the middle repeat back the basic content of what the person said. Responses on the right are better quality reflections because they reflect the person’s meaning, rather than their surface language.

<u>Not</u> a Reflection	Basic Reflection	Advanced Reflection
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That’s interesting. What would you study? • I’ve been thinking of going back to school too. • I understand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • So you’d like to get started on your degree. • It sounds like you’re ready to get started on your degree. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sounds like you’re trying to plan for your future. • You’re excited about getting a head start!

Reflections have an important role in motivational interviewing because they can help a leader “roll with” resistant statements. They acknowledge the Soldier’s viewpoint while keeping the conversation moving forward. Instead of disagreeing with or pointing out a Soldier’s incorrect thinking or poor attitude, a better response is usually to reflect what the Soldier is saying and redirect the conversation with an open question. This lets the Soldier know that you are listening and helps him or her think about how to address the problem on their own. Here’s an example of how a Leader might use reflections to respond to more troublesome statements.

Soldier Says:	Less Effective	More Effective
I can’t get to PT on time. Everyone’s coming here at the same time and the traffic is terrible.	Maybe you should leave your house earlier.	<i>You’re right. Traffic in the morning is bad. Everyone’s got to figure out their own plan for getting here by 0600. What are your options?</i>
I was never told I’d have to take all these classes. I’m just sitting in a room all day.	You signed the contract, didn’t you? You sure didn’t have any problem taking the signing bonus.	<i>So, this part is surprising to you. Given that this is part of your training, what are some things you can do to help you get through this class?</i>

Importantly, a leader does not have to agree with the Soldier to reflect what they are saying. Rather, reflections show that you understand the point the person is trying to make.

Two things can help to raise the quality of reflections:

1. *Simplify the statement.* Repeat back the most important parts of what a person has said. Avoid starting reflections with stems like, “So, what I’m hearing you say is that…”or

“What you’re telling me is that…” that can make the reflections feel forced or disingenuous. Just restate what the person is saying, using plain language.

- *That’s really exciting!*
 - *It’s a lot to think about. You’re having a hard time figuring out what to do.*
 - *It feels like a waste of your time, and so it frustrates you.*
2. *Continue the thought.* The best reflections don’t just parrot back what a person says. They either paraphrase or guess what would come next if the person continued to talk. In this way, good reflections give momentum to a conversation by helping the person express his or her thoughts.
- *...and that makes you angry.*
 - *...it’s overwhelming to think about what you’ll do after you leave the military.*
 - *...so you’re still working through your options here.*

Summarize

Summaries remind a person about major discussion points, the plan of action, and the person’s own reasons for taking action. Summaries are useful in three ways. If a person stops talking, summaries can be a bridge to help him or her keep talking. Like reflections, summaries can point out a pattern in what the person is saying. Finally, summaries allow for direction or commentary by the leader to emphasize parts of what the person has said. This helps demonstrate that the leader accurately understands all that has transpired.

Here’s an example of a summary where the leader and Soldier are talking about a stressful home situation. In this example, the leader does not have a particular goal in mind other than helping a Soldier think through a difficult situation.

It’s like you said...relationships can be difficult. In your case, it’s sort of a vicious cycle. When you get home, you’re exhausted from being at work all day, and she’s exhausted from being with the baby. You both end up saying things you regret later. You’ve suggested she spend more time with the other wives on the base, but for whatever reason, it’s just not working for her.

Here’s an example of a summary where the leader does have a goal in mind--helping improve a Soldier’s PT performance.

So, let me summarize here. We’ve been talking about time management and PT performance. This week you’ve been consistently a few minutes late to formation, and the running, in particular, has been rough. Because of the weight gain, you’re at risk for failing your next PT test. So, what’s your plan here?

Here’s an example of a summary that might be used at the end of a counseling interaction:

We’ve talked about a couple things. One is getting caught up on your training hours,

and you thought that working with PFC Marshall on the flashcards would help. I think that's a smart idea, and would benefit you both. As far as your work assignment, we talked about options for the days you're not on vehicle maintenance. You said it would be great to get some skills that might be transferrable to HVAC repair outside the Army. What else do you want to add to this plan?

The techniques above—Open Questions, Affirmations, Reflections, and Summaries (OARS)—are the building blocks of conversations.

Using OARS in Everyday Conversations

A technique called “Conversation Analysis” looks at how people take turns in speaking. In *competitive* conversations, one person dominates by interrupting, talking over, or drawing conclusions before the speaker is done talking. In *cooperative* conversations, the listener waits until the speaker is done talking, and may ask questions or repeat what the speaker has said to help him or her make the point. A cooperative approach tends to be better at moving conversations forward; it helps both parties understand the full meaning of the communication. A similar pattern is found in analyses of conversations in emergency flight and hospital trauma scenarios; teams that take turns tend to be more efficient than teams where one or two people dominate the conversation.

Here's an example where a leader has pulled a Soldier aside during morning PT for a brief check-in. The leader has noticed that the Soldier is unhappy with work assignments. This is a “following” conversation because the leader doesn't have a particular goal in mind. The only goal is to listen carefully. The listening is helpful by itself.

Leader: *I wanted to check in and see how things were going. Seems like it's been a rough transition from AIT.*

Soldier: *Yes sir, the Army isn't what I expected at all.*

Leader: *It's been a surprise. [Reflection]*

Soldier: *Well, yeah. Waking up in the dark. PT at 0530. Spending my day doing PMCS on vehicles. It sucks.*

Leader: *It's a lot of hard stuff, and not that interesting. [Reflection]*

Soldier: *I was told it would be exciting. I saw videos of blowing stuff up. Instead I'm changing oil and cleaning latrines!*

Leader: *... seems like a lot of grunt work. [Reflection]*

Soldier: *And now I've got four more years of this? It sucks.*

Leader: *So, let me see if I have this right. Enlistment is not what you expected, and there are lots of things right now that feels unsatisfying. [Summary]*

Soldier: *Yeah, I guess.*

Leader: *To be fair, some of these things are just part of military life. It sometimes takes time to get used to the schedule and duties. What kind of things are you most interested in? What were you hoping to get out of your time in the Army? [Information; Reflection]*

Soldier: *Honestly, the field exercises seem pretty cool. Maybe operating the heavy equipment.*

Leader: *Okay. Thanks for sharing that with me. It's important to me to have good communication with the Soldiers on my team. So what I'd like to do is to check in with you again to see how things are going. Maybe we can work together to come up with a plan. Sound fair?* [Affirmation; Offer of Help]

Soldier: *Sure. That makes sense. Thank you sir.*

“Following” and “guiding” conversations often start with phrases like:

- *I noticed that...*
- *So what's been going on with...?*
- *What's on your mind?*

Here's another conversation where a leader is speaking with a Soldier about difficulties with a roommate. This is more of a “guided” conversation because the leader's goal is to help the Soldier think about the best ways to manage this relationship. Again, the leader listens carefully and resists the tendency to try to “fix” the Soldier's situation. The leader might give some information or advice, but it's important that the Soldier learn how to address situations like this on his own.

Leader: *How are things going with your roommate? I understand there have been some difficulties.* [Open Question]

Soldier: *Honestly sir, it's a mess. He leaves his crap everywhere. When I'm trying to sleep, he's playing video games and drinking Red Bull.*

Leader: *It's hard being in such a small space.* [Reflection]

Soldier: *In the evenings I'm trying to study. I want to make something with my life. He just wastes all his time and drags me into his messes.*

Leader: *Sounds like it is really interfering with your goals. What have you tried to address the problem?*

Soldier: *Not much. I've tried to talk to him before, but it goes nowhere.*

Leader: *I wonder if I could make a suggestion. (wait for a response) One of the things that sometimes works is to develop a sort-of contract between roommates. To agree on basic things like quiet times, and where stuff is kept. I've seen that work for others, but of course, you'd have to sit down with him and talk about those things.* [Suggestion; Emphasis on Personal Responsibility]

Soldier: *I don't know. He just doesn't seem to care about anything.*

Leader: *This is a pretty common situation, and it's possible that it might help to share this with him in a calm tone and agree on some basic things like quiet times.* [Suggestion]

Soldier: *Yeah, I guess it couldn't hurt.*

Leader: *Ok, let me check in with you later this week to see how it's going.* [Follow up]

Soldier: *Thank you sir.*

Evoking

Recognizing and Evoking Change Talk

The Navajo language played a vital role in World War II. Navajo “code talkers” used a secret

language to send coded information over the radio. This code helped the Allies to win major victories in the Pacific theatre. The use of Native American language was not new. The US had used Choctaw speakers during World War I, but Germany and Japan had worked hard to learn the Choctaw language before the outbreak of World War II. The Navajo language, however, is tricky for non-natives because it is not written down. In 1942, the US created 200 new Navajo words for military terms and had a team of “code talkers” memorize and practice transmitting them under stressful conditions. After the decisive battle at Guadalcanal, Maj Gen Vandergriff concluded, “We don’t understand it, but it works. Send us more Navajos.”

Language and behavior are strongly related. Of course, people use words to describe their behavior, but the opposite can also be true: People can literally talk themselves in and out of change. This happens in debates when people become more entrenched in their viewpoints the more they talk about them. In research studies with people who don’t have strong views about a topic, giving them an opportunity to talk about one side or the other tends to move their views to that side. This observation led psychologist Daryl Bem to conclude, “As I hear myself talk, I learn what I believe.”

Researchers have studied the kind of language people use when talking about change. This “change talk” can be divided into five categories—desire, ability, reasons, need and commitment.



When people talk about their desire, ability, reasons, or need to change, they are more likely to talk about their commitment to change. Commitment talk makes them more likely to take action.

Consider two Soldiers who smoke. The Soldier who makes the statement on the right is more likely to quit smoking than a Soldier who makes the statement on the left. The Soldier on the right is talking about reasons (coughing, expensive) and ability (medication) to quit, while the Soldier on the left is talking about reasons to continue smoking. (Talk that is against change is called “sustain talk.”) In both cases, their speech is an indicator of their future behavior.

Low Likelihood of Change	High Likelihood of Change
<p><i>There’s nothing to do here. If I didn’t smoke, I’d be bored out of my skull. Sure, it affects my PT, but I’m a long way from failing. So it’s not a big deal.</i></p>	<p><i>I’m coughing a lot more than I used to. I know it’s the smoking. Plus, it’s expensive, even at commissary prices. I heard there was some sort of medication that could help people quit. Maybe I should look into that.</i></p>

One way to encourage change talk is to ask for it. Here are some questions that ask about desire, ability, and reasons to change:

- *Why would you want to make that change?* [Desire]
- *If you decided to change, how would you go about it?* [Ability]
- *What concerns do you have about your overall health?* [Reasons]

Here are some questions that ask about commitment to change:

- *How are you going to do that?*
- *What will that look like?*
- *What's the first step?*

A second way to encourage change talk is to follow up on productive statements. This makes it more likely that the person will continue to talk in a positive direction. Consider a Soldier who says, “I know I need to improve my PT score, but these standards are impossible. I’ve gained too much weight in the last 6 months.” This statement has some change talk (“need to improve PT” and “gained a lot of weight”) and some sustain talk (“going to be impossible”). A leader’s response determines which part the Soldier talks about.

If a leader wants the Soldier to talk more about change, here are some ways to follow up on the more productive part of the statement:

Open Question	<i>So, what are some things you could do to lose weight?</i>
Affirm	<i>That's a good connection there. I agree that losing weight would help a lot, especially with your two-mile run time, since that's where you tend to lose the most points.</i>
Reflect	<p><i>So, the extra weight has really affected your PT score. [single sided]</i></p> <p><i>It's important to you to improve your PT score, but probably it would mean some sort of weight loss. [double sided]</i></p> <p><i>...and you would have to think about where to start, whether it would be diet or exercise, or something else. [reflection with a twist, continues the thought]</i></p>
Summarize	<i>So let me summarize and see if I have this right...[summarize most important change elements]</i>

In these responses, the leader is using Open Questions, Affirmations, Reflections and Summaries (OARS) to shape the Soldier’s language—and behavior—in the direction of positive change.

Here's another example where a Soldier uses both change talk and sustain talk. The leader follows up on the change talk (underlined) to encourage the Soldier to talk more about his role in the disagreement.

I can definitely lose my temper at times [Change Talk], and that's on me. I just wish Garza would stay out of my way. He's a punk! [Sustain Talk]

The temptation is to follow the most irritating part--the suggestion that the other Soldier deserved it. However, if a leader wants to increase the Soldier's ownership over the action, the most productive part is probably the recognition that his temper can get out of control. Following up with a reflection or question about this part makes it more likely that the Soldier will continue to talk about his or her own responsibility:

Reflection: *OK, so looking back, you recognize that you could have handled things better.*

Question: *Looking back, what would you have done differently?*

Here's an example where a Soldier talks about a curfew violation. The statement contains some change talk (the first part) and some sustain talk (the second part):

We just lost track of time [Change Talk]. Traffic was bad, and then they singled me out for a search. [SustainTalk]

If a leader wanted to encourage a Soldier to take ownership of the curfew violation, it might look like this:

Reflection: *So looking back, you would have done things differently. You would have planned ahead to make sure you had plenty of time to get back.*

Question: *So what's your plan moving forward to make sure you don't lose track of time?*

In both cases, the leader uses questions and reflections to nudge the conversation toward more productive talk.

One special kind of reflection, a "double-sided" reflection, repeats back both sides of what a person says. People are more likely to talk more about whatever comes last in a double-sided reflection. For instance, the diagram below shows two different ways of responding to the same statement. Only the order is different. Since the second option puts the sustain talk first and change talk last, the person is more likely to continue with change talk.

Soldier says:

I know smoking's not good for my health. But the last time I tried to quit, I ended up snacking all the time and gained a lot of weight.

If you said:

So you'd like to quit smoking, but you're afraid you might gain weight.

Even though you might gain a few pounds, it sounds like you're worried about the health effects of smoking.

Soldier responds:

Well yes, and I've already gained a lot of weight in the last year.

Well yes, I've been coughing a lot more, plus my wife absolutely hates it.

When talking about change, it can also be more helpful to concentrate on “forward-focused” questions. Forward questions ask what Soldiers *could do, will do*, or things that *will work for them*. In contrast, backward questions ask why Soldiers *can't, won't, or didn't* do something.

Avoid	Try
Why did you do that?	<i>How can you fix this?</i>
Why did you forget to submit the form?	<i>What's your plan to make sure the form gets submitted next time?</i>
Why are you late?	<i>How will you make sure you're here on time tomorrow?</i>

The “why” questions on the left encourage people to talk about excuses and barriers, while the “what” and “how” questions on the right encourage people to talk about solutions.

Planning

Setting Goals

People are more likely to follow through with things they have talked about in detail. For this reason, leaders should encourage Soldiers to talk about the timeline, and ask what things Soldiers will need to do at each point in the plan. The leader can give suggestions and advice where appropriate, but it is better if Soldiers are doing most of the problem-solving. The more specific, the better.

- *What would be the first step?*
- *What things would you need to do to make that happen?*
- *How can I help you? What do you need?*

Goals should be Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time bound (sometimes called

“SMART” planning). If a Soldier has a large goal, it may help to break the goal into smaller, short-term steps that will increase the chance of success. For example, if a Soldier wants to obtain a job in an area where they have no experience, a leader might help the Soldier to break the goal into smaller pieces.

	Key Question	Example
Specific	What specifically do you want to achieve?	<i>I'd like to get more experience in air defense.</i>
Measurable	How will you know if you've reached your goal?	<i>When I leave the Army, I'd like to get my degree in aviation or aerospace engineering.</i>
Attainable	What resources are needed?	<i>I would need to apply to Air Defense Artillery School.</i>
Realistic	Is the goal reasonable?	<i>I have a good head for numbers. Aerospace is a big industry where I live.</i>
Time-Bound	When will each of the steps be completed without kicking the can down the road?	<i>In the next week, I'd like to do some research on what training programs are available.</i>

A leader can help a Soldier brainstorm situations that might cause problems.

- *What are some parts of your plan that might be difficult?*
- *What would you have to do to address that?*

A leader can also help a Soldier identify who (or what) would help to achieve the goal. Here are some questions that ask specifically about that person's role in the change process, and what the Soldier would need to do to involve this person.

- *Who is someone who might be able to help you? How would they help?*
- *What's your timeline?*

The more specifically a person talks about an idea, the more likely it is to happen. Written or visual cues, such as notes, schedules, and reminders, can also be helpful. Again, the Soldier should be the one who is doing most of the talking. Leaders sometimes add a bit of advice or information where appropriate and use reflections or summaries to reinforce the plan.

- *What would that look like? Where would you start? What would happen next?*
- *What are some things that might get in your way? How would you deal with that?*
- *If you're at a 2 now in your progress, what would it take to get you to a 3?*

Giving Information and Advice

Gen. George Patton said, “Don't tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity.” Learning how to solve problems is an important part of the Soldier development process. However, when leaders do provide advice, certain things make it more likely that a Soldier will act on that information. These strategies help a Soldier maintain autonomy over a decision.

- Ask for permission before providing advice (e.g., “Would it be okay if I gave you some information about...?”). In many cases, Soldiers don't even know they need advice or guidance.
- Preface advice with permission to disagree (e.g., “This may or may not work for you, but one thing you might think about is...”)
- Give more than one option (e.g., “There are a couple of base resources that might work for you. One option is to think about...”)
- Emphasize personal responsibility (e.g., “Ultimately, you're the one who has to decide what to do here.”)

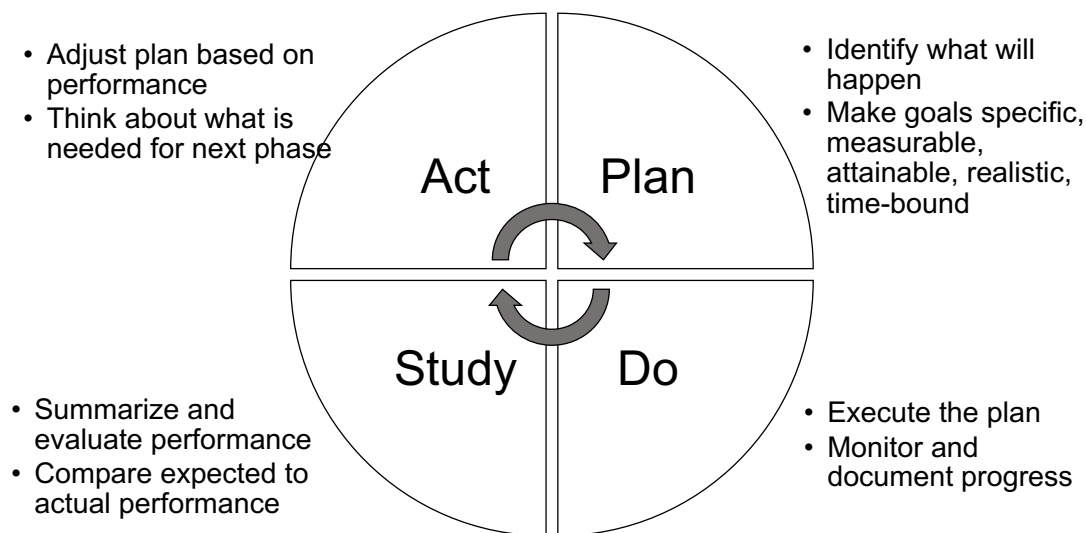
One format for providing advice is called Elicit-Provide-Elicit. In this format, leaders first ask Soldiers what they already know about something, or what questions they have (Elicit). The leader gives a small amount of information (Provide), building on what the Soldier has said. Finally, the leader asks what the Soldier would like to do with the information (Elicit). This format emphasizes the Soldier's competence and responsibility in the action.

1. ELICIT readiness and interest
 - *“What do you know about how the field exercises are organized?”*
 - *“What have you heard about the NCO Development Program?”*
2. PROVIDE information or feedback
 - *“That's right. For most Soldiers...”*
 - *“Yes, that's certainly one reason the program exists. Another reason is...”*
3. ELICIT the plan or reaction
 - *“What's your plan to improve performance at the next drill...?”*
 - *“How can I help?”*

Following Up

The Greek philosopher Aristotle said, “We are defined by what we do repeatedly, therefore excellence is a habit.” Because behavior is often difficult to change, relapse is a normal part of the process for most people, most of the time. For instance, the average smoker makes around 30 quit attempts before successfully quitting for good. Rates of success at quitting drinking or losing weight are similarly bad. Because of this, it is important for leaders to help Soldiers set goals, try them out, evaluate the results, and think about the next attempt. Thinking about the change process from beginning to end can help a Soldier anticipate difficulties and develop a contingency plan in case of trouble.

The Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle, designed for organization-level change, can also be useful for person-level change. This framework can be useful during developmental counseling sessions, as well as in informal conversations that happen between counseling sessions. Everyday conversations keep the feedback loop moving so that things are accomplished between counseling sessions. In the Plan stage, the Soldier and leader pick an area to work on, set SMART goals, and develop a change plan. In the Do stage, the Soldier carries out the behavior, while the leader monitors progress. In the Study stage, the two look at the data to see what happened. Finally, in the Act stage, the Soldier and leader use the data to plan the next change attempt, looking for opportunities for improvement. Close attention to each phase ensures that the next attempt will be better than the last.



The Counseling Enhancement Tool

The CET provides a structured way for NCOs and Soldiers to share observations, discuss expectations, and develop collaborative plans. The CET is a two-way guided conversation between a Soldier and a leader. Soldiers may have their own perspectives on performance, barriers, and resources that will be useful in achieving goals. In addition, by encouraging Soldier input, this helps the Soldier learn how to provide counseling to others. Appendix H gives stand-alone instructions for administering the CET. This section gives a brief overview and examples of how the skills in this manual are used to facilitate a developmental counseling session.

The CET covers seven topic areas:

- Tactical and Technical Proficiency
- Communicates Effectively
- Exhibits Effort
- Exhibits Personal Discipline
- Contributes to the Team

- Exhibits Fitness, Military Bearing, and Appearance
- Manages Personal Matters

These topics are a minimum for developmental counseling; there may be other areas of focus that can be added to the discussion. The CET consists of two parts: a Soldier Form and a Leader Form. The Soldier Form, completed before the meeting, is designed to assist Soldiers in self-evaluation. The Leader form, completed before and during the meeting, helps the NCO to structure a developmental counseling conversation.

Before the counseling session:

1. Ask the Soldier to complete the CET Soldier Form.
2. Complete sections A and B of each area on the CET Leader Form.
 - a. Give Sustain/Improve rating for each area (Section A). Mark each with the rating that best describes the Soldier's performance over the rating period (typically in the past month).
 - b. Make notes about the Soldier's behavior, including areas of strength and opportunities for growth (Section B). Observations should include areas of strength, as well as opportunities for growth. Observations should be as specific and detailed as possible.
3. Schedule a time with the Soldier to review the form.

During the counseling session:

1. Explain to the Soldier that this will be a two-way conversation about professional development. The basic approach is to balance expertise (*What are you seeing? What recommendations do you have?*) with evocation (*What is the Soldier seeing? What ideas does the Soldier have?*). Because this is a collaborative conversation, each person should be talking about half the time.
2. Cover the areas one at a time, asking the Soldier what score they would give themselves in each area (Section C). Reflect and summarize. It is not necessary to share leader ratings immediately with the Soldier, especially if your ratings are significantly lower than the Soldier's. Because the CET is more *developmental* than *evaluative*, the most important part of this section is to help the Soldier gain an understanding of the expectations and how he or she can improve in an area.
 - a. *Why did you give yourself that score?*
 - b. *What things are you doing well in that area (e.g., why not a lower score)?* [Take notes on the form]
 - c. *What would it take to improve that score by just 5 or 10%?* [Take notes on the form]
3. Negotiate 2-3 SMART goals, including barriers and resources (Question 8). Reflect and summarize.
 - a. *What goal would you set for yourself in this area? What would that look like?* [Take notes on the form]
 - b. *How would you go about that? Where would you start?* [Take notes on the form]
 - c. *When could you have that done?* [Take notes on the form]
4. Summarize the interaction. Schedule a follow-up conversation if needed.

Here's a conversation between a Soldier and leader in Section 3C (Exhibits Effort). The conversation focuses on ways the Soldier could take more initiative:

- Leader: *This section talks about the amount of effort you put into what you're doing. That involves both completing tasks, as well as looking for ways to contribute, even when things are not directly assigned to you. What percentage of the time do you think you've met the expectation in this area?*
- Soldier: *I think I'd give myself an 80 or 90%. There's no problems as far as I can see.*
- Leader: *I was a bit lower, around 70%, but it looks like we're in the same ballpark. Why did you give yourself that rating?*
- Soldier: *What I've been doing so far isn't that hard. When I get instructions, I follow through right away and wait for the next set of instructions.*
- Leader: *I would agree with that assessment. Your follow-through is good. One thing I might challenge you on is to look for ways to pitch in, even if it's not directly assigned to you. Taking initiative means that you look for things that might be dropped, and make sure those things are getting done. What would it take to get that 70% to, say, 75% in this area? What are some ways you could take more initiative in this area?*
- Soldier: *Well, SPC Liu has been out a lot with family issues. I sometimes see how things pile up when he's gone. Since we do similar work, I guess we could coordinate to make sure everything is completed.*
- Leader: *That's a great example of taking initiative. I'd love to talk more about that when we get to the planning section on the form.*

Here's an example of a conversation between a Soldier and leader on Section 8 (Plan). The conversation focuses on weight loss goals:

- Leader: *One of the goals you mentioned in Section 6 was around weight loss. With the new baby, you recognize that you've put on a few pounds and it's really affected your PT score.*
- Soldier: *It's not that big a deal, but yeah, that's true.*
- Leader: *What's a goal you could set for yourself in this area?*
- Soldier: *It's really not that big a deal, but if I could get back to my previous weight in the next few months, that would be ideal.*
- Leader: *How many pounds then?*
- Soldier: *I guess getting back to 170, so 10 pounds in total.*
- Leader: *What's a goal you might set for yourself in the next month?*
- Soldier: *2-3 pounds probably.*
- Leader: *And how would you go about that?*
- Soldier: *I think just being back will help. But also being more careful about what I'm eating. When my partner was pregnant, we both ate a lot more.*
- Leader: *OK, so it sounds like weight loss is one of your goals, specifically 2-3 pounds in the next month. Your plan is a combination of getting back into a routine, as well as being more careful about what you eat. Tell me about the eating part. What's a specific goal you'd like to set in that area?*

Summary

Gen. James Mattis said, “The most important six inches on the battlefield is between your ears.” For this reason, leaders need to have conversations with Soldiers about their mental, physical, and relationship health. These areas work together to produce strong, capable Soldiers. Many of the examples in this guide focus on broader lifestyle choices, such as diet, sleep, substance use, and leisure time activities that affect military readiness. The guide began by describing different kinds of leader-Soldier communication, ranging from formal counseling to informal conversations. It then showed how motivational interviewing can improve conversations between a leader and Soldier. It concluded by giving examples of strategies that can be used to build Soldiers’ motivation and commitment to change during both formal and informal conversations.

Key Points:

- Soldier choices about diet, sleep, relationships, substance use, and leisure time activities, can greatly affect military readiness.
- Leaders can use everyday conversations to help Soldiers become more capable and resilient.
- In a “guided” conversation, leader acts as a mentor to help a Soldier think through the best way to address an issue, and develop the skills to problem-solve on his or her own.
- Behavior change is a process, relapse is normal, and certain kinds of conversations are a better match for people at different stages of change.
- Soldiers who have internal reasons for change, who feel confident about new behaviors, and who have others to support them, are more likely to make lasting changes.
- The "relational" part of motivational interviewing involves listening strategies such as open-ended questions, affirmations, reflections, and summaries (OARS).
- The "technical" part of motivational interviewing uses those strategies to draw out change talk around desire, ability, reasons, need and commitment to change.
- The Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycle can help identify areas for change, implement a plan, monitor progress, and plan for future improvement.
- The Counseling Enhancement Tool (CET) provides a structured format for developmental counseling, where both parties are working together to set goals and solve problems.

Appendix A: Source Material

Portions of these public domain sources were used in this manual:

1. Miller, W. R. (Ed.) (2004). *Combined Behavioral Intervention manual: A clinical research guide for therapists treating people with alcohol abuse and dependence* (Vol 1.). Bethesda, MD: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism. [Appendix B]
2. Walters, S. T., Alexander, M. A., & Vader, A. M. (2008). The Officer Responses Questionnaire: A procedure for measuring reflective listening in probation and parole settings. *Federal Probation*, 72(2), 67-70. [Appendix C]
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 20. Langley GJ. *The improvement guide: a practical approach to enhancing organizational performance*. 2nd ed. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; 2009.

Appendix B: Training Lesson Plans and Learning Objectives

A 6-part PowerPoint training series accompanies this manual. Each module includes presentation discussion, group exercises, and practice activities. Slides also have notes on how to explain the material (the material assumes the trainer is already competent in the skills). Modules can be completed in about 90 minutes. A multiple-choice questionnaire can be used at the end of training to measure knowledge.

At the conclusion of each module, participants will be able to:

1. The How's and Why's of Behavior Change
 - a. Identify 3-4 health areas that contribute to overall military readiness
 - b. Explain how the "stages of change" and self-determination theory are used to promote behavior change
 - c. Recognize the role of interpersonal style (e.g., directing, guiding, following) in influencing motivation
2. Using Open Questions
 - a. Distinguish open from closed questions
 - b. Explain when open and closed questions are most useful as a communication style
 - c. Demonstrate in a brief interview the ability to generate more open than closed questions
3. Using Reflections and Summaries
 - a. Distinguish reflections from other types of listening responses
 - b. Correctly respond to statements to demonstrate different types of reflections
 - c. Demonstrate in a brief interview the ability to generate more reflections than questions
4. Using Affirmations
 - a. Describe how affirmations help improve performance and readiness
 - b. Demonstrate in a brief interview the ability to summarize a person's strengths
 - c. Demonstrate in a brief interview the ability to affirm positive efforts and progress
5. Evoking and Strengthening Commitment
 - a. Identify and distinguish between change and sustain talk
 - b. Describe the connection between change talk and behavior change
 - c. Respond to change talk with reflective listening responses
6. Everyday Conversations
 - a. Distinguish forward- from backward-focused questions
 - b. Explain the importance of emphasizing autonomy in advice giving
 - c. Demonstrate the use of "SMART" goals in planning
 - d. Demonstrate in a brief interview the use of the CET

Appendix C: Useful Questions and Statements

Useful Questions

What concerns do you (does your CO, squad leader, etc.) have?
How has...caused trouble for you?
What are some good things about...?
What are some not-so-good things about...?
How would things be better for you if you made that change?
What thoughts have you had about change?
What do you think will happen if you don't...?
If you look forward to, say, a year from now, where would you like to be in your performance?
How do you want things to end up when you're done with active duty? Where do you want to be?
How would that pay off for you, if you went ahead and made this change?
In what situations is it hardest for you to stay sober/avoid smoking/avoid spending money/manage your anger?
There are a few things that might work for you (provide a short list). Which of these would you like to try?
Here are some things that we need to talk about (provide a short list). Which of these would you like to talk about first?
On a scale of 1-10, how important is it for you to make a change in your...?
On a scale of 1-10, how confident are you that you could change if you wanted to?
If you wanted to change, how would you go about it?
Who would (or will) help you to...?
What worked for you in the past?
What would you like to work on first?
When would be a good time to start?
How could (or will) you do that?
What can I do to help you succeed at...?
What else?

Useful Statements

That's a good idea.
You're really well informed about...
That's really smart of you to...
You've made a great effort to...
You have a lot of great ideas for...
You've obviously put a lot of thought into this.
It's frustrating/difficult.
It's hard for you.
So the thing that most concerns you is...
You want to do the right thing.
I think you could do it if you really wanted to.
I think that will work for you.
Thanks for talking with me.
I appreciate your honesty.

Appendix D: Characteristics of Successful Changers (“Strengths Exercise”)

Accepting	Committed	Flexible	Persevering	Stubborn
Active	Competent	Focused	Persistent	Thankful
Adaptable	Concerned	Forgiving	Positive	Thorough
Adventuresome	Confident	Forward-looking	Powerful	Thoughtful
Affectionate	Considerate	Free	Prayerful	Tough
Affirmative	Courageous	Happy	Quick	Trusting
Alert	Creative	Healthy	Reasonable	Trustworthy
Alive	Decisive	Hopeful	Receptive	Truthful
Ambitious	Dedicated	Imaginative	Relaxed	Understanding
Anchored	Determined	Ingenious	Reliable	Unique
Assertive	Die-hard	Intelligent	Resourceful	Unstoppable
Assured	Diligent	Knowledgeable	Responsible	Vigorous
Attentive	Doer	Loving	Sensible	Visionary
Bold	Eager	Mature	Skillful	Whole
Brave	Earnest	Open	Solid	Willing
Bright	Effective	Optimistic	Spiritual	Winning
Capable	Energetic	Orderly	Stable	Wise
Careful	Experienced	Organized	Steady	Worthy
Cheerful	Faithful	Patient	Straight	Zealous
Clever	Fearless	Perceptive	Strong	Zestful

“Some Characteristics of Successful Changers” is in the public domain and may be reproduced and adapted without further permission. Original source: Miller, W. R. (Ed.). (2004). *Combined Behavioral Intervention manual: A clinical research guide for therapists treating people with alcohol abuse and dependence* (Vol. 1). Bethesda, MD: National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

Appendix E: Soldier Responses Questionnaire

Here are some things a Soldier might say during a conversation. Think about each statement as if you were really in the situation, with that person talking to you. For each statement, write the next thing you would say if you wanted to let the person know that you were listening. Write only one or two sentences for each statement.

1. A Soldier tells you: “The PT standards are too strict. The kind of food they serve in the Army makes people fat.”
2. A Soldier tells you: “My drinking can definitely get out of hand sometimes, but there’s nothing else to do in town.”
3. A Soldier tells you: “My squad leader always takes PFC Mitchell’s side because they’re from the same town. They hang out and watch football all the time. He shouldn’t be giving me crap just because I’m not a Raiders fan.”
4. A Soldier tells you: “It’s really hard being away from my family. My wife gets so mad that I can’t be there for birthdays and stuff. I’ve tried reaching out, but she won’t even pick up the phone.”
5. A Soldier tells you: “I’ve been looking at different opportunities, but the training sucks here. I’ve got to figure out what to do after I get out of the Army.”

SCORING THE SOLDIER RESPONSES QUESTIONNAIRE

The SRQ measures depth of reflective listening. Each response is rated on the depth of reflection and ability to avoid communication roadblocks (Gordon, 1970). “Roadblocks” like the following can raise defensiveness and make change less likely:

- Ordering or threatening
- Persuading with logic, arguing, lecturing
- Disagreeing, criticizing, sarcasm, labeling
- Giving unsolicited advice, suggestions or solutions

To score the SRQ, give each written response a score from 1-5, based on the following criteria. Several examples are given for each, using responses to Soldier statement #1.

A score of 1 is given if the response includes a roadblock response, whether or not it contains additional elements. A score of 1 is also given for irrelevant, inaccurate or incomplete responses.

- *You have to meet the PT standards. It's required.* (ordering)
- *I bet if you lost some weight it would help with PT.* (persuading with logic)
- *So you're finding it difficult to maintain a healthy diet. What about eating smaller portions or walking to breakfast?* (reflection, unsolicited advice)

A score of 2 is given if the response contains a closed (yes/no/limited option) question. A score of 2 is also given for affirmations, offers of help, or supportive statements that do not fit into other categories. If the response also contains a roadblock, it receives a score of 1.

- *You think the standards are too strict? What do you think they should be?* (closed question)
- *It's good that you recognize that the weight gain is affecting your PT score.* (affirmation)
- *Would you like to talk about some ways that people manage their weight?* (offer to help)
- *I understand what you're saying.* (generic supportive statement)

A score of 3 is given if the response contains an open question. When multiple responses are made, the highest level is scored (unless the response contains a roadblock, resulting in a score of 1).

- *Tell me about some of the difficulties you're having.* (open question)
- *What do you think you should do?* (open question)
- *What strategies do you think you could use to keep the weight down?* (open question)

A score of 4 is given if the response repeats the basic content of the original statement. When multiple responses are made, the highest level is scored (unless the response contains a roadblock, resulting in a score of 1).

- *So it seems like the food is the main reason you're having trouble.* (simple reflection)
- *It sounds like you are aware and want to do something about the weight, but the food options make it more difficult. What kinds of things have you tried?* (simple reflection, open question)

A score of 5 is given if the response paraphrases the original statement, using substantially different language or inferring meaning. When multiple responses are made, the highest level is scored (unless the response contains a roadblock, resulting in a score of 1).

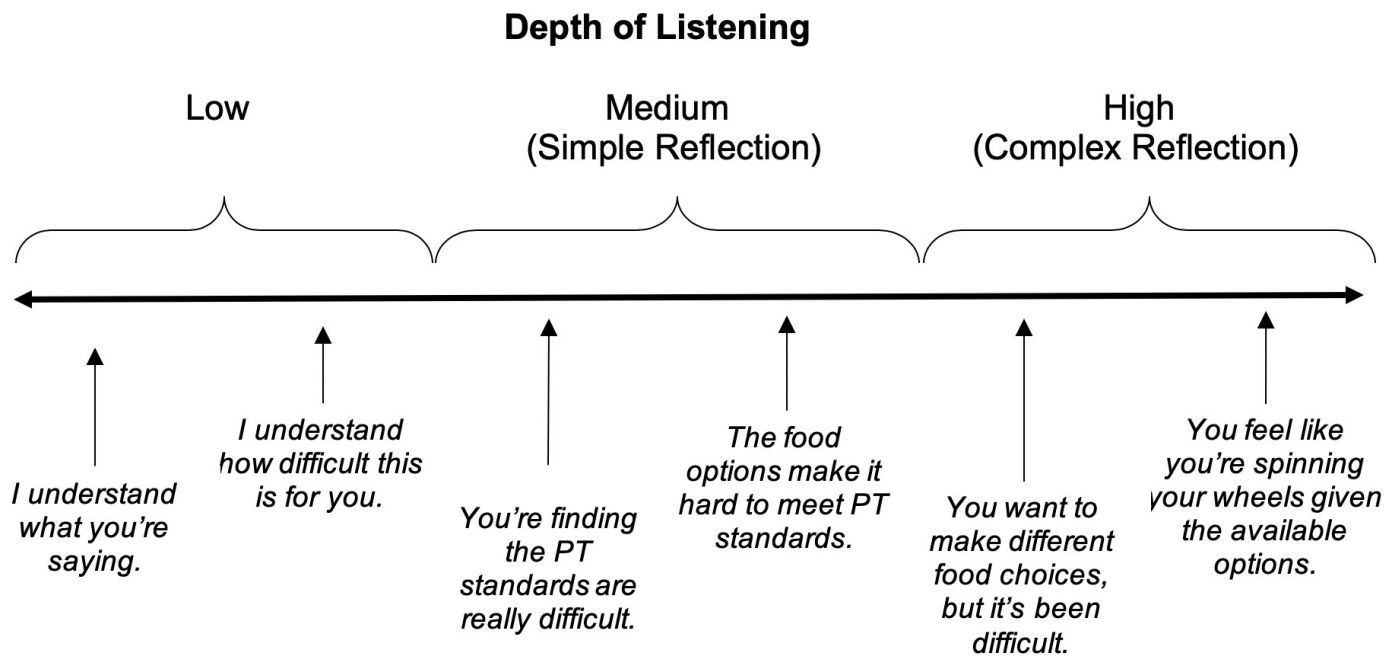
- *You really feel stuck.* (paraphrase that infers meaning)
- *You feel like you're caught between a rock and hard place.* (paraphrase that infers meaning)
- *You want to be fit, but it's hard to think about how you would do that. What kinds of things are you willing to try?* (paraphrase that infers meaning, open question)

It can sometimes be difficult to distinguish between reflections and other kinds of statements; sometimes a word or two can make a difference. Reflections are statements that restate or paraphrase what the Soldier has said. For instance, all of the following would probably be given a score of 4 or 5 (unless followed by a roadblock), because *they focus mainly on what the Soldier has said*.

- *It's frustrating.*
- *I hear you saying that you're frustrated.*
- *I understand that you're angry.*
- *I can see how frustrating this is.*
- *I can appreciate that it makes you angry.*

All of the following would probably be given a score of 2 because they focus mainly on the leader's reaction or affect, rather than on what the Soldier has said.

- *I understand what you're saying. I can see where you're coming from.* (lacks Soldier content)
- *I appreciate you sharing that with me.* (lacks Soldier content)
- *I understand the food choices are upsetting.* (emphasizes leader's understanding)
- *I can appreciate how angry you are about that.* (emphasizes leader's understanding)



Modified from: Walters, S.T., Cahill, M. A., Vader, A. M. (2008). The Officer Responses Questionnaire: A procedure for measuring reflective listening in probation and parole settings. *Federal Probation*, 72(2), 67-70.

Appendix F: Counseling Enhancement Tool Soldier Form

COUNSELING ENHANCEMENT TOOL
Soldier Form

This form was developed to assist junior enlisted Soldiers engage in conversations with NCOs about professional development. NCOs will ask your input in order to encourage a dialogue conversation about your progress, areas for improvement, and ways to move forward on your goals.

SOLDIER NAME:

NCO NAME:

1. TACTICAL AND TECHNICAL PROFICIENCY (MOS AND WARRIOR TASKS)

1. A. Sustain and Improve. Mark S for areas to sustain or I for areas you want to improve

- S I Demonstrate MOS proficiency
- S I Demonstrate warrior task proficiency
- S I Handle MOS task-related problems effectively
- S I MOS qualified
- S I Other:

Since my last developmental counseling I have received feedback about this area of performance from (list all you recall)?

1.B. Observations: Please list specific observations to support your choices above. Be prepared to share these examples with your NCO.

1.C. Expectations: On a scale of 1-100% what percentage of time have you met the expectations of your NCO in this area? %

1.D. Goal: How can you improve in this area? How can your leader help you improve? Others?

2. COMMUNICATES EFFECTIVELY

2.A. Sustain and Improve. Mark S for areas to sustain or I for areas you want to improve.

- S I Speak clearly and concisely
- S I Demonstrate communication skills needed for job duties
- S I Engage in active listening
- S I Demonstrate understanding when receiving communication from others (e.g., clarifies information, takes notes as needed)
- S I Distribute information in a timely manner (e.g., passes down relevant information to Soldiers, filters up important information to chain of command)
- S I Other:

Since my last developmental counseling I have received feedback about this area of performance from (list all you recall)?

2.B. Observations: Please list specific observations to support your choices above. Be prepared to share these examples with your NCO.

2.C. Expectations: On a scale of 1-100% what percentage of time have you met the expectations of your NCO in this area? %

2.D. Goal: How can you improve in this area? How can your leader help you improve? Others?

3. EXHIBITS EFFORT

3.A. Sustain and Improve. Mark S for areas to sustain or I for areas you want to improve

- S I Complete work assignments
- S I Put forth extra effort as needed to accomplish tasks effectively
- S I Complete assignments without unnecessary supervision
- S I Take initiative to accomplish tasks without being told
- S I Seek out challenging assignments and/or additional responsibilities
- S I Other:

Since my last developmental counseling I have received feedback about this area of performance from (list all you recall)?

3.B. Observations: Please list specific observations to support your choices above. Be prepared to share these examples with your NCO.

3.C. On a scale of 1-100% what percentage of time have you met the expectations of your NCO in this area? %

3.D. Goal: How can you improve in this area? How can your leader help you improve? Others?

4. EXHIBITS PERSONAL DISCIPLINE

4.A. Sustain and Improve. Mark S for areas to sustain or I for areas you want to improve

- S I Live the Army standards and values
- S I Hold others accountable to Army standards and values
- S I Follow orders willingly
- S I Exhibit self-control and discipline on the job
- S I Other:

Since my last developmental counseling I have received feedback about this area of performance from (list all you recall)?

4.B. Observations: Please list specific observations to support your choices above. Be prepared to share these examples with your NCO.

4.C. Expectations: On a scale of 1-100% what percentage of time have you met the expectations of your NCO in this area: %

4.D. Goal: How can you improve in this area? How can your leader help you improve? Others?

5. CONTRIBUTES TO THE TEAM

A. Sustain and Improve. Mark S for areas to sustain or I for areas you want to improve.

- S I Treat others with dignity and respect
- S I Offer assistance to others without being asked
- S I Put in effort to achieve team goals
- S I Other:

Since my last performance counseling I have received feedback about this area of performance from (list all you recall):

5.B. Observations: Please list specific observations to support your choices above. Be prepared to share these examples with your NCO.

5.C. Expectations: On a scale of 1-100% what percentage of time have you met the expectations of your NCO in this area? %

5.D. Goal: How can you improve in this area? How can your leader help you improve? Others?

6. EXHIBITS FITNESS, MILITARY BEARING, AND APPEARANCE

6.A. Sustain and Improve. Mark S for areas to sustain or I for areas you want to improve.

- S I Maintain physical condition per Army regulation
- S I Maintain military bearing per Army regulation
- S I Maintain Army standards for appearance per Army regulation
- S I Other

Since my last developmental counseling I have received feedback about this area of performance from (list all you recall):

6.B. Observations: Please list specific observations to support your choices above. Be prepared to share these examples with your NCO.

6.C. Expectations: On a scale of 1-100% what percentage of time have you met the expectations of your NCO in this area? %

6.D. Goal: How can you improve in this area? How can your leader help you improve? Others?

7. MANAGES PERSONAL MATTERS

7.A. Sustain and Improve. Mark S for areas to sustain or I for areas you want to improve.

- S I Fulfill commitments to family/friends
- S I Stay on top of personal finances and budget; financial planning
- S I Use sound judgment in personal matters
- S I Other:

Since my last developmental counseling I have received feedback about this area of performance from (list all you recall):

7.B. Observations: Please list specific observations to support your choices above. Be prepared to share these examples with your NCO.

7.C. Expectations: On a scale of 1-100%, what percentage of time have you met the expectations of your NCO in this area over the past month? %

7.D. Goal: How can you improve in this area? How can your leader help you improve? Others?

8. Plan: Consider three main goals you would like to focus on for the next evaluation period. Think about your answers above, your overall goals, and your current status on the following measures as you select your next goals:

SMART Goal 1:

SMART Goal 2:

SMART Goal 3:

Barriers and Resources: Is there anything that could interfere with you accomplishing these goals? What is your plan to address this barrier? How could your leader help you? How can others help you?

Appendix G: Counseling Enhancement Tool Leader Form

COUNSELING ENHANCEMENT TOOL
Leader Form

This tool is designed to support the development of Soldiers by offering a method NCOs can use to enhance conversations around developmental counseling. Brief instructions are included in each section and detailed instructions and guidance are contained in the tool reference material.

Soldier:

NCO:

Key events since last session:

Dates of review:

1. TACTICAL AND TECHNICAL PROFICIENCY (MOS AND WARRIOR TASKS)

1. A. Sustains and Improves. Mark S for sustain or I for improvement.

- S I Demonstrates MOS proficiency.
- S I Demonstrates warrior task proficiency.
- S I Handles MOS task-related problems effectively.
- S I MOS qualified.
- S I Other:

1.B. Observations:

1.C. Expectations: Ask Soldier: On a scale of 1-100%, what percentage of time do you think you have met expectations? %

1.D. Goal: Ask Soldier: What can you do to improve? How can I help you get there?

2. COMMUNICATES EFFECTIVELY

2.A. Sustains and Improves. Mark S for sustain or I for improvement.

- S I Speaks clearly and concisely.
- S I Demonstrates communication skills needed for job duties Engages in active listening.
- S I Demonstrates understanding when receiving communication from others (e.g., clarifies information, takes notes as needed).
- S I Distributes information in a timely manner (e.g., passes down relevant information to Soldiers, filters up important information to chain of command).
- S I Other:

2.B. Observations:

2.C. Expectations: Ask Soldier: On a scale of 1-100%, what percentage of time do you think you have met expectations? %

2.D. Goal: Ask Soldier: What can you do to improve? How can I help you get there?

3. EXHIBITS EFFORT

3.A. Sustains and Improves. Mark S for sustain or I for improvement.

- SOI Completes work assignments even under challenging conditions.
- SOI Puts forth extra effort as needed to accomplish tasks effectively
- SOI Completes assignments without unnecessary supervision.
- SOI Takes initiative to accomplish tasks without supervision.
- SOI Seeks out challenging assignments and/or additional responsibilities.
- SOI Other:

3.B. Observations:

3.C. Expectations: Ask Soldier: On a scale of 1-100%, what percentage of time do you think you have met expectations? %

3.D. Goal: Ask Soldier: What can you do to improve? How can I help you get there?

4. EXHIBITS PERSONAL DISCIPLINE

4.A. Sustains and Improves. Mark S for sustain or I for improvement.

- SOI Holds self to Army values and standards.
- SOI Holds others accountable to Army values and standards.
- SOI Follows orders; committed to obligations.
- SOI Exhibits self-control and discipline on the job.
- SOI Other:

4.B. Observations:

4.C. Expectations: Ask Soldier: On a scale of 1-100%, what percentage of time do you think you have met expectations? %

4.D. Goal: Ask Soldier: What can you do to improve? How can I help you get there?

5. CONTRIBUTES TO THE TEAM

5.A. Sustains and Improves. Mark S for sustain or I for improvement.

- SOI Treats others with dignity and respect.
- SOI Notices when others need help and offers assistance without being asked.
- SOI Puts in effort to achieve team goals.
- SOI Other:

5.B. Observations:

5.C. Expectations: Ask Soldier: On a scale of 1-100%, what percentage of time do you think you have met expectations? %

5.D. Goal: Ask Soldier: What can you do to improve? How can I help you get there?

6. EXHIBITS FITNESS, MILITARY BEARING, AND APPEARANCE

6.A. Sustains and Improves. Mark S for sustain or I for improvement.

- S I Maintains physical condition per Army regulation.
- S I Maintains excellent military bearing per Army regulation.
- S I Maintains Army standards for appearance per Army regulation.
- S I Other:

6.B. Observations:

6.C. Expectations: Ask Soldier: On a scale of 1-100%, what percentage of time do you think you have met expectations? %

6.D. Goal: Ask Soldier: What can you do to improve? How can I help you get there?

7. MANAGES PERSONAL MATTERS

7.A. Sustains and Improves. Mark S for sustain or I for improvement.

- S I Fulfills commitments to family/ friends.
- S I Maintains personal finances and budget; financial planning.
- S I Uses sound judgment in personal matters.
- S I Others:

7.B. OBSERVATION

7.C. Expectations: Ask Soldier: On a scale of 1-100%, what percentage of time do you think you have met expectations? %

7.D. Goal: Ask Soldier: What can you do to improve? How can I help you get there?

8. Plan: Based on the conversation, work with Soldier to identify three areas to focus. Review the Soldier's information in the Small Unit Leader Tool, and their IDP in ACT. Have the Soldier identify the top 3 areas they want to work on. Help the Soldier develop relevant SMART goals.

SMART Goal 1:

SMART Goal 2

SMART Goal 3

Barriers and Resources: Ask the Soldier: Is there anything that could get in the way of you achieving these goals? Based on the discussion were you able to identify any additional resources the Soldier could utilize for success?

Appendix H: Counseling Enhancement Tool Instructions

Counseling Enhancement Tool: CET

Background: NCOs play an important role in the professional development of junior enlisted Soldiers by training, educating, and counseling Soldiers in accordance with the Army Ethic. To support NCOs in this task, the Counseling Enhancement Tool (piloted as the Soldier and Leader Development Tool) was designed to help NCOs have quality conversations during developmental counseling. The CET provides guidance for interactive, collaborative, two-way conversations about Soldier development for the purpose of improving performance.

The CET is based on motivational interviewing, which is a collaborative, goal-oriented communication style designed to strengthen motivation and commitment to goals. *Talk Like a Leader (TLAL)*, an empirically-supported communication skills training developed for Army NCOs, provides skill-based training that supports the CET. (Contact Dr. April Sanders at the Army Research Institute Fort Hood for more information on the TLAL; april.d.sanders9.civ@mail.mil).

Purpose: The CET was designed to foster an open dialogue between leaders and subordinates. The tool is not intended to make evaluative decisions, but rather maximize existing opportunities for NCOs and Soldiers to share observations, discuss expectations, and develop collaborative plans to increase goal attainment.

Overview: The CET provides seven topic areas, gleaned from doctrine and research, relevant to all junior enlisted Soldiers. These topics should be considered a minimum for developmental counseling, rather than an exhaustive list of potential topics. There may be other areas that you and your Soldiers need to discuss regarding development and these should be added into the discussion. The CET consists of two parts: a Soldier Form and a Leader Form. The Soldier Form is designed to prepare junior enlisted Soldiers for developmental counseling by engaging in self-evaluation exercises. The Leader form provides prompts for the NCO to walk through a conversation about developmental counseling with the Soldier. Both forms include embedded instructions in the interactive PDF form and expanded instructions here. Each form also includes the same seven focus areas to be discussed: *Tactical and Technical Proficiency; Communicates Effectively; Exhibits Effort; Exhibits Personal Discipline; Contributes to the Team; Exhibits Fitness, Military Bearing, and Appearance; and Manages Personal Matters.*

Procedure:

- A. Part 1: Planning: The leader provides the CET *Soldier form* to the Soldier along with these instructions and a timeframe for completion. The leader completes each sub-section A and B of each of the seven topic areas included on the CET.
 - Sub-section A. *Sustain and Improve*. The leader reads each description and marks each with the rating that best describes the Soldier's performance over the past rating period (typically in the past month).
 - Sub-section B. *Observations*. The leader makes notes of the Soldier's behaviors, either direct observations or those reported by others, that support the *Soldier Performance* choice. Observations should include areas of strength, as well as

opportunities for growth. It is important observations be as specific and detailed as possible. Including the frequency of the behavior, the impact it has on others, its connection to Soldier and team performance, goals, and the overall mission may be particularly helpful. If Soldier observations are currently tracked in another format (e.g., a green book, running DA Form 4856), note their location for quick reference for the discussion.

- B. Part 2: Conversation with Soldier: The leader and Soldier set aside time to review sub-sections A and B. The leader guides the conversation using the rest of the CET, sub-section C-E and Section 8.
- Sub-section C. *Expectations*. The purpose of this section is to set the tone of the conversation, demonstrating to the Soldier they will have an important part in the discussion about professional development. The basic approach is to balance expertise (*What are you seeing? What recommendations do you have?*) with evocation (*What is the Soldier seeing? What ideas does the Soldier have?*). Understanding the Soldier's perspective on their own performance, barriers, and needed resources provides the leader with important information. In addition, by encouraging Soldier input, this helps him or her be better prepared when they begin providing developmental counseling to others. It is important to note that it is not necessary to share leader ratings immediately with the Soldier, especially if it is significantly lower. The purpose of this section is to gain a better understanding of what your expectations are and how they are being met or not met. Based on how they are presented, your rating of the Soldier may inspire them or discourage, and thus it should be shared with the intention of helping the Soldier improve, not simply to provide a number that does not constitute a score or assessment rating.
 - Sub-section D. *Goal*. In this sub-section the leader guides the conversation to a specific goal the Soldier wants to accomplish by using the tools and approaches taught in the *Talk Like a Leader* training (see Tools and Approach section below for a brief overview). The purpose is to leverage the Soldier's internal motivation to a goal by allowing the Soldier a more active role in the goal setting process. When leaders guide the conversation in such a way to increase the Soldier's internal motivation and commitment to the goal research suggests Soldiers will take more responsibility for the outcomes than just being told what their goals should be. The leader can provide suggestions or resources at opportune times (e.g., when the Soldier agrees to hear suggestions) in order to maximize the Soldier's receptiveness and utilization of provided suggestions.

The leader will repeat these steps for all seven sections (*Tactical and Technical Proficiency; Communicates Effectively; Exhibits Effort; Exhibits Personal Discipline; Contributes to the Team; Exhibits Fitness, Military Bearing, and Appearance; and Manages Personal Matters*).

- Section 8. *Plan*. The purpose of this sub-section is to guide the leader through a discussion focused on a plan forward. The cue questions included in Section 1 attempt to ensure the plan centers around activities that both the leader and Soldier are willing and capable of performing within the time frame. The questions can be

modified if the leader needs to ask the Soldier directly. For example, the cue question “What is the Soldier willing to do to address barriers to progress?” can be changed to ask the Soldier “What are you willing to do to overcome the barriers we discussed?” As you discuss and plan the path forward it might be useful to refer to the SMART goal format (see below for more information): and/or integrate the plan with the Soldier’s Individual Development Plan in Army Tracker. This section is designed to ensure that you and your Soldier have a shared understanding of the plan for moving forward.

Tools and Approach: Developmental counseling relies strongly on interpersonal listening strategies such as open-ended questions, affirmations, reflections, and summaries (“OARS”). These strategies are used throughout the meeting to ensure that the leader understands the Soldier’s perspective and is engaging the Soldier in the process.

- A. Ask Open Questions: Closed questions ask for yes/no or limited-range responses, while open questions ask for longer answers or elaboration. Closed questions are better for getting short answers or verifying understanding. Open questions are usually better at pulling out detailed information or encouraging a person to think about the answer.

For instance:

- *What questions do you have?*
- *What do you want to do after you’re done with active duty? Where do you want to be long-term?*
- *What other ideas do you have? What else might work for you?*

Open questions can also help a Soldier to arrive at a specific plan of action:

- *There are a few things that people do here (provide a short list). Which of these do you think would work for you?*
- *Who would (or will) help you to...?*
- *What worked for you in the past?*

During developmental counseling, it can be more useful to concentrate on “forward-focused” questions that ask what Soldiers *could do, will do, or things that will work for them*. In contrast, backward questions ask why Soldiers *can’t, won’t, or didn’t* do something. For instance:

Avoid	Try
Why did you do that?	<i>How can you fix this?</i>
Why did you forget to submit the form?	<i>What’s your plan to make sure the form gets submitted next time?</i>
Why are you late?	<i>How will you make sure you’re here on time tomorrow?</i>

The questions on the left encourage Soldiers to talk about barriers, while the ones on the right encourage Soldiers to talk about solutions.

B. Affirm Positive Progress: Good leaders go out of their way to call attention to positive progress. Some leaders take time to learn about a Soldier’s family, hobbies, and strengths so that they can show a genuine interest in his or her personal life. Knowing what drives your Soldier, and what he or she is doing well is a crucial part of developmental counseling.

One kind of affirmation highlights something a Soldier has done well:

- *This is really great work. The attention to detail is excellent.*
- *You’re making great progress.*
- *Things are much improved.*

Another kind of affirmation calls attention to strengths or character traits:

- *You care a lot about your work product. I think you’ll do well as a sergeant.*
- *You have a lot of leadership qualities. People listen to you.*
- *That’s a really smart observation.*

“How” (rather than “why”) questions can reinforce positive efforts and build confidence:

- *How did you do this?*
- *How did you know that would work?*
- *You’ve done a remarkable job putting all of this together. How did you manage to do all that?*

Emphasizing positive qualities can help shift Soldiers’ perspectives from their deficiencies to their capabilities, and from past disappointments to future opportunities.

C. Reflect what the Soldier is Saying: Reflections are restatements or summaries of what a Soldier is saying or thinking. They may repeat or rephrase what a Soldier has said, summarize an emotion, or point out mixed feelings. The best reflections use slightly different words to demonstrate that the leader understands the point the Soldier is trying to make. Reflections demonstrate respect, and clarify that you and the Soldier both understand what the conversation is about.

Here are some ways a leader could reflect a Soldier’s statement: “We just found out my girlfriend is pregnant again. Finances are already stretched so thin, I’m not sure how we’re going to make it work.”

Repeat/Rephrase (use similar words)	<i>It sounds like you’re concerned about how the baby is going to affect your finances.</i>
-----------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Paraphrase (use different words)	<i>That's a tough spot to be in. You're not sure what to do.</i> [adds meaning]
Double-Sided Reflection (capture both sides)	<i>So there's some joy about the new baby, but also a lot of anxiety about what this will mean.</i>
Reflection with a Twist (reflect back part, with a slightly different emphasis)	<i>So you're really going to have to get creative to figure out how to make this work within your budget.</i> [agrees with part of statement, adds meaning]

At points of disagreement, reflections can acknowledge the Soldier's viewpoint while keeping the conversation moving forward. Instead of disagreeing or pointing out a Soldier's poor attitude, a better response is usually to reflect what the Soldier is saying and redirect the conversation with an open question or a statement that highlights the Soldier's options or responsibility to meet the standard.

Soldier Says:	Less Effective	More Effective
I can't get to PT on time. Everyone's coming here at the same time and the traffic is terrible.	Maybe you should leave your house earlier.	<i>You're right. Traffic in the morning is bad. Everyone's got to figure out their own plan for getting here by 0600. What are your options?</i>
I was never told I'd have to take all these classes. I'm just sitting in a room all day.	You signed the contract, didn't you? You sure didn't have any problem taking the signing bonus.	<i>So, this part is surprising to you. Given that this is part of your training, what are some things you can do to help you get through this class?</i>

Importantly, a leader does not have to agree with the Soldier in order to reflect. Rather, reflections show that a person understands what someone else is saying.

- D. **Summarize What you are Hearing:** Summaries remind a person about major discussion points, the plan of action, and the person's own reasons for taking action. Summaries also allow for direction or commentary by the leader to emphasize parts of what the person has said. A summary at the end of the counseling session demonstrates that the leader understands all that has transpired, and reminds the Soldier about the plan of action to address any deficiencies.

Here's an example of a summary where the leader and Soldier are talking about a stressful home situation that is beginning to affect work performance. In this example, the leader does not have a particular goal in mind other than helping a Soldier think through a difficult situation. The summary alone can be helpful.

It's like you said...marriages can be difficult. In your case, it's sort of like a vicious cycle. When you get home, you're exhausted from being at work all day, and she's exhausted from being with the baby. You both end up saying things you regret later.

You've suggested she spend more time with the other wives on the base, but for whatever reason, it's just not working for her.

Here's an example of a summary where the leader does have a goal in mind: Helping improve a Soldier's PT performance.

So, let me summarize here. We've been talking about time management and PT performance. This week you've been consistently a few minutes late to formation, and the running, in particular, has been rough. Because of the weight gain, you're at risk for failing your next PT test. So, what's your plan here?

Here's an example of a summary that closes a developmental counseling interaction:

We've talked about a couple things. One is getting caught up on your training hours, and you thought that working with PFC Marshall on the flashcards would help. I think that's a smart idea, and would benefit you both. As far as your work assignment, we talked about a couple of options for the days you're not on vehicle maintenance. You said it's important to you to get some skills that might be transferrable to HVAC repair outside the Army. What else do you want to add to this plan?

E. Help the Soldier to Plan

Soldiers are more likely to achieve their goals if they are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time bound (sometimes called "SMART" planning). If a Soldier has a large goal, it may help to break the goal into smaller, short-term steps that will increase the chance of success. For example, if a Soldier wants to obtain a job in an area where they have no experience, a leader might help the Soldier to break the goal into smaller pieces. The leader can give suggestions and advice where appropriate, but it is better if Soldiers are doing most of the problem solving.

	Key Question	Example
Specific	What specifically do you want to achieve?	<i>I'd like to get more experience in air defense.</i>
Measurable	How will you know if you've reached your goal?	<i>When I leave the Army, I'd like to get my degree in aviation or aerospace engineering.</i>
Attainable	What resources are needed?	<i>I would need to apply to Air Defense Artillery School.</i>
Realistic	Is the goal reasonable?	<i>I have a good head for numbers. Aerospace is a big industry where I live.</i>
Time-Bound	When will each of the steps be completed without kicking the can down the road?	<i>In the next week, I'd like to do some research on what training programs are available.</i>

A leader can help a Soldier brainstorm situations that might cause problems.

- *What are some parts of your plan that might be difficult?*
- *What would you have to do to address that?*

A leader can also help a Soldier identify who (or what) would help to achieve the goal. Here are some questions that ask specifically about that person's role in the change process, and what the Soldier would need to do to involve this person.

- *Who is someone who might be able to help you? How would they help?*
- *What's your timeline?*

Written or visual cues, such as notes, schedules, and reminders, can also be helpful. Again, the Soldier should be the one who is doing most of the talking. Leaders sometimes add a bit of advice or information where appropriate, and use reflections or summaries to reinforce the plan.

- *What would that look like? Where would you start? What would happen next?*
- *What are some things that might get in your way? How would you deal with that?*
- *If you're at a 2 now in your progress, what would it take to get you to a 3?*