

# teamCORE

Cohesion & Organizational  
Readiness Enhancement



*This module was developed by the Research Transition Office (RTO) of the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR), based on research from the Center for Cognitive and Social Neuroscience at the University of Chicago. Comments or suggestions for the improvement of this module should be made to WRAIR at:*

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## **Team Cohesion and Organizational Readiness Enhancement (TeamCORE)**

### **Introduction**












The Army's Ready and Resilient Campaign, in its mission to strengthen personal readiness and optimize performance, encompasses five key domains: physical, psychological, social, spiritual, and family. This training centers around the social dimension.

Team Cohesion and Organizational Resilience Enhancement, or "TeamCORE", is designed to enhance the social fitness of individual Soldiers – and, by extension, units – through the understanding of social influences and the application of specific social fitness skills and exercises. TeamCORE is designed to help Soldiers learn skills and principles toward developing and sustaining healthy individual and group relationships and to equip them with an acute awareness of the indicators of social fitness. The training is designed for Soldiers at the unit level.

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This Trainer's Guide for the following training module has been designed to be user-friendly while containing as much information as possible to help you present this module. The following symbols are used throughout.

Symbol	Represents	Explanation
	Timing	This symbol indicates the amount of time allotted for a given section of the material.
	Target / Intent	This symbol indicates the main function or rationale for a given slide.
	Key Point	Numbers and text highlighted in yellow are used to indicate the main points that must be addressed in order to meet a given section's target / intent.
	Sample Script	Bullets are used to elaborate on key points by providing a potential script that the trainer can use.
	Note to Trainer	Bracketed text indicates a note to the trainer which is not intended to be read aloud. These provide hints on how to present the material and tips to avoid potential issues that may arise within a given topic.
	Multimedia	This symbol indicates the use of supplementary audio/video files. To avoid down-time or technical difficulties, keep an eye out for these and plan accordingly.
	Handouts	This symbol indicates that the participants will use handouts at a given point in the module. To avoid down-time, keep an eye out for these and plan accordingly.
	Exercise	This symbol indicates the start of an exercise or activity. To avoid down-time, keep an eye out for these and plan accordingly.
	Continue	This symbol indicates that the training material for a given slide continues onto the next page.
	Stop	This symbol indicates that the training material for a given slide ends on this page.
	Discussion Question(s)	This symbol identifies when there is a non-rhetorical discussion question(s) in the instructional content that follows.

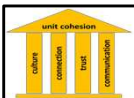
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[usarmy.detrick.medcom-wrair.mbx.resilience-research@health.mil](mailto:usarmy.detrick.medcom-wrair.mbx.resilience-research@health.mil)

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## TERMINAL LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Action:
  - Increase Soldiers' knowledge of concepts and skills to reduce social isolation and enhance unit cohesion
- Condition:
  - In an instructional setting, through group discussions, activities, and/or individual responses (written or verbal) as determined by the instructor.
- Standard:
  - Demonstrate an understanding of methods proven effective to:
    - constructively share unit culture
    - enhance and protect social connection within units
    - strengthen trust within units
    - reinforce communication between unit members

Record your own notes here:



### Outline the course objectives.

#### 1. Explain Course Terminal Learning Objective (TLO) Action.

- Welcome to the training in Team Cohesion and Organizational Resilience Enhancement (TeamCORE).
- This course is designed to increase Soldiers' knowledge of concepts and skills necessary to reduce social isolation and enhance unit cohesion.

#### 2. Summarize the (TLO) Condition.

- In an instructional setting, through group discussions and/or individual responses (written or verbal) as determined by the instructor.

#### 3. Summarize the (TLO) Standard.

- Demonstrate a solid understanding of methods proven effective to:
  - Constructively share unit culture,
  - Enhance and protect social connection within units,
  - Strengthen trust within units, and
  - Strengthen social communication between unit members.



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**Length of the training 2.5 hours**



**To introduce the course and the trainer.**

**1. Introduce the course and the trainer.**

- Good morning/afternoon my name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am a \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_.
- Welcome to Team Cohesion and Organizational Readiness Enhancement - TeamCORE.
- Much like there are specific physical exercises that strengthen the core of your body, our goal through TeamCORE is to provide you with specific skills or "exercises" to strengthen the "core" of your unit.

**2. Provide an overview of the training.**

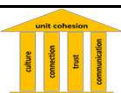
- The training will last 2.5 hours, including a 10-minute break.
- We'll talk about the basics of team cohesion and then talk about specific skills you can use to increase unit cohesion.

**3. Explain the importance of class participation.**

- This is an interactive module.
- The more you participate, the more you'll get out of this training.



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## FORTIFYING UNIT COHESION

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**Pillar #1: Consider unit culture**

- Skill #1: Understanding unit culture
- Skill #2: Sharing unit culture

**Pillar #2: Protect unit connections**

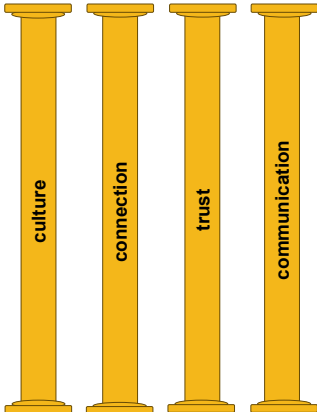
- Skill #1: Addressing social isolation
- Skill #2: Countering groupthink

**Pillar #3: Strengthen unit trust**

- Skill #1: Listening Well
- Skill #2: Responding Well

**Pillar #4: Reinforce communication**

- Skill #1: Tactical Communication
- Skill #2: Clearing Roadblocks
- Skill #3: A Good Apology



Record your own notes here:



**To provide an outline of the course lessons and skills.**

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

1. Briefly discuss the main areas that will be covered in the course.

- Here's an outline of what we'll be talking about.
- The overarching structure here is unit cohesion that is supported by four pillars (as pictured at the top right of the screen).

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- First pillar we will discuss is unit culture: understanding unit culture, and how we share and communicate unit culture.

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- Next, we will talk about unit connections: addressing social isolation, and how to create Group-mind and protect against groupthink.

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- Then we will talk about unit trust: listening well and responding well.

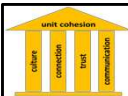


**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- Our fourth and final pillar is all about communication: communicating effectively and avoiding pitfalls that can lead to conflict.
- Let's start with understanding Unit Cohesion.

Record your own notes  
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## UNIT COHESION

### What is cohesion?

Sticking together tightly

What does a cohesive unit look and feel like?



To define cohesion and discuss the characteristics of a cohesive unit.

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

### 1. Define cohesion.

- **[ASK]:** You've probably heard the term cohesion a lot but what does it mean?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses, then provide definition.]

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- Cohesion is defined in the dictionary as the act or state of sticking together tightly.

### 2. Discuss what a cohesive unit looks and feels like.

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

**[NOTE:** Recording responses to the following discussion on a whiteboard or flipchart is optional and can be a helpful visual.]

- **[ASK]:** What does a cohesive unit look and feel like? What are signs of a cohesive unit?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses. If Soldiers struggle to come up with examples, prompt with the following-up question on the next page.]

Record your own notes here:

**[NOTE:** Focus the discussion on positive examples of cohesion, rather than negative examples of poor cohesion or toxic leadership, for example.]



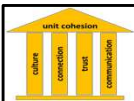
- **[ASK]:** In other words, what are some behaviors you might see, or comments you might hear from other Soldiers indicating that a unit is highly cohesive?

**[NOTE:** Allow for brief discussion. Signs of a cohesive unit might include the following:

- Good leadership,
- Two-way communication,
- Goals,
- Trust,
- Defined roles,
- Recognition of each other's strengths,
- Acceptance of others who think differently,
- Growth mindset or learning environment,
- Sense of urgency, and
- Synergy (better together than apart).]

Record your own notes  
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## WHY IS COHESION IMPORTANT?

### Cohesive units...

- ✓train to higher standards
- ✓fight better
- ✓have fewer casualties
- ✓do not disintegrate under stress
- ✓require less administrative support
- ✓provide a higher quality of life



**Cohesive units are more combat effective than a collection of lone wolves**

Record your own notes here:



**To highlight the importance of cohesion and communication skills.**

### 1. Discuss the benefits of cohesion and a cohesive team.

- If you've worked in a cohesive team, you know it.
- All the members work well together towards a common goal and are more effective than a collection of single individuals.
- Research shows that more cohesive units
  - train to higher standards,
  - fight better,
  - make better tactical decisions,
  - suffer fewer casualties,
  - require less administrative support, and
  - are better at withstanding stress.

*[NOTE: This association is likely correlational; not much research has been conducted on causation.]*

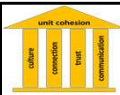
### 2. Explain that team cohesion can be trained and developed.

- The good news is that unit cohesion is not accidental.
- By using the skills you will learn in this module, your unit can strengthen its cohesion.
- Now let's talk about one thing that can get in the way of unit cohesion – social isolation.

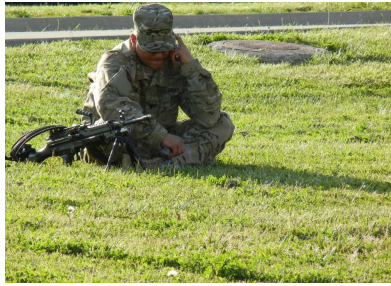




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## SOCIAL ISOLATION



### Social Isolation

the feeling of not belonging; being disconnected from others

Social isolation is not the same as being alone

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Strain, R. (2012). 3rd ESC soldiers deploy to Afghanistan [Image 3 of 3][Photograph]. Defense Visual Information Distribution Service. <https://www.dvidshub.net/image/560078/3rd-esc-soldiers-deploy-afghanistan>



**To define social isolation and its impact on the unit.**

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

### 1. Define social isolation.

- One enemy of unit cohesion is social isolation.
- **[ASK]:** When you hear the term social isolation, what comes to mind?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses.]

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- Social isolation is the feeling of not belonging or of being somehow disconnected from others.
- This feeling can result from being physically apart from others, from not having enough social interactions, or from feeling excluded from a group.
- It also may be that the social interactions you do have just aren't fulfilling.
- **[ASK]:** Do you enjoy spending time on your own?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses.]

- We all enjoy being on our own from time to time, but that's not what we're talking about when we're talking about social isolation.



**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

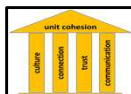
- Social isolation is not the same thing as being alone.
- In other words, social isolation is not always about whether you're around other people, it's about how you relate to other people.

**2. Emphasize that social isolation is a unit-level problem.**

- Feeling socially isolated affects your emotions, your ability to make sense of things, and your behavior toward others.
- Soldiers who feel isolated have:
  - more mental health problems, are angrier, and
  - have more physical pain and limitations, which can affect how they perform at work.
- It's also harder to interact with someone you feel disconnected from, and it's harder to build cohesion if some unit members feel isolated.
- Negative feelings stemming from perceived isolation can spread, so it's not only an individual Soldier's problem—it is the unit's problem.

Record your own notes  
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## SOCIAL CONTAGION

**Social isolation can spread over time**



**Explain how emotions and attitudes can spread and why it matters.**

1. To define social contagion and explain how emotions and attitudes can spread
  - You may have heard sayings like “laughter is contagious” or “a smile is contagious.”
  - We know that both positive and negative moods, attitudes, and behaviors can spread throughout a group of people.
  - Has anyone seen anger spread through an organization or group?
  - This is what we call “social contagion”—the spread of attitudes, ideas, emotions, and behaviors from person to person and across a social network.

### 2. Explain that social isolation can spread.

- We also know from research that social isolation can spread across a social network.
- In a social network, if one person starts to feel isolated, over time, this may mean that the individual stops reaching out and connecting with others. This behavior can start to affect others so that over time, other people in the social network start to feel isolated as well.

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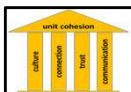
**[NOTE:** In one study, more than 5,000 people from a community completed a loneliness questionnaire every few years over a 10 year period. By looking at social networks over time, researchers were able to see how loneliness spread across the groups. People were about 50% more likely to experience loneliness if someone they were directly connected to felt lonely. Cacioppo et al., 2009]



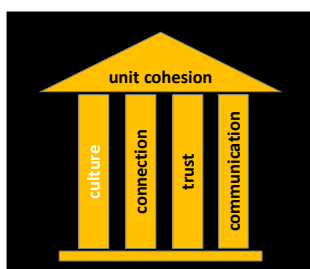
- This may cause a lot of problems for units including the loss of individual trust in the group as a whole.
- Then, before you know it, the team is starting to feel disconnected.
- This is why it's important to pay attention and be aware of verbal and behavioral indicators of social isolation as a means of protecting unit cohesion.

Record your own notes  
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## SHARING UNIT CULTURE



Record your own notes  
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**To outline the importance of sharing unit culture as a means of establishing unit cohesion.**

### 1. Discuss Pillar One: Culture

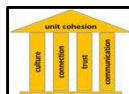
- The first pillar supporting unit cohesion is Sharing Unit Culture.
- **[ASK]:** What comes to mind when you hear the phrase "unit culture"?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses.]

- Culture is the set of shared
  - attitudes,
  - values,
  - goals, and
  - practices
- that characterizes an organization like a military unit.



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## UNDERSTANDING UNIT CULTURE



- Every unit has its own unique culture
- Unit culture is defined by its identity, its members' roles, and the unit's rules

Who we are



What we do



How we do it



**To provide an overview of the three components of Army unit culture.**

1. Discuss the three parts that make up unit culture; identity, roles, and rules.

- For our purposes, team or unit culture is made up of (1) identity, (2) roles, and (3) rules.
  - A unit's identity can reveal whether teammates see themselves as professionals or not.
  - The advantage of cultivating the identity of a professional warrior can strengthen the team's commitment to their mission and to excellence.
- **[ASK]:** What are some examples of identity, roles, and rules that are part of your unit?

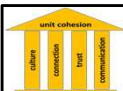
**[NOTE]:** Allow for responses. Responses may include items below:

- Identity includes things like names, symbols, patches, headgear, mottos, and the shared history that define us.
- Roles include things like ranks, positions, and titles, formal and informal that organize us.
- Rules include things like guidelines for behavior, regulations, SOPs, and procedures for action.]

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## TEAM CULTURE: WRITTEN AND UNWRITTEN RULES



**What do you do  
when you see this?**



**...now what about  
this?**



**To identify the importance of written and  
unwritten cultural norms.**

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

### 1. Define written and unwritten cultural norms.

- In every team or organization, there are written and unwritten rules.

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- **[ASK]:** What do you do when you see this?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses/reactions.]

- We all know to stop at a stop sign. The rule is written right on the sign just in case we don't know that a red octagon means "stop."

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- **[ASK]:** ...now what do you do in this situation? If you're a Soldier, do you walk on the SGM's grass?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses/reactions.]

- Sometimes the rules about what to do are not always clearly written for us. In these situations, we rely on unwritten rules.
- For example, it is typically assumed that Soldiers shouldn't walk on the grass, even though there is no written rule against it.

Record your own notes  
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- **[ASK]:** How do we learn unwritten rules? How did you learn not to walk on grass?

**[NOTE:** Allow for brief discussion and record responses on a whiteboard or flipchart (optional). How to learn unwritten rules might include the following:

- Watch what other people do,
- Ask others,
- Read about the culture, and
- Make mistakes and get corrected.]

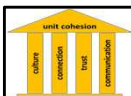
Record your own notes here:

**[NOTE:** Another unwritten rule is not double-dipping chips.]

**[NOTE:** One reason for the unwritten rule about grass is that if Soldiers think it's ok to take shortcuts between paths, they might think it's ok to take shortcuts in other ways too.

Taken from:  
[wearethemighty.com/why-troops-keep-off-grass](http://wearethemighty.com/why-troops-keep-off-grass)]





## LEARNING THE CULTURE



**To normalize difficulty in transitioning to a new unit.**

### 1. Discuss difficulties of integrating into a new unit.

- What about joining a new unit? Learning the unwritten rules of a new unit can make adjustment challenging.
- **[ASK]:** How hard is it to integrate into a new unit?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses].

- Research with more than 2,000 soldiers found that 1 in 5 soldiers who had recently PCSed to a new unit reported feeling moderately to very alone.
- This difficulty with transition was the same, regardless of marital status, rank, or how long someone had been in the military.

### 2. Explain that integrating should be intentional and may need to go beyond the sponsorship effort.

- In order to bridge the integration gap, the Army created the Total Army Sponsorship Program.
- But let's face it, integration takes more than the Sponsorship program, and Soldiers may feel lonely or isolated long after the initial adjustment period. Therefore both the new Soldier and the unit members should be attuned to the issue of loneliness.

Record your own notes here:

Adrian, A. L., Adler, A. B., Thomas, J. L., & Britt, T. W. (2018). Integrating new soldiers: The role of leaders and unit members. *Military Psychology*, 30(2), 131-141.

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## LEARNING THE CULTURE

### Skills for newcomers

- Watch and observe
- Ask questions
- Show up on and off duty
- Be socially aware



**To identify what newcomers can do to integrate.**

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

1. Discuss behaviors that can help new soldiers integrate into the new unit.

- **[ASK]:** What can new Soldiers do to help themselves integrate into a new unit?

**[NOTE:** Allow for brief discussion and record responses on a whiteboard or flipchart (optional).

- Ask questions,
- Show up – on and off duty, and
- Watch and observe. Pay attention to social cues – how the unit's culture works.]

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

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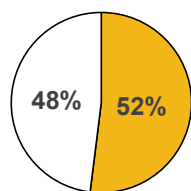
- These skills will also help them learn the written and unwritten rules of the unit.
- So there are things that individuals can do to make the transition into a new unit easier.
- Now let's talk about the impact of other unit members in that transition.

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## SHARING THE CULTURE



Half of new Soldiers said that unit members provided support during transition...



...which led to stronger unit cohesion.



**To explain the impact of existing unit members on Soldier integration into a new unit.**

### 1. Explain the impact of existing unit members on Soldier integration.

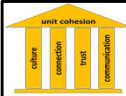
- In that same study of newcomers, around half said that
  - unit members provided support during the transition and
  - this support was associated with better ratings of cohesion and unit climate.
- So this investment paid off for the whole team.
- However, about half of them said that other unit members did **not** provide them support.
- And not getting support was associated with lower ratings of cohesion and unit climate. That is going to cost the unit.
- Two points here:
  - first, how units respond ultimately matters to the unit itself, and
  - second, there's plenty of room for improvement depending on what kind of unit you want to be in.

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## SHARING THE CULTURE

### ACTIVITY

In small groups, come up with a list of what you can do to help integrate new unit members



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**To discuss a hypothetical scenario about integrating new unit members.**

### 1. Conduct the sharing culture activity.

- Soldiers who have been in a unit for a while will understand its identity, roles, and rules better than newer unit members.
- By reaching out to new members of your unit, you can build unit cohesion by creating a shared identity.
- This activity is about setting new members up for success. Imagine a Soldier has just joined the unit.
- **[ASK]:** What are you going to say to get them on board?



- What do they need to know in terms of unwritten rules?
- What can you do to help integrate them?
- What should you avoid doing?

**[NOTE:** Have students take 2-3 mins to discuss and brainstorm in pairs or small groups then share their responses with the class. Include the following in your debrief key points:


- Include unit members in activities on and off duty,
- Educate soldiers about the unit's identity, roles, rules, and history,
- Tell them key stories or share unit jokes, and
- Give them a chance to participate in shaping the culture.]



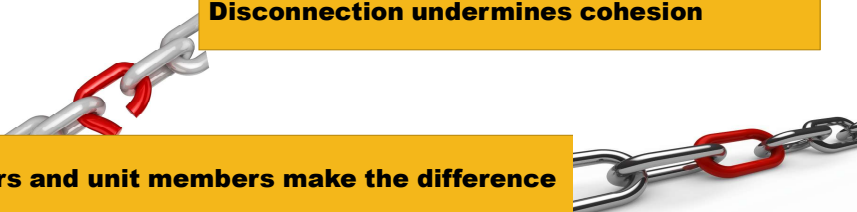
- Doing these things that you've just discussed can be crucial to a more efficient process of integrating new Soldiers into the unit.
- This will help the group and pay off in terms of developing unit cohesion.

Record your own notes  
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## TEAM CULTURE: SUMMARY



**Disconnection undermines cohesion**

**Leaders and unit members make the difference**



**To summarize the importance of support from unit members and leaders during transition.**

1.

Discuss the importance of support from unit members and leaders during soldiers' transition.

- **[ASK]:** So what are your key takeaways from the first pillar - Culture?

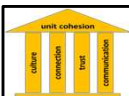
**[NOTE:** Allow for responses.]

- Units with socially isolated members do not benefit from cohesion which will cost the unit.
- Supporting new and isolated unit members makes the entire unit stronger.
- How the unit manages its integration matters.
- Be the unit you want to be.
- **A chain is only as strong as its weakest link.**

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## SHARING THE CULTURE: SUMMARY

- Include unit members in activities on and off duty
- Educate soldiers about the unit's identity, roles, rules, and history
- Tell them key stories or share unit jokes
- Give them a chance to participate in shaping the culture



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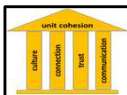
**To prompt discussion about sharing culture.**

### 1. Debrief activity.

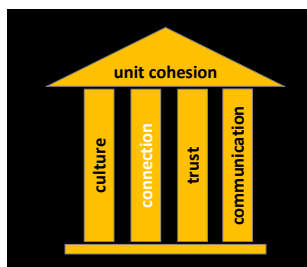
- Remember there are things unit members can do.
  - Include unit members in activities on and off duty,
  - Educate soldiers about the unit's identity, roles, rules, and history,
  - Tell them key stories or share unit jokes, and
  - Give them a chance to participate in shaping the culture.
- Doing these things can create a more efficient process of integrating new soldiers into the unit.
- This process will pay off in terms of developing unit cohesion.
- Now we're going to talk about the second pillar.



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## PROTECTING UNIT CONNECTIONS



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**To transition to the second pillar: connections.**

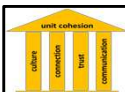
### 1. Discuss the different components of unit connections.

- The second pillar is protecting unit connections.
- We're going to cover:
  - Addressing social isolation
  - Developing Group-mind and guarding against groupthink





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## CONNECTIONS: AWARENESS

**What happens if someone isn't new to the unit, but starts to disconnect?**



**What might you notice?**



**To identify signs of a unit member beginning to disconnect.**

1. Brainstorm what happens when someone who is not new to the unit starts to disconnect.

- **[ASK]:** What happens if someone who isn't new to the unit starts to disconnect?

**[NOTE:** Take 3-4 responses.]

- This could be bad for the individual.
- This could be bad for the unit.

2. In small groups, brainstorm and discuss signs of a unit member starting to disconnect.

- **[ASK]:** What are 5 signs and/or cues you might notice when a unit member starts to disconnect?

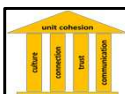
**[NOTE:** Have students discuss and brainstorm in pairs or small groups for 2-3 minutes. Have each group provide a list of possible responses. For example:

- Withdrawal,
- Changes in behavior,
- Not responding to invitations or questions,
- Not engaging with the team unless necessary
- Not going outside of the barracks.]



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## CONNECTIONS: INDICATORS

### A Soldier who is socially isolated can be

- more likely to blame others
- more reactive
- more sensitive
- more defensive & irritable
- more withdrawn
- less energetic



**To review behaviors associated with social isolation.**

### 1. List the ways a socially isolated soldier might act.

- Let's see how you did. Here are some signs and cues that you might see.

**[NOTE:** *Highlight the parts that have not been previously discussed.*]

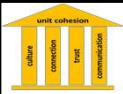
- A Soldier who is socially isolated can be:
  - More likely to blame others,
  - More reactive,
  - More sensitive,
  - More defensive and irritable,
  - More withdrawn, and
  - Less energetic.
- Some signs are more obvious than others but all of them can be seen.

**[NOTE:** *Some of these signs have overlap with depression but depression can happen as a consequence of social isolation or be a cause – it isn't necessarily the same thing.*]

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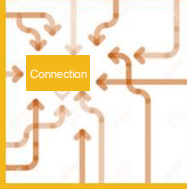


## CONNECTIONS: ACTIVITY



### ACTIVITY

in small groups, come up with a list of what you can do if you think that someone is getting socially isolated



**To discuss ways to help socially isolated Soldiers.**

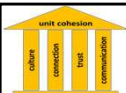
1. Brainstorm different things Soldiers can do to help reintegrate a socially isolated Soldier into the unit.
  - In your same groups, come up with a list of what you can do if you think that someone in your unit is getting socially isolated.
  - **[NOTE:** *Divide students into the same small groups. Take 2-3 minutes for the group discussions and brainstorming, then have them debrief their responses. Categorize the responses as direct or indirect actions.*]

**[NOTE:** *The visual image depicts that there are many different ways to get to the same point.*]

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## CONNECTIONS: DIRECT & INDIRECT ACTION



### INDIRECT

- Check in with a buddy
- Keep an eye out for them
- Ask a leader
- Create opportunities to have everyone feel included
- Provide a role for every Soldier
- Mention concern to Chaplain or key unit member

### DIRECT

- Check in with them
- Ask questions
- Invite them to small-group events
- Personally invite them to large-group events
- Task with specific role
- Follow-up (not one and done)
- Offer assistance

Record your own notes here:



**To distinguish between direct and indirect action.**

### [SLIDE BUILDS]

#### 1. Define direct and indirect action.

- There are a range of possible actions Soldiers can take.
- We are going to review some examples.
- Notice these examples are going to be divided into indirect and direct actions.
- Let's discuss direct and indirect actions in more detail.
- **[ASK]:** What do you think is the difference between direct and indirect action?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses.]

- Direct action is doing something yourself to reach out.
- Indirect action is finding a way to reach out via intervening factors or intermediaries (other people).
- **[ASK]:** Why might you want to use a direct approach sometimes and an indirect approach other times?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses. Possible answers include rank differences, lack of familiarity, feeling awkward.]

#### 2. Provide examples of direct and indirect action.



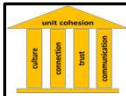


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**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- Examples of **indirect** action include:
  - check in with a buddy,
  - keep an eye out for them,
  - ask a leader,
  - create opportunities to include everyone,
  - provide a role for every soldier, or
  - mention concerns to the Chaplain or key unit member.
- Examples of **direct** action include:
  - check in with them,
  - ask questions,
  - invite them to small group events,
  - personally invite them to large group social events,
  - task with a specific role in event planning,
  - follow up, and
  - offer assistance.





## CONNECTIONS: ACTION



**ACTIVITY**  
 in small groups,  
 discuss example




**To apply knowledge of direct and indirect action to a hypothetical scenario.**

1.

Discuss examples in which direct and indirect action can be taken.



- You will now be divided into small groups.
- Each group will be assigned either examples 1 or 2 for this activity.
- Apply your knowledge of direct and indirect action for your assigned scenario.
- Be prepared to discuss your group's consensus and differences in approach.

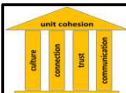


**[NOTE:** Take about 5 mins for this activity. Divide the class into groups and assign them either Example 1 or 2. Have participants read and discuss their scenario and actions they would take in their small groups, then debrief to the class.]

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## CONNECTIONS: EXAMPLES

### Example 1: "Rich Kid"

PFC Lewis comes from a wealthy family but joined the military for the college benefits because he wanted to be independent and not rely on his family's money. He doesn't particularly love the Army but sees his time in service as a way to get an education so that he can start his own business.

The other Soldiers see him as a rich kid because rumor has it that he takes ritzy vacations with his family and that his grandfather has a massive estate. He feels very "different" from the other Soldiers and very lonely at times.

### Example 2: "Married Fast"

SPC Garza is a young Soldier in your platoon. He's been a good performer for the last 2 years. Several months ago, he began leaving the barracks every evening after work and coming home late or not at all, and he stays gone on the weekend. He's not hanging out with his friends in the unit, and you recently found out he had been dating and then married a girl who has serious financial problems and two children.

Between the time he told you about his marriage and the time he was supposed to move out of the barracks, the relationship fell apart. Now he's still in the barracks, feeling lonely, confused, and afraid of what his friends will think about him.



**To review application of knowledge of direct and indirect action for the hypothetical scenarios.**

### 1. Debrief discussion of direct and indirect actions to be taken for their example.

#### • For those of you who were assigned Example 1:

- **[ASK]:** What would be indirect action in this scenario?
- **[ASK]:** What would be a direct action in this scenario?
- **For those of you who were assigned Example 2:**
- **[ASK]:** What would be an indirect action in this scenario?
- **[ASK]:** What would be a direct action in this scenario?

**[NOTE:** Have participants debrief their discussion and identify consensus views and differing opinions.

Indirect examples include:

- check in with a buddy,
- keep an eye out for them,
- tell an informal leader.

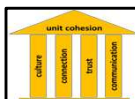
Direct examples include:

- check in with them,
- ask questions,
- invite them to small group events like sharing a meal,
- task with a specific role in event planning.]

Record your own notes here:



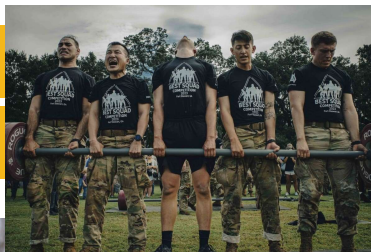
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## CONNECTIONS: AWARENESS

**What does social connection and social isolation feel like?**

**How might you build connections in your unit?**



**To build awareness of social connections and social isolation.**

### 1. Introduce Social Connection and Social Isolation discussion.

- **[ASK]:** "What does social connection feel like?"  
Possible responses might include:
  - belonging/inclusion
  - supportive
  - quality relationships
  - feeling cared for, valued
- **[ASK]:** "What does social isolation feel like?"  
Possible responses might include:
  - lonely
  - uncared for
  - unsupported
  - excluded
- **[ASK]:** "How might you build connections in your unit?" Possible responses might include:
  - unit participation in installation sporting events (ex. Commander's Cup)
  - unit participation in community service project (ex. School partnership, community clean up)
  - unit organizational day, family day
  - platoon BBQ

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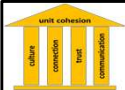
Best squad competition:  
<https://api.army.mil/e2/c/images/2023/10/04/c93b0523/max1200.jpg>

Promotion ceremony:  
[www.defense.gov/multimedia/Photos/igphoto/2003360007/](http://www.defense.gov/multimedia/Photos/igphoto/2003360007/)

Rafting:  
[www.defense.gov/Multimedia/Photos/igphoto/2003351984](http://www.defense.gov/Multimedia/Photos/igphoto/2003351984)



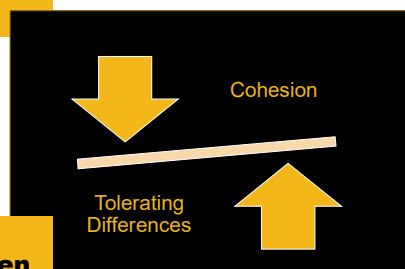
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## CONNECTIONS: BALANCING ACT

**While cohesive units are important, there's a balance**

**If being cohesive means not tolerating differences, then the whole team has a problem**



Record your own notes here:



**To introduce the concept of balancing teams.**

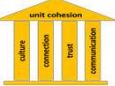
### 1. Review the need for balance.

- While cohesive units are important, there's a balance between sticking together and sticking together too much.
- If being cohesive means not tolerating differences, then what happens if someone has a different opinion? Will they be able to speak up? Will the team be ready to listen?
- How can teams or leaders be impacted in terms of making good decisions with and without balance?
- If there is no balance, teams can be negatively impacted in terms of making good decisions.






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## GROUPTHINK VS. GROUP-MIND


### Groupthink

- focusing on agreeing instead of thinking critically
- not disagreeing with the group
- squashing disagreement by others



### Group-Mind

- understanding and overall agreement on unit goals
- commitment to the group
- everyone is on the same page
- everyone values their membership in the group




**To distinguish between groupthink and group-mind.**

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

### 1. Define groupthink

- By a show of hands, who knows someone who has gotten in trouble for drinking?
- **[ASK]** Did this happen when they were alone or did it happen in a group?
- **[ASK]** Were there others who could have spoken up but maybe didn't.

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses.]

- Why do you think they didn't speak up? Sometimes when groups develop there is little tolerance for differences of opinion or questioning others.

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- When groups stick together so closely that they squash individual differences of opinion, the result can be groupthink.
- Groupthink happens when the balance between feeling close and respecting individual differences gets out of whack.
- The group focuses on agreeing with one another, rather than thinking critically or considering alternative courses of action.
- Essentially groupthink shuts down someone with good ideas and squashes dissent.

Record your own notes here:



- Think about examples you know where a group of Soldiers has made a questionable decision together. Things like (1) deciding to go rock climbing when the weather forecast called for thunder, or (2) Encouraging each other to drink more than any of them normally would. Take a few moments and discuss in groups of 3-4.

[**NOTE:** Allow participants to discuss for 2-3 min]

- [**ASK**]: What examples are you thinking of from your own experience?

[**NOTE:** Allow participants to respond.]

- [**ASK**]: How does groupthink relate to group cohesion?

[**NOTE:** Allow participants to respond. Listen for answers describing how sometimes the group is too cohesive and there is no room for disagreement, team members are afraid to be rejected].

Record your own notes here:

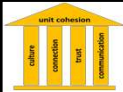
## 2. Explain Group Mind

### [**CLICK TO ADVANCE**]

- On the other hand, sometimes groups develop a strong identity and sense of connection that allows for a degree of disagreement. They share a mental model or what's called "Group-mind."
- Group-mind is when there is an explicit and implicit understanding of group goals, everyone is committed to the group, they share assumptions, they value one another, and they also value differences of opinion.
- [Trainer Note: Another way to think of this is to call it a shared mental model.]
- When individuals value the individual differences that collectively make up the group, it can drive optimal team performance.

[Note that cohesive units do not have to fall victim to groupthink. It's a choice that the group has to make about how they are going to develop and what they are going to value.]





## GROUPTHINK: ACTIVITY

**How can you prevent groupthink?**



Record your own notes here:



**To discuss ways to avoid groupthink.**

1. Discuss what Soldiers can do to prevent groupthink.

- **[ASK]:** What can be done to prevent groupthink?

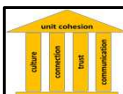
**[NOTE:** Divide participants into small groups for a table top discussion. Explain that they will have 3 minutes to come up with responses to the above questions then debrief to the class.].

- **[ASK]:** What were some strategies you came up with that could help prevent groupthink?

**[NOTE:** Allow participants to respond by group. Additional strategies are provided on the next slide.]



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## GROUPTHINK

### Unit Members

- ✓ Take turns playing “devil’s advocate”
  - Thinking critically
  - Punching holes in the plan
  - Offering opposing points of view
- ✓ Have everyone say something critical
- ✓ Discuss with someone you trust outside the group to get an unbiased view



### Leaders (formal and informal)

- ✓ State preference last
- ✓ Assign people tasks of skeptic – make them responsible
- ✓ Set up small groups to work on a specific task at the same time to get different points of view



### To discuss ways to avoid groupthink.

#### 1. Provide strategies for preventing groupthink.

- Here is a list of strategies that can help your group avoid groupthink.

**[TRAINER NOTE:** Review strategies not previously discussed.]

- **[ASK]:** Are these strategies a good fit for every military situation?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses. The expected response is no.]

- **[ASK]:** What about when you are on a mission or in a tactical environment?
- All close groups have to guard against groupthink but there may be times when it is not appropriate to challenge a decision given the military context, rank and mission.

#### 2. Place groupthink in context depending on the group.

- **[ASK]:** Is groupthink a risk only for groups with a designated leader? What about groups of friends, where they all the same rank?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses.]

Record your own notes here:



- For groups with a designated leader, these strategies should ideally be initiated by the leader but it's everyone's responsibility to support a healthy difference of opinion.
- For groups of peers, the strategies can be initiated by the informal leader.
- But everyone should be aware of guarding against alternative ideas. This means that everyone should be willing to explore alternative COAs presented by other group members.
- **[ASK]:** How would implementing these strategies impact unit cohesion?

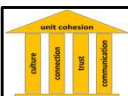
**[NOTE:** Allow for responses. Issues include: (1) It may take longer to make a decision and frustrate the group, (2) there may be more dissent and disagreement in the teams].

- Teams that are high in trust can tolerate differing opinions, which leads us to the third pillar.

Record your own notes here:

**[NOTE:** Additional considerations include (1) being respectful when stating the disagreement so that individuals don't feel shamed and then want to reject the group, and (2) calling out the possibility that the team is engaging in groupthink.]





### ALERTING TO UNNECESSARY RISKS

- There may be times when you need to challenge unnecessary risks
- Use phrases that catch the listener's attention, increasing in intensity
- This approach is essential in medical settings



**To review warning the team about unnecessary risks.**

#### 1. Introduce three statements

- In combat, there will be times when a decision is being made that is unnecessarily dangerous.
- Team members need to be able to point out the potential danger.
- They can use a stepped model – where they make statements of increasing gravity.
- They can start by saying: “**I am concerned**” and explain why.
- If that doesn’t work, they can say “**I am worried.**” This alerts teammates that there is a serious issue.
- If that doesn’t work, they can say: “**This is a safety issue.**”
- If there is groupmind (or a shared mental model) among team members, everyone will understand that statement is a cue to stop and consider the unnecessary risk involved.
- In fact, all three sentences can be combined into one in order to express a high level of concern.
- In this way, the team members can feel empowered to look out for one another and the mission.

Record your own notes here:

Mesias, G.A., Nugent, K.L., Wolfson, M., Clarke-Walper, K., Germain, A., Sampson, M.K., Wilk, J.E. (In Press). Development of Training to Prepare Army Medics to Address Behavioral Health Needs of Soldiers in Far-Forward Environments Utilizing Mobile App Technology. Military Medicine.

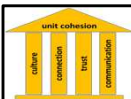




- For example:
  - An ammo depot might be improperly secured, introducing a safety and operational risk.
  - If a team member spots this, it is their duty to make the appropriate person aware of the issue.
  - They can say “I am concerned” with the way the ammo is being stored because it might ignite.
  - If that doesn’t get the right attention, then they can say “I’m worried it is dangerous.”
  - If that doesn’t result in reassessment, they can follow-up with “This is a safety issue.”
- Ultimately, there is a limit to challenging decisions being made in a military context.
- Planning ahead of time how to alert one another to a concern can help strengthen the team’s trust and respect for one another.

Record your own notes  
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## EMOTIONAL CONTAGION

### Leverage emotional contagion



### To introduce emotion contagion.

#### 1. Develop skills like leveraging emotional contagion.

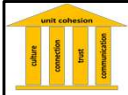
- Another connection skill is to leverage emotional contagion.
- Emotional contagion is when a unit starts to catch the emotions of others. It's a powerful phenomenon.
- Research shows that within seconds, teams can be impacted by one person's upbeat presence or a negative mood.
- This contagion can happen without the team even being aware of it.
- It can also happen whether you want it to or not because it's automatic.
- If you see the group moving in a direction that you don't want, take a pause and ask yourself if it's due to emotional contagion.
- Then try reorienting the group through
  - how you speak (fast to show energy and motivation or slow to reduce stress),
  - your tone (upbeat, flat or angry), and
  - your posture (arms out, displaying confidence or shoulders down, displaying defeatism).

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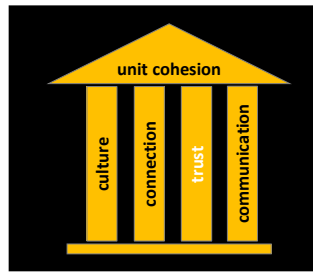
[Formal Diners \(defense.gov\)  
https://www.defense.gov/Multimedia/Photos/igphoto/2003315290/](https://www.defense.gov/Multimedia/Photos/igphoto/2003315290/)



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## STRENGTHEN UNIT TRUST



### To introduce the third pillar: trust

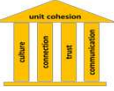
#### 1. Discuss the different skills needed to establish trust.

- The third pillar supporting unit cohesion is Trust.
- Trust is a crucial factor in unit cohesion, culture, and building/maintaining connection.
- In this section we will discuss the importance of listening well and responding well when someone brings you their good or bad news as a means of developing and strengthening unit trust.

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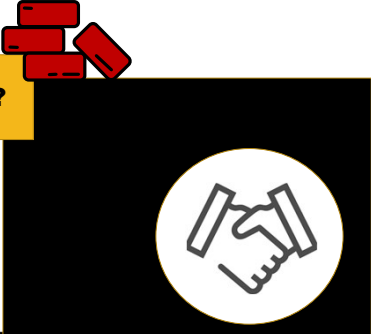
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## TRUST

Cohesive units are built on trust

How do groups earn your trust?




**To identify what trust means for cohesive units.**

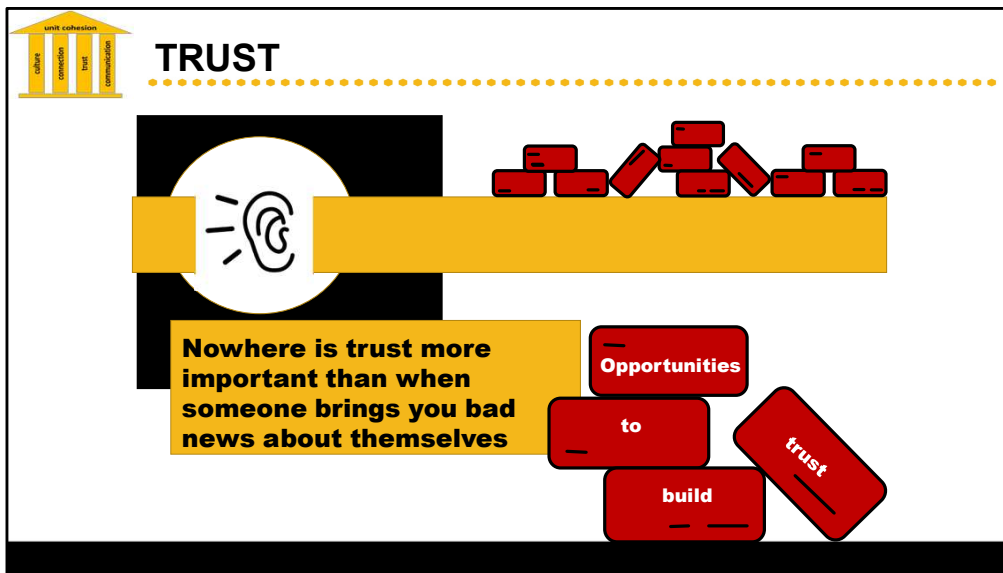
### 1. Discuss how groups earn individual trust.

- Let's look more deeply into our third pillar, Trust, from a group perspective.
  - **[ASK]:** How do people within a group earn your trust?
- [NOTE:** Allow for responses. Key points might include:
- People do what they say they are going to do,
  - You can rely on them,
  - They know what they're doing or will tell you if they don't,
  - You can trust them with personal matters, and
  - They respect your boundaries, and know when to keep personal information private.]
- A key element of trust is how individuals in the group handle information.
  - In teams with high trust, you care more for each other's safety than for your own.

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**To explain effective listening in building trust.**

**1. Discuss the importance of listening and responding.**

- How you respond is important for building trust when someone brings you bad news.
- Listening and responding well can signal to your team members that you are trustworthy.
- Additionally, responding well will let others know that you are someone who has their six.

**2. Discuss what it means to listen well.**

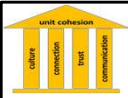
- **[ASK]:** What do you do to show you are listening when someone brings you bad news?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses.]

- Let's look at some key components to listening well.



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## LISTENING WELL

- ✓ Pay attention
- ✓ Match posture
- ✓ Paraphrase to check your understanding
- ✓ Reflect back key emotions
- ✓ Ask questions



Record your own notes here:



**To identify effective listening skills.**

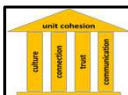
### 1. Explain some characteristics of listening well.

- When listening to someone, it is important to pay attention – put down your phone, turn off distractions.
- Try matching the person's posture – if they lean forward, lean forward, if they cross their arms, cross your arms – this is a natural process and you probably do it anyway, but it's good to be aware of.
- Paraphrase or summarize what you heard to check your understanding and to demonstrate you are tracking.
- **[ASK]:** What does it mean to reflect back key emotions? What does that look like?

**[NOTE]:** Allow for responses. The following is an example of reflecting back: if someone is describing how upset they are about something, try identifying one of the key emotions, like "that sounds incredibly disappointing" or "seems like you're pretty angry about that."]

- If you get it wrong, they'll let you know and you can tune in more closely.
- Ask questions (assuming the person wants to talk) – this helps demonstrate your genuine interest.
- Also, at a later time, you'll want to make sure to follow up. Following up demonstrates you were listening and genuinely care.

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## LISTENING WELL: ACTIVITY

**SGT Smith finds out that his father is ill, and he comes to tell you about it as a friend.**



- **Paraphrase**
- **Reflect**
- **Ask**
- **Follow-up**



**To practice listening well.**

### 1. Practice listening well.



**[NOTE:** Have a participant read the SGT Smith sentence on the slide for this discussion. Ask the following questions – suggested responses are below each.]

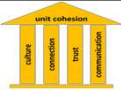
- **[ASK]:** What would paraphrasing look like?
  - “So your dad is pretty sick?”
- **[ASK]:** What would reflecting look like?
  - “Sounds like you’re going through a tough time.”
- **[ASK]:** What would you ask?
  - “How bad is it?”
  - “Are you thinking of taking leave to visit him?”
  - “How’s your Mom doing?”
- **[ASK]:** What would follow-up look like?
  - Check back with your buddy in a couple of days and ask about his father.
- **[ASK]:** Do you have to go into problem solving mode to be a good buddy?
  - You don’t have to – you can just listen.
- These steps show your buddy you are really (actively) listening well.

Record your own notes here:

**[NOTE:** The skills described here are also components of “active listening”. Some Soldiers may be familiar with this concept and these skills can be leveraged here.]

**[NOTE:** “Follow-up” doesn’t mean peppering SGT Smith with a million questions but means checking back in after a day or two.]


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## RESPONDING WELL

Sharing good news matters just as much as sharing bad news

How do you respond when someone shares good news?




### To identify responding well skills.

#### 1. Explain the importance of effective responses.

- Just as responding well is important for building trust when someone brings you bad news, it is also key to building trust when someone shares good news.
- The way you respond when someone shares a positive experience with you will affect the strength of that relationship.
- **[ASK]:** How do you respond when someone shares good news?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses.]

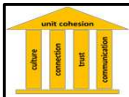
- When responding to someone, it is important to respond with authentic, active, and constructive interest to help build relationships and trust.
- A positive experience can be big or small, but it has meaning to the person who shared it. It is important to be a joy multiplier.
- Active Constructive Responding is a style of communication that you can use when someone shares good news or a positive experience with you.

Record your own notes here:

**[NOTE:** ACR was developed by Dr. Shelly Gable from the University of California Santa Barbara.

*Gable, S. L., Gonzaga, G. C., & Strachman, A. (2006). Will you be there for me when things go right? Supportive responses to positive event disclosures. Journal of personality and social psychology, 91(5), 904.]*

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## RESPONDING WELL

	Constructive	Destructive
Active	Enthusiastic support, engaged, genuine, asks questions	Crushes good news, focuses on the negative
Passive	Distracted, understated support	Ignores the event, focuses on themselves



**To introduce ACR as a means of building trust.**

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

### 1. Define and explain the four types of responses.

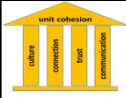
- There are four ways that people can respond to good news.
- Think of it along two dimensions:
  - passive-active and
  - destructive-constructive.
- Passive Constructive: Ignores the other person, does not acknowledge news, shows that they don't really care.
- Passive Destructive: Ignores the event, focuses on themselves.
- Active Destructive: Crushes the good news, emphasizes drawbacks, turns positive into negative.
- Active Constructive: Enthusiastic support, genuinely engaged, asks questions, conveys investment in others, and amplifies positive feelings.

Record your own notes here:





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## RESPONDING WELL

	Constructive	Destructive
Active	Active Constructive	Active Destructive
Passive	Passive Constructive	Passive Destructive

Record your own notes here:



### To explain ACR in detail.

#### 1. Provide examples of each type of response.

- Let's look at an example of each of these types of response.
- The scenario is that one group member shares with another group member that they just completed their first 10k race.

#### [CLICK TO ADVANCE]

- A Passive Constructive response might be: "Good for you. Let's get back to work."

#### [CLICK TO ADVANCE]

- A Passive Destructive response may be: "Sounds good, I run 10k every weekend and am training for a marathon."

#### [CLICK TO ADVANCE]

- An Active Destructive response might be: "Great, you're lucky you didn't blow out your knees" or "have fun walking in 20 years."

#### [CLICK TO ADVANCE]

- And an Active Constructive response might be: "That's amazing! How did it feel? How will you celebrate?"
- Using ACR provides enthusiastic support, demonstrates genuine engagement, conveys investment in others, and amplifies positive feelings.

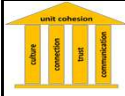


2. Explain why Active Constructive Responses are most effective for building trust.

- The people we trust are not just the ones who are there when things get rough, but also those who are there to help celebrate our successes too.
- How we respond to good news matters just as much as how we respond to bad news and helps build a sense of trust.

Record your own notes here:





## ACTIVITY: VIGNETTE DISCUSSION WITH ACR

### Practice



Active Constructive	Active Destructive
Passive Constructive	Passive Destructive



**To practice applying ACR to a hypothetical scenario.**

1.

Introduce a hypothetical scenario in which a unit member tells you something.

- Let's say SPC Rodriguez shows up and tells you they were selected for Soldier of the quarter.
- Work together in small groups to come up with possible responses for all four boxes.

**[NOTE:** Allow 2-3 minutes for this activity. Pair students up or work in small groups. After each group has had an opportunity to work through their responses, debrief in the large group.]

2.

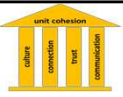
Debrief responses for each box.

- **[ASK]:** How would you respond for each box?
- [NOTE:** Debrief each box allowing each group to contribute a response.]
- There are many ways to build trust. Listening and responding well are two examples of how to build trust.
  - Not only is trust essential for strong teams, but good communication is too.

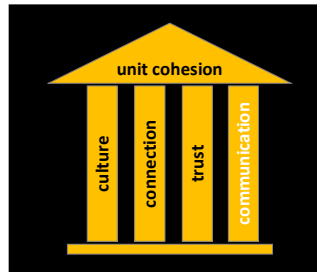
Record your own notes here:

**[NOTE:** Other examples include: (1) Bought a car, (2) Got engaged, (3) Passed APFT/ACFT, (4) Passed ht/wt, (5) Went to the beach and relaxed all weekend.]

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## REINFORCE COMMUNICATION



### To transition to fourth pillar: Communication

#### 1. Discuss communication as a pillar of unit connection.

- The final pillar in supporting unit cohesion is Communication.
- While listening well and ACR are part of communication, we are going to talk about how Culture, Connection, and Trust work together to form a cohesive unit.
- Good communication builds relationships between individuals and also builds relationships within a group.
- In this section, we will discuss the importance of
  - communicating effectively,
  - addressing conflict, and
  - clearing roadblocks in order to read situations and others more accurately.

Record your own notes here:



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## TACTICAL COMMUNICATION: GOALS

Ensure everyone in the group...

- has good situational awareness
- understands the plan
- understands what we are trying to achieve



### Pro-Tips

If you do understand, confirm understanding

If you don't understand, ask for clarification



### To define tactical communication.

#### 1. Review components of tactical communication.

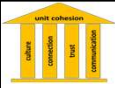
- Communication matters both at a tactical level and in terms of cohesion.
- In terms of tactical communication, it is important to ensure everyone in the group...
  - has a shared understanding
  - has good situational awareness
  - understands the plan
  - understands what they are trying to achieve – what the goal of the mission is.

Record your own notes here:





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## TACTICAL COMMUNICATION: HOW TO DO IT

Audio



- Complete
- Clear
- Brief
- Timely



**To introduce tactical communication.**

### **[SLIDE BUILDS]**

#### **1. Review components of tactical communication.**

- There are 4 guidelines to follow for effective battlefield communication.
- First, make sure that your communication is complete.
- You will want to share all relevant information while avoiding unnecessary details that might lead to confusion.

#### **[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- Second, be clear.
- Use terminology and concepts that are easily understood.

#### **[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- Third, stick to the point.
- Don't over explain things or you use too many words.

#### **[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- Fourth, be timely.
- Avoid delays in relaying information that could compromise mission success. Focus on what is important to know right now.

Record your own notes here:

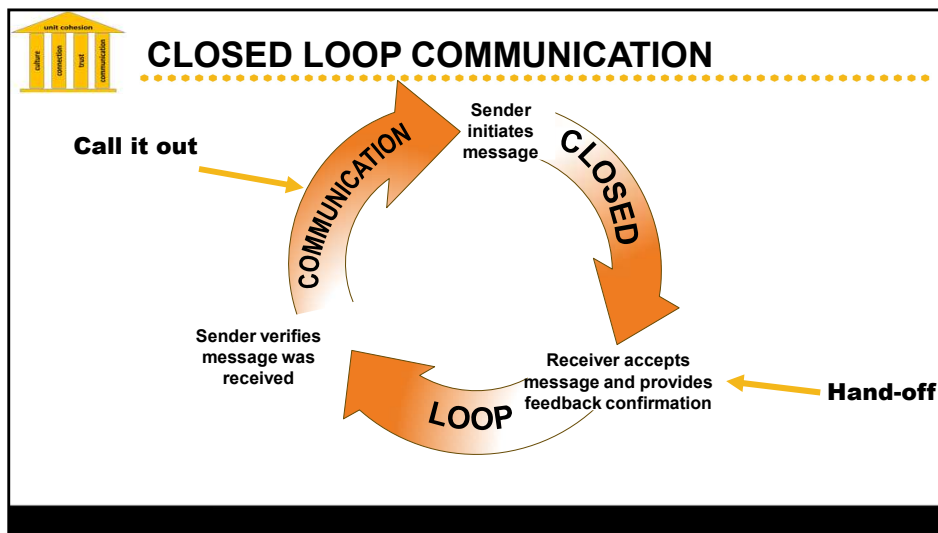
Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. (2023, June).  
<https://www.ahrq.gov/teamsteps-program/curriculum/communication/tools/index.html>



- [Play Audio with ADVANCE]
- [Ask: What did you think of the audio? How clear was the communication?]
- What were the three goals:
  - (1) what is the situation,
  - (2) what is the plan, and
  - (3) what are what we trying to achieve
- What would you improve?
- Notice the leader shared what he knew and acknowledged what he didn't know.
- Is this a useful strategy?

Record your own notes  
here:





**To introduce closed loop communication.**

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

### 1. Review elements of closed loop communication.

- [ASK]: How many of you have ever gone rock climbing? How do you communicate during rock climbing?
- [TRAINER NOTES: The right answer is “on belay” and “off belay”]
- That’s right, call and response – the same principle applies in military communication.
- It informs all team members simultaneously during emergency situations, and it helps team members anticipate next steps
- You start by calling out the action that you are initiating.
- In tactical drills this can be
  - Sender: “Contact left!”
  - Receiver: “Contact Left!”
  - Sender: “Moving!”
  - Receiver: “Move!”
- By responding the receiver ensures that the sender knows the message was received.
- When the sender verifies the message was received, they are letting the receiver know they heard them.

[CLICK TO ADVANCE]

- When the sender initiates the message they are using what is called a “call-out”.

Record your own notes here:

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. (2023, June).  
<https://www.ahrq.gov/teamstepps-program/curriculum/communication/overview/index.html>



## 2. Use example of a medic

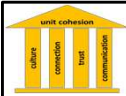
- This kind of communication is fundamental in medical contexts.
- For example, a medic calls out, "BP is falling. 80 over 48, down from 90 over 60."
- Another team member verifies and validates receipt of the information by saying, "Got it. BP is falling and at 80 over 48, down from 90 over 60."
- The original sender of the information completes the loop by saying "Correct."
- This approach may seem redundant, but studies shows using this simple technique reduces medical errors in the ER where the only distractions are the health of the patient and a chaotic environment.
- On the battlefield it becomes even more important.

[CLICK TO ADVANCE]

- So far, we've talked about ideal communication practices. But what happens when there are struggles in communication?

Record your own notes here:





## CONFLICT IN TEAMS

Informational



We have different information!

Interpersonal



Hostile interactions

Record your own notes  
here:



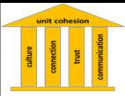
### To introduce two forms of conflict

#### 1. Describe two forms of conflict

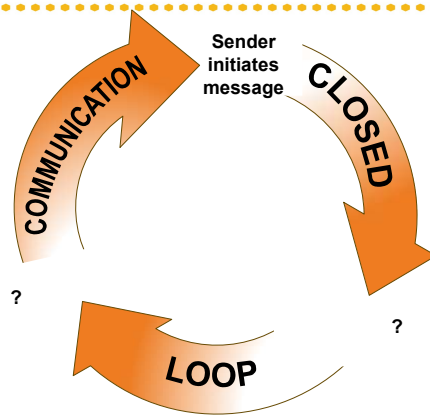
- Conflict related to communication can occur in two different ways.
- Informational conflict involves differing views, ideas, or opinions.
- Left unresolved, informational conflict may also evolve into interpersonal conflict that weakens the team.
- One way to help prevent these kinds of conflicts is to set up a plan ahead of time about how to address information conflict.
- This can even be addressed when it comes to gaps in closed loop communication.



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## WHAT IF THE LOOP DOESN'T CLOSE?



**To address when closed loop communication isn't closed**

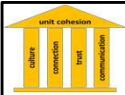
### 1. Review handling a gap in closed loop communication.

- What if there is a gap in closed loop communication that leads to informational conflict?
- [ASK]: Sometimes the person you are talking with is distracted or overloaded so they don't close the loop with you. What do you do?
- [Discuss – listen for themes related to repeating the statement, asking the person if they heard you, and giving up]
- After you voice your initial concern, the team member needs to acknowledge it.
- If they don't acknowledge it, you should try again.
- [ASK] But how do you avoid nagging and getting team members irritated? [Listen for 1-2 responses]
- Establish ahead of time how your team wants to handle this.
- Some teams establish a **"two-challenge rule"** to give permission to ask twice and at the same time to put a limit on the number of challenges. This is to avoid being an additional distraction (or nagging).
- If you establish this rule ahead of time, it can become a part of your unit's culture of looking out for one another.
- At a certain point, you need to follow directions or use your chain of command if you feel that there is a serious issue going on

Record your own notes here:



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## TOOLS TO ADDRESS CONFLICT IN TEAMS

### Informational



We have different information!

### Interpersonal



Hostile interactions



**Two-Challenge Rule**



**To summarize other ways to handle informational conflict**

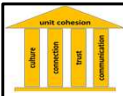
### 1. Review other ways to handle informational conflict

- Ultimately, the goal of this two-challenge rule is to balance confirming you have been heard with ensuring team members can focus on what they need to do.
- Another source of informational difficulty is when there is no standard way for doing certain tasks.
- In that case, team members come up with their own answers and this can create a lack of continuity and lead to misunderstandings.
- Ideally, developing and sharing SOPs can help prevent this kind of informational conflict.
- There are also other ways a team can encounter interpersonal difficulty.

Record your own notes here:

Photo credit (right hand side): Hannah (Nez) Covington, Walter Reed Army Institute of Research

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## TOOLS TO ADDRESS CONFLICT IN TEAMS



### To review ways of addressing interpersonal conflict

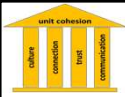
#### 1. Introduce the concept of interpersonal conflict

- Interpersonal conflict tends to revolve around the team members themselves, not the actions or the information.
- Tension, annoyance, and animosity are common.
- Interactions can become very argumentative.
- Attempts should be made to resolve this kind of conflict before it interferes with team performance.
- One way to address this kind of conflict is to establish Rules of Engagement (ROEs) for managing interpersonal conflict.

Record your own notes here:



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## ROE FOR INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT

- Time your discussion well
- Choose a private location
- Keep your voice level and take turns listening
- Frame in terms of your own experience
- Use “I” statements rather than blaming
- Be specific, avoid “always”
- Work on win-win or finding a compromise
- If you can’t find a win, agree to disagree
- Use humor to break tension



Record your own notes here:



### To introduce ROEs for interpersonal conflict

#### **[SLIDE BUILDS]**

#### 1. Set the conditions

- Time your discussion well: While you don’t want to wait too long to raise an issue, cool off beforehand. Also, don’t let the conversation interfere with the mission.
- Choose a private location: It might be hard to have these kinds of discussions with an audience because people might feel more defensive.
- Keep your voice level and take turns listening: Try to monitor your own feelings and dial down the anger if you feel it rising, otherwise the person will hear the emotion and not the words you’re trying to convey.

#### 2. Select productive language

#### **[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- The next set of strategies are about your choice of words.
- Frame in terms of your own experience: Don’t speak for others. Just talk about your own experiences.



- Use “I” statements rather than blaming.
- An “I” statement is something like: “When you misplace your gear, I feel frustrated. I would prefer it if you could keep your gear on your side of the tent.” rather than saying “You are a slob!”.
- Be specific, avoid “always” and also any other “all or nothing” language.


### 3. Create a way forward

#### **[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- The third set of strategies aims to create a path forward given that you will need to be working with this teammate in the future
- Work on win-win or finding a compromise.
- People are naturally defensive, so the trick is to approach the conflict with a win-win solution in mind.
- For example, “What if we found a box you can put all your gear in. Would you be willing to use it?”
- If you can’t find a win, agree to disagree
- Use humor to break tension.
- Use humor wisely. Mean humor can inflame the situation, but shared humor is a powerful tool.
- Besides managing interpersonal conflict, there can also be road blocks to strengthening interpersonal connection.

Record your own notes here:






## A GOOD APOLOGY

Secrets to a good apology

Repairing relationships



### Apology Rules

1. Own it, using “I” statements
2. Acknowledge impact on the other person
3. Be sure not to deflect by focusing on other person’s fault
4. Commit to change in the future

Record your own notes here:



**To introduce elements of a good apology.**

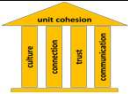
### 1. Create a good apology.

- Apologies are great. Since all relationships get strained, it’s important to know how to repair them. It’s another way of changing things if you didn’t catch it or check it first.
- There are specific ingredients to a good apology
  - Be specific about your mistake
  - Take ownership (use “I” statements),
  - Acknowledge what impact it had on the other person,
  - Don’t deflect (“but you...”)
  - Commit to change





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## APOLOGY: ACTIVITY



### ACTIVITY

in small groups, discuss  
example of roommate  
bringing in dirt

### Apology Rules

1. Own it, using "I" statements
2. Acknowledge impact on the other person
3. Be sure not to deflect by focusing on other person's fault
4. Commit to change in the future



**To practice an apology.**

1. Engage in activity to practice apology.



**[NOTE: Activity in small groups]**

- Imagine the following scenario:
  - You have been working late, and you are tired.
  - Your teammate walks into your room with dirty boots, ruining your clean floor.
  - You overreact and yell at him for five minutes.
- In small groups, discuss: how should you apologize? And what might be a roadblock to apologizing?

**[NOTE FOR DEBRIEF addressing apology content.**

*Potential roadblocks may include:*

- pride,
- anxiety,
- anger
- feeling justified]
- **[ASK]:** What are the benefits of a good apology?

**[NOTE: Allow for responses. Themes include harmony, trust, cohesion]**

Record your own notes  
here:



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## READING SITUATIONS AND OTHERS MORE ACCURATELY



Record your own notes  
here:



**To introduce reading situations and others more accurately.**

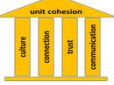
1.

Review the importance of reading situations and others more accurately.



- One of the areas in which we can improve social connection skills is how accurately we interpret the words and actions of unit members.
- Oftentimes we sabotage our own encounters with others because we only partly know the situation, and/or we allow the filters of our own life to shape what we hear.
- So in the space between receiving the message and responding, we can -- without awareness -- run into roadblocks that skew our understanding and misinform our interpretation and response.




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## COMMON ROADBLOCKS

**mismatched expectations**



**neglecting/misreading nonverbal signals**



**self-fulfilling prophecy**

Record your own notes here:



**To introduce common roadblocks to reading situations and others more accurately.**

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

### 1. Introduce three common communication roadblocks.

- To improve our ability to read situations and others, we'll have to be able to notice, and work around some common roadblocks.
- Here are a few of them:

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

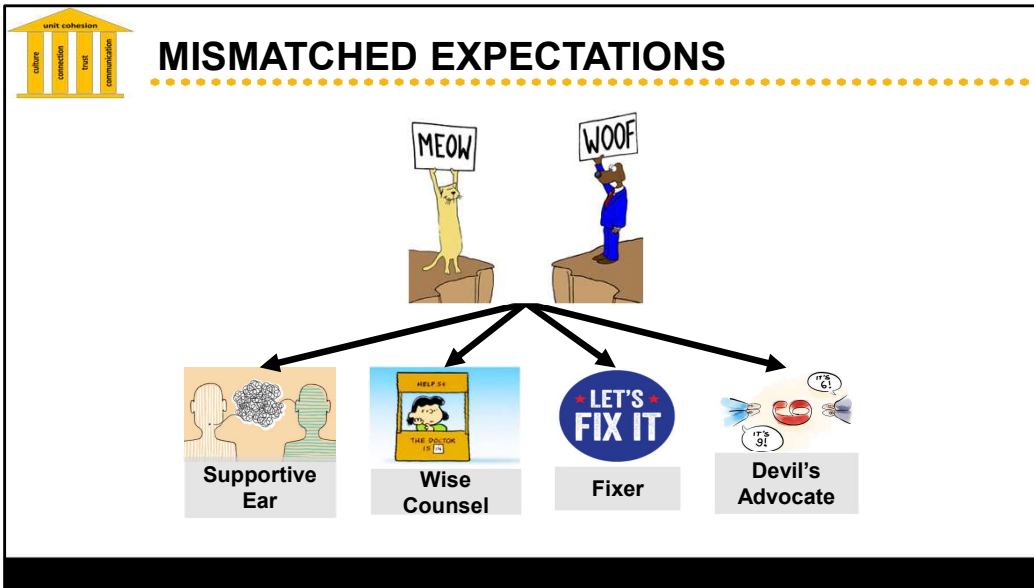
- Mismatched expectations,

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- Neglecting or misreading nonverbal signals, and **[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**
- The self-fulfilling prophecy
- Let's look at each of these roadblocks individually.



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Record your own notes here:



**To review the risk of mismatched expectations**

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

**1. Discuss the risk of mismatched expectations.**

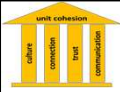
- One common roadblock is having mismatched expectations.
- Being a good listener can take many forms:

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- For example, the supportive ear – just listening and being there for the other person
- Or the wise counsel – listening and offering advice
- Or the fixer – listening, offering advice, and taking action to fix the problem
- Or the devil's advocate – listening and offering alternative perspectives.
- Sometimes, our friends just want us to listen and offer a supportive ear.
- But our tendency is to dive in and start trying to fix or give advice, and this can lead to conflict.
- So it's important to clarify with the person doing the talking what role you should be taking.
- If you aren't sure, you can even ask: "what role should I be playing here?"
- The goal is to match their expectations.



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## NEGLECTING/MISREADING NONVERBAL SIGNALS



**neglecting/misreading  
nonverbal signals**



**To introduce the importance of nonverbal signals in reading situations and others.**

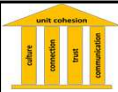
***[SLIDE BUILDS]***

1. Transition to example of how nonverbal signals influence interpretation of the message.
  - It is also critical to pay attention to nonverbal signals.

Record your own notes  
here:



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## NEGLECTING/MISREADING NONVERBAL SIGNALS



Record your own notes here:



**To demonstrate the importance of nonverbal signals in reading situations and others.**

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

1. Use **Video** to introduce an example of how nonverbal signals influence interpretation of the message.

- Let's take a look at an example of how nonverbal signals can influence how we read situations.

**[CLICK TO PLAY VIDEO:]**

**[NOTE:** Audio of video will play against blank screen]

**Video:** Video 7\_State Farm Commercial.wmv; (0:24)]



- **[ASK]:** What signals made their messages sound different?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses. Responses may include:

- Tone of voice
- Rate of speech.
- Facial expressions
- Body language.]



**[CLICK TO PLAY VIDEO:]**



**[NOTE:** *Video will play*]

**Video:** *Video 7\_State Farm Commercial.wmv;*  
(0:24)]

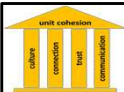
- We use signals such as tone of voice, facial expressions, and body language to send nonverbal messages that can be even more powerful than words.

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- This is why it's important to be alert to the signals surrounding the words as well as to the words themselves.
- Without this context, misunderstandings can easily happen.
- It's also important to consider how someone's role might affect the meaning of nonverbal signals.
  - For example, if your leader takes a stern tone with you, it might mean one thing but if your buddy uses the same tone, it might suggest that something is off and you need to reach out.
- So at the individual level, the key with nonverbal signals is to start recognizing what is normal or abnormal for a particular person.

Record your own notes  
here:





## CONFLICTING MESSAGES



Record your own notes here:



**To discuss recognizing conflicting messages.**

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

### 1. Explain the importance of comparing words and signals for consistency.

- Nonverbal signals can influence how we read situations.
  - Tone of voice
  - Rate of speech
  - Facial expressions
  - Body language
- But what if the signals don't line up?
- Nonverbal signals—both on their own and in combination with spoken words—give important information about the feelings and attitude of the person sending them.
- **[ASK]:** Take a look at this picture. Based on his nonverbal signals, what do you think this Soldier might be experiencing?

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- He might be feeling upset or frustrated, or he might just have a headache.
- Nonverbal signals can be a powerful tool for reading situations and others, but they should not be considered the sole source of information.



2. Explain that conflicting messages should prompt more probing.

- So let's say this is your buddy—the guy in the picture—and you approach him and ask him if he's ok.

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- He answers, "Yeah I'm good".
- His body language seems to be implying something is wrong, but his words are saying he's okay.
- His verbal and nonverbal signals are not sending the same message, so this situation requires clarification.

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- We've all been in a situation like this before.
- **[ASK]:** How did you figure out what was really going on?

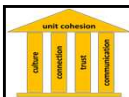
**[NOTE:** Allow for variety of responses. Theme: Use "I" statements to note the disconnect between words and behavior]

- **[ASK]:** What impact could this disconnect have on the team?

**[NOTE:** Allow for variety of responses. Discuss how this approach can lead to reduced sense of connection and trust building]

Record your own notes here:





## THE SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY



**To introduce the self-fulfilling prophecy.**

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

### 1. Explain the self fulfilling prophecy.

- Let's explain the self-fulfilling prophecy, then we'll take a look at how it can work against or for the team.
- Our core beliefs about ourselves and others influence what we expect to happen in social situations. Our expectations influence our behaviors (attitudes and actions), and those behaviors affect the outcome, causing the expectation to be fulfilled. This in turn reinforces the original belief.
- So, a generic example might be, I believe my job is not important. I expect to go to work today and do nothing of value. My attitude is negative, my productivity is low, and my work is poor quality. The outcome is that I produce nothing of impact or value, reinforcing my belief about the low importance of my work.
- What makes the self-fulfilling prophecy so powerful is that most of the time we do not critically examine our beliefs. As a result, we don't even realize that they are affecting the quality of our lives and that by changing our beliefs, we can change our life experiences in dramatic ways.

Record your own notes here:





2. Discuss the potentially counterproductive side of the self-fulfilling prophecy example on the slide.

- Now let's look at the self-fulfilling prophecy in the context of a Soldier's social connection and communication.

- First, we'll look at how it can work against us.

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- A new Soldier to the unit thinks "This unit sucks. No one gets along."

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- This leads the Soldier to expect that "They just complain all the time and bring me down. It won't matter what I do and I don't want anything to do with them." **[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- As a result of these expectations, they avoid group activities with unit members outside of their mission requirements.

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- **[ASK]** Then, what happens?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses, but keep discussion brief. Ask how it impacts the Soldier and unit]

- No social connections are made and the Soldier feels apathetic.
- The unit stays negative and when the next person joins the unit, they also encounter a negative unit.

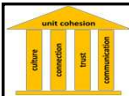
- **[ASK]** Are there any questions?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses, but keep discussion brief.]

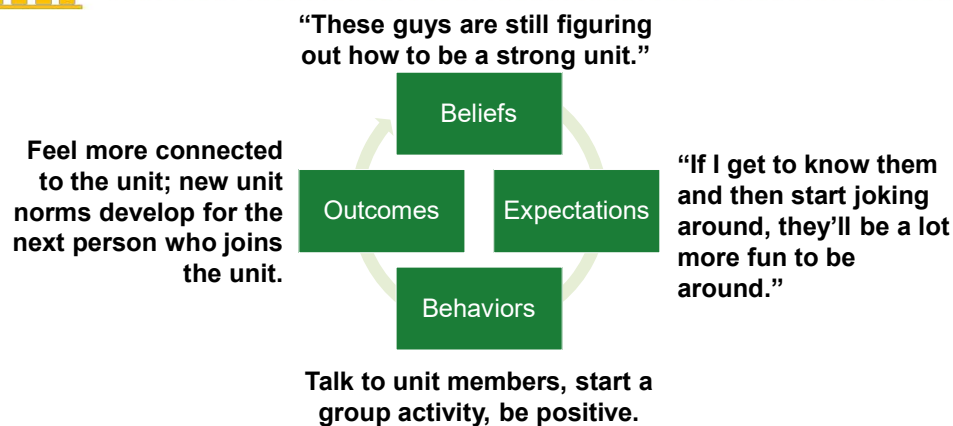
- You can see how negativity is contagious – but so is positivity.
- Now, let's look at how expectations can work in our favor.

Record your own notes here:





## THE SELF-FULFILLING PROPHECY



Record your own notes here:



**To discuss a productive example of the self-fulfilling prophecy.**

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

1. Discuss a productive example of the self-fulfilling prophecy.

- Now imagine that same Soldier.

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- The Soldier’s belief now is: “These guys are still figuring out how to be a strong unit.”
- **[ASK]** So what are their expectations going to be?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses.]

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- “If I get to know them and then start joking around, they’ll be a lot more fun to be around.”
- So if that’s what they expect, how will they behave?

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- They would be purposeful about making efforts to be positive and engage in activities with unit members.

**[CLICK TO ADVANCE]**

- **[ASK]** And how is that likely to play out?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses.]

- They feel more connected to the unit



- New unit norms develop for the next person who joins the unit.
- So our beliefs inform our expectations which inform our behaviors. And our behaviors inform our outcomes, which reinforce our beliefs.
- **[ASK]** Can you see how the self-fulfilling prophecy can get in the way of communication and connection?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses.]

2. Discuss a productive example of the self-fulfilling prophecy.

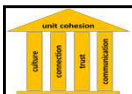
- **[ASK]** How can we leverage this knowledge about self-fulfilling prophecies to help build social connections?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses. Responses may include:

- *We can be on the look out for times we do that to ourselves*
- *We can be on the look out for when others do it*
- *We can remind ourselves to give everyone a chance*
- *We can be deliberate about developing positive expectations for others, which can help build them up and improve our relationships.]*

Record your own notes here:





## CLEARING ROADBLOCKS



mismatched expectations  
**remember:**  
**clarify your role**



neglecting/misreading  
nonverbal signals  
**remember:**  
**look for cues**



self-fulfilling prophecy  
**remember:**  
**you get what you expect**

Record your own notes  
here:



**To think about strategies for dealing with roadblocks.**

### [SLIDE BUILDS]

#### 1. Summarize how to unblock roadblocks

- It's easy to run into these roadblocks.
- Each of them can get in the way of effective communication and building relationships in your unit.
- So it's important to think about how they can be avoided. Remember to match your response to what your battle buddy was looking for.

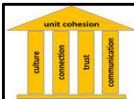
#### **CLICK to ADVANCE**

- When it comes to misreading signals, remember to look for cues.
- What is the person trying to tell you?
- Is there a disconnect between what you are seeing and what you are hearing?

#### **CLICK to ADVANCE**

- Are you engaging in a self-fulfilling prophecy?
- Remember, you get what you expect.
- Changing your approach might surprise you.

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## ACTIVITY: PFC PARK AND THE PCS

PFC Park has always been slow to make friends. When he gets to his new unit, he expects that his fellow Soldiers won't take much interest in getting to know him, so he just hangs out in his room, goes to the DFAC and back, and generally keeps to himself. As a result of his lack of reaching out and making himself available to others, he ends up with no friends.

PFC Park texts a buddy from BCT and explains that he doesn't like his new unit. His buddy texts back: "don't sweat it."

A couple of days later, PFC Park sees PFC Berger and PFC Franks from his unit at the PX and decides to make an effort and see if he can walk back to the barracks with them. As he begins to walk toward them, he sees them laugh and then they turn around and go in the opposite direction. PFC Park believes they saw him and laughed at him, then darted away to avoid him. He's pretty devastated.

Record your own notes here:



### To practice awareness of roadblocks.

#### 1. Introduce the activity.

- So now we're going to practice recognizing roadblocks and how to clear them.

**[NOTE:** Activity in small groups]

**[NOTE:** Divide into small groups. Instruct half to take PFC Park's perspective and half take PFC Berger's perspective.]



- What roadblocks can you see?
- What can PFC Park do differently (if anything)?
- or
- What can PFC Berger do differently (if anything)?

**[NOTE:** After 3-5 minutes, have each group report back to the class as a whole.

*Listen for themes such as: self-fulfilling prophecy (PFC Park's behavior), misreading nonverbals (that PFC Park was trying to catch up with Berger and Franks and was upset afterwards).]*

- Could PFC Park been misreading nonverbals from the two unit members PFC Berger and PFC Franks?

#### 2. Provide additional context to the scenario.



- The story continues: An hour or so later, back in the barracks area he sees PFC Berger and PFC Franks. PFC Berger walks over to him and says, "Right when we saw you, Franks realized he forgot to grab one of his bags from the check-out area so we went back to get it. Sorry we missed you, maybe next time."

- **[ASK]:** Does that change your recommendations?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses.]

- As you can see in the example, communication matters.
- **[ASK]:** Did the BCT buddy know what PFC Park was going through?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses. Listen for the concept that PFC Park' text didn't really explain what was going on ]

- **[ASK]:** How well did PFC Berger handle the situation?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses.

*In general, PFC Berger handled the situation well – he must have guessed that PFC Park misinterpreted what happened. He was probably looking at nonverbal cues since PFC Park was "pretty devastated".*

*PFC Berger also offered an apology. How did he do? Did he use "I" statements (he said "we", so that is owning it), he didn't blame PFC Park' so that's good, and he said what they would do in the future ("maybe next time") – although could be more specific.*

*He did not "Acknowledge impact on the other person" – and that might have helped PFC Park feel more understood.*

*Still, they are on the right track.]*

- **[ASK:]** Whose responsibility is it?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses. Listen for the concept that connection is a shared responsibility across the unit.]

- **[ASK:]** Does PFC Park have to pretend he is extraverted or outgoing even when he isn't?

**[NOTE:** Allow for responses. Listen for the concept that PFC Park does not have to fake his personality. What matters is the disconnect between the connection he wants and the connection he has. His isolation could also start to negatively influence the entire team. He and the whole team will benefit from establishing connections.]

Record your own notes here:





**REVIEW**

**Unit Cohesion**  
 culture  
 connection  
 trust  
 communication

**Sharing Culture**  
 understanding unit culture  
 sharing unit culture

**Protecting Connection**  
 dealing with isolation  
 developing group mind vs. groupthink

**Strengthening Trust**  
 listening well  
 responding well

**Communication**  
 tactical communication  
 avoiding roadblocks  
 a good apology

Record your own notes  
here:



**To wrap-up the module.**

**[SLIDE BUILDS]**

## 1. Summarize the module.

- We started today by talking about the importance of unit cohesion—this idea that we stick together through good times and bad times.
- We talked about the effects of social isolation on the individual and on the unit.
- We talked about the importance of understanding and sharing unit culture—this idea that we strengthen unit cohesion by sharing the things that make our unit unique.
  - Who we are – the specific characteristics of our unit.
  - What we do – the specific roles that you each fill in your unit.
  - How we do it – the written and unwritten rules that guide our behavior and interactions with one another.
- We then talked about the importance of protecting our connections by including others and recognizing the value of our differences. We also discussed group mind and groupthink or shared mental model, and how they differ.

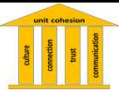




- We also talked about how to strengthen unit trust by sharing good and bad times, and by relying on each other when times get tough.
- And finally, we discussed the importance of communication skills, and what barriers can get in the way.

Record your own notes  
here:





## BOTTOM LINE

**Social isolation is a risk to you and your team**

**By investing in social connection, you can mitigate risk and strengthen your team**

**What you chose to do matters**



Record your own notes here:



**To emphasize the bottom line.**

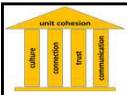
### [SLIDE BUILDS]

#### 1. Reinforce the main point.

- Social isolation is a threat to individuals and to the whole team.
- It's potentially contagious – it can become a cultural norm within the group – affecting the whole unit. And this pattern of behavior can potentially undermine the health and functioning of the whole team.
- *CLICK to ADVANCE*
- But the flip side is also true. Just like isolation is contagious, so is connection.
- By investing in social connection, you can reduce the risk to your teammates and to yourself and even strengthen the whole team.
- Regardless of rank, you can make a positive impact. And you don't have to be someone you aren't -- you can keep ahead of social isolation by reaching out in small ways.
- *CLICK to ADVANCE*
- What you chose to do matters and by investing in others, you can help yourself and your team.



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## WRAP-UP

What's the most valuable concept you learned today?

What's a take-home point that you can practice?

Record your own notes here:



**To emphasize the bottom line.**

### [**SLIDE BUILDS**]

#### 1. Check on learning.

- [**ASK**]: Are there any questions on any of the skills or principles that we covered today?

[**NOTE**: Allow for and answer any questions that may arise.]

#### [**CLICK TO ADVANCE**]

- Discuss the following questions with a partner.
  - What's the risk if your team does not pay attention to the importance of social I connection?
  - What's the most valuable concept you learned today?
  - What's one take-home point that you can use as a team member? As a leader?

[**NOTE**: Allow time for discussion, then ask for responses. Record responses on a flipchart (if available), and summarize the Soldiers' responses, emphasizing the components of the training.]

