



by Tom Dull

Unique to the military profession is that, upon entrance, the servicemember is instantly accepted and considered part of the team. Whether a scout team, infantry company, or brigade staff, soldiers are always a member of a team (and most of the time members of multiple teams at once).

Although teams might be unique through their personalities and locations, all military teams are typically similar with a distinct three component hierarchy. Most military teams have a leader at the head of the respective unit, junior leaders interspersed across the unit to transmit the senior leader's intent and guidance, and subordinates to carry out the leader's orders and operations. All three components are necessary to form the team and vital for it to function and achieve success.

Unfortunately, however, it is all too common for some teams to have an attitude that is not cohesive. These teams are fractured, and their team members are better defined as

coworkers instead of teammates. Being a poor teammate is revealed through broken trust (within the team), unbalanced work effort amongst members, and selfish attitudes manifesting as a lack of care for the welfare of the team members and their families.

However, there is hope. To establish and achieve the true definition of being a good teammate, team members must possess two behaviors. Simply stated, a good teammate must (1) be deliberate in actions and well-intentioned in manner and (2) be determined to be united with fellow team members.

1. Be deliberate in action and do so in a well-intentioned manner.

- **Don't be selfish with your teammates.** Selfishness may be the root cause of team destruction. Pride and anger quickly and easily cloud the goals and purpose of the team. It is the idea of getting an advantage over another team member. This is often conveyed in insults and character assaults and regularly delivered behind a teammate's back. It is the idea of tearing down another teammate to make oneself appear better.
- **Don't be conceited towards your teammates.** There is nothing worse than a know-it-all. That person who talks in the first person and expresses hubris within the team. This is the team member who does not listen and does not look to learn from the team. This team member has all the answers and is centered only on themselves; this team member does not look to help another team member.
- **Practice humility with your teammates.** Humility is the opposite of pride. It is the strongest virtue a teammate can have as a member of a team. It carries the idea that the teammate is not fixed in their thinking but rather growing and willing to learn. The virtue of humility enhances the cohesion of the team and is the foundation of trust and team performance.

2. Be determined to be united.

- **Deem your teammates as more important than yourself.** This is an area that is often difficult for individuals to achieve. It requires that all three of the elements (not being selfish, not being conceited, and practicing humility), provided above, are habitually practiced all at once. It is the idea of genuine commitment to the team and its members. It is demonstrated by showcasing the abilities and skills of your teammate and leader, it is the idea of caring for the reason of the team's mission and the talents of your teammates to accomplish that goal, it is the lack of concern for self. In the military profession, this could manifest as risk to self over risk to members of the team.

- **Look out for your teammates' best interest.** This is the idea of building up a teammate and respecting them in all areas. It requires the teammate to remain disciplined in their care and concern for their fellow team members. This is negatively demonstrated in trust breaking behavior and positively conveyed in speaking truth and sharing the burden and risk of the team when life and work are austere and uncertain.

Being a good teammate is hard. But by following the above team behaviors, to deliberately act in a well-intentioned manner and determined to be united, teammates will become cohesive regardless of the environment and operation.

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