

SPC Nelson

Building Resiliency in the Squad

The purpose of this essay is to give instructions to squad leaders on building resiliency in the squad. Promoting self-confidence, developing a sense of purpose, and building a support network builds squad resiliency. Mastering more simple tasks, continuing to learn new skills, and having an appropriate reaction to failure creates self-confidence. Squad leaders provide Soldiers with a sense of purpose by setting goals, explaining individual Soldier's roles, and promoting outside interests and hobbies. A good squad leader creates a support network by building emotional capital within the squad, communicating effectively, and recognizing Soldiers in need. Resiliency is the ability to adapt to stressful environments and situations and overcome failures with a positive attitude (American Psychological Association). A resilient team is more capable and more likely to accomplish its mission efficiently. When the individuals of a team are resilient, they can help make the entire team resilient. Ultimately, the team or squad leader has the responsibility of building resiliency in their team and individual Soldiers.

A squad leader must help their Soldiers develop self-confidence in their abilities while creating confidence in the team's collective ability. Mastery or near-mastery of individual skills through repetition of simple tasks creates a baseline ability level and builds confidence (Derosa, 2019). Consistent squad-level training in basic Soldier skills creates confidence in the team's collective ability while more advanced squad-level training develops new skills and promotes teamwork. A resilient Soldier is not only confident in their current skill set but is also confident in their ability to learn and adapt to

new skills. Squad leaders should find opportunities for their Soldiers to cross-train with other military jobs and gather a larger picture of how the squad works within the platoon, and the platoon within the company, and so forth. Squad leaders should also recommend Soldiers continue their military and civilian education. Education and skill mastery creates self-confidence, which is a key element of resiliency. The appropriate reaction to failure is a large part of being resilient. Reacting to failure by focusing on it and never moving past it is not resilient. A resilient reaction to failure is to learn from it and move on to the next task (Derosa, 2019). After-action reviews and group discussions help bring closure to failed or disappointing missions so that Soldiers are less likely to focus on failure. The ability to adapt to and create positivity from failure is a key element of a resilient squad.

Having a sense of purpose creates resiliency and acts as a shielding factor for depression and suicide prevention as well (Derosa, 2019). When an individual has a sense of purpose, they can look past small hindrances and see the big picture. Squads avoid “getting lost in the weeds” during a particular mission when they keep their purpose front-most in their mind. Setting attainable goals for the squad and individual Soldiers is essential for building resiliency. Goal setting creates a sense of purpose and helps define the role of the team and its individuals. Accomplishment of a goal promotes self-confidence and confirms the sense of purpose. A squad leader should clearly define a Soldier’s role in the unit and the importance of that role to the overall mission. It is important that Soldiers feel comfortable with their role in the service but also important that they find a purpose outside of the military. Squad leaders should encourage Soldiers to find hobbies and participate in activities outside of the

service. Soldiers who have no interest outside of the military do not recover from failure as effectively. A resilient Soldier will turn to success in other areas when faced with failure in their military career.

Team leaders build squad resiliency by creating a supportive network. A team that comes together to support one another is more capable of overcoming team challenges and setbacks. Emotional capital is a level of loyalty and trust built by a leader over time and through shared experiences (Fannin, 2018). A leader uses emotional capital as a kind of currency that they invest and then withdraw when in adverse situations. The depletion of emotional capital leads to the collapse or underperformance of a team. It is the squad leader's job to determine how their team communicates and develop that method clearly for the Soldiers. Some teams work better with clearly defined roles and strict discipline while others work better with an exchange of tasks and responsibilities from day-to-day. A team leader must establish the team as an open peer support network for Soldiers, for issues in the military and in personal lives. Sometimes a welcoming and supportive network is not enough for a Soldier. Recognizing indicators of a stressed Soldier is an important part of being an effective squad leader. It may be necessary for the team leader to bring the support network to the Soldier when the Soldier does not seek it out. One or two resilient soldiers does not make the whole team resilient, but those who understand resiliency can support others and guide them to becoming more resilient individuals as well.

A healthy level of self-confidence, confidence in the team's ability, an individual sense of purpose, a team sense of purpose, and a supportive team environment builds resiliency in a squad. A squad that adapts to stress and overcomes challenges is more

capable and more effective in both support and combat roles. The team leader is in the best position to develop their team's resiliency by continuing to train and educate their team, setting reasonable goals for their team, promoting activities outside of the military, and molding the team into a supportive network of peers.

References

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