

Corrective Training

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It is probably a fair assumption that corrective training has been a part of our military for many centuries. If a task was not completed correctly or on time, additional training or a corrective task was employed to ensure its mastery or compliance.

Today we turn to Army Regulation 600-20, paragraph 4-6 for guidance: “One of the most effective administrative corrective measures is extra training or instruction (including on-the-spot correction). For example, if Soldiers appear in an improper uniform, they are required to correct it immediately; if they do not maintain their housing area properly, they must correct the deficiency in a timely manner. If Soldiers have training deficiencies, they will be required to take extra training or instruction in subjects directly related to the shortcoming.

1. The training, instruction, or correction given to a Soldier to correct deficiencies must be directly related to the

deficiency. It must be oriented to improving the Soldier's performance in his or her problem area. Corrective measures may be taken after normal duty hours. Such measures assume the nature of training or instruction, not punishment. Corrective training should continue only until the training deficiency is overcome. Authority to use it is part of the inherent powers of command.

2. Care should be taken at all levels of command to ensure that training and instruction are not used in an oppressive manner to evade the procedural safeguards applying to imposing non-judicial punishment. Deficiencies satisfactorily corrected by means of training and instruction, shall not be noted in the official records of the Soldiers concerned."

AR 27-10, paragraph 3-3, adds to the discussion with similar verbiage: "One of the most effective non-punitive measures available to a commander is extra training or instruction. It is used when a Soldier's duty performance has been substandard or deficient; for example, a Soldier who fails to maintain proper attire may be required to attend classes on the wearing of the uniform and stand inspection until the deficiency is corrected. The training or instruction must relate directly to the deficiency observed and must be oriented to correct that particular deficiency. Extra training or instruction may be conducted after duty hours."

As a private, I recall that I was late to formation one day and I was counseled using a [Department of the Army Form 4856](#) where I was instructed to report to our charge of quarters desk at 0600. To me, being counseled on a DA form was enough to get my attention. Since my duty was to be early to any formation, the additional time to report to our CQ early did not have any added value. In retrospect, this is an example of an ineffective corrective training task which was not even supervised.

A more memorable event, in my opinion, was when one of my battle buddies was seen driving recklessly on post. It just so happened, that he was being followed by a command sergeant major who exercised his general military authority and gave the Soldier a task to prepare a "safe driving techniques" class for his platoon. This class was to be no less than 15 minutes, presented to his entire platoon, and supervised by his company first sergeant. I remember that he explained what he did; he explained the conversation with the CSM and his corrective training. He then gave a short class using the Oklahoma State driver's study guide and a portion of the U.S. Army Defensive Driving course. This was not only effective for him, but it also had an impact on everyone who witnessed it.

As a squad leader, I had three Soldiers that did not understand the importance of accountability. I allowed my team leaders to try and correct the situation the first few times through the use of counseling and corrective training. They tried the usual progression of "this is your first warning...., report early to formation...., report early to formation and write a short essay on why you think this is important....," and on. These attempts proved to be ineffective. After their attempt I still had four Soldiers out-of-ranks on a single day and it was time for me to step in and fix the entire squad. The entire squad was counseled and all received the same corrective training to include the team leaders. I would schedule several formations throughout the day, each formation was in a different uniform and a new task was to be completed prior to the next formation. The first few formations were a hit and miss on compliance and were quickly fixed with on-the-spot corrections, but when additional formations were added throughout the day and after duty hours, compliance was inevitable. This went on for over a week and was draining on the Soldiers and the NCOs as well. The result was zero tardiness or missed formations the remainder of my time as their squad leader. This was my most successful corrective training method as a squad leader; it was directly related to the deficiency, it was progressive from least restrictive to very restrictive, and it achieved the objective to retrain the Soldiers and reinforce standards. Granted, some might argue that my actions might be viewed as mass punishment but the situation warranted correcting the behavior of every member of the squad as each member has some level of culpability in the squad's past poor performance.

As a platoon sergeant and first sergeant, one of my biggest challenges was trying to teach my junior NCOs how to properly record counseling sessions on a DA Form 4856. It took some time before they understood that the "action plan" was corrective training and not just a task to be completed, that it should also be supervised and be educational, have an objective, and be progressive. The action plan should never just be about recommending or

threatening Uniform Code of Military Justice action.

According to Command Sgt. Maj. Rory L. Malloy, commandant of the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy:

Punishment is strictly the realm of the UCMJ. Corrective training is intended to correct a deficiency or shortcoming, never to punish. If a Soldier arrives to work and he hasn't shaved properly, having him conduct a "shaving class" in formation, in which he puts on shaving cream and shaves in front of his peers, isn't corrective training — it's humiliating, it's unprofessional, and it could be considered hazing. However, his NCO could have that Soldier arrive 30 minutes early and shave in the latrine under the supervision of the NCO. In that case, it's clear the action is intended to ensure the Soldier knows how to shave properly. It takes place in private. It's not intended to harass, humiliate or haze. If a supervisor believes his or her whole platoon has a problem with shaving properly, he or she might conduct a class to correct the issue, but the intention should never be to humiliate or punish.

According to Command Sgt. Maj. Bradley J. Houston, command sergeant major of the 2nd Engineer Brigade:

I personally, as a private, was assigned corrective training as a result of being late to formation. This was welcomed by me as I had seen other Soldiers receive UCMJ punishment for the same infraction. It showed me that my chain of command cared about me enough to fight for me all the while making it clear that conduct such as this was not compatible for our profession.

As a battalion command sergeant major I grew frustrated from the lack of corrective training being used in our unit and the way in which some leaders chose to employ it. First, if not used the perception of the Soldiers is that the chain of command must be "Article-15 happy" and that any infraction would be dealt with in this manner. This created a "zero defects" mentality and eroded the trust between our Soldiers and our leaders. Those who chose to employ corrective training were not willing to put in the effort behind their plans and ensure Soldiers were being assigned corrective training oriented towards correcting their deficiencies. When you do something that appears to be just wasting a Soldier's time, you are viewed as a tyrant versus a caring leader committed to taking care of Soldiers.

I partnered with our legal team and our Inspector General's office in an effort to educate our leaders on what corrective training really is and to provide them with a few examples of what it should look like. This NCO professional development session was very useful and well received by our junior leaders. After this, I began seeing classes to their platoon or squad being used instead of writing an essay. This simple shift still provided education to the Soldier who committed the infraction while also educating the other Soldiers in their unit. This also made our NCOs take ownership of their Soldiers and their issues versus placing the burden on the staff duty NCO for supervision. We eliminated the practice of allowing NCOs to assign their Soldiers with the task of signing in at the SDNCO desk for their corrective training.

Through all of this we increased trust between our NCOs and Soldiers, reduced minor misconduct and also showed that we were serious about rehabilitation if further misconduct did occur that necessitated further administrative or UCMJ actions. I believe it also required our NCOs to put more time and effort behind their counseling processes which will only make Soldiers and ultimately our units better.

Leaders must ensure compliance with Army regulations, in particular assuring that corrective training is rehabilitative in nature and not intended to embarrass, harass, humiliate or punish the Soldier. Soldiers who are facing administrative separation, non-judicial punishment, or court-martial may still be required to conduct corrective training prior to adjudication or separation. Coordination with your legal office is recommended to ensure that your plan of action does not amount to unlawful pretrial punishment under Article 13, UCMJ.

A common mistake, for example, is the action taken when a Soldier is late for work call or formation. The Soldier is made to make up the time after duty hours, but then is given a task unrelated to the work missed. If a Soldier missed physical training, he or she should conduct tasks associated with accountability and make up the physical training

session they missed. If a Soldier missed work call, he or she should perform tasks associated with his or her daily duties and should not become the clean-up detail for the week.

Finally, there is no written guidance on the duration of corrective training, but when we acknowledge that corrective training should be rehabilitative in nature and not a punishment it is difficult to place a pre-determined duration. Corrective training or instruction should continue until the Soldier demonstrates consistently that performance has improved and that the re-training was effective. This may be a onetime session, for example, when giving a class on the subject, or it could take a few weeks. When the Soldier demonstrates that he or she can consistently complete the task with fewer errors that is when the corrective training should end. I explain this to my NCOs by comparing corrective training to non-judicial or judicial punishment. A punishment carries a specific timeline as a sentence given by a judge or a commander, but corrective training is not a sentence, it is instruction or re-training and the objective is to meet an established goal or standard which is not necessarily based on time.

In closing, Soldiers will not always perform to standard and it is our responsibility as leaders and mentors to ensure understanding of the tasks and established Army standards, not only to ensure discipline, but to ensure the continuity of a professional military organization. When Soldiers do not perform to standard, they should be reminded of the established standard and afforded an opportunity to demonstrate understanding and compliance through corrective training. If the Soldier continues to make mistakes or be non-compliant, through inability or indiscipline, more creative methods are often necessary or the leader may need to use more progressively restrictive methods to correct their behavior. When leaders demonstrate to Soldiers that corrective training or instruction is focused on making them better or getting them back on track, they will build mutual trust and confidence with their Soldiers. When the corrective plan is simply designed to take away a Soldier's time or viewed as a lazy attempt to correct behavior, then their action becomes ineffective and trust is diminished. When we train or re-train Soldiers, it should always be with the intent on creating new opportunities to improve.

If you would like to learn more about this topic I recommend you take the time to read [AR 600-20](#), paragraph 4-6 and [AR 27-10](#), paragraph 3-3, both of which provide the Army's regulatory guidance on the topic. Additionally, I recommend Command Sgt. Maj. Rory L. Malloy's article "[From the CSM: Correction should train, not humiliate](#)" published in the NCO Journal in 2013. Malloy discusses several examples of corrective training and provides sound advice. Lastly, I recommend you use your senior NCOs and mentors to draw best practices and advice not only on this topic but all matters of leadership.