



(Graphic by NCO Journal)

# Emotional Intelligence

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**S**pc. Lee, is about to depart on a four day pass from Advanced Individual Training to spend some quality time with his wife and kids, his first real break since he began basic training. He sees Spc. Plotner and says, "I will see you when I get back, and thanks for sharing with me how to get my boots to shine." Three days later, Lee returns and finds Plotner, "Brother, look how my boots turned out, amazing right!" The following day at formation, a drill sergeant (DS1) was walking the line looking at boots, he stopped in front of Lee, announcing loudly, "Medics, take a look at these boots, this is the standard!" Plotner passes a nod as if to say, it worked right. The formation that followed the next day went completely different, when another drill sergeant (DS2) was on duty that day and immediately zeroed in on Lee's boots. "Medic! How did you get those boots to shine like that, that's unauthorized, those are too shiny, and I don't want to see you wearing them tomorrow!" Lee is now confused, one drill sergeant says this is the standard and the other says, "Do not let me catch you wearing them."

Unfortunately, Lee only has the two pair he was issued and they both look the same, too shiny. What does Lee do? He decides, "I'm not removing the shine from my boots, it doesn't make sense and the other drill sergeant said they were the standard, so I'm keeping them".

The next day both drill sergeants are present for inspection, and immediately DS2 goes straight to Lee as though he was looking for him? DS2 raises his voice in disgust and tells everyone they are getting new boots, with DS1 looking on saying nothing. That week on a Thursday, 32 medics were driven to clothing sales to receive two new sets of boots. Lee is quiet sitting with his two sets packed in a linen bag and doesn't understand why each DS has a different standard. While sitting to be fitted, a civilian comes out and says to Lee, "What's your size and why are you turning in your boots?" Lee states, "There is nothing wrong with my boots they are new, fit perfect, and I don't really need new boots." The civilian says, "So why are you here?" Lee replies, "Sir, I have to turn my boots in because my drill sergeant said

they are too shiny and that isn't authorized." Feeling for the Soldier, the civilian recommends, "Let's just replace one set only and this way you can keep one." Two hours later DS2 sees Lee sitting on the bus with a few other Soldiers as they wait for the group to finish exchanging uniforms, and again he points out Lee. The drill sergeant begins tapping on the window and says, "Everyone off the bus and empty your linen bags so we can see what's in them?" Lee dumps his bag and the DS begins yelling at him, "I told you to turn those boots in, they are too shiny!" The next words spoken by the drill sergeant would turn the tide as the drill sergeant said angrily,

Oh, by the way, those boots are memorably encased to remind Lee of that day. Now we need to answer, why? Why did Lee feel so strongly about his boots? Because he believed in the effort he spent to shine them and was willing to stand his ground. He didn't need more rank to know what his instincts told him. He had already observed his buddy Plotner, reach back with one hand, latch onto a Soldier's individual equipment, and drag him through a 12 mile road march. It was only afterwards we learned that Plotner had a fractured foot over the last nine miles. Now this might not mean a lot to you so far, but realize that Plotner was a former Army ranger



Trainees from Foxtrot Company, 2nd Battalion, 19th Infantry Regiment, negotiate a confidence course on Sand Hill at Fort Benning, Ga, Feb. 27, 2019. The mission of the 2/19th Infantry Battalion is to transform civilians into disciplined Infantrymen. (U.S. Army photo by Patrick Albright, Maneuver Center of Excellence, Fort Benning Public Affairs)

"Soldier you are a thief!" Lee turns toward the drill sergeant and says "What did you call me?" As he starts towards the drill sergeant, saying, "You are the one who needs a lesson in manners, when I'm done with you, you will wish you hadn't called me that!"

The account above is a real story, observed in "full color" by myself. The real story behind Spc. Lee is that he was a brilliant Medic. Lee excelled as a medic, leader, and I'm happy to tell you he is a first sergeant in the Army today. Lee is easily liked by others, even the drill sergeant who harassed him about his boots. You see, Lee's story is just one of millions that play out in the Army today.

who had left the service and decided to come back in. He had jumped into Panama and was Lee's best friend from day one of Basic Combat Training. Plotner went on to fly for the Army and I had the honor of starting my Army career under his teaching. He always said, "Don't expect others to do for you." If you do it yourself, give all your heart!" "Others will want what you have - desire."

Comrades, do you remember days like these? I bet you do. Do you remember when getting "smoked" was considered just part of being hard? Do you remember being escorted behind the motor pool where a staff sergeant directed a new "buck" sergeant on how to prop-

erly "exercise discipline" and it was always some poor specialist on the receiving end? Do you remember how you were expected to be a marathoner in your platoon or you were looked down upon? Do you remember the days where that poor runner was taken down the back roads with one NCO over their left shoulder and another over their right? Do you remember running until you puked up your previous night's supper? So here are the real questions. Do you think these moments were emotional? How do we get ourselves into cycles where no consideration is given for the other person's emotional limits? What risk are we accepting by not remaining attuned or aware of what we say or how we say it? I'm certain you remember the old saying, "See one, show one, do one"? In essence, that is how we often adopt both good and bad practices.

Robert Collier said it well, "Take the first step, and your mind will mobilize all its forces to your aid. That first essential is that you begin. Once the battle is started, all that is within and without you will come to your assistance." In the same way, emotional fixations are like images we can't see. If you see them clearly for what they really are, you can remove their power and control. Simply being in full possession of your thoughts toward something or someone without allowing emotional influences to mislead you, is pure genius. Now if you add rank, position, military status, and physical prowess to the equation each of these subtle differences will no doubt create a powerful emotional tapestry. The words we speak, the emotions we encounter, and how we approach one another enables us to think first and act accordingly.

Our emotional reactions distract us from the present, from the needs of others, and literally make us become what we think. Lee certainly felt strongly about defending his boots because an ex-Army ranger who shared his Panama experience, took the time to show him how to make his boots shine. The mind is always moving along and thinking up the next thought. Emotions are a strong part of the equation. An emotion is actually a hidden seed of thought that is spontaneous, unpremeditated, and with some of us, it's a default setting? How

prepared are you at allowing emotions to take place in the moment? Do we resist them? Having the skill to be conscious of yourself within the law of thought and emotion require us to work the process through applica-



U.S. Army Spc. Tasha Kilen, Company B, Division Headquarters and Headquarters Battalion, 34th Red Bull Infantry Division, participates in a yoga class April 3, 2019 at Camp Arifjan, Kuwait. U.S. Army Central (Forward) invited Paula LeBov, American Red Cross employee and resiliency program manager, to introduce Soldiers to yoga as a way to help build resiliency. (U.S. Army photo by Sgt. Jennifer Shick)

ton, self-analysis, and experience. Coincidentally, this is also where the emotions hide. Would the drill sergeant reconsider his comment if he knew that Lee came from a large "back woods" family and was proud of it because he grew up with virtually nothing? Is Lee holding on too tight? How would you feel, if you earned a promotion, was given a higher level of responsibility with many Soldiers placed into your charge and care, and one of the first things you over hear from your boss is, "Well he has a perception management problem". Is the comment accurate? What emotion belongs here? Is this like the Wizard of Oz, where the dog calmly pulls back the curtain only to find there's nothing to fear?

What would you do if your five year old pulled down your brand new 60-inch flat screen plasma TV, sending it to it's demise? What will your six-foot angry silhouette convey through his eyes, as you tower over him? How would you know on that particular day your son was confident and ready enough to get his own toy out from behind the TV? Completing a task you had done for him many times before! One of the best sentences ever shared with me was, "I treat everyone equally, no matter who they are." That was spoken from the only person to ever fire me from a job. Why does it take a significant emotional event for us to become more self-aware? If



U.S. Army Sgt. Kaylee Lozada, a human resources specialist from New York, N.Y., recites the Oath of Enlistment in a CH-47 Chinook on her first deployment to Afghanistan, Nov. 29, 2018. Lozada first enlisted in the U.S. Army July 2013 and goals are becoming a Drill Sergeant. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Markus Bowling)

you want to be more proficient at emotional intelligence, you have to follow some basic rules. Start by owning your share of someone else's struggle, as you may be the centerpiece of the situation.

First, start with knowing that conscious leaders have the ability to consistently move themselves and others to action because they understand the "invisible forces" that shape us (Tony Robbins, "Why we do what we do"). Second, when we have an emotional reaction either positive or negative, we have an opportunity to direct the outcome. It's the decision to look inward that equals the power to shape the outcome. Sometimes it's more than enough just to be there for others, remaining unattached to the outcome. We should listen, and observe. Maybe that's all that's required for you to be a positive force. The defining factor is not resources it's resourcefulness. It's the right emotional state of mind that is the ultimate resource of creativity, determination, empathy, curiosity, passion, and resolve. Third, are you focused on feelings, the past, the future, yourself, or others? How do you know what to be focused on when you are emotional? Will a symbolic meaning of your interaction cause emotions to be inappropriate? Why does this happen? Everything was going well and BAM! Someone wants to take my boots away from me! This is an example of a hair trigger, mild cue, or threat to your basic needs. Being ready is not enough, you have to let go of outcomes, remain calm, and work from the mental stronghold that everything is ok.

Lastly, self-discipline begins with the mastery of

your thoughts. If you don't control what you think, you can't control what you do. Leadership is not about controlling others. It's more about the enrichment of self through freedom and empowerment. When you feel a rush of strong emotions redirecting you, physically take a step back and notice if you are behaving inappropriately. Be mindful and take notice of "how do I feel right now?" Then ask "what am I thinking?" "How am I behaving?" Finally, talk yourself through the situation while staying open to the experience. These questions will help to disengage you from personal thought patterns or find your own creative

thread to a more adaptive and positive-shift (Tara, Bennett-Goleman, and Emotional Alchemy). How would you know if an emotionally charged situation wasn't emanating from your own deeply ingrained habits which can narrow your freedom of choice in the moment? Unless you focus and notice your actions which dictate how you behave, than you are doomed to repeat it. Mindfulness allows thoughts and feelings to come and go naturally as you observe them with a steady attention. We neither, react or judge them for any reason. We just observe them with equanimity. For some, taking a slow controlled breath is all that's needed. Remain as the witness and override any over reactions.

We are all after the same answers- "what does it mean?" "Am I being punished or rewarded here?" "What am I going to do next?" "Do I give up or move forward?" These questions require us to explore the impact of our decision, often times through emotion in order to find meaning. Just recall Rosa Park's courageous story. How did she maintain her calm throughout that experience? She arrived at the simple truth that she was not going to live in fear any longer. She was overcome with calm. Learn to shift your thoughts; sustained awareness lies in its impact on our thoughts, moods, and emotions. When we face a jumble of emotions with mindfulness, our sustained attention quiets the inner disorder and confusion; as mindfulness gains a foothold, it calms the chaos and your emotions begin to stabilize.

Ultimately, we are the makers of ourselves by virtue of the thoughts we choose and encourage (James Allen,

"As a Man Thinketh"). How we show up in the moment of each circumstance will reflect the inner character of our truth. The art and skill of personality will balance the mood of the leader and enable our connection to others. Whenever you recognize negative emotions ask yourself this, "What else could this mean?" or "Do I appreciate what others have to give?" Both are good first steps to being emotionally intelligent.

If you would like to learn more about this topic I would recommended that you take time to read: "The Secret of the Ages" by Robert Collier, "Why we do what we do" seminar by Tony Robbins, "Emotional Alchemy" by Tara, Bennett-Goleman, "As a Man Thinketh" by James Allen, and "From One Leader to Another: Emotional Intelligence and Leadership" by Sergeant Major S. Oak. ■

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