

# What the Warrior Ethos means to me

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(U.S. Army photo / graphic by NCO Journal)

The Warrior Ethos is a subset of our Soldier's Creed. It is the heart and soul of the Creed and is four simple, yet powerful sentences. Without the Ethos, the Creed does not stand. The Soldier's Creed was fully implemented by the Army on Nov. 13, 2003. Soldiers are expected to memorize it in Basic and Advanced Individual Training. However, memorization is easy, understanding is hard. The young Soldiers placed in your charge, will do better if you explain and help them understand the Ethos. Here is a way of teaching it for understanding. Steal it if you want, but it is better if you customize your lesson to fit your style.

***"I will always place the mission first."***

When our Soldiers join the Army, they want to be a part of an organization that is bigger than them. They want to serve their country and defend the values of our nation. This particular line is one about values. I place the mission with little or no regard to my own personal well-being. It is bigger than any one Soldier and their individual needs. Without my pure faith and trust that my mission supports a greater good, the entire Army falls apart. Each person is responsible for their part of completing the overall mission.

### ***"I will never accept defeat."***

I love this sentence. Notice that it does not say "I will never be defeated". It says that I will never accept it. Everyone will face adversity; every Soldier will be defeated at some point in their career. Some of those defeats will be big and some small. But you never have to accept it. If you get knocked down, get back up, dust yourself off and get back at it, whatever it may be. Learn from your mistakes always seeking perfection, knowing that perfection is not likely, but it is a worthy pursuit. It is in the pursuit of perfection that individuals and units reach excellence. Excellence should be the goal.

### ***"I will never quit."***

This is one of the simplest principles yet needs to be taught to our newest Soldiers and reinforced throughout their service. I was personally lucky enough to be taught this at a young age by my parents. However, not all young men and women are as fortunate. It can be taught and it can be reinforced. The best placed to be taught is at the team level by a young NCO who believes it to their core.

### ***"I will never leave a fallen comrade."***

This is a very deep and powerful sentence. It has many hidden meanings other than the vision it might first evoke in one's mind's eye. I believe it is the key to our resiliency efforts. It is easy to apply for visible issues such as flesh wounds, broken bones, bleeding and restoring breathing. But how do you apply it to a relationship, financial hardship, educational concerns, all very real issues that many of our young Soldiers face today.

Let me tackle this by asking a question. Would you ever leave a fallen Soldier if they had a broken leg? Of course, the answer is NO! Let me ask another question. Would you leave a Soldier who might do harm to themselves if you knew it? Again the answer is NO! But that is the hard part, how do you know a Soldier is hurting inside with non-visible wounds? The answer is easy to say, but hard to implement. You have to talk to them. You have to build a safe and trusting relationship in which they feel comfortable talking to you. It is by far the most difficult of the four lines comprising the Warrior Ethos. It also is the one that will truly define you as a good leader, because it is so hard to accomplish. In this new day of social media and

technological advances, good old face-to-face counseling and discussion is the best way to identify unseen issues.

So in conclusion, I was lucky enough to have the Ranger Creed drilled into me as a young private in the 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment. I have tried to live by that creed each and every day. Now I do the same by using the Warrior Ethos each and every day. It is on my coin and it is a talk that I can give to Soldiers at a moment's notice. I believe in the Ethos and think it is one of our keys to maintaining and improving the great Army we have. I hope you find your own way to express what the Ethos means to you and share it with those under your charge.