



U.S. Army Command Sgt. Maj. Gary Lynn, 2nd Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment, 3rd Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division crawls under a wire obstacle at the Jungle Operations Training Course at East Range, Hawaii, Oct. 1, 2020. (U.S. Army photo by 1st Lt. Angelo Mejia)

Developing the Leader Mindset

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“A leader takes people where they want to go. A great leader takes people where they don’t necessarily want to go, but ought to be.” —former first lady Rosalyn Carter (Goldin, 2018, para. 2)

Leadership development should be more than just a list of tasks preceding training events. *Army Regulation (AR) 350-1: Army Training and Leader Development* describes leader development as being “...achieved through the lifelong synthesis of the knowledge, skills, and experiences gained through the training and education opportunities in the institutional, operational, and self-development domains” (Department of the Army, 2017, p.3). Becoming a great leader is a lifelong process all service members and Department of the Army (DA) Civilians should actively pursue. This article will focus on understanding motivations, positively influencing mindsets, and how to develop leaders ready for a rapidly changing and ambiguous environment.

Motivation

Abraham Maslow, a renowned American psychologist and one of the founders of “humanist psychology,” has a theory of human motivation that suggests all human needs can be arranged into a hierarchy of prevalent needs, where certain needs are connected to the satisfaction of other more dominant needs (McCleod, 2020). His theory is formed around four foundational pillars:

1. A human being should be viewed as an integrated unit.
2. The needs of a human being are felt more unconsciously than consciously, thus cultural and social context do not play a significant role in the theory of needs.
3. Man is a perpetually wanting animal.
4. Behavior is motivated by a complex set of conscious and unconscious needs, as well as the socio-cultural



U.S. Army Paratroopers with the 173rd Airborne Brigade prepare for an airborne operation in Pordenone, Italy, Sept. 15, 2020. (U.S. Army photo by Paolo Bovo)

context (Maslow, 1943b).

Maslow's theory also explains although people are mostly occupied with satisfying their urgent basic needs, it is the need for self-actualization that drives them to high-level innovation and satisfaction. This understanding creates two questions:

1. What specifically motivates someone to do something?
2. How much of that specific motive is needed for someone to complete a challenging task?

Professors Richard Ryan and Edward Deci speculate that it takes both an *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivation to accomplish a difficult task (2000a). Intrinsic motivation is defined as that which causes someone "to behave a certain way for the satisfaction of the behavior itself" (Ryan & Deci, 2000c, p. 16). Extrinsic motivation is described as engaging in an activity or behavior for a reward or to avoid a punishment (Cherry, 2020). This means a leader must understand their subordinates' motivations and needs to draw out their best performance and accomplish difficult tasks and missions.

Mindset

Mindset is the constructed beliefs about one's abilities. These beliefs could be a set of self-assumptions, or they could be the processed understandings of received information (Dweck, 2006). There are two basic forms of mindset: the *fixed mindset*, in which an individual has developed an idea regarding their capabilities, traits, etc. that they are certain cannot be changed (pessimist); and the *growth mindset*, where one believes their current skills and abilities are in a constant state of progress – not an indicator of skills, knowledge, and abilities, but rather an understanding that growth can always occur regardless of any situation (optimist) (Dweck, 2006; Mraz & Hertz, 2015).

It is the fixed mindset that should be avoided as a leader, as it results in low levels of motivation to excel since their belief is that they cannot improve any further in a subject (for example, saying "I am not a math person" instead of learning how to do new calculations when

necessary) (Dweck, 2015; Maslow, 1943a; Ryan & Deci, 2000a; 2000b). A successful leader should want to grow and continuously develop.

Changing the Mindset

According to *Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22: Army Leadership and the Profession*, leaders should encourage ideas that will improve both unit and individual performance, as well as promote a positive mindset to increase effectiveness and efficiencies (Department of the Army, 2019b).

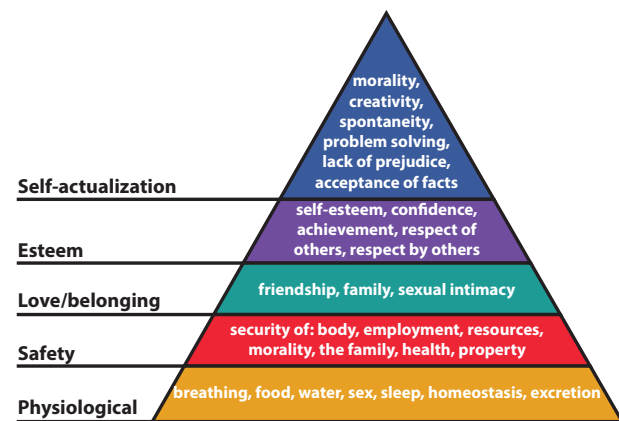
In order to embrace a growth mindset, and demonstrate a willingness to adapt to the Army's needs, leaders should do the following to improve overall performance:

- Ask questions about how to perform tasks better.
- Anticipate the need for change and action.
- Analyze tasks to determine better ways to achieve desired end states.
- Identify ways to improve unit or organizational procedures.
- Leverage technologies to improve effectiveness.
- Demonstrate and encourage critical and creative thinking. (Department of the Army, 2019b, p. 7-2)

Developing Future Leaders

Developing leaders is an integral part of institutional and unit success. *Field Manual (FM) 6-22: Leader Development* states "...leader development is the deliberate, continuous, sequential, and progressive process—founded in Army values—that grows Soldiers and Army Civilians into competent and confident leaders capable of decisive action" (Department of the Army, 2015, p. 1-1). Leader development programs should not be just a series of tasks; but, rather a dynamic and comprehensive process that targets the psychological foundation required to lead U.S. Army Soldiers in any environment while also following a mission command philosophy (Department of the Army, 2019a).

Mentors and instructors who understand the barriers of a fixed mindset, and can model behaviors consistent



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Graphic courtesy of SimplyPsychology*)

