

# Relationships Matter

It takes one Marine to make another Marine better

by MGySgt Charles A. Walker

**T**he Marine Corps is a corps of Marines. The phrase sounds so comically simple that it is almost absurd; a thoughtful pause, however, will reveal the depth of the statement ... a corps of Marines. It speaks of a cadre of remarkable individuals—men and women of every color, creed, and socio-economic background—who have each earned the title of United States Marine. That title binds us to one another across the ages. As a Marine looks back on his time in service, on the experiences that shaped the caliber of Marine he is today, the most prominent influence is that of another U.S. Marine. Whether a mentor, a leader, or a peer, it takes one Marine to make another Marine better. *As iron sharpens iron, so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend.*<sup>1</sup> This happens on a daily basis in our corps and is further evidence that relationships matter.

Relationships are the personal and professional interactions we have with

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each other and the bonds we form. These can be cemented with face-to-face contact and a firm handshake—presence matters. Being present is paramount to establishing a relationship, especially as a leader. A commander conducts battlefield circulation not only to assess the tactical situation on the ground but also to be with his Marines. Simply being where the Marines are has a tremendous impact, especially in an austere place under conditions of hardship. Ask a Marine who served with the “Blue Diamond,” the 1st Marine Division, from 2003–2004 how they feel about Gen James N. Mattis (then the Division Commanding General). Their pride will be evident, as each feels

he knows the CG from his visit to their position in Iraq. They have shared experiences with and are devoted to their general. Because of his presence, each Marine knew why they were there, what they had to do, and they felt they were a part of the team. They were then free to “fight with a happy heart.” They felt—and still, to this day, feel—a kinship and relationship with their commander. This is one example in our recent collective history; however, this scenario has played out many times, in many places, and at different echelons since 1775.

Relationships bridge the gap between a professional obligation and a personal commitment. One example of this can be seen between the supporting and supported unit, such as a supported infantry regiment and a supporting combat logistics battalion, or CLB. The CLB receives a request from the regiment, but because of the regiment’s operational tempo and competing priorities, the requirement is communicated late to the CLB. The CLB is justifiably unable to provide the support requested as a result of the regiment’s failure to plan properly. If working relationships are not established or are poor, this will often be the outcome. However, when the CLB feels it is a part of the team—as a result of ongoing personal contact and interaction—the support will always come through because it is not for “another unit” but for the same team; it’s for a brother. These relationships do not end upon transfer to another unit. The Marine Corps is small, and, inevitably, Marines find themselves crossing paths again, whether at a school, on an exercise or operation, or at a new duty assignment. When solid relationships have been established, they can be seamlessly renewed at the next command; momentum is maintained, and



Marines know when you don't care. (Photo by LCpl Taylor Cooper.)

the team is strengthened. When poor relationships are established, there are hurdles to overcome to eliminate the friction.

Beyond a commander and his Marines, or a supporting and supported unit, the greatest area where relationships matter regards personal issues. It

individual Marine; we are in the people business, first and foremost. The commander that states "mission first, people always" is wise; each of us must invest in one another. SNCOs must spend time with young company-grade officers so that they may influence the caliber of field-grade or general officers they will

ter, we work toward a common goal, and we do it together: one team, one fight. This is how relationships are formed. In crowds around the world, two Marines can find each other, close the gap, and shake hands warmly although meeting for the first time because they each formed relationships with other Marines along the way, and we are all connected one to another. Marines rarely fight for a cause but always for one another. Remember these things the next time a task draws too much of your attention. Slow down and invest in people. Say what you mean, and mean what you say. In this way, the bonds and relationships formed will grow ever stronger as you (and those you influence) add to the illustrious heritage of our corps of Marines.

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has been said that "a Marine doesn't care what you know, but he knows when you don't care." When a Marine is shown that his leadership (or peer) cares about him, that Marine can overcome anything. Our greatest resource is the

one day become. Peers must challenge, correct, and encourage each other at all ranks. We must physically and metaphorically put our arms around both our combat veterans and our young, new joins. We share hardship and laugh-

#### Note

1. Proverbs 27:17, *Holy Bible* (New King James Version).

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2018 Theme | Understanding the Human Dynamics of the Battlespace: Building Partner Capacity in Complex Terrain.

## Kiser Family Irregular Warfare Essay Contest

### Question

What role does practical knowledge of belief systems that are relevant to operational planning and decision making play in developing culturally proficient operators who are adept in interacting with and influencing allied and partner militaries, relevant civilian populations and opposing forces? How should the Marine Corps seek to develop practical knowledge of belief systems\* as a culture capability in forward deployed Marines and units?

\*Belief Systems --- A belief is a certainty, learned through inherited group experiences and practices, about the substance and meaning of phenomena and human activity... beliefs influence the way people perceive their world, resulting in a specific worldview.

### Deadline

30 October 2018

### Prizes

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