



S M D C / A R S T R A T
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As we continue our discussion on Army values and their importance to the men and women who serve our great nation as members of the United States Army, we come to the letter R in the acronym "LDRSHIP." R is there to remind us of the importance of giving and earning respect. Army Field Manual 6-22 defines respect.

RESPECT: Treat people as they should be treated.

As noted in FM 6-22, "Respect for the individual is the basis for the rule of law—the very essence of what the Nation stands for. In the Army, respect means treating others as they should be treated. This value reiterates that people are the most precious resource and that one is bound to treat others with dignity and respect."

Respect is very important to each and every one of us. Most of us are taught from childhood to respect our elders, our teachers, the feelings of others, law, and the values and customs of our family and country. Hopefully, we're also taught to respect the values and customs of people who are different from us or who hail from different countries. This fundamental value is absolutely critical to the overall morale and welfare of Army Personnel.

A unit that works under a cloud of disrespect, an environment where common respect for others is not given, or one where the leader or leaders have failed to earn the respect of the team is destined for failure. No one works well, much less at an optimum level in an environment where the person does not feel respected or valued. A leader might compel performance based upon threat or promise of reward—for a short period of time, but long term success and the ability to build and adapt for the future depends upon an environment of respect.

FM 6-22 instructs us to "consistently foster a climate in which everyone is treated with dignity and respect, regardless of race, gender, creed, or religious belief." Successfully building such a "climate of respect" requires strong leadership by example. "How a leader lives the Army Values shows subordinates how they should behave. Teaching values is one of a leader's most important responsibilities. It helps create a common understanding of the Army Values and expected standards."

This being said, we must not come to believe that fostering a climate of respect is solely the responsibility of our leaders. Each of us is responsible for our actions towards others and the impact of those actions upon the unit. The old adage that "one bad apple spoils the whole barrel" is absolutely true when it comes to respect. If a member of the unit fails to respect others within the unit, it won't be long before resentment builds, divisions occur, and the climate of respect is totally destroyed.

Respect and self-respect are also deeply connected. It's almost impossible for us to respect others if we don't respect ourselves, and it's equally hard to respect ourselves if others don't respect us. Loss of self-respect occurs for many reasons. It can be caused by slipping into actions or habits—alcohol or drug abuse for example—that run counter to your values or it can be fostered by enduring abuse or disrespect from someone we love or respect.

People are respected for their actions towards others and towards themselves. This lesson was driven home for me during my recent visits to our SMDC Soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan. The respect our Soldiers have earned from both their fellow Service Members and local citizens in theater, speaks volumes about the criticality of respect within the Army.

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