

THE VALUE OF LIFE / A LIFE WORTH LIVING
Foundational Readiness Day, APR 2022

Section 1: (5 minutes)

Facilitator: Good Morning, The Value of Life and a Life Worth Living are both approaches the Army has adopted. Instead of reacting after personnel have engaged in harmful or risky behavior (i.e., “picking up the pieces”) The Army is looking forward to supporting Soldiers and personnel in positive decision making and building a life worth living! Key points to remember:

- 1) Your life has value and purpose
- 2) You are a critical member of our Army reserve Team
- 3) You matter to me, your leaders, family, and friends.

Our time today we will start to explore these points, thinking about the source of our value, and what does a purposeful, significant life look like (“the good life” or a “life worth living”). Another way to think about it is we want to get to the “WHY” behind the “WHAT” for example...Why does my life have value and purpose? Why am I a critical member of the Team? Why do I (you) matter to my team, leaders, family and friends?

Please take a moment to read this excerpt from the Army’s “Profession of Arms White Paper” [attendees refer to Participant Page or slides]

“THE PROFESSIONAL SOLDIER. An American Professional Soldier is an expert, a volunteer certified in the Profession of Arms, bonded with comrades in a shared identity and culture of sacrifice and service to the nation and the Constitution, who adheres to the highest ethical standards and is a steward of the future of the Army profession.”

Facilitator: Have you ever seen this lived out? When and by who? Have you ever seen this not lived out? What was the impact on other Soldiers or the mission? Does this excerpt reflect the value of life or a life worth living? If so...how or if not, why not?

The Army is integrating the Value of Life concept into all levels of training to promote positive outcomes and develop protective factors in the Army family against harmful behaviors.

Section 2: (20 minutes)

Facilitator: Of course, questions about life are nothing new! Throughout the ages, people have contemplated the Value of life...and what makes life worth living, what is a good life. Have you ever asked yourself, why do I get up every morning? Why does someone choose to get up every day face challenges and difficulties? They are the foundational questions for our purpose and identity.

Take about five minutes and read the excerpts below. They are drawn from different traditions of religion and philosophy, highlighted in Yale University's "Life Worth Living" class. (This class informed the development of the Life Worth Living initiative)

As you read, note any similarities or differences you observe. [Allow 5 minutes for reading, if group is done earlier proceed to questions.]

Utilitarianism "According to the Greatest Happiness Principle...the ultimate end...is **an existence exempt as far as possible from pain and as rich as possible in enjoyments**, both in point of quantity and quality...this being, according to utilitarian opinion the end of human action...an existence such as has been described might be to the greatest extent possible **secured to all mankind**; and not to them only but, so far as the nature of things admit to the whole sentient creation." John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*

Nietzsche **What is good? Whatever augments the feeling of power**, the will to power, power itself, in man. **What is evil? Whatever springs from weakness. What is happiness? The feeling that power increases**—that resistance is overcome." Friedrich Nietzsche *The Antichrist*

Stoicism "What then is it that is worth one's while to be concerned for? Why nothing but this: to bear an **honest mind, act for the good of society, to deceive nobody, to welcome everything** that happens as necessary and familiar...**put yourself into the hands of fate, and let her spin you out what fortune** she pleases" Marcus Aurelius' *Meditations*

Buddhism "Living in society, **we must share the suffering of our fellow citizens and practice compassion and tolerance** not only toward our loved ones but also toward our enemies. This is the test of our moral strength. We must set an example by our own practice. We must live by the same high standards of integrity we seek to convey with others. The **ultimate purpose is to serve and benefit the world.**" Dalai Lama, *How to See Yourself as You Really Are*

Islam Only when human beings **worship their God by submitting to His religious law can they have peace and harmony** in their lives and the hope for heaven, just like the universe runs in harmony by submitting to the physical laws set by its Lord. **When you remove the hope of heaven, you remove the ultimate value and purpose of life.** Otherwise, what difference would it really make whether we live a life of virtue or vice? Everyone's fate would be the same anyway. Imam Kamil Mufti, *Meaning of Life in Islam*

Judaism “Kohelet [The Teacher] finds life short. The prospect of death threatens to rob him of all happiness, until he realises [sic] that **mortality is the very condition of our happiness**. Because life is short, every **moment is precious**. That is the knowledge most of us are only taught through pain or crisis or loss. Work, love, life itself: these are the sources of joy...**Happiness lies in being, not in having**.” Rabbi Lord Sachs, *Happiness is to be found in Being, Not in Having*

Christianity “If anyone wants to come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For **whoever wants to save his life will lose it**, but whoever loses his life for My sake, this is the one who will save it. For **what good does it do a person if he gains the whole world, but loses or forfeits himself?** *Luke 9:23-25*

Facilitator: These religious and philosophical traditions are rich, and these are just samples not meant to reflect the “fullness” of these traditions. But we can still learn quite a bit by even these short sections. In your view what is the Utilitarian’s idea of a good life? That is, what makes life worth living? [**Facilitator’s note: Go through each tradition and ask the same questions**] Do you see any similarities between various traditions? Which ones are similar and why? Are there differences between the traditions? What did you see there?

Section 3: Total (35 minutes)

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1. The Value of Life (10 minutes):

Facilitator: How we value ourselves and others is the foundational bedrock upon which build “A Life Worth Living.” Therefore, it is imperative that each person wrestles with these questions. Religious leaders, philosophers, and sages throughout history engaged these same questions and can serve as guides in this self-discovery.

Questions to consider:

- Why do we have value?
- Why do other people have value?
- What is the source of this value?
- How do we build these concepts of value?

- How do these concepts of value (of self and others) make a difference in our actions, that is how do we treat others?

2. A Life Worth Living (10 minutes):

Facilitator: Suicide and other harmful and toxic behaviors often result from “despair” -- a loss of hope. Despair grows in an environment of pain; despair starves in an environment of meaning and significance. Meaning and significance are critical components to a life worth living. If a person understands their ultimate value and has sense of meaning in their life, even pain and suffering can be part of a life worth living.

Questions to Consider:

- What are our sources of hope?
- Have you ever lost hope? Did you get it back? If so, how?
- What are sources of meaning or significance in life?
- How can pain, suffering, and grief contribute to a life worth living?

[NOTE: often positive impacts can ONLY be seen in retrospect, after time has elapsed and care and healing has taken place.]

3. Practical Exercise: Building a Life Worth Living (15 minutes or until the hour is complete):

Facilitator: Elements of the Army Design Methodology can help map the strategy to build a Life Worth Living. It begins with understanding who you are (self-awareness), and your environment (your current life). Next consider, how would you define a meaningful significant life Finally, what can you do, and what will you need to connect those two things? **[Facilitator’s note: Lead a short, facilitated conversation on questions below, and then offer time until the hour is up to work on their strategy, see participant guide...leave about 2 minutes at the end for a final wrap up]**

Questions to Consider:

Self-Awareness and Your Current Life:

- Who am I? What do I believe? How have I gotten to where I am?
- What do I currently spend my time, talent, and “treasure” on?
- Who are the important (and not-important) people in my life?

- When you consider who you are and your current life, what makes you feel content and gives you joy? What causes you discomfort or pain?
- What do you have control over, and more importantly what DON'T you have control over?

A Meaningful and Significant Life:

- What is worthy for me to spend my life on?
- What do I want to be known for?
- What do I want my obituary to say about me?

Closing the Gap

- Are my current priorities supporting a life worth living?
- Are there people, things, ideas, habits keeping me from living a meaningful life, my best life? If so, am I able to let them go?
- Who can help me orient my life for significance and meaning?
- Am I a person of hope? How can I develop hope to build a life worth living?

4. Conclusion, So What?

Facilitator: Our goal today was to take a deeper look at the three main points of the Army's focus on the Value of Life and Life Worth Living...to discover the "WHY behind the WHAT" (e.g. Why does your life have purpose and meaning?)

1. Your life has value and purpose
2. You are a critical member of our Army reserve Team
3. You matter to me, your leaders, family, and friends.

Final Questions: [Facilitator Note: You can facilitate short discussion now on questions below, or you can ask the questions rhetorically and challenge people to think through them over the next few days]

- Can you identify your foundation (or core) beliefs on the Value of Life and a Life Worth Living?
- How does what we have discussed today connect to the Value of Life?
- How are your actions impacted by your own beliefs in the Value of Life?