

Our Warrior Ethos: An essay

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I started this journey alone. I walked in to a recruiting station and joined the largest organized force this planet has to reckon with. The magnitude of it is awe-inspiring in its own right. Our nation is the great masterpiece in which we enlisted to protect.

Just the sight of an American flag or the sound of our anthem is enough for me to feel that rush of adrenaline, which is so many things mixed into a singular concoction of emotion that I can only try at best to dig deep within my soul to verbalize it all.

When I see our flag, I feel strength. When I raise my right arm to render a salute to it, the feeling is one of such intense respect; it is a phenomena which I cannot fully describe. I look at those who stand beside me. I think the emotions they feel are the same. We are not connected to each other by marriage or birth. We come from different backgrounds, cities, faiths and cultures. We do not look alike nor do we sound alike. We have varying degrees of social standing and education. So how is it that you can take the everyday, common American and turn that body and soul into a warrior who is willing to give up his or her life for that of a fellow Soldier?

We are a family of fighters. We become proficient in our Warrior Tasks, our Battle Drills and even our occupational specialties. We drill muscle memory into every inch of our being so we can maneuver as one. It is a single thread that binds us — a value and belief system average Americans have come to trust as a sacred protector of their land. That thread is so complex, stubborn and strong that I cannot imagine it ever being broken.

Our Army values guide our way on every journey, every mission in which we set out to tackle. That is why it is so important for our successors to fully understand the stepping stones we have laid before them. The history and the progression of the noncommissioned officer should be ever-prevalent in our subordinate's minds as they are the future leaders, mentors, and coaches.

Those leaders before me shared their knowledge and skill in order to see that I, too, would be there for the next generation. If

I do not ensure those who follow in my place know the things I know, and live the same values as I live, then I have failed.

The relative rank I wear on my chest is not that of power, but of wisdom and experience. I am an enforcer of standards. As a first sergeant, my mission is Soldiers. I am to keep those under my care physically and mentally fit and willing to fight the fight. My mission is to train my team so that they can take my place once I am gone, to mentor them in to well-rounded, trustworthy leaders who genuinely care. I am to coach them into becoming experts in all that they do. By doing all of this, I will know that they have not been left behind and have been given what they need to succeed.

I believe the Army values entail essential qualities of character needed to build an effective team of warriors. When I see someone walk by me wearing our uniform, I judge that Soldier. I assume the nature of the person wearing it is that of a trusted, dignified, tough and loyal individual. I feel that silent, unspoken understanding between us, that we are brothers and sisters in arms and that we are here to protect one another no matter the circumstance.

When I look at each and every member of my team, the emotions that run through my blood make my chest extend out in pride. I have memories of pre-mission prayers or crying with a fellow Soldier on the anniversary of our brother-in-arm's death. In my heart I know these sacrifices were for the betterment of our nation. We must drive on and strive for excellence so the losses we have suffered won't be for naught.

The Warrior Ethos is an attitude and a state of mind. It takes a special internal strength that only a warrior can understand. That is what we are: warriors. The loyalty, enthusiasm, and inspiration of those before me will never be forgotten. I have internalized the values they instilled upon me, and it is all now part of my nature; part of my own existence.

Through the heat of the battle or the calm of the storm, the lessons I have learned toughened my soul and the bonds I have built will be forever. I can truly say I will never accept defeat. I will never quit, and when I look back on my career I will know that I gave it my all and I will stand proud.



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