Master Resilience Training in the U.S. Army

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The U.S. Army Master Resilience Trainer (MRT) course, which provides face-to-face resilience training, is one of the foundational pillars of the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program. The 10-day MRT course is the foundation for training resilience skills to sergeants and for teaching sergeants how to teach these skills to their soldiers. The curriculum is based on materials developed by the University of Pennsylvania, the Penn Resilience Program (PRP), and other empirically validated work in the field of positive psychology. This "train the trainer model" is the main vehicle for the dissemination of MRT concepts to the entire force.

Keywords: resilience, positive psychology, posttraumatic growth

The U.S. Army Master Resilience Trainer (MRT) course is a 10-day program of study that teaches resilience skills to noncommissioned officers (NCOs). Since the NCOs will teach their soldiers these skills, this course also teaches the fundamentals of how to teach these skills to others. The course serves as one of the foundational pillars of the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program. The course includes three components: preparation, sustainment, and enhancement. The preparation component was developed at the University of Pennsylvania's Positive Psychology Center and is presented in the first eight days of the course. This component teaches resilience fundamentals and is based on the Penn Resilience Program (PRP) curriculum as well as on other empirically validated interventions from positive psychology (Seligman, Ernst, Gillham, Reivich, & Linkins, 2009; Seligman, Rashid, & Parks, 2006; Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005). The sustainment component was developed by researchers at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research and focuses on deployment cycle training. The enhancement component was developed by sports psychologists at the United States Military Academy at West Point and teaches personal and professional skills that maximize individual performance. The MRT course is intended to serve primarily as a foundation for training resilience skills (preparation) but also to introduce other resilience concepts that soldiers will encounter at other points in their deployment and life cycles throughout their careers (sustainment and enhancement). Therefore, this article focuses on concepts included in the preparation portion of the MRT course, as this information represents the majority of the material covered in the course.

Background of the Penn Resilience Program (PRP)

Psychologists have been studying resilience since the 1970s, and research has demonstrated that there are many aspects of resilience that are teachable (Reivich & Shatté, 2002; Seligman, 1990). The term *resilience* has multiple definitions, but the one that guides this training is *a set of processes that enables good outcomes in spite of serious threats* (Masten, 2001). In other words, resilience is the ability to persist in the face of challenges and to bounce back from adversity. There are a number of evidence-based protective factors that contribute to resilience: optimism, effective problem solving, faith, sense of meaning, self-efficacy, flexibility, impulse control, empathy, close relationships, and spirituality, among others (Masten & Reed, 2002). The Penn Resilience Program (PRP) was developed at the University of Pennsylvania and focuses on a subset of the factors identified by Masten and Reed. These include optimism, problem solving, self-efficacy, self-regulation, emotional awareness, flexibility, empathy, and strong relationships. The PRP was originally developed as a school-based training program for students in late childhood and early adolescence. The preparation portion of the MRT course incorporates key elements from the PRP (Gillham, Reivich, & Jaycox, 2008) as well as from a parallel program called APEX (Gillham et al., 1991; Reivich, Shatté, & Gillham, 2003) that has focused on preventing depression and anxiety in college students. In addition, empirically validated concepts from positive psychology, such as identifying signature strengths (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), cultivating gratitude (Emmons, 2007), and strengthening relationships through active constructive responding (Gable, Reis, Impett, & Asher, 2004), are incorporated in the MRT course. Both the PRP and the APEX program include training that improves cognitive and social skills.

Central to the PRP and the APEX program is Albert Ellis's ABC (adversity–belief–consequence) model, which

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holds that one's beliefs about events drive one's emotions and behaviors (Ellis, 1962). Students are taught to monitor their beliefs and evaluate the accuracy of these beliefs (Beck, 1976; Beck, Rush, Shaw, & Emery, 1979). A key element of the Ellis model is *explanatory style,* which refers to how individuals explain both positive and negative events in their lives. Pessimists tend to attribute the causes of negative events to permanent, uncontrollable, and pervasive factors (Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978). Depressed people are more pessimistic than their nondepressed peers, and people with pessimistic styles are at greater risk for depression than their optimistic counterparts (e.g., Nolen-Hoeksema, Girgus, & Seligman, 1992; Seligman et al., 1984). Conversely, optimists tend to attribute the causes of negative events to temporary, changeable, and specific factors. Although optimistic explanations act as a buffer against depression, the extent to which they are inaccurate can interfere with problem solving. So in the PRP and the APEX program, students learn how to detect inaccurate thoughts generated by their explanatory styles, to evaluate the accuracy of those thoughts, and to reattribute those thoughts to more accurate causal beliefs.

The PRP is one of the most widely researched depression prevention programs. To date, there have been 19 controlled studies evaluating the efficacy of the PRP (e.g., Gillham, Hamilton, Freres, Patton, & Gallop, 2006; Gillham et al., 2007; Gillham, Reivich, et al., 2006; Gillham, Reivich, Jaycox, & Seligman, 1995; Jaycox, Reivich, Gillham, & Seligman, 1994). These studies have found that the PRP and the APEX program both can reduce anxiety, depression, adjustment disorders, and conduct problems. A meta-analysis of these studies found that young people who participated in the PRP had fewer symptoms of depression than participants in no-intervention control conditions for as long as 24 months following the end of the PRP training (Brunwasser, Gillham, & Kim, 2009). Taken together, these findings demonstrate that the skills taught in the PRP lead to significant, measurable positive changes in youth. The preventive effects of the PRP on depression and anxiety are relevant to one of the aims of the MRT course, preventing posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), since PTSD is a nasty combination of depressive and anxiety symptoms.

The research on the PRP has also demonstrated that teachers who are trained in the PRP can, in turn, teach PRP skills effectively. That is, when the Penn curriculum developers trained educators to teach PRP skills to their students, the students showed fewer symptoms of depression and behavioral problems (Brunwasser et al., 2009; see also Challen, Noden, West, & Machin, 2009). This demonstrated efficacy with a "train the trainer" model is an important element of the PRP and one of the key reasons that the U.S. Army is partnering with the PRP to train soldiers. The NCOs (sergeants) are the trainers who will reach the soldiers, and the NCOs are taught not only resilience skills in the MRT course but also how to teach these skills to their soldiers.

Launching the U.S. Army MRT Course

The purpose of the MRT course is to teach NCOs a set of skills and techniques that build resilience and that they can, in turn, teach to other soldiers. Specifically, the primary group of NCOs targeted to attend the MRT training course are drill and platoon sergeants. The intent is that these NCOs will take the skills and training taught in the MRT course to the junior soldiers they instruct and lead. We hypothesize that these skills will enhance soldiers' ability to handle adversity, prevent depression and anxiety, prevent PTSD, and enhance overall well-being and performance.

In the spring and early summer of 2009, the University of Pennsylvania worked in collaboration with U.S. Army personnel from the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program to modify the PRP curriculum for a military student population. Modifications included identifying specific soldier adversities (both professional and personal); incorporating these into the MRT program as case studies, examples, and practical exercises; and updating procedures to equip NCOs with both a depth of knowledge and critical teaching skills to impart the MRT concepts to their soldiers. The goal of the MRT course is to provide NCOs with the background and skills they need to teach critical resilience techniques to their soldiers. Two pilot courses were conducted during the summer of 2009, and the MRT curriculum was finished in the fall of 2009. It served as the foundation for the first full-blown MRT training course in November 2009, which was conducted in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with 150 NCOs, and additional interactive, live video teleconferencing was conducted with 30 NCOs in Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

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MRT Preparation Component

The first eight days of the MRT course are spent teaching PRP skills and represent the preparation component of MRT training. During the first five days, NCOs attend large-group plenary sessions where key program elements are introduced and discussed and smaller breakout sessions where they are taught to apply and practice what they have learned in the large-group sessions. Each breakout session is led by an MRT trainer and four facilitators. Both civilians and Army personnel serve on breakout group facilitator teams. This civilian and military mix is very effective and well received by the soldiers.

The last three days of the preparation component focus on teaching NCOs how to teach the skills they have learned to other soldiers. The NCOs work through a series of activities and drills to strengthen their knowledge of, and competence with, the material. These activities include role plays; checks on learning in which teams craft challenging questions related to the content that must be answered by another team; identifying delivery mistakes and content confusions during mock sessions led by an MRT instructor; and identifying the appropriate skills to teach and how to teach them when given a specific soldier case study.

The PRP has used the five-day "learn it and live it" plus the three-day "deepen understanding and teach it" structure in their educational programs for the past several years. We have found that this approach provides a better understanding of course content and instructional training.

The preparation component includes four learning modules and a concluding module. In each module, NCOs are given a brief didactic presentation followed by a series of experiential activities such as group discussions, role plays, and application exercises. In addition, we use videos and music to illustrate concepts and enhance engagement. Module 1 teaches the fundamentals of resilience and clarifies common misconceptions. Module 2 builds mental skills that enable mental toughness and effective problem solving. Module 3 identifies character strengths and focuses on using both individual and team "top strengths" to overcome challenges and reach goals. Module 4 builds strong relationships through communication strategies and active constructive responding. The concluding module focuses on identifying the key themes of the program, consolidating learning, and completing an individual development plan for soldiers to further master the content. Modules 1 and 2 each take two and one half days, Module 3 takes one day, Module 4 takes one day, and the concluding module is one half of a day in length. A detailed description of module content follows.

Module 1: Resilience

In this module, the NCOs learn about what contributes to resilience; explore misconceptions associated with resilience through a series of famous quotes and poetry; learn six "core competencies" that the program targets to build resilience; and explore how resilience enables them to be effective leaders and to live the Warrior Ethos—"I will always place the mission first. I will never accept defeat. I will never quit. I will never leave a fallen comrade." In addition, we use video clips to highlight central themes in resilience.

The core competencies highlighted in Module 1 are (a) self-awareness—identifying one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, and patterns in each that are counterproductive; (b) self-regulation—the ability to regulate impulses, thinking, emotions, and behaviors to achieve goals, as well as the willingness and ability to express emotions; (c) optimism—noticing the goodness in self and others, identifying what is controllable, remaining wedded to reality, and challenging counterproductive beliefs; (d) mental agility—thinking flexibly and accurately, perspective taking, and willingness to try new strategies; (e) character strengths—identifying the top strengths in oneself and others, relying on one's strengths to overcome challenges and meet goals, and cultivating a strength approach in one's unit; and (f) connection—building strong relationships through positive and effective communication, empathy, willingness to ask for help, and willingness to offer help.

Module 2: Building Mental Toughness

In this module, soldiers learn a series of skills that increase the resilience competencies learned in Module 1. The skills of Module 2 derive from the work of Aaron Beck, Albert Ellis, and Martin Seligman and pull heavily from the field of cognitive-behavioral therapy, as well as from our work adapting and developing the material for use as a classroom preventive program (Abramson et al., 1978; Beck, 1976; Beck et al., 1979; Ellis, 1962; Gillham et al., 2008; Reivich & Shatté, 2002; Seligman et al., 2009). The specific skills taught in Module 2 are presented below with examples tailored to the military.

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ABC. In this unit we teach soldiers how to identify thoughts that are triggered by activating events and to identify reactions that are driven by those thoughts. Soldiers learn to recognize an activating event (A), their beliefs (B) about the activating event, and the emotional and behavioral consequences (C) of those thoughts. Soldiers work through a series of professional (e.g., "You fall out of a three-mile run") and personal (e.g., "You return from deployment and your son does not want to play basketball with you") activating events with the goal of being able to separate the activating events from what they say to themselves in the heat of the moment and the emotions/behaviors their thoughts generate. After a series of practical exercises, the soldiers look for thought patterns that are driving adaptive outcomes and patterns that are driving counterproductive outcomes. The goal at the end of this module is to have soldiers distinguish activating events, thoughts, and consequences.

Explanatory styles and thinking traps. This unit focuses on explanatory styles and other patterns of thinking that can either heighten leadership, performance, and mental health or undermine them. Soldiers learn the dimensions of explanatory style as well as other "thinking traps" such as jumping to conclusions, and they explore the emotional and behavioral consequences each thinking style drives. We present a series of Army case studies in this unit to illustrate how patterns of thinking can help or hinder resilience.

For example, to illustrate the thinking trap of overgeneralizing (the tendency to judge a person's worth, motivation, or ability on the basis of a single action), we present the following scenario to the soldiers:

A soldier in your unit struggles to keep up during physical training and is dragging the rest of the day. His uniform looks sloppy and he makes a couple of mistakes during artillery practice. You think to yourself, "He's a soup sandwich! He doesn't have the stuff of a soldier."

The NCOs are asked to describe the thinking trap and discuss the effects this has on the sergeant and the soldier the sergeant is leading. After completing this exercise, one sergeant commented:

I hate to admit it, but I think that way a lot. I tend to write people off if they screw up. I guess I'm not big on second chances because I think you can judge a person's character through their actions. If that guy had a strong character, he wouldn't be dragging and his uniform wouldn't be in disarray.

These comments led to a spirited conversation about leaders judging the worth of their soldiers on a single action and how this overgeneralizing can undermine a soldier's confidence and demoralize other soldiers.

After soldiers review common thinking traps, we present them with a series of questions that they can ask themselves in order to identify critical information that they may have missed because of a thinking trap. For example, the question "How did others contribute to this situation?" is used to help a person who has a "me" style (one focused exclusively on how he or she brought about a problem) consider a fuller range of causes. By the end of learning this skill, the soldiers are able to identify their specific thinking patterns and have practiced using specific questions to broaden the information to which they attend.

Icebergs (deeply held beliefs). In this unit, NCOs identify their deeply held beliefs (e.g., "I can handle whatever comes my way" or "Asking for help is a sign of weakness") and core values (e.g., "People should be treated with dignity and respect" or "We should strive for forgiveness and mercy"), and they learn to recognize when these icebergs are driving out-of-proportion emotion. Once the iceberg is identified, they ask themselves a series of questions to determine (a) if the iceberg continues to be meaningful to them, (b) if the iceberg is accurate in the given situation, (c) if the iceberg is overly rigid, and (d) if the iceberg is useful. Then the soldiers look at how these icebergs contribute to or undermine their effectiveness in the Army, as leaders, and in creating strong relationships.

Special attention is given to the belief "Asking for help shows weakness" because this belief undermines the willingness to rely on others or to ask for help from leaders, peers, or other health care resources. Several NCOs commented that this particular belief requires a lot of work to change because historically soldiers have felt stigmatized if they sought out help and were often ridiculed for not being strong enough to handle their own problems. However, many have stated that they believe the culture around help seeking is now shifting in the Army. One NCO commented privately,

There was a time when I would have called a soldier a [expletive] for seeing a counselor or going to a chaplain. And if I didn't say it to his face, I sure would have thought it. I don't see it that way anymore. Multiple deployments have taught me that we're all going to need help from time to time and it's the strong ones that are willing to ask for it.

Energy management. In this unit, soldiers manage their energy through a variety of strategies (including meditation, controlled breathing, and progressive muscle relaxation). In addition, we discuss the need for rejuvenation to maintain resilience and share strategies that can be used to rejuvenate oneself (including prayer, exercise, sleep, and laughter). During the later enhancement phase of the MRT course, the energy management techniques are covered in more detail (e.g., controlled breathing and positive imagery).

Problem solving. This unit covers a six-step model of problem solving used to accurately identify contributing causes of a problem and identify solution strategies. Soldiers learn about confirmation bias (the tendency to search for or interpret information in a way that confirms what one already believes) and the problem it poses for gathering even-handed evidence. They also learn strategies to avoid the confirmation bias. We also discuss how the confirmation bias may undermine effective leadership. That is, if a leader has a preconceived idea about a soldier's worth, readiness, aptitude, or commitment, then it is very difficult for that soldier to overcome the preconception his or her leader holds. At the end of this unit, NCOs are able to identify patterns in thinking that hinder an accurate appraisal of a problem, to use specific questions to identify factors they previously missed, and to work around the confirmation bias.

Minimizing catastrophic thinking. *Catastrophic thinking* is defined as ruminating about irrational worst-case outcomes. It can drive up anxiety and paralyze action. We use a video clip in which a soldier is unable to contact his wife via e-mail. From this video clip, we demonstrate catastrophic thinking ("She's left me") and explore the effects of this style of thinking on energy, focus, problem solving, and emotions. We teach a three-step model that includes (a) capturing catastrophic thinking, (b) generating a best-case possibility, and (c) identifying most likely outcomes. After likely outcomes are identified, we teach soldiers to develop a plan for coping with the situation. By the end of this unit, soldiers can distinguish contingency planning (effective) from catastrophizing (ineffective), and they learn to use the three-step process in order to identify likely outcomes and then plan for them.

Fighting back against counterproductive thoughts in real time. This unit is about how to immediately challenge negative thoughts. Focusing on negative thoughts can lead to reduced confidence and engagement, and we teach skills that reduce "mental chatter" which, when left unchecked, compromises performance.

The three strategies used to challenge counterproductive beliefs are evidence, optimism, and perspective. Soldiers identify three common errors that are made when trying to challenge counterproductive thoughts (minimizing, rationalizing, and denying) and strategies for correcting these errors midstream (one time/one thing, owning the situation, and taking appropriate responsibility).

Challenging counterproductive thoughts is not about replacing every negative thought with a positive one. Rather, it is a stop-gap technique that enables one to focus on right now and not put oneself (or others) at greater risk because of the distracting thoughts. We emphasize to soldiers that there is a later time and place to focus on and discuss worries and persistent negative thoughts, because often there is something that can be learned from them. Oftentimes the "theme" of the negative thoughts is related to an "iceberg" belief. For example, in one class a soldier said that he was constantly barraged by negative thoughts about whether his wife truly loved him and that these thoughts often interfered with his ability to stay focused. Following this unit, he commented that he believed the theme of his thoughts related to his iceberg belief that "I'm not the kind of guy women love." Although it is important to fight off these thoughts at certain times (e.g., when trying to get much-needed sleep or when engaging in high-risk maneuvers), it is also important to pay attention to these beliefs and systematically and thoughtfully evaluate them at more appropriate times.

Cultivating gratitude. Throughout the course, NCOs are asked to complete a gratitude or "three blessings" journal. We refer to this activity as "hunt the good stuff," and its purpose is to enhance positive emotions, particularly gratitude. The research on gratitude indicates that individuals who habitually acknowledge and express gratitude derive health benefits, sleep benefits, and relationships benefits (Emmons, 2007). Each morning of the course, NCOs are asked to share something they "hunted" from the day before as well as a reflection on what the positive event or experience meant to them. Typically, from 5 to 10 NCOs share a blessing at the start of each class. Some examples of blessings that students have shared with the class include "I had a great conversation with my wife last night—I used what we learned in class, and she said it was one of the best conversations we've ever had" and "I stopped and talked to a homeless guy, and I learned a lot from him." Another soldier shared the comment, "The owner of the restaurant didn't charge us for our dinner as a way to say thank you for being in the Army." Interestingly, as the week unfolds, the blessings become more personal. For example, during the morning of the final day, one NCO related the following experience:

> I talked to my eight-year-old son last night. He told me about an award he won at school, and usually I'd just say something like "that's nice." But I used the skill we learned yesterday and I asked a bunch of questions about it—Who was there when he got the award? How did he feel receiving it? Where's he going to hang the award? And about halfway through the conversation he interrupted me and said, "Dad, is this really you?!" I knew what he meant by that. That was the longest we ever talked, and I think we were both surprised by it. It was great.

Module 3: Identifying Character Strengths

In this module, soldiers identify their top character strengths, practice identifying strengths in others, and practice using individual strengths and team strengths to overcome a challenge and reach a goal. The material in Module 3 is drawn from the work of Chris Peterson and Martin Seligman (2004), and in the course we link it to the Army's "Be, Know, Do" model of leadership. Army Field Manual

6-22 states, "An enduring expression for Army leadership has been BE-KNOW-DO. Army leadership begins with what the leader must BE—the values and attributes that shape character. . . . As defining qualities, they make up the identity of the leader" (U.S. Department of the Army, 2006, p. 1-1). We discuss the Army values (loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage) and the "Be" of the Army leadership model in the context of character strengths.

As part of Module 3, soldiers complete the online Values in Action character strengths questionnaire (www.authentichappiness.org). The survey rank orders 24 strengths and provides a brief description of characteristics that define each of the strengths. As all the NCOs identify their top strengths, we look for patterns among the group and discuss what the group strength profile reflects about who they are as leaders. We present a series of Army quotes and video clips about leadership, and the NCOs discuss how character strengths are reflected in the quotes and videos.

The NCOs then explore their own profiles in small groups. They discuss a strength they already consciously bring to their leadership style and one that they would like to more fully use as a leader. They are provided a series of questions to discuss that include the following: What did you learn about yourself by taking the Strength Survey? Which strengths have you developed through your service in the military? How do your strengths contribute to your completing a mission and reaching your goals? How are you using your strengths to build strong relationships (professionally and personally)? What are the "shadow sides" of your strengths, and how can you minimize these?

After discussing individual strengths, soldiers practice identifying character strengths in others. First we show a series of photographs of well-known individuals, and the soldiers identify the strengths of each of the individuals. They are encouraged to identify the obvious strength (e.g., humor and playfulness for Chris Rock) and also to think about how the individual uses his or her strengths synergistically (e.g., Chris Rock uses his humor and playfulness together with curiosity and social intelligence).

Next we focus on using strengths (individually and as a team) to overcome challenges and bring about success. We present a case study that demonstrates how an Army unit pulled together and, as a team, overcame obstacles in setting up an entire support hospital. During the exercise, NCOs identify instances from the case study in which individuals and the unit as a whole relied on specific character strengths to complete the mission.

Building on this activity, the soldiers go into small groups and have a mission that they need to complete as a unit. We instruct them to use their team's character strengths to complete the mission and to name the specific behaviors that the strengths enable. Finally, the soldiers write their own "Strength in Challenges" stories and share these with other members of their small groups. For example, one NCO described how he used his strengths of love, wisdom, and gratitude to help a soldier who was acting out and causing conflict among other soldiers. The NCO talked about pulling on his strength of love to engage the soldier when most others avoided the soldier because of his anger and hostile behaviors. During their discussion, the NCO learned that the soldier felt consumed by anger at his wife and that his anger was interfering with his ability to get along with other soldiers in his unit. Then, operating from his strength of wisdom, the NCO helped the soldier to understand the wife's perspective and worked with him to write a letter to his wife. In the letter, the soldier expressed how he was feeling and also described the gratitude he feels because his wife has had to handle so much on her own during his three deployments.

At the end of this unit, the NCOs are aware of their signature strengths and how they can use them as leaders and family members. They have practiced identifying strengths in others and using strengths in conjunction with skills and talents to overcome challenges and complete a mission. In addition, they have explored how a strength focus with their soldiers (and family members) can build stronger connections in the unit as well as with their families.

Module 4: Strengthening Relationships

The final module is focused on strengthening relationships among soldiers and between soldiers and their family members. We teach three skills: (a) active constructive responding (ACR), which is based on the work of Shelly Gable (Gable et al., 2004); (b) praise, which is based on the work of Carol Dweck (Kamins & Dweck, 1999); and (c) communication styles (passive, aggressive, and assertive communication). This module provides soldiers with practical tools that help in building relationships and that challenge beliefs that interfere with positive communication.

When an individual responds actively and constructively (as opposed to passively and destructively) to someone sharing a positive experience, better relationships ensue (Gable et al., 2004). We detail four styles of responding—active constructive (authentic, enthusiastic support), passive constructive (understated support), passive destructive (ignoring the event), and active destructive (pointing out negative aspects of the event)—and we role play each style. Figure 1 presents examples of the four styles for a hypothetical situation.

After each role play, soldiers identify the style of responding portrayed. They focus on what was said as well as body language, voice tone, and the emotion conveyed. They also describe the effect a particular response had on the person communicating the message and the person responding to the message.

Following the demonstration, NCOs complete a worksheet to help them reflect on ways they typically respond and to identify factors that make it hard for them to respond actively and constructively (such as being tired or being overly self-absorbed). The exercise also focuses on how they can use their signature strengths to respond actively and constructively (e.g., use the strength of curiosity to ask questions, use the strength of zest to respond enthusiastically, or use the strength of wisdom to point out valuable learning from the situation).

Figure 1
Examples of Four Styles of Responding

Situation: Private Johnson tells his close friend Private Gonzales, "Hey, my wife called and told me she got a great job on post."	
Active constructive response: That's great. What's the new job? When does she start? What did she say about how she got it and why she deserved it?	Passive constructive response: That's nice.
Passive destructive response: I got a funny e-mail from my son. Listen to this…	Active destructive response: So who's going to be looking after your son? I wouldn't trust a babysitter. There are so many horror stories you hear about baby sitters abusing kids.

This teaching block also incorporates the work of Kamins and Dweck (1999) on effective praise. Many of the positive experiences soldiers share warrant praise. For example, "I aced my PT test," "We cleared the building without sustaining any casualties," or "I was promoted to master sergeant!" We emphasize using praise that points out a specific strategy, effort, or skill that contributed to a good outcome as opposed to more general praise such as "Way to go!" or "Good job!" We highlight the importance of using praise targeted at specific details because it demonstrates attention to the accomplishment that is not conveyed with a quick "Way to go" response. Leaders who use effective praise with their soldiers convey (a) that they were really watching and listening, (b) that they took the time to identify how the soldier brought on the positive outcome, and (c) that the praise was authentic—as opposed to a one-size-fits-all "Good job."

Next, soldiers practice ACR with members of their small groups (incorporating effective praise when appropriate) in order to find a style that is authentic to them and also supportive of the other person. The application of ACR to leadership is discussed, and the ways in which ACR might be helpful for maintaining strong family bonds during deployments are reviewed. By the end of this section, the soldiers are able to distinguish the four styles of responding to good events, can craft effective praise, and have practiced using their strengths to develop an authentic and comfortable style of being active and constructive.

The final part of this module teaches assertive communication. The soldiers work in teams to describe *passive*, *aggressive,* and *assertive* communication styles. They identify the words, voice tone, body language, and pace of each style, as well as the messages each style conveys about the speaker and the listener. For example, a passive communication style sends the message "I don't believe you'll listen to me anyway." A critical aspect of teaching assertive communication is to explore the deeply held beliefs and core values (icebergs) that promote one style of communication over another. Someone who has the belief "People will take advantage of any sign of weakness" will tend toward an aggressive style of communicating, whereas a person who believes "It's wrong to complain" will tend toward a passive communication style. Further, a person who holds the belief "People can be trusted" is more likely to use an assertive communication style.

Next we introduce a five-step model of assertive communication: (a) identifying and working to understand the situation, (b) describing the situation objectively and accurately, (c) expressing concerns, (d) asking the other person for his or her perspective and working toward an acceptable change, and (e) listing benefits to the situation and the relationship when the change is implemented. The NCOs practice these skills by applying them to a variety of situations such as the following: "Your battle buddy has started drinking excessively and has been seen drinking and driving"; "Your significant other is spending money on things you don't consider essential"; and "A fellow soldier continues to take your belongings without asking permission." For each of these scenarios, two soldiers role play while a third gives guidance to help them remain in an assertive style of communicating. Following the role plays, soldiers identify a situation that they are currently confronting and practice using assertive communication to address the situation. We emphasize helping soldiers explore the style of communication they use with family members. Many soldiers have shared stories about how they communicate too aggressively with spouses and children because it is difficult to transition from the fast-paced, command-oriented world of their "day" job to a more democratic focus in their personal lives.

After the five-day "learn it and live it" portion of the preparation phase, three days are spent preparing the soldiers to teach the skills to other soldiers. These three days involve a series of discussions, role plays, and practical exercises designed to increase soldiers' understanding of the course content, allow them to practice teaching the material, and also receive feedback about and guidance on their ability to teach the materials.

MRT Sustainment Component

The sustainment component of the MRT course is taught on Day 9 of the course and focuses on reinforcing resilience skills over the course of a military career and applying these skills in the military-specific context. This module focuses on sustaining resilience in leadership education and across the deployment cycle. Soldiers are also taught how to identify when an individual is encountering significant challenges to their resilience and how to adapt MRT skills when the individual is referred for additional support.

Much of the material in the sustainment component is grounded in research from the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research documenting the importance of the military unit in understanding resilience (e.g., Bliese, 2006; Bliese

& Britt, 2001; Chen & Bliese, 2002) as well as the impact of the leader on soldier well-being (e.g., Britt, Davison, Bliese, & Castro, 2004; Castro, Thomas, & Adler, 2006; Thomas, Bliese, & Jex, 2005) and attitudes (e.g., Wright et al., 2009).

Predeployment and postdeployment modules are adapted from the Army's former "Battlemind" training program, and they reflect the terminology and concepts taught in the preparation phase of MRT. These modules familiarize soldiers with what to expect in terms of psychological demands and reactions at various points in the deployment cycle and teach them communication skills related to deployment. Three group-randomized trials have demonstrated the efficacy of this approach (Adler, Bliese, McGurk, Hoge, & Castro, 2009; Adler, Castro, Bliese, McGurk, & Milliken, 2007; Thomas et al., 2007). The goal is to ensure that resilience skills are also targeted for specific points in the deployment cycle and, where possible, that there is empirical evidence for their use in the military environment.

MRT Enhancement Component

The enhancement component of the MRT course is taught on the last day of the course. Enhancement introduces MRT soldiers to techniques that were first developed in sports psychology and that are the foundation for the training provided by sports psychologists from the Army Center for Enhanced Performance. The enhancement portion of the MRT course presents an overview of the key skills taught by sports psychologists. The skills introduced are mental skills foundations, building confidence, goal setting, attention control, energy management, and imagery.

Mental skills foundations involve understanding the nature of high performance, understanding the relationship between the training and trusting mindsets, and identifying the connection between thoughts, emotions, physiological states, and performance (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Ellis & Dryden, 1987; Krane & Williams, 2006; Ravizza, 1977; Zinsser, Bunker, & Williams, 2001). Soldiers explore the difference in their psychological states during both excellent and mediocre performances. *Building confidence* involves learning effective ways to create energy, optimism, and enthusiasm. *Goal setting* is a systematic process of identifying personal aims, ambitions, and tangible action plans that bolster a commitment to pursue and achieve excellence (Latham & Locke, 1991). *Attention control* addresses the concentration demands associated with critical military tasks. *Energy management* consists of practical skills used to activate, sustain, and restore optimal levels of energy while minimizing the negative effects of stress. Finally, *integrating imagery* involves learning ways of creating or recreating successful experiences that can enhance aspects of performance, including preparing, performing, and recovering.

Roles and Responsibilities of MRT Graduates

After successfully completing the 10-day MRT course, soldiers are assigned a skill identifier that designates them as a certified MRT. During MRT training, instructors monitor the performance of soldiers and evaluate their ability to grasp the concepts, to participate in discussions, and to verbally communicate the skills being presented. On the basis of these instructor evaluations, some soldiers are selected to attend facilitator training at a later date, where they are given additional training in order to support future MRT classes as course facilitators.

Once NCOs complete the MRT course, they get a set of preparation phase instructional materials: (a) They receive a PowerPoint briefing that presents an overview of the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program and the MRT course. This is a tool that the NCOs can use to familiarize their senior leaders with the overall Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program and to provide information about the roles and responsibilities of an NCO trained as an MRT. (b) The MRT PowerPoint slides and teaching aides are to be used for large-group instruction and breakout-group training. (c) An MRT skills teaching package is provided that includes all of the materials needed to teach 12 individual core blocks of instruction covering ABC, thinking traps, icebergs, energy management, problem solving, "put it in perspective," real-time resilience, identifying strengths in self and others, using strengths in challenges, assertive communication, active constructive responding and praise, and "hunt the good stuff." The time required for the NCO to teach each block varies between 30 and 120 minutes.

NCOs are instructed to work with their leadership to identify and schedule time in the training calendar in which they can teach a dedicated block of MRT instruction on a regular basis. Giving MRT-trained soldiers adequate time to teach the materials to other soldiers is critical to program success. Teaching regularly scheduled blocks of MRT instruction ensures the widest dissemination of the material within units.

Initial Feedback From NCOs Attending MRT Training

The first official MRT course was conducted in November 2009. At the end of this course, soldiers anonymously evaluated the program. The feedback form was completed by 171 of 183 soldiers who participated in Philadelphia and who participated via video teleconference from Fort Jackson in Columbia, South Carolina. The Fort Jackson participants could interact with the Philadelphia training team in real time during the full group plenary sessions but had their own breakout group with University of Pennsylvania training team members in Fort Jackson. Course ratings from both the Philadelphia and Fort Jackson NCOs averaged between 4.7 and 4.9 out of 5 on "learning skills valuable to military life and personal life," on "NCOs and soldiers will benefit from learning these skills," and on almost all other aspects of the program. Representative written comments included the following:

- "This was the best Army course that I have ever taken. The skills I learned will help me improve my personal life and professional life. These resilience

skills and MRT training should be mandatory for all ranks, families, and civilians."

- "I truly believe this is the best and most useful training I have received in the 16 years of my service. These skills are a foundation for all other skills, and I can use these skills forever."
- "This training has been the most effective and professional training the Army has sent my way."
- "This was no doubt the best class I've ever been taught."
- "This course has changed my life. Giving me the knowledge that I can control my thoughts and reactions is crucial to having changed me."
- "This will be an invaluable asset to my soldiers, family members, and me. A life changer—must be given to all leaders."

While this initial feedback is promising, it is important to note that these comments represent only the NCOs' immediate evaluation of the program. Therefore, in order to impartially evaluate the lasting effects of MRT training, the Comprehensive Soldier Fitness program is conducting a large-scale assessment of the consequences of the training compared to controls (Lester, McBride, Bliese, & Adler, 2011, this issue). The assessment will monitor the performance of NCOs who have attended the course as well as the performance of entire units that have been taught resilience skills by the attendees. This wait-list control design will assess the efficacy of the "train the trainer" element of the MRT course by looking at the military performance, emotional and social fitness, psychopathology, and physical health of the NCOs themselves as well as the soldiers that they train in resilience.

Future MRT Training

The MRT training course is currently being taught in Philadelphia by instructors from the University of Pennsylvania and is supported by a cadre of civilian and military facilitators. Courses are also being given under our supervision by teachers at Victory University, Fort Jackson, South Carolina. During 2010 and 2011, courses will be taught in Philadelphia by the University of Pennsylvania. Starting in mid-2011, we will begin to transition the course oversight to the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command and to teachers at Victory University, Fort Jackson.

Master resilience training involving many thousands of NCOs as teachers and 1.1 million soldiers as students is one of the largest-scale psychological interventions ever undertaken. It is the backbone of a cultural transformation of the U.S. Army in which a psychologically fit Army will have equal standing with a physically fit Army. We believe that the field of psychology can be proud of its role in this transformation.

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