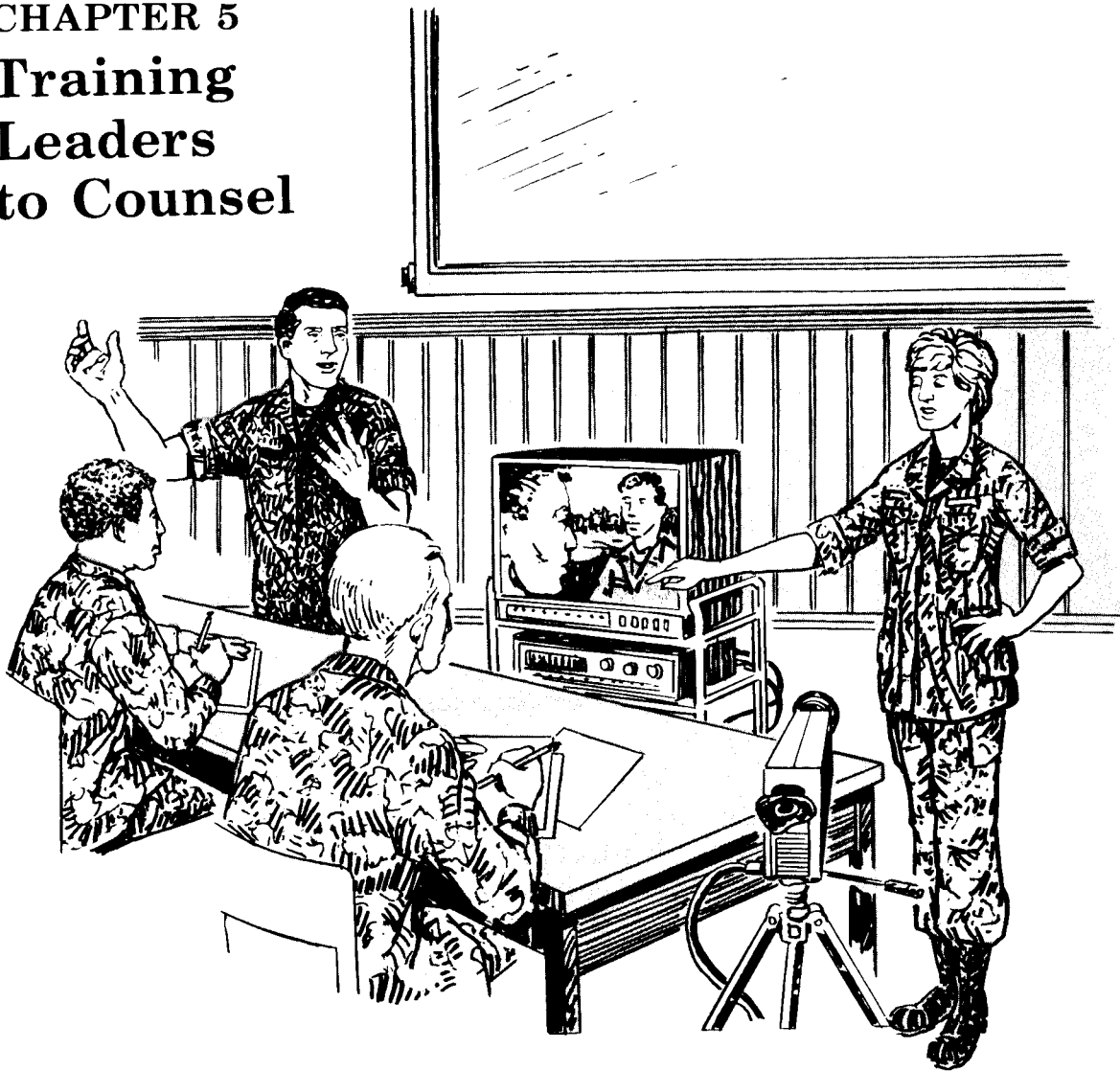


CHAPTER 5

Training Leaders to Counsel



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The Difference

Am I glad the section sergeant gave us some help to improve our counseling skills. I didn't know what I was going to do with Private Spivey. I learned a little about counseling when I went to the NCO academy. I'm good in my MOS, but that didn't help me in dealing with Spivey. I just wasn't doing any good with him.

But, after our last NCO professional development on leadership counseling, I've done some things differently. I learned then what I was doing right, and I got other ideas on what I might do to be more effective. When I talked with Private Spivey again, that all helped and made a real difference. You can't argue with success. The section sergeant sure knew what he was doing when he set up those exercises for us. Things are going better because of it.

NEED FOR TRAINING

Counseling is an essential leadership competency. It is related to many of the other elements of military leadership. Knowledge of basic counseling skills and techniques and the ability to apply them are necessary for leaders to perform their duties. Leaders become more capable as they gain further knowledge and experience as counselors.

Counseling training improves unit leaders' ability to help their soldiers, thus improving a unit's overall readiness and capability to perform its mission. Unit leaders probably have received some counseling instruction in officer or noncommissioned officer courses or at a service school, academy, or training center. This introduction to counseling is a basis for further development at the unit level. Even experienced leaders with advanced instruction can benefit from a good professional development program in leadership counseling. A unit conducts training exercises to further develop

its leaders in certain job skills, techniques, and procedures. It should also conduct training to further develop and improve leaders' abilities to counsel subordinates.

Learning to counsel effectively is not a simple process. A basic knowledge of skills and techniques can be acquired through self-study and in a classroom. (Appendix F provides examples of how this might be done.) Developing the ability to counsel results from practice. By applying the knowledge and skills learned in the classroom, leaders develop and increase their counseling proficiency. This can be done in a training situation through role playing or by on-the-job experience. Leaders must have an accurate evaluation of their own counseling abilities and make changes to increase their effectiveness when dealing with others. Junior leaders can look to their seniors for assistance and guidance. A leader should always seek to improve his own ability to counsel subordinates.

★
**KNOW YOURSELF
AND SEEK
SELF-IMPROVEMENT**

METHODS FOR TRAINING

ROLE MODELING

All leaders must train their subordinate leaders to improve their ability to counsel. One method is by role-modeling. A unit leader continually shows counseling methods and techniques to his subordinate leaders in his dealings with them. The leader must realize that his actions model and demonstrate the expected counseling behavior, no matter how informal those actions may be.

For example, when a platoon sergeant counsels a squad leader on accomplishing a mission, he is showing one approach to performance counseling. The squad leader is influenced by the way he is treated. The platoon sergeant serves as an effective role model if he shows a firm, knowledgeable, and caring approach. On the other hand, if the platoon sergeant is weak at praising and recognizing good work, the squad leader will probably be weak in praising his subordinates.

**SUBORDINATES
LEARN TO USE
PRAISE FROM THEIR
LEADER'S EXAMPLE.**



FEEDBACK

Another method used to develop counselors is feedback. There are many ways to learn the basic concepts, skills, and techniques of counseling. To become proficient, one must then apply the skills and techniques in role playing or in actual counseling of soldiers. Feedback on the effectiveness of a leader's counseling efforts is necessary if development and improvement are to take place. And, with some thought and creativity, the time and opportunity to provide feedback on a leader's performance evaluation should be available in most units.

Peer evaluation is one useful technique for providing feedback. Oftentimes a subordinate leader is named to present instruction or to conduct a short briefing for the rest of the unit. When the training is completed, a few of the subordinate leaders can gather for a brief

performance counseling session. One of them can evaluate the leader who led the training. The other leaders can watch and listen and then provide feedback on the conduct of that performance counseling. The officer or senior noncommissioned officer in charge controls this type of peer evaluation to ensure that appropriate comments are made. Immediate and informative feedback is provided in a realistic situation. If the performance counseling properly addressed observed actions rather than making value judgments, there is little chance for conflict. The counselor must be factual and objective or the counselee may become defensive, argumentative, or withdrawn. He is not role playing. He really performed the task he is being counseled on and will respond accordingly. This process can be done quickly and with different subordinate leaders each time.

Leader evaluation is another technique for providing feedback. A leader's immediate superior sits in on a counseling session with a soldier. When the counseling is over and the soldier has been dismissed, the senior leader shares his findings with the junior leader and offers advice or guidance. This works best when the soldier knows and is comfortable with both of the leaders. This technique is not appropriate for every situation and should be used in a way that does not degrade the authority of the junior leader.

ROLE PLAYING

Role playing is also used to train counselors, with feedback playing an important part. The effectiveness of role playing depends on the use of real situations and on the ability of the counselee to act and behave as a soldier being counseled would react to his leader. In conducting this activity, the people playing the roles of counselor and counselee must be given slightly different instructions. The counselor needs some general information; the counselee, more detailed information. (Some examples are given in appendix G.) Other participants observe and then provide feedback at the

conclusion. A tape recorder can be used to record and play back the role playing. This assists observers in citing specific remarks. Or the session can be recorded on videotape and played back while the observer provides feedback. In this way the counselor can see and hear what he has done. This causes the observers to concentrate on describing specific actions, statements, and gestures and their observed effects.

Role playing can be done to meet the needs of the participants. There is no requirement to role play an entire counseling session. Any part of counseling can be practiced in this exercise. It may be necessary to practice establishing rapport with a nervous soldier at the beginning of a session or just to practice active listening skills. The situations might be based on problems that have been experienced or on circumstances that are peculiar to the unit or location.

The observers in any role-play exercise have an important responsibility. They must watch and listen and then provide the feedback. Thus they are practicing many of the skills necessary for conducting performance counseling. They must provide feedback on specific actions rather than on general statements. "You had some good nonverbal responses" is a general statement that is not particularly useful. A better observation would be "The counselee said he might have a new idea, and then you leaned forward in your chair with a different expression on your face showing that you were interested in hearing his idea, and he continued in detail." The observers identify observed actions and results.

As leaders gain in experience, they become accustomed to using styles and methods that have worked previously. In role-playing exercises, students are free to try different methods. They can practice something new or something they are weak at without fear of failing. And no subordinate will be harmed while the leader is developing a new skill or technique.

Unit counseling training can be based on just two references—this manual and FM 22-100. The information in these two publications, together with conscious application, enables leaders to improve their counseling skills. Additional materials for general information, unit training, and self-improvement are listed in the reference section.

SUMMARY

This chapter has discussed training and developing leaders to fulfill their responsibilities as counselors. To improve proficiency in applying counseling skills and techniques, the following points should be considered:

- Counseling ability results from applying knowledge learned in the classroom.
 - To improve their counseling ability, leaders must have feedback or an evaluation of their counseling efforts.
 - Role playing and peer evaluation are possible ways of providing feedback.
 - Leaders serve as role models when they counsel subordinate leaders.
 - Professional development in units can be done informally or in structured training sessions.
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