



SUMMER 2023

## A LEADER DEVELOPMENT ACADEMY LESSON

### SHAPING BEHAVIOR

At NMLPDC, shaping the behavior of others is a lesson we teach all junior officers going through the Division Officer Leadership Course (DIVOLC). The intent is to help them be better at leading their teams and reach the organization's goals. From DIVOLC's lesson book we share the checklist below to help you proactively shape the behavior of others based on dignity and respect.

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■ **Check yourself first. Are you a manager, a supervisor, or a leader?** Managers manage resources; supervisors monitor progress; leaders have the knowledge, skills, competence and understanding of how to engage, motivate, mentor, develop, and inspire others to work toward a desired goal. As military and civilian leaders in the Navy we are often told “bloom where you are planted,” meaning “do the best where you are and with what you have.” But even a sturdy dandelion growing in the crack of a parking lot needs the energy of the sun and water to bloom. It is the job of the leader to be the positive energy to help the roots of trust to emerge from the seeds of dignity and respect, reinforcing the stem of communication. In order to lead, create transparent communication, trust and collaboration; consider the individual, not their rank or title; and be approachable.

■ **Did you set clear expectations?** For our civilian personnel, the Department of Defense has in place the Performance Management and Appraisal Program in which the supervisor is expected to establish performance standards which help identify for the employees the areas of focus for which their performance will be evaluated, thereby helping set them up for success in their respective job. Supervisors must review the performance elements and ensure they are SMART (Specific; Measurable; Achievable; Relevant to the position; and the employee should receive Timely feedback). For military personnel, we have mandatory mid-term counseling and annual evaluations or fitness reports, but these occur after the service member has been on the job. Supervisors should be proactive and ensure military personnel also get SMART objectives when they first check-in so they have a clear path to help the organization succeed. All expectations should be communicated verbally and in writing, as often as needed, not just during reporting cycle benchmarks. For contract personnel, make sure you understand the scope of the contract under which they are employed so you can help hold them accountable to the terms of performance. If you are having issues with a contractor, and you are not the Contracting Officer Representative (COR), communicate these issues to the COR. The COR is a government employee and your ally. The COR should pass on the concerns, in writing, to the head of the contract so they can counsel their employee. Contractors are NOT your employees. Therefore, it is NOT the government supervisor's role to counsel contractors; always seek the COR's assistance with contractor performance issues.

■ **Did you challenge your assumptions?** Do not assume your team members know what is expected of them. Set clear goals for everyone. Communicate your leader philosophy early on. Do not assume everyone knows who is responsible for what, and do not assume your employees have the resources, training, skills, or knowledge to do their job. Often we get assigned to lead organizations where subordinates have been doing the job as best they could with limited guidance, training and resources. As a leader, it is your job to ensure they have what they need to succeed. If there are complaints about an individual, do not assume guilt, get all sides of the story before moving forward with any action. Take your time to assess the regulations that apply to your section, and see if there are knowledge or training gaps which need to be addressed. Do this with tact to avoid the appearance of insult or questioning of the employee's knowledge or experience. Make sure they know you are there to provide them the tools to succeed, and document these efforts, not just cases when you had to address negative behavior.

■ **Are you using different tools to help you shape behavior?** Having open, two-way conversations is the best way to shape behavior. Your subordinates want to be treated with dignity and respect like anyone else. Ask for feedback so you can improve as well. Ensure your communications are timely, task dependent, and consistent, for example, “good job dealing with the frustrated customer.” Take advantage of Navy traditions, Quarters, huddles, awards programs, personal notes, etc., to recognize your team, and provide opportunities for training and coaching. When you have to correct behavior, do it in private.

■ **Are you documenting?** Always document your actions and your subordinates' good work or misbehavior. Unless you are giving formal counseling, documenting does not have to be a fancy, formal memorandum. A simple e-mail to yourself is enough proof should you need to show in the future that you have been actively working to shape someone's behavior.

**LCDR Veronica Restrepo Molina, MSC, USN** currently serves as Special Assistant, Naval Medical Leader and Professional Development Command. Born and raised in Medellin, Colombia, LCDR Restrepo Molina migrated to the United States at the age of 13 and enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserve at the age of 17. During her enlisted career, she was assigned to the 257<sup>th</sup> Transportation Battalion as a Transportation Management Coordinator in Gainesville, Florida. In 1998, she deployed to Hungary as part of Operation Joint Guard. In 2002 she completed her enlistment contract and was honorably discharged from the Army Reserve. In 2003, she completed her Bachelor of Arts at the State University of New York, College at Potsdam; in 2009 she completed her Master of Health Service Administration at Armstrong Atlantic State University, Savannah, Georgia; and in 2011 her graduate certificate in Information Assurance from the University of Maryland, University College.

In June 2014, LCDR Restrepo Molina received a direct commission as a Lieutenant Junior Grade as a Health Care Administrator in the Navy Medical Service Corps. Following Officer Development School in Newport, Rhode Island, she served at the Navy Medicine Professional Development Center (NMPDC) in Bethesda, Maryland as Division Officer for Graduate Programs. In 2016 she was hand-selected to become NMPDC's Deputy Comptroller and graduated from the Financial and Materiel Management Course.

In September 2017, LCDR Restrepo Molina assumed the duties of Deputy Comptroller at Fort Belvoir Community Hospital in Fort Belvoir, Virginia followed by service as Comptroller and Director of Resource Management at U.S. Naval Hospital Guantanamo Bay and at Naval Medical Leader and Professional Development Command. She was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Commander in the Summer of 2023.

Her military decorations include the Navy Commendation Medal (two awards), Joint Achievement Medal, Army Achievement Medal (two awards), the Army Reserve Medal with "M" device, and the NATO Medal. In 2018, she was awarded the Executive Medicine Additional Qualification Designator.