

## Commander's Guidance for Senior Leader Ethics Education

### **EXPLORATION TOPIC: STUMBLING BLOCKS AND SELF AWARENESS**

The intent for this module, *Stumbling Blocks and Self Awareness*, is to provide a platform of study and engagement with peers that will enhance understanding of human thinking processes in order to promote continued growth of moral character and professional identity for leaders. Leaders and followers are constantly assessed by what they do and don't do - their behaviors and their actions. Understanding this concept, therefore, demonstrates the need for reflective assessment of ourselves and from our subordinates, and provides the bases for continued and lifelong self-development

In order to provide insight into behaviors and actions, this module recommends an "analysis of impediments, and pitfalls to personal conduct, discretionary judgments and ethical reasoning."

Especially at the Senior Leader level, the first area of investigation includes but is not limited to the factors/processes that inhibit/affect ethical reasoning, specifically as leaders progress through their careers. What is moral disengagement and how does it affect decision-making? How do our personal biases color our perception of reality and therefore our ability to engage in ethical reasoning? Why do good people make bad decisions? Senior Leaders are, also, subject to situations that by their nature challenge behavior and decision-making. What are the effects of positions of power on behavior? Does increased authority contribute to unethical decisions and actions? Exploring and discussing these issues leads to increased understanding of decision-making and improved moral resilience.

The second area of investigation is the resources and processes that help build moral clarity and strength. As in the first area of investigation, these resources and processes provide the basis for understanding thought processes, which promote exemplary behavior and judgment as well as tools to help individuals work through complex situations (ethically ambiguous, highly stressful, multiple outcomes/effects, etc.). What is the value of the Army Profession Ethic, espoused values, and artifacts? How do we make decisions that are ethical, efficient and effective? How do we, as Stewards of the Army Profession, pass best practices on to junior leaders?

The third area of investigation examines the roles of the significant players in Senior Leader environments: peers and mentors and how they affect decision making. Do the roles change as a leader enters the "strategic level?" How do their interactions affect the leader? How does a Senior Leader affect those relationships?

The fourth area of investigation looks specifically at behaviors that manifest themselves in Army environments and due to Army conditions or institutional norms. Complicity, failure to uphold standards, and lack of candor prevent a healthy system of open checks and balances and non-tolerance of ethical error.

Together with the foundational modules, *The Army Profession as Our Unifying Purpose and Context* and *Investing in Character Development*, this module promotes learning in the higher categories of the cognitive and affective domains. Learning new material, applying the learning, and engaging in topic discussion is the suggested method.

