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1. How to conduct a counseling session and fill out a DA Form 4856 in the Army. What are your questions about counseling? If I don't cover them, leave a comment. What are the secrets of the counseling form? What is a positive counseling? How do I adapt the way I counsel to different Soldiers? Why is it important for EVERY Soldier to be counseled regularly? Why doesn't my leader counsel me? Are there tools to make counseling easier and more standardized? If you are interested in any of these questions then stick around for this NCOOP. Before we get started, we need to discuss the basics of counseling and the gap that exists. Let's get to it...Let's start with a few questions to determine your commitment to counseling. Is counseling important to you? Yes? Great. No, this might not be for you. IDK? let's keep going and you can answer that again at the end. ##ARTICLEThere is a tiny minority of juniors who properly fill out the form. I'm not discussing magic bullets or perfect templates; let's focus on this standardized form. This tool has its limitations, and other methods exist for documenting counseling sessions with soldiers. It's essential to use this form correctly. Have you ever received counseling without being given a copy of the form? Perhaps the leader discussed something unexpected or vague, leading to a generic conversation based on your section or role. You might have felt confused or angry during the session due to the rushed approach. If we follow the directions on the form, we can minimize this from happening. When filling out background information, most people put "End of month counseling for \_\_\_\_\_" or "Initial counseling for \_\_\_\_\_". What else is supposed to go in that box? Sometimes, people say "type of counseling", "negative", "EOM" (end of month), or "professional growth". This is a good start, but let's look closer at the form's "secret". The form has two sections you're supposed to fill out: the reason for the counseling and the leader's facts and observations prior to the counseling. The reason section is usually filled in, but the second part is often missing. Adding this information can be helpful in negative event-oriented counseling sessions. Part 2 allows you to open the session and provide relevant information about what you want to discuss. Printing off a copy for them to read and fill out beforehand can mitigate issues with rushed conversations. The conversation portion of the counseling session can be conducted in various ways, but a prefilled form might indicate a directive counseling session. The plan of action should consist of three elements: goal, actions, and expected outcomes. SMART goals are essential in this section. As a leader, being aware of this acronym will help you create effective plans. The importance of SMART goals, session closing, agreements, leader responsibilities, and Part IV cannot be overstated in the counseling process. A well-structured plan of action is essential for achieving success, but often, key elements are missing or overlooked. SMART goals provide direction, but without substeps and timelines, they can feel vague and unattainable. The lack of these crucial components can hinder progress and lead to frustration. Session closing is another critical aspect that is frequently neglected; a summary of the key points discussed during the session helps to reinforce learning and ensure understanding. Agreements are made between the leader and subordinate, but their significance is often underestimated. By confirming that the subordinate understands the plan of action, agreements provide a sense of accountability and motivation. The leader's responsibilities in Part III are equally important; they outline how the leader will support and guide the subordinate to achieve the goals. This section showcases the leader's commitment to the subordinate's success. Part IV is often overlooked due to time constraints, but it is a vital component of the counseling process. It requires additional effort and dedication from leaders but can significantly impact the development of their subordinates. By completing this section, leaders demonstrate their investment in their Soldiers' growth and can identify potential issues before they become major problems. In conclusion, effective counseling is crucial for leadership success. By understanding the importance of SMART goals, session closing, agreements, leader responsibilities, and Part IV, leaders can create a more comprehensive and supportive environment for their subordinates. To effectively conduct an Army Squad Leader Initial Counseling session, schedule it promptly and ideally within the first week of their deployment. Treat them with respect and professionalism during the meeting, ensuring a supportive environment for open communication. Document everything thoroughly, including the DA Form 4856 and any subsequent agreements or assessments made during the counseling. Ask your subordinate numerous questions, allowing them to take an active role in assessing their team's performance. Determine what motivates them and allows them to make unbiased evaluations of their squad members. Finally, instill confidence within them by expressing your trust and faith in their abilities. This will bolster their morale and set the stage for a successful tenure as Platoon Sergeant. Leave a comment below to let me know what you think. Very Respectfully, Chuck Holmes Former Army Major (resigned) Publisher, Part-Time-Commander.com Contact Me with Your Questions Attention Friends & Viewers! For a limited time, I am giving away \$70 in free health products. This includes samples for three life-changing products and a must-read book. There are no strings attached. You are under no obligation to purchase anything. This offer is for a limited time and is for US residents only. You can request your free sample pack here. If you're looking for a part-time side hustle, new opportunity, or new career, visit this website, type in your best email, and then create your free account. In this initial counseling, I will describe your duties, responsibilities, and my expectations of you as one of my leaders. This counseling, with future performance counseling, will help you to improve your leadership effectiveness and help you prepare your Team to become a well-trained, fully mission-capable unit. As a Fire Team leader, you are responsible for the training, discipline, safety, morale, and motivation of our soldiers. Ensure that you care for our soldiers and their families by knowing and addressing their problems in a timely manner. I want you to fully understand what technical and tactical knowledge I expect a Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) to have. DUTY SCOPE: Responsible for the welfare, fitness, morale, individual training of our Soldiers and maintenance of all assigned equipment. Serves as the primary instructor and advisor in matters of tactics, personnel management and junior leader development. Directs his team's tactical employment during offensive and defensive operations. MILITARY BEARING AND Demeanor: You will be clean-shaven daily. Your uniform will be clean and serviceable. You will have a fresh haircut. You will set the example for your soldiers. Standards can never be relaxed. Don't forget you are a professional, Non-Commissioned Leader. INSTRUCTING AND TRAINING SOLDIERS: You must prepare your lessons and know what you are talking about. Instructing is an art that must be developed. It is vital that you have a thorough, intimate knowledge of what you are going to teach. This often means hours of study and research. More can be learned by going over the study material more than once. LEADERSHIP: Obtain the respect of your soldiers. This will only be gained by treating your soldiers fairly and setting the example with your appearance, outward behavior, competence, and technical and tactical knowledge. It also requires taking a friendly interest in their private life, by having friendly chats with all your soldiers, and by caring for them as you would your own family. ESPRIT DE CORPS: Develop a healthy and enthusiastic attitude about your Team's duties. Cheerfulness is a great factor in lightening your load and a sense of humor will carry you over the roughest of roads and the most difficult and arduous of tasks. A good sense of humor is a great stabilizer in trying times or when under tension or strain. PLAN OF ACTION o You will study and think of ways to better yourself and your soldiers, devoting many hours a day to your duties as an NCO, never forgetting who you are and where you come from, and what constitutes your responsibilities. o You will abide by The Creed and compare your performance to it daily. No one is more professional than I. I am a Noncommissioned Officer, a leader of Soldiers. I will not use my grade or position to attain pleasure, profit, or personal safety. Competence is my watchword. My two basic responsibilities will always be uppermost in my mind: Accomplishment of my mission and the welfare of my Soldiers. I will strive to remain technically and tactically proficient. I am aware of my role as a Noncommissioned Officer, I will fulfill my responsibilities inherent in that role. All Soldiers are entitled to outstanding leadership; I will provide that leadership. I know my Soldiers, and I will always place their needs above my own. I will communicate consistently with my Soldiers and never leave them uninformed. I will be fair and impartial when recommending both rewards and punishment. Officers of my unit will have maximum time to accomplish their duties; they will not have to accomplish mine. I will earn their respect and confidence as well as that of my Soldiers. I will be loyal to those with whom I serve: seniors, peers, and subordinates alike. I will exercise initiative by taking appropriate action in the absence of orders. I will not compromise my integrity, nor my moral courage. I will not forget. ##As Noncommissioned Officers, leaders, it is essential to remember that we are professionals and embody the qualities of leadership. Our primary responsibilities include setting an example, placing the needs of our soldiers above our own, mentoring and coaching them, and developing their well-rounded skill sets. When conducting a counseling session, whether formal or informal, we must ensure that we address the soldier's strengths, weaknesses, shortcomings, and performance. This not only helps the individual but also demonstrates our care and dedication to their growth. In an ideal world, every leader would use DA Form 4856 for counseling purposes, as it serves as a valuable tool in reforming bad behavior, recognizing good behavior, and providing feedback. The responsibilities of a leader extend beyond the counseling session itself. We must be proactive in monitoring our soldiers' performance, training status, and time management skills. We should also be available for counseling at any time, observe behavior and performance, and provide guidance and assistance when needed. It is crucial to understand that our role as leaders is not only to train and develop but also to make mistakes and learn from them. We must create an environment where soldiers feel motivated, directed, and supported in their endeavors. Our goal should be to empower them to take ownership of their work and achieve their full potential. In conclusion, effective leadership is about setting the example, being proactive, and making time for counseling sessions. By embracing DA Form 4856 and utilizing it as a tool for both positive and constructive feedback, we can create a more cohesive and productive team within our units. The various types of Army Counseling, including Event-Oriented Counseling, Reception & Integration Counseling, Crisis Counseling, Referral Counseling, Promotion Counseling, Adverse Separation Counseling, Performance Counseling, and Professional Growth Counseling. The goal is to address issues with Soldiers in a structured format. CounselingThe next step is to conduct the counseling. If you have prepared properly, this should be easy to do. The most common types of counseling are initial, quarterly and performance based counseling. When you do the counseling, sit down with the person in private (unless you need a witness) and conduct the counseling face-to-face. Tell them why they are meeting with you and what you want to talk about. Create a simple agenda to follow, and try to keep the counseling session to no more than 30-minutes. STEP # 6: Follow Up, Follow Up, Follow UpThis is what separates good leaders from great leaders. Follow-up is the most important part of the counseling process. This is where you provide verbal feedback with the Soldier informing them of their performance AFTER the counseling session. You also need to ensure they are following the action plan you outlined for them during the counseling session. Try to provide feedback regularly, so there are no surprises during your next counseling session. When possible, put your feedback in writing too. I'd like to close out this section by telling you that counseling is the most important part of your job. Even if your boss does not sit down and counsel you properly, you still have the responsibility to counsel and develop your subordinates. You must "make the time" in your busy schedule to get this done. By doing so, you will improve morale in your unit, your followers will respect you more, and the overall performance in your unit will improve. Top 10 Army Counseling TipsIn this section, I want to share my top 10 Army Counseling Tips. As an Army leader, counseling your subordinates (in writing) is one of the most important aspects of your job. Unfortunately, it's often an area that gets neglected. Most Army leaders understand the importance of counseling, yet few leaders do it. Most leaders don't make the time to do it, because counseling takes time and competes with their other duties. I get it. You have a lot on your plate, but developing and mentoring your subordinates MUST be one of your biggest priorities. The best way to do that is with formal, written counseling. Here are some simple success tips. Tip # 1: Develop a Game Plan & Schedule to FollowYour first step is to develop a game-plan and schedule to follow. You should use some kind of tracking sheet. Add your subordinates to the counseling tracking sheet. Determine when you must do the initial counseling and follow up counseling for each Soldier you supervise. Set the dates in your calendar or day planner. Schedule the time to get it done. Make it a top priority or it will never get done. Tip # 2: Always Meet Face-to-Face in PrivateWhenever possible, you should meet with your Soldiers face-to-face. You want to look them in the eyes when you talk with them. You want to avoid distractions and interruptions. Turn off your cell phone and computer and go somewhere private. Never do a counseling over the phone or via email (unless you have no other option). Tip # 3: Conduct the Verbal Counseling First & Then Write it UpI've found that it's easiest to do the verbal counseling first and then do the formal, written counseling. Let the Soldier know what you are thinking and tell them that you will go back to your office and get everything typed up onto a DA Form 4856 for them to sign. This lets you address the issue immediately when you talk to them, and it gives you time to think through the problem and then type everything up. It also gives you time to collect any facts or information you might need concerning the issue. I firmly believe that EVERY time you do a verbal counseling, you should also put it in writing. Tip # 4: Learn the Other Person's Side of the StoryWhen you do a counseling, you don't want to be the only person talking. Get good at asking questions and listening. Find out what the other person knows or is thinking about. This gives you an additional perspective and lets your Soldier know that you care about what they think. Even if you don't want to know their side, make sure you aren't the one doing all the talking. Tip # 5: Focus on the Facts, Not Your Emotions or OpinionsThe best counseling sessions (especially negative counseling sessions) focus on the facts, not opinions. Be specific and objective when you do a counseling with a Soldier. Summarize the facts and events, reference regulations if necessary, and try to keep your opinion to a minimum. Tip # 6: If You Do a Negative Counseling, Have a WitnessWhenever you conduct a negative counseling session with someone, bring in a witness, preferably your boss or a trusted peer. This keeps you from getting any false accusations against you. This sounds like common sense, but many military leaders forget to do it. Tip # 7: The Sooner the BetterThe sooner you can conduct a counseling session the better. The longer you delay it, the less effect it will have on a Soldier. For instance, if a new Soldier arrives to your section starting today, get their counseling done on the first or second day. This creates a good first impression and lets the Soldier know you have your act together. When you do a negative counseling, do it on the same day the incident happened. If you wait a week or two, it won't be very effective. Tip # 8: Always Follow Up with the Soldier AfterwardsOne of the most important parts of counseling is the follow-up. As a leader, you should follow up with your Soldier after the counseling session to make sure they are working through the plan of action. Make sure they are making progress and fixing things. Ensure you are available to answer the Soldier's questions. Be accessible. Tip # 9: Never Put Anything in Writing You Will RegretWhen you are writing a counseling statement, never put anything in writing that you will regret. If you are emotional or angry, wait a few minutes until you cool down. Make sure your counseling statement is objective, and isn't a personal attack on the person. Have your boss or a trusted peer review the counseling ahead of time. Tip # 10: Be ConsistentWith all the tips above in mind, make sure to be consistent in your approach. Do what you say you will do, when you say you will do it. Your Soldiers will respect you more for it, and you will have a better relationship with them. ##Lookin forward to seeing everyone at the meeting tomorrow and discuss our strategies. The last thing you want to do is get yourself in trouble because you wrote something you shouldn't have. Tip #10: Don't Worry About PerfectionMy last Army Counseling tip is "don't worry about perfection." Your counseling statement can be hand-written. It doesn't have to be typed up or look fancy. As long as it is accurate and objective, don't fret. If you are worried about making everything perfect, there's a good chance you will NEVER finish the counseling statement. The mere fact that you are conducting the counseling is what matters most.The DA Form 4856 Magic Bullet StatementWhat is the DA Form 4856 Magic Bullet Statement? Simply put, it is a "legal statement" you include on the official Army Counseling Form when you counsel a subordinate. This statement is typically used for "negative" event-oriented counseling. Example events might include insubordination, driving under the influence, failure to report, public intoxication, or something similar.The purpose of the Magic Bullet Statement is to (1) let your Soldier know that you are serious and you mean business and (2) let your Soldier know what will/could happen if this type of negative behavior continues.From my personal experience in the military I can tell you that the DA Form 4856 Magic Bullet Statement works wonders. When you include it on the negative counseling statement, you really get the Soldier's attention. In most cases, it helps correct the poor behavior immediately. After all, who wants to be kicked out of the military? Who wants an Article 15 or Court-Martial?On the other hand, if your counseling does not correct or fix the Soldier's performance, your written counseling makes recommending UCMJ or Administrative Actions much easier. Putting things in writing, combined with the Magic Bullet Statement, creates a paper trail that covers ass when you make recommendations to your chain of command. When you can show your commander two, three, four or five negative counseling statements for someone, they will listen to you!If you supervise Soldiers, I HIGHLY recommend you include the DA 4856 Magic Bullet Statement on every "negative" counseling you do. Here are two basic versions of the Magic Bullet Statement:Example #1 "I am counseling you for the conduct noted above. Be advised that continued conduct of this nature may result in initiation of a bar to reenlistment, administrative action to include your separation from the service, and/or punitive action (i.e. UCMJ action). If this conduct continues, action may be initiated to involuntarily separate you from the service under AR 635-200, Chapter 5, 11, 13 or 14. If you are involuntarily separated, you could receive an Honorable, General Under Honorable Conditions, Other Than Honorable, or Uncharacteristic Discharge. An Honorable Discharge may be awarded under Chapter 5, 13 and 14. An Uncharacteristic Discharge may be awarded under Chapter 11. A General Under Honorable Conditions Discharge may be awarded under Chapter 5, 13 and 14. An Other Than Honorable Discharge may be awarded under Chapter 14. If you receive an Honorable Discharge, you will be qualified for most benefits resulting from your military service. If you receive a General Under Honorable Conditions Discharge or an Uncharacteristic Discharge, you will be disqualified from reenlisting in to the service for some period (i.e. at least two years) and you will be ineligible for many veterans benefits to include but not limited to the Montgomery G.I. Bill. If you receive Other Than Honorable Discharge, you will be ineligible for most, if not all, veteran's benefits to include but not limited to the Montgomery G.I. Bill and you will be precluded from reenlisting in the service. If a General Under Honorable Conditions, Other Than Honorable, or Uncharacteristic Discharge is given, you may face difficulty in obtaining civilian employment as employers have a low regard for less than Honorable Discharges. Although agencies exist to which you may apply to upgrade a less than Honorable Discharge, it is unlikely that such application will be successful."Example #2 "Pursuant to 1-16, AR 635-200, this constitutes a formal counseling session concerning your noted deficiencies. You will be given a reasonable period of time to correct these deficiencies and to rehabilitate yourself into a productive satisfactory Soldier. Your conduct will be monitored during this time and you will be given an opportunity to prove yourself. If your performance and conduct continues to be unsatisfactory, you could be processed for separation under Chapter 5-13 or 5-17 AR 635-200. You could also be chapter under Chapter 9, 13, or 14. If you are processed for separation under Chapters 9 or 13 you could receive a general discharge and if processed under Chapter 14, Section III, you may receive up to an Other Than Honorable Discharge. Regardless of the type of discharge that you may receive it may have serious consequences effecting civilian, veteran's benefits, or future service."Source for DA Form 4856 Magic Bullet Statement - Visit this website to get different versions of the Magic Bullet Statement!If you need additional DA Form 4856 Magic Bullet Statements you can do a search on the Internet or visit your local JAG Office. Also, some commands have their own version, so talk with your S1 or Company Commander to find out what they recommend.ConclusionIn conclusion, the DA Form 4856 is a powerful tool for small unit leaders to conduct Army Counseling. Educate yourself on this form, be proactive with the people you supervise, and you shouldn't have many problems. If you do, you can leverage the DA Form 4856 to fix and address those issues as needed.What are your thoughts about Army Counseling? Have you used DA Form 4856 before? If so, leave a comment below to let me know what you think. I look forward to hearing from you. Thanks. Recommended Resources to Help You with Your Army CounselingThese two books will help you paraphrase text here ##ENDARTICLEThe purpose of a plan of action is to help a soldier achieve specific goals and objectives. This plan outlines the steps that need to be taken in order for the soldier to succeed. It's essential for both the soldier and their leader to work together to create a plan that will lead to success. In this document, there are several key sections. The first section, called "Signature of Counselor," is where the counselor signs off on the counseling session and provides their signature and date. This section ensures that both parties have agreed to the terms of the counseling. The second section, "Assessment of the Plan of Action," assesses whether or not the plan has achieved its desired results. Both the leader and the soldier being counseled complete this section, providing valuable information for future follow-up counseling sessions. In this section, it's crucial for both parties to have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. The leader must ensure that the soldier is provided with an environment conducive to learning and growth. This includes offering opportunities for training and development, as well as addressing any obstacles that may be preventing the soldier from meeting standards. The leader should also take note of any challenges or difficulties that the soldier may be facing and offer support and guidance to help them overcome these hurdles. This might involve referring the soldier to a specific agency or providing additional resources to aid in their development. In some cases, the leader may need to take further action to ensure that the soldier is able to meet the objectives outlined in the plan. This could include coordinating with other leaders or departments within the organization to provide support and guidance. The document also emphasizes the importance of maintaining open communication between the leader and the soldier. The leader should be available for counseling at any time, providing a safe and supportive environment for the soldier to discuss their concerns and progress. Examples of responsibilities that may be listed in this section include: \* Providing training or resources to help the soldier meet standards \* Coordinating with other departments to support the soldier's development \* Monitoring the soldier's progress and offering guidance as needed \* Addressing any obstacles or challenges that may be preventing the soldier from meeting objectives By following these guidelines, both parties can work together effectively to create a plan of action that will lead to success. This requires open communication, clear understanding of responsibilities, and a willingness to address any challenges or difficulties that may arise.

Imagine yourself right out of AIT and into your first unit, where you're getting settled amongst people from places you've never visited with different values, perspectives, and beliefs. You don't really know what your job is at the unit because what you do day to day is much different than what your job title and training tell you should be doing. Is this really what the Army is? "I thought I'd be doing more of what I signed up to do..." I got a paper that tells me to be on time, stay out of trouble, do good at PT. I guess this is an "On the Job Training type thing". Fast forward a year and you're going to the promotion board. "Well it would have been nice to know I was on this board with more than a few days notice Sarge! Living the dream!" Your leader then tells you, here sign these just match the date on the front and don't mess this up, it's for your promotion board packet! As you fill out 8 months worth of counseling forms, you think "typical, it would have been nice to see some of this before now..... oh wait, what is this..... you put in here the time I forgot to take the keys to the motorpool? That happened 6 months ago!" Great, I'm sure that won't set me up for failure in the board tomorrow... Can you relate? What happened to this Soldier? Someone getting set back because their leader failed to do their job?...How does that make you feel? That's probably why you're reading this so let's get at it. How to conduct a counseling session and fill out a DA Form 4856 in the Army. What are your questions about counseling? If I don't cover them, leave a comment. What are the secrets of the counseling form? What is a positive counseling? How do I adapt the way I counsel to different Soldiers? Why is it important for EVERY Soldier to be counseled regularly? Why doesn't my leader counsel me? Are there tools to make counseling easier and more standardized? 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Determine what motivates them and allows them to make unbiased evaluations of their squad members. Finally, instill confidence within them by expressing your trust and faith in their abilities. This will bolster their morale and set the stage for a successful tenure as Platoon Sergeant. Leave a comment below to let me know what you think. Very Respectfully, Chuck Holmes Former Army Major (resigned) Publisher, Part-Time-Commander.com Contact Me with Your Questions Attention Friends & Viewers! For a limited time, I am giving away \$70 in free health products. This includes samples for three life-changing products and a must-read book. There are no strings attached. You are under no obligation to purchase anything. This offer is for a limited time and is for US residents only. You can request your free sample pack here. If you're looking for a part-time side hustle, new opportunity, or new career, visit this website, type in your best email, and then create your free account. In this initial counseling, I will describe your duties, responsibilities, and my expectations of you as one of my leaders. This counseling, with future performance counseling, will help you to improve your leadership effectiveness and help you prepare your Team to become a well-trained, fully mission-capable unit. As a Fire Team leader, you are responsible for the training, discipline, safety, morale, and motivation of our soldiers. Ensure that you care for our soldiers and their families by knowing and addressing their problems in a timely manner. I want you to fully understand what technical and tactical knowledge I expect a Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) to have. DUTY SCOPE: Responsible for the welfare, fitness, morale, individual training of our Soldiers and maintenance of all assigned equipment. Serves as the primary instructor and advisor in matters of tactics, personnel management and junior leader development. 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I will not compromise my integrity, nor my moral courage. I will not forget. ##As Noncommissioned Officers, leaders, it is essential to remember that we are professionals and embody the qualities of leadership. Our primary responsibilities include setting an example, placing the needs of our soldiers above our own, mentoring and coaching them, and developing their well-rounded skill sets. When conducting a counseling session, whether formal or informal, we must ensure that we address the soldier's strengths, weaknesses, shortcomings, and performance. This not only helps the individual but also demonstrates our care and dedication to their growth. In an ideal world, every leader would use DA Form 4856 for counseling purposes, as it serves as a valuable tool in reforming bad behavior, recognizing good behavior, and providing feedback. The responsibilities of a leader extend beyond the counseling session itself. We must be proactive in monitoring our soldiers' performance, training status, and time management skills. We should also be available for counseling at any time, observe behavior and performance, and provide guidance and assistance when needed. It is crucial to understand that our role as leaders is not only to train and develop but also to make mistakes and learn from them. We must create an environment where soldiers feel motivated, directed, and supported in their endeavors. Our goal should be to empower them to take ownership of their work and achieve their full potential. In conclusion, effective leadership is about setting the example, being proactive, and making time for counseling sessions. By embracing DA Form 4856 and utilizing it as a tool for both positive and constructive feedback, we can create a more cohesive and productive team within our units. The various types of Army Counseling, including Event-Oriented Counseling, Reception & Integration Counseling, Crisis Counseling, Referral Counseling, Promotion Counseling, Adverse Separation Counseling, Performance Counseling, and Professional Growth Counseling. The goal is to address issues with Soldiers in a structured format. CounselingThe next step is to conduct the counseling. If you have prepared properly, this should be easy to do. The most common types of counseling are initial, quarterly and performance based counseling. When you do the counseling, sit down with the person in private (unless you need a witness) and conduct the counseling face-to-face. Tell them why they are meeting with you and what you want to talk about. Create a simple agenda to follow, and try to keep the counseling session to no more than 30-minutes. STEP # 6: Follow Up, Follow Up, Follow UpThis is what separates good leaders from great leaders. Follow-up is the most important part of the counseling process. This is where you provide verbal feedback with the Soldier informing them of their performance AFTER the counseling session. You also need to ensure they are following the action plan you outlined for them during the counseling session. Try to provide feedback regularly, so there are no surprises during your next counseling session. When possible, put your feedback in writing too. I'd like to close out this section by telling you that counseling is the most important part of your job. Even if your boss does not sit down and counsel you properly, you still have the responsibility to counsel and develop your subordinates. You must "make the time" in your busy schedule to get this done. By doing so, you will improve morale in your unit, your followers will respect you more, and the overall performance in your unit will improve. Top 10 Army Counseling TipsIn this section, I want to share my top 10 Army Counseling Tips. As an Army leader, counseling your subordinates (in writing) is one of the most important aspects of your job. Unfortunately, it's often an area that gets neglected. Most Army leaders understand the importance of counseling, yet few leaders do it. Most leaders don't make the time to do it, because counseling takes time and competes with their other duties. I get it. You have a lot on your plate, but developing and mentoring your subordinates MUST be one of your biggest priorities. The best way to do that is with formal, written counseling. Here are some simple success tips. Tip # 1: Develop a Game Plan & Schedule to FollowYour first step is to develop a game-plan and schedule to follow. You should use some kind of tracking sheet. Add your subordinates to the counseling tracking sheet. Determine when you must do the initial counseling and follow up counseling for each Soldier you supervise. Set the dates in your calendar or day planner. Schedule the time to get it done. Make it a top priority or it will never get done. Tip # 2: Always Meet Face-to-Face in PrivateWhenever possible, you should meet with your Soldiers face-to-face. You want to look them in the eyes when you talk with them. You want to avoid distractions and interruptions. Turn off your cell phone and computer and go somewhere private. Never do a counseling over the phone or via email (unless you have no other option). Tip # 3: Conduct the Verbal Counseling First & Then Write it UpI've found that it's easiest to do the verbal counseling first and then do the formal, written counseling. Let the Soldier know what you are thinking and tell them that you will go back to your office and get everything typed up onto a DA Form 4856 for them to sign. This lets you address the issue immediately when you talk to them, and it gives you time to think through the problem and then type everything up. It also gives you time to collect any facts or information you might need concerning the issue. I firmly believe that EVERY time you do a verbal counseling, you should also put it in writing. Tip # 4: Learn the Other Person's Side of the StoryWhen you do a counseling, you don't want to be the only person talking. Get good at asking questions and listening. Find out what the other person knows or is thinking about. This gives you an additional perspective and lets your Soldier know that you care about what they think. Even if you don't want to know their side, make sure you aren't the one doing all the talking. Tip # 5: Focus on the Facts, Not Your Emotions or OpinionsThe best counseling sessions (especially negative counseling sessions) focus on the facts, not opinions. Be specific and objective when you do a counseling with a Soldier. Summarize the facts and events, reference regulations if necessary, and try to keep your opinion to a minimum. Tip # 6: If You Do a Negative Counseling, Have a WitnessWhenever you conduct a negative counseling session with someone, bring in a witness, preferably your boss or a trusted peer. This keeps you from getting any false accusations against you. This sounds like common sense, but many military leaders forget to do it. Tip # 7: The Sooner the BetterThe sooner you can conduct a counseling session the better. The longer you delay it, the less effect it will have on a Soldier. For instance, if a new Soldier arrives to your section starting today, get their counseling done on the first or second day. This creates a good first impression and lets the Soldier know you have your act together. When you do a negative counseling, do it on the same day the incident happened. If you wait a week or two, it won't be very effective. Tip # 8: Always Follow Up with the Soldier AfterwardsOne of the most important parts of counseling is the follow-up. As a leader, you should follow up with your Soldier after the counseling session to make sure they are working through the plan of action. Make sure they are making progress and fixing things. Ensure you are available to answer the Soldier's questions. Be accessible. Tip # 9: Never Put Anything in Writing You Will RegretWhen you are writing a counseling statement, never put anything in writing that you will regret. If you are emotional or angry, wait a few minutes until you cool down. Make sure your counseling statement is objective, and isn't a personal attack on the person. Have your boss or a trusted peer review the counseling ahead of time. Tip # 10: Be ConsistentWith all the tips above in mind, make sure to be consistent in your approach. Do what you say you will do, when you say you will do it. Your Soldiers will respect you more for it, and you will have a better relationship with them. ##Lookin forward to seeing everyone at the meeting tomorrow and discuss our strategies. The last thing you want to do is get yourself in trouble because you wrote something you shouldn't have. Tip #10: Don't Worry About PerfectionMy last Army Counseling tip is "don't worry about perfection." Your counseling statement can be hand-written. It doesn't have to be typed up or look fancy. As long as it is accurate and objective, don't fret. If you are worried about making everything perfect, there's a good chance you will NEVER finish the counseling statement. The mere fact that you are conducting the counseling is what matters most.The DA Form 4856 Magic Bullet StatementWhat is the DA Form 4856 Magic Bullet Statement? Simply put, it is a "legal statement" you include on the official Army Counseling Form when you counsel a subordinate. This statement is typically used for "negative" event-oriented counseling. Example events might include insubordination, driving under the influence, failure to report, public intoxication, or something similar.The purpose of the Magic Bullet Statement is to (1) let your Soldier know that you are serious and you mean business and (2) let your Soldier know what will/could happen if this type of negative behavior continues.From my personal experience in the military I can tell you that the DA Form 4856 Magic Bullet Statement works wonders. When you include it on the negative counseling statement, you really get the Soldier's attention. In most cases, it helps correct the poor behavior immediately. After all, who wants to be kicked out of the military? Who wants an Article 15 or Court-Martial?On the other hand, if your counseling does not correct or fix the Soldier's performance, your written counseling makes recommending UCMJ or Administrative Actions much easier. Putting things in writing, combined with the Magic Bullet Statement, creates a paper trail that covers ass when you make recommendations to your chain of command. When you can show your commander two, three, four or five negative counseling statements for someone, they will listen to you!If you supervise Soldiers, I HIGHLY recommend you include the DA 4856 Magic Bullet Statement on every "negative" counseling you do. Here are two basic versions of the Magic Bullet Statement:Example #1 "I am counseling you for the conduct noted above. Be advised that continued conduct of this nature may result in initiation of a bar to reenlistment, administrative action to include your separation from the service, and/or punitive action (i.e. UCMJ action). If this conduct continues, action may be initiated to involuntarily separate you from the service under AR 635-200, Chapter 5, 11, 13 or 14. If you are involuntarily separated, you could receive an Honorable, General Under Honorable Conditions, Other Than Honorable, or Uncharacteristic Discharge. An Honorable Discharge may be awarded under Chapter 5, 13 and 14. An Uncharacteristic Discharge may be awarded under Chapter 11. A General Under Honorable Conditions Discharge may be awarded under Chapter 5, 13 and 14. An Other Than Honorable Discharge may be awarded under Chapter 14. If you receive an Honorable Discharge, you will be qualified for most benefits resulting from your military service. If you receive a General Under Honorable Conditions Discharge or an Uncharacteristic Discharge, you will be disqualified from reenlisting in to the service for some period (i.e. at least two years) and you will be ineligible for many veterans benefits to include but not limited to the Montgomery G.I. Bill. If you receive Other Than Honorable Discharge, you will be ineligible for most, if not all, veteran's benefits to include but not limited to the Montgomery G.I. Bill and you will be precluded from reenlisting in the service. If a General Under Honorable Conditions, Other Than Honorable, or Uncharacteristic Discharge is given, you may face difficulty in obtaining civilian employment as employers have a low regard for less than Honorable Discharges. Although agencies exist to which you may apply to upgrade a less than Honorable Discharge, it is unlikely that such application will be successful."Example #2 "Pursuant to 1-16, AR 635-200, this constitutes a formal counseling session concerning your noted deficiencies. You will be given a reasonable period of time to correct these deficiencies and to rehabilitate yourself into a productive satisfactory Soldier. Your conduct will be monitored during this time and you will be given an opportunity to prove yourself. If your performance and conduct continues to be unsatisfactory, you could be processed for separation under Chapter 5-13 or 5-17 AR 635-200. You could also be chapter under Chapter 9, 13, or 14. If you are processed for separation under Chapters 9 or 13 you could receive a general discharge and if processed under Chapter 14, Section III, you may receive up to an Other Than Honorable Discharge. Regardless of the type of discharge that you may receive it may have serious consequences effecting civilian, veteran's benefits, or future service."Source for DA Form 4856 Magic Bullet Statement - Visit this website to get different versions of the Magic Bullet Statement!If you need additional DA Form 4856 Magic Bullet Statements you can do a search on the Internet or visit your local JAG Office. Also, some commands have their own version, so talk with your S1 or Company Commander to find out what they recommend.ConclusionIn conclusion, the DA Form 4856 is a powerful tool for small unit leaders to conduct Army Counseling. Educate yourself on this form, be proactive with the people you supervise, and you shouldn't have many problems. If you do, you can leverage the DA Form 4856 to fix and address those issues as needed.What are your thoughts about Army Counseling? Have you used DA Form 4856 before? If so, leave a comment below to let me know what you think. I look forward to hearing from you. Thanks. Recommended Resources to Help You with Your Army CounselingThese two books will help you paraphrase text here ##ENDARTICLEThe purpose of a plan of action is to help a soldier achieve specific goals and objectives. This plan outlines the steps that need to be taken in order for the soldier to succeed. It's essential for both the soldier and their leader to work together to create a plan that will lead to success. In this document, there are several key sections. The first section, called "Signature of Counselor," is where the counselor signs off on the counseling session and provides their signature and date. This section ensures that both parties have agreed to the terms of the counseling. The second section, "Assessment of the Plan of Action," assesses whether or not the plan has achieved its desired results. Both the leader and the soldier being counseled complete this section, providing valuable information for future follow-up counseling sessions. In this section, it's crucial for both parties to have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. The leader must ensure that the soldier is provided with an environment conducive to learning and growth. This includes offering opportunities for training and development, as well as addressing any obstacles that may be preventing the soldier from meeting standards. The leader should also take note of any challenges or difficulties that the soldier may be facing and offer support and guidance to help them overcome these hurdles. This might involve referring the soldier to a specific agency or providing additional resources to aid in their development. In some cases, the leader may need to take further action to ensure that the soldier is able to meet the objectives outlined in the plan. This could include coordinating with other leaders or departments within the organization to provide support and guidance. The document also emphasizes the importance of maintaining open communication between the leader and the soldier. The leader should be available for counseling at any time, providing a safe and supportive environment for the soldier to discuss their concerns and progress. Examples of responsibilities that may be listed in this section include: \* Providing training or resources to help the soldier meet standards \* Coordinating with other departments to support the soldier's development \* Monitoring the soldier's progress and offering guidance as needed \* Addressing any obstacles or challenges that may be preventing the soldier from meeting objectives By following these guidelines, both parties can work together effectively to create a plan of action that will lead to success. This requires open communication, clear understanding of responsibilities, and a willingness to address any challenges or difficulties that may arise.

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