

Battlemind Training System: “Armor for Your Mind”

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INTRODUCTION

From the time new recruits enter military service, they are drilled with the understanding that to accomplish the mission they must maintain and operate an essential weapon system. That essential weapon system is the trained and armed US Army Soldier. Historically, the institutional development of the US Army Soldier has included tough physical conditioning coupled with realistic technical and tactical training. This traditional approach to shaping new recruits has consistently produced a corps of tough, confident, flexible, and prepared Warriors capable of winning in combat and waging successful military operations. Battlemind training augments this skill set by building upon the Warrior’s proven combat skills and mental fortitude—for truly we cannot send their bodies where we have not prepared their minds to go.

The term *Battlemind* was originally coined during the early 1990s by General Crosby Saint who, at the time, was the Commander of US Army Europe.¹ He recognized that there was a need to mentally prepare his troops to both deploy and then transition back to their home life successfully. Battlemind, as it is known today, came to fruition following the research findings of the Land Combat Study (2003-2004) spearheaded by COL Carl Castro and COL Charles Hoge.² These detailed deployment and subsequent redeployment data were collected and analyzed by their team at the Walter Reed Army Institute of Research (WRAIR). The needs identified by the analysis paved the way for the creation of the Army’s premiere psychological resiliency program—Battlemind.

The Land Combat Study provided the statistical foundation from which Battlemind transformed from

concept to application as a viable readiness enhancing tool for deployment cycle support training. The Battlemind Training System continues to develop as a program under a 3-pillar approach which includes deployment-related training, but has further evolved into institutional training.

Battlemind is now defined as a Warrior’s inner strength to face fear, adversity, and hardship during tough times with confidence and resolution. It is the will to persevere and win. Battlemind training seeks to build upon a Warrior’s proven combat skills, self-confidence, and mental toughness as critical aspects of their training. The Battlemind Training Office, located at the Army Medical Department (AMEDD) Center and School, Fort Sam Houston, Texas, continues to work in conjunction with WRAIR to develop research-based, relevant, psychological resiliency training that can be imparted in a language and manner to which Warriors can relate.

BATTLEMIND TRAINING OFFICE

In March 2007, the Combat Stress Actions Office was reorganized into the Battlemind Training Office, under the umbrella of the Soldier and Family Support Branch at the AMEDD Center & School. It is the platform from which all Battlemind and Combat and Operational Stress Control Training is developed and fielded.

The objectives of Battlemind training are to mentally prepare our Warriors for the rigors of combat and other military deployments; to assist our Warriors in their successful transition back home; to provide our Warriors with the skills to assist their Battle Buddy* to transition home; and, finally, to prepare our Warriors to deploy again in support of all types of military

*Defined as the person to whom a Soldier can turn in time of need, stress, and emotional highs and lows, who will not turn the Soldier away, no matter what. This person knows exactly what the Soldier is experiencing because he or she is currently going through a similar experience or has been through a similar experience and/or situation before.

operations, including additional combat tours. These objectives are accomplished via 3 distinct cycles of military life: Life-Cycle Training, Deployment-Cycle Training, and Soldier-Support Training. Each of these cycles builds from and complements the others. Life-Cycle Training strives to eliminate the stigma that surrounds the search for behavioral healthcare and to promote resilience throughout a Warrior's career. Deployment-Cycle Training provides Warriors with the skills necessary to thrive and adapt to the stressors of deployment, and then successfully transition from the extraordinary circumstances related to military deployments back to garrison and Family life. Finally, Soldier-Support Training addresses the unique needs and specific requirements of Warriors, their Families, and the military community at large.

LIFE-CYCLE TRAINING

Battlemind Life-Cycle Training institutionalizes Battlemind principles and concepts into the US Army training and education system. At the most basic level, Warriors are trained how to mentally prepare themselves for all types of contemporary military deployments while caring for their Battle Buddies. At the highest level, senior leaders will learn how to design organizational models which promote growth, reduce barriers to behavioral healthcare, and enhance total unit readiness for large troop elements. In other words, as our Warriors progress through their careers, they will continue to build their Battlemind skills in a way that is commensurate with their level of responsibility. It ensures our Warriors understand what is, and what is not, within their direct ability to control. There are currently 7 Battlemind Life-Cycle Training products in various stages of development. All institutionalized Battlemind training products will be fielded by the end of fiscal year 2009.

Basic Battlemind Training (BBT) is the building block for all life-cycle training. BBT will be trained at Basic Combat Training and One Station Unit Training programs of instruction. The tenets of BBT include trust in leaders, Battle Buddies, and promotes self-aid/buddy-aid skills which include peer intervention techniques to ensure physical and mental well-being. Warriors are taught to focus their thoughts, actions, and resiliency skills while never losing sight of their duty, values, and the Warrior Ethos, regardless of the situation they may find themselves.

Battlemind Warrior Resiliency (BWR) is the core competency training for all AMEDD enlisted and

officer personnel. BWR is currently being trained in the AMEDD Enlisted Advanced Individual Training (AIT) and Officer Basic Officer Leadership Course (BOLC). This skills-based training emphasizes those skills learned in BBT; additionally, BWR teaches AMEDD personnel how to identify and assist Warriors who may be in need of behavioral health treatment. The principle message will be that psychological trauma derived from combat or operational deployments consists of predictable emotions that, when recognized and brought to light, are also treatable. BWR strives to eliminate perceived stigmas historically associated with Warriors seeking help for behavioral health problems.

Battlemind Warrior Resiliency–Transition targets those AMEDD enlisted and officer personnel who completed AIT and BOLC before the BBT and BWR were incorporated into training. This instruction includes elements of both BBT and BWR.

Battlemind Warrior Resiliency–Recertification ensures established BWR standards are maintained and validated to the required skill sets in the execution of unit-level resiliency programs. This module, akin to cardiopulmonary resuscitation recertification, will strive to remain a dynamic training program through the continued use of relevant updates based on further research findings.

Battlemind for Leaders (BFL) represents the continuation of Battlemind Life-Cycle Training resiliency training through the professional military education system. BFL builds upon the skills learned during BBT and begins to shift its focus to effective leadership techniques and its direct relationship to individual morale and the incidence of behavioral health issues in a unit. This training meets the requirements specific to junior leaders in the grade of E4(P) to E6 as well as that of company grade officers. Target delivery will be to noncommissioned officers (NCOs) attending the Warrior Leaders Course and the Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course, as well as to officers attending Basic Officer Leadership Course and the Captains' Career Course.

Battlemind for Leaders–Intermediate (BFL-I) builds upon BFL training and extends its focus to the implementation and management of organizational health policies at battalion and similar sized elements for staff positions and midgrade leaders. This training

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not only addresses aspects of Warrior leadership, it also discusses effective techniques of mentoring junior leaders. Targeted delivery will be for NCOs attending Advanced Noncommissioned Officers Course, and to officers attending Intermediate Leader Education.

Battlemind Precommand and Senior Leaders (BSL) represents the culmination of Battlemind Life-Cycle Training that started with BFL and BFL-I. BSL will target the information and skills necessary to build, manage, and enforce umbrella organizational policies which promote unit readiness at brigade level and higher. It will also maintain a focus on resiliency issues unique for senior NCOs and senior officers in command positions. BSL will be taught during precommand and senior service courses, to include the Sergeants Major Academy and the War College.

DEPLOYMENT-CYCLE TRAINING

Deployment-Cycle Training is part of the readiness initiative sponsored by the Army G-1 called the Deployment-Cycle Support Process. Battlemind training provides targeted education to be delivered at designated times throughout all 7 phases of deployment (training/preparation, mobilization, deployment, employment, redeployment, postdeployment, and reconstitution). Responsibility for the delivery of Deployment-Cycle Support training has been shared with the Chaplains Corps as directed by *Army Directive 2007-02*.³ The combination of chaplains and behavioral health professionals significantly extends the capability for delivery of this training for deploying units. Deployment-Cycle training modules are designed to build upon existing Warrior strengths such as mental toughness, teamwork, and psychological resiliency as Warriors prepare to deploy and return from all types of military operations. These training modules were originally created and developed by WRAIR using data analyses from the Land Combat Study and subsequent Mental Health Advisory Team findings. The findings showed that Warriors wanted and needed training which provided them with coping skills and techniques that could be employed before, during, and after a difficult deployment rotation. The resulting training helps Warriors by providing them with concepts and tools designed to reduce the impact of stress of potentially traumatic events (PTE) prior to experiencing them in a deployment setting.

Pre-Deployment Battlemind Training

Pre-Deployment Battlemind Training (PDBT) is packaged into individual training for Warriors, leaders, helping-professionals, and military Spouses. Ideally, training is delivered in platoon-sized elements or working groups of no more than 40 students. Training for Spouses and Families is typically conducted by Family Readiness Groups or representatives at Army Community Service to similar sized groups of Family members. All modules prepare each of these groups for realities specific to their deployment experiences. In predeployment training for Warriors and leaders, they are prepared for a wide range of sensory, psychological, and emotional stimuli associated with military deployments. The leader training modules expand on the education by highlighting 10 tough facts for leaders, such as the expectation of and preparation for injuries and deaths of one’s unit members, and to understand that deployments place a tremendous strain on Families. PDBT expounds on the 10 tough facts for leaders, and gives them some ways to help mitigate the predictable effects on both themselves and, especially, unit members and their Families.

Predeployment training for helping-professionals discusses 12 tough facts which include issues such as dealing with burnout, the delivery of bad news, and breaking down barriers to care. Finally, predeployment training for Spouses and Family members fills an extremely important, but sometimes overlooked, gap in preparedness. The training is conducted with the deploying Warriors and their respective Families. It provides a group setting opportunity to discuss what Warriors will experience on the battlefield, while also providing perspective to the Warriors as to what the Spouse and Family will experience while they are deployed. It emphasizes the importance of communication and understanding between Family members. Furthermore, it provides the Spouse and Family with home front expectations regarding the temporary change of roles within the household, having to wear “dual hats” as a parent, and when and where to seek help if needed while the Warrior Spouse is away.

Training During Deployment

During the deployment, Battlemind training focuses on managing the level of health and unit efficacy in the contemporary operating environment.⁴ During a deployment, tragedy can take many forms, from a close call under hostile circumstances, unit casualties,

accidents, or even fratricide. Any of these incidents can shatter individual or unit effectiveness. Deployment-focused Battlemind training seeks to mitigate the effects of such events by reinforcing Warrior skills, self-aid/buddy-aid, battlefield ethics, and preparing Warriors to continue their missions. These skills are trained to Traumatic Event Management practitioners and reinforced during Battlemind Psychological Debriefings.

Traumatic Event Management (TEM) training plays an enormous role in helping Warriors and units bounce back. TEM offers information on combat and operational stress reaction, PTE, posttraumatic stress disorder, long-term stress reaction, and posttraumatic growth. TEM also teaches how to facilitate structured group discussions for Warriors who have experienced a significant incident in theater, and how to move on and grow from that experience. The TEM program was designed to provide a conceptual framework to provide the ability to flexibly apply supportive interventions in response to a PTE. Such interventions should be based on a thorough assessment of the impact and level of dysfunction that a specific or series of PTEs have caused organizations or individuals. The analysis of degradation resulting from PTE exposure results in a series of selective interventions intended to maintain unit cohesion and help units regain combat effectiveness as efficiently as possible. TEM was developed to include event- and time-driven formats which are flexible and focused on education, while allowing participants to explore predictable reactions to extraordinary stimuli.

Battlemind Psychological Debriefing (BPD) was developed by WRAIR after extensive research with military populations.⁶ While there are several different kinds of debriefing models, BPD focuses on the unique aspects of what Warriors must deal with on the modern battlefield. BPD training is provided to Behavioral Health and Unit Ministry assets. When necessary, the BPD-trained TEM practitioner can lead or facilitate a debriefing with a group who has just experienced a PTE while serving in the contemporary operating environment. The BPD format attempts to help Warriors make sense of PTEs, and restore a sense of duty and honor to the participants so that they can continue with their mission. BPD is different from existing civilian debriefing models in that the Soldier in a combat zone may be required to endure similar

traumatic events on multiple occasions, simply because of the nature of the work. That stands in stark contrast to the normal civilian experience—the affected individual will likely never be exposed to a similar PTE again, and the odds of repeated exposures are infinitesimally small. Therefore, the civilian debriefing model has as its goal assistance and preparation of the individual to recover and continue with the rest of his or her normal life.

Postdeployment Battlemind Training

Postdeployment Battlemind training closes the loop on training for Warriors and their Families in regards to the deployment cycle. Part of the findings from the Land Combat Study include a requirement for training how to transition combat skills to home skills. Warriors have difficulty reintegrating into their home life and with their Families on predictable timelines following a deployment.

Battlemind I Training (Postdeployment Health Assessment) is presented to Warriors who are redeploying, or who have recently returned from a deployment. This module discusses normal homecoming expectations and how to successfully transition from the combat zone to the “home zone.” This one-hour block of instruction provides self-awareness training to Warriors, adaptation skills, and education on finding behavioral health resources. Additionally, it discusses how to modify desirable combat skills which helped the Warrior to survive the deployment into skills that will be useful when back with Family and friends.

Battlemind II Training (Postdeployment Health Reassessment) is complementary training to the Battlemind I module presented at the 3- to 6-month mark following a deployment. It discusses the ongoing transition home and how to work through problems which commonly arise among combat veterans. The training reinforces the self-aid/buddy-aid concept and attempts to dispel common myths associated with seeking behavioral health assistance.

Battlemind Training for Spouses and Families is presented to Warriors and their Families in much the same manner as the predeployment version. This block reviews matters discussed prior to deployment, and helps Families start a dialogue regarding how things have changed since the Warrior was first deployed.

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The major theme of this training centers on the Warrior and Spouse becoming a team again. During a Warrior's deployment, the Family unit may begin to rely on external support, and individuals may become personally independent. The responsibility of the Warrior to transition his or her combat skills is discussed, but that responsibility is paired with the spousal responsibility to transition the home front deployment skills as well.

SOLDIER-SUPPORT TRAINING

Soldier-Support Training (SST) captures the unique populations and subjects that Life-Cycle and Deployment-Cycle modules do not. SST will provide Battlemind training to extended support systems, including specialized populations such as National Guard and Reserve Component specific issues, military Families, and network health providers.

Chaplain Train the Trainer: The goal of the course is to teach chaplains and chaplain assistants how to return to their installations and train remaining chaplains and behavioral health assets in the effective presentation of Deployment Cycle Support Battlemind Training. Modules mandated by the Army G-1 include: Predeployment Battlemind training for Leaders and Warriors, Battlemind I (Postdeployment Health Assessment training), Battlemind II (Postdeployment Health Reassessment Training), Traumatic Event Management training, Battlemind Psychological Debriefing training, and Pre/Postdeployment modules for Spouses and Families.

The Combat and Operational Stress Control (COSC) Course is the premier platform of deployment centric prevention training for behavioral health and unit ministry personnel. The course offers 5 days of didactic education and practical exercises on the latest COSC doctrine and battlefield updates. In addition to doctrinal training, students also receive briefings on related areas including analysis of the most recent Mental Health Assessment Team data, mild traumatic brain injury/concussion awareness, the Army Center for Enhanced Performance* Education Model, Battlefield Ethics, Sexual Assault Prevention In-Theater and briefings from the Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps COSC professionals. Priority of

attendance for this course goes to personnel preparing to deploy overseas in support of Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom. Priority attendees also include Air Force behavioral health personnel who have been tasked to deploy in lieu of Army personnel to support Army missions. Advanced modules of the COSC Course are in development and will have more practical exercises and hands-on training which focus on specific key COSC prevention and intervention concepts.

Warriors in Transition (WT) are those Warriors who are assigned to a Warrior Transition Unit (WTU). These Warriors receive treatment and rehabilitation for injuries sustained in the combat theater. The Battlemind Training Office (BTO) has developed training for WTU staff during the WTU Residence Course to include training in Suicide Awareness and Battlemind Resiliency Training. The Spouses, Families, and friends who care for WTs who are recovering from both physical and psychological trauma are known as WT Caregivers. BTO is in the process of developing training modules, videos, and a counseling program that focuses on the unique needs of WT Caregivers.

WEBSITE, INTERACTIVE VIDEOS, AND MARKETING

As with anything in this world, information is essential in making sound decisions and keeping ourselves aware of our surroundings. The marketing of Battlemind is a crucial component in raising the awareness of our Warriors, commanders, Families, and other organizations about the products and programs we have available. The BTO has and continues to promote its programs in several different ways in order to reach as many people as possible. Recently, the BTO launched an internet portal which has become the Army's official Battlemind website (<http://www.battlemind.army.mil>). It will become a major conduit for the BTO to dispense information and training, and will be a resource for Warriors, Families, commanders, and behavioral health providers. Marketing of the Battlemind logo and its tenets have taken the BTO from booths at several conferences to the training of Air Force behavioral health providers and Canadian, El Salvadoran, and Slovenian military personnel.

*The Center for Enhanced Performance is a department of the US Military Academy Preparatory School, West Point, New York. Information is available at http://www.usma.edu/USMAPS/pages/academics/cep_home.htm.

Education is the primary leverage we have in the development of awareness and an understanding of the issues that challenge the wounded Warrior. Technology as a fundamental modality of education today is effective and readily available. The AMEDD Battlemind Training Office believes that there is significant value in creating Virtual Experience Immersive Learning Simulations® that will allow both wounded Warriors and those involved/invested in their recovery to practice dealing with issues in computer-based and/or web-based experiences. Such simulations allow people to explore and understand issues and challenges in a way that helps them prepare for successfully dealing with those issues and challenges when they face them in real life.

The BTO in concert with AMEDD Television are currently working on several video projects that will be used to educate Warriors and Family members to include Suicide Awareness, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, and Seeking Behavioral Health Care / Reducing Stigma.

CONCLUSION

Although still in its infancy, the Battlemind Training Office has become the largest training branch in the Soldier and Family Support Branch at the AMEDDC&S. The diverse and important missions of BTO have become a focal point within the AMEDD and at senior Army command levels. Campaigns during Operations Iraqi Freedom and Enduring Freedom have shown us that we must remain flexible to be able to meet mission objectives. BTO strives to be proactive, flexible, and as forward thinking as possible. Remaining focused on the Warrior and their Family needs remains our objective. Preparing Warriors, leaders, and their Families for the operational tempo of our current Army is of crucial importance.

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4. The contemporary operating environment is the operational environment that exists today and for the clearly foreseeable future. An operational environment is defined in DoD *Joint Publication 1-02*⁵ as “a composite of the conditions, circumstances, and influences that affect the employment of military forces and bear on the decisions of the unit commander.”
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