



EXCELLENCE

Values for Living—Cadet Character Development Forum

INTRODUCTION

Each Values for Living character development forum helps Civil Air Patrol volunteers explore a virtue from multiple angles and practice that virtue through a hands-on activity. The combination of analysis and practice helps members internalize that virtue so it stays with them beyond the squadron meeting.

Excellence means giving your best effort, no matter what challenge is facing you. What exactly is our best effort? If someone asked you, "How do you know that you gave it your best effort," what would you say? What can we do to make excellence more than a feeling or an aspiration? In this lesson, we explore the behaviors that lead to a habit of excellence.

PRECLASS CHECKLIST

Prior preparation is essential to success. Please prepare the following well ahead of time:

- All media installed and checked out
- Phase Three cadet orientation/training completed
- Participation awards such as candy or granola bar treats available
- Room arrangements complete

ATTENTION GETTER

LARGE GROUP FACILITATED BY CHAPLAIN/CDI/COMMANDER (5-10 MINUTES)

Option 1: Media Clip. "Ten Thousand Hours." We see the results of excellence but often fail to see the work that leads to excellence. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWEF5le89ug>

Option 2: Media Clip. "Intensity and Consistency." Simon Sinek asks, "Do you love your wife? Prove it." We can ask the same question about excellence. "Have you given your best effort? Prove it." <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8qxb9u4nbWk>

Option 3: Media Clip. "Overcoming Resistance to Change." (Download)

Option 4: Personal Story. Share a story about specific behaviors that helped you achieve excellence. You might mention regular practice, seeking feedback, an accountability technique, or learning from failures.

UNDERSTANDING THE DESIRED BEHAVIOR

ONLINE GROUP OR SMALL GROUP FACILITATED BY PHASE III CADET (15 MINUTES)

- The *Learn to Lead* textbook defines excellence as “giving your best effort, no matter what challenge is facing you.” How do you know that you have given your best effort?
- Which behaviors prevent you from giving your best effort?
- Which behaviors show that you are giving your best effort on a school assignment?
- Which behaviors show that you are giving your best effort in an athletic competition?
- Which behaviors show that you are giving your best effort in CAP?
- How can you tell that someone else is giving his or her best effort?

APPLICATION OF THE BEHAVIOR TO THEIR LIVES

LARGE GROUP FACILITATED BY CHAPLAIN/CDI/COMMANDER (15 MINUTES)

- Can you achieve excellence without the other core values? Why or why not?
- Excellence is not the same thing as success. Sometimes, even when we give our best efforts, the results are less than we hoped. Is there any way to “fail excellently”? How can you turn a setback into an opportunity for excellence?
- In your small groups, you discussed behaviors associated with *individual* excellence. What does excellence look like in a team or an organization? What behaviors do you associate with excellent organizations?
- What can you as an individual do to encourage excellence within your team?
- What can your team do to encourage excellence in the team that will take its place?

ACTIVITY

ONLINE GROUP OR SMALL GROUP FACILITATED BY PHASE III CADET (10-15 MINUTES)

“Hotwash”

A hotwash is a discussion immediately following an event. This discussion gathers information on the performance and looks for opportunities to improve. CAP’s Emergency Services volunteers depend on hotwashes and more thorough After-Action Reviews (AARs). These self-assessments ensure the highest levels of excellence in service to our communities.

This activity will teach you a simple format for a hotwash that you can use both inside and outside of CAP. You can start a hotwash with just a few simple questions:

- What went well?
- What needs improvement?
- What SMART goal¹ can I set for myself to bring about that improvement?

In your small groups, take turns conducting very brief hotwashes. Each participant should answer all three questions about a recent event. The participants may discuss separate events or work

¹ Reminder: SMART goals are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.

together to discuss an event in which they all participated. Here are some example events that you might discuss:

- This squadron meeting (so far) or any recent unit activity
- My last test (whether in CAP, school, or elsewhere)
- My most recent physical fitness assessment or athletic event

Small group facilitators should confer with their unit commanders, Chaplains, and/or Character Development Instructors to expand the list of suitable events for a hotwash.

Discussion questions after the activity:

- How much time does it take to complete a hotwash?
- What questions would make my hotwash more effective?
- How does the presence of other people change the hotwash?
- In what circumstances would I *not* want to perform a hotwash?

LESSON SUMMARY AND WRAP-UP

LARGE GROUP FACILITATED BY CHAPLAIN/CDI/COMMANDER (5 MINUTES)

Excellence means giving your best effort, no matter what challenge is facing you. How do we measure effort to know that we are truly giving our best? In this lesson, we have seen that excellence is more than wanting to do your best. If you want to be excellent, you need to adopt behaviors that will help you improve. Excellence requires deliberate practice, checking your work, requesting feedback, and learning from failures. These behaviors work for individuals and for teams, including Civil Air Patrol. Only by making these behaviors a fixed habit can we truly excel in service to community, state, and nation.

QUOTABLE QUOTES

“Excellence is to do a common thing in an uncommon way.” – Booker T. Washington

“Perfection is not attainable, but if we chase perfection, we can catch excellence.” – Vince Lombardi

“Excellence is in the details.” – Gregory L. Sullivan

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, therefore, is not an act, but a habit.” – Aristotle

“The will to win, the desire to succeed, the urge to reach your full potential, these are the keys that will unlock the door to personal excellence.” – Confucius

“Anything you can turn your hand to, do with what power you have.” – Ecclesiastes 9:10

“Excellence is the gradual result of always striving to do better.” – Pat Riley