



# KEEPING A CONFIDENCE

Values for Living—Cadet Character Development Forum

## INTRODUCTION

Each Values for Living helps cadets explore a virtue from multiple angles and practice that virtue through a hands-on activity. The combination of analysis and practice helps cadets internalize the virtue so it "sticks" and stays with them beyond the end of the squadron meeting.

As our society becomes ever more connected, information flows freely and often indiscreetly. What kind of information should we keep private? When, if ever, should we disclose private information? **Keeping a confidence** establishes trust but some secrets shouldn't be kept.

## 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 MINUTES.)**

### **Option 1: The D-Day Leak (Media)**

It's April of 1944. The Second World War rages. Allied forces under the command of General Dwight D. Eisenhower are preparing for the invasion of continental Europe. General Eisenhower has just received upsetting news about an old friend and West Point classmate, Major General Henry Miller. Miller, the head of the Ninth Air Force's Service Command, was helping plan the invasion. According to several witnesses, Miller had compromised operational security. At a party with some Red Cross nurses, Miller had boasted that the Allies would invade before 15 June. Let's watch General Miller at the party and then see General Eisenhower and his executive officer confront General Miller.

## **Option 2: The D-Day Leak (No Media)**

It's April of 1944. The Second World War rages. Allied forces under the command of General Dwight D. Eisenhower are preparing for the invasion of continental Europe. General Eisenhower has just received upsetting news about an old friend and West Point classmate, Major General Henry Miller.

On 18 April, the U.S. Army's chief intelligence officer in Britain hosted a party for Red Cross nurses. General Miller, head of the Ninth Air Force's Service Command, was one of the guests. Amidst the cocktails and conversation, General Miller had boasted that the allied invasion would come before 15 June.

When confronted by Eisenhower, Miller swore that he had done nothing wrong. But what if the Axis powers had learned the date of the invasion? The Axis defenses would have been even more robust. Miller's loose lips risked the lives of thousands of American and allied soldiers and the success of the entire invasion.

For that single breach of security, Miller was relieved of command, demoted, and discharged from the Army. His long friendship with Eisenhower disintegrated.

### **Introduction to the Lesson (for both Option 1 and Option 2)**

Most of you will agree that Miller was wrong to reveal any information about the invasion. As volunteers with the Civil Air Patrol, you understand elementary operational security. In a military context, you know when and how to keep a secret. Most of you wouldn't hesitate to report such a security breach, even if you learned about it in confidence. When lives are at stake—especially thousands of lives—the choices seem easy.

Our day-to-day choices about secrecy are rarely so easy. How often do we reveal things about our friends and family that we ought to keep private? How do we know when to reveal something said to us in confidence? How do we know which secrets are worth keeping?

## **UNDERSTANDING THE DESIRED BEHAVIOR**

### **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION LED BY PHASE 3 CADETS (3-5 PEOPLE IN EACH GROUP. 10 MINUTES.)**

Cadet Facilitators should lead their small groups in a discussion using the following prompts:

- Most of us are asked to keep secrets every day. Perhaps you heard, “this needs to stay between us,” or, “promise you won't tell anyone.” When was the last time you were asked to keep a secret? When was the last time you asked someone else to keep a secret?
- Have you ever experienced a time when a friend promised to keep your secret but then shared the information with others? How did that feel? What did you do? What happened to your friendship?
- General Miller's security breach was reported by a young first lieutenant. The lieutenant feared that “ratting out” a senior officer would make him a “snitch” and cost him his

opportunity to command a company. What kind of negative consequences could you face for breaking a confidence?

- Can you give an example of a secret that you should keep, no matter what?
- Can you give an example of a secret that you must not keep, despite the negative consequences?

## APPLICATION OF THE BEHAVIOR TO THEIR LIVES

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

Chaplains/CDIs/commanders should continue the lesson with a large group discussion based on the following prompts:

- In your small groups, you discussed secrets that you should keep and secrets that you must not keep. Let's call them "good secrets" and "bad secrets." How can the Core Values help us distinguish "good secrets" from "bad secrets"?
- Besides using the Core Values, how can you distinguish "good secrets" from "bad secrets"?
- We all make mistakes. We all have done things of which we're not proud. When do we have a right for these mistakes to be private? In what circumstances should or shouldn't we reveal or discuss the faults of others?
- If you are younger than 18, should your parents be allowed to review your internet browsing history? Why or why not?
- Some people are required to keep secrets. In most cases, medical doctors are not permitted to reveal patient information without permission. The only exception is when they have reason to suspect abuse, abandonment, neglect, or financial exploitation of a vulnerable person. Why do you think doctors are so strict about patient privacy?
- Our legal system designates some conversations "privileged." Privileged conversations can't be considered as evidence at trial. Private conversations with your spouse, your attorney, and clergy (ordained leaders of religious communities, including CAP chaplains) are all privileged. Why do you think our laws protect the secrecy of these conversations?
- The Air Force Academy's honor code requires cadets to report any classmate who has told a lie or cheated on a test. Cadets who do not report lying and cheating could be expelled. Why do you think the Academy included this in their honor code?

## ACTIVITY

### SMALL GROUP ACTIVITY LED BY PHASE 3 CADETS (3-5 PEOPLE IN EACH GROUP. 15 MINUTES.)

Cadet facilitators should present the following scenarios to their small groups. Give each cadet the opportunity to respond first to one scenario. Ask not only what the cadet would do but why the cadet believes this is the right decision. After the first cadet answers, encourage the rest of the group to agree, disagree, offer feedback, or ask questions.

- While using the family computer, you find that someone has been looking at web pages about dealing with suicidal thoughts. What do you do?
- Your friend is picking you up to go to a school basketball game. When you open the car door, you smell marijuana. Your friend invites you into the car and offers you a joint. You refuse and head back into your house. Your parents ask why you are back so soon. What do you say to them?
- Your squadron testing officer has been emailing you to schedule your next proctored milestone exam. In one of the recent emails, she forgot to include another recipient and the message went only to you. At the next meeting, she apologizes to you for violating one of the rules of the Cadet Protection Program. She tells you it was an honest accident and asks you not to report it to the squadron commander. What do you do?
- One of your best friends pulls you aside at school. She is obviously very upset. She says, "Please don't tell anyone, but I just found out I am pregnant." How would you respond?
- One evening, you find your mother sitting alone on the couch crying. You ask her what's wrong and she tells you that she recently learned your father has a gambling problem. She says he's trying to change but she doesn't know whether she can trust him. She immediately regrets telling you about your father's gambling problem and asks you to promise not to say anything. What do you do?
- Your squadron has just appointed a new Cadet Commander. You don't know her well, but you have heard that she was suspended from school last year for cheating and you have questions about her integrity. With whom should you share your concerns?

## LESSON SUMMARY AND WRAP-UP

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

The Chaplain or CDI should conclude the lesson with a summary, such as the following:

In this lesson, we've explored the challenges you will face in knowing when to keep a confidence. We've seen that there are both "good secrets" and "bad secrets." It won't always be easy to tell the difference.

When you don't know whether to keep a secret, ask yourself some questions. Why am I being asked to keep this a secret? If I keep this secret, who could suffer and how? If I don't keep this secret, who could suffer and how?

You may not have perfect answers to these questions. That's OK. Just by asking and trying to answer them, you will become more responsible with sensitive information. In becoming more responsible, you'll also become a better leader and a better friend.

## QUOTABLE QUOTES

"A secret spoken finds wings." — Robert Jordan

"A fish with his mouth closed never gets caught." — Fuad Alakbarov

"There will be but few people who, when at a loss for topics of conversation, will not reveal the more secret affairs of their friends." — Friedrich Nietzsche

"The closer and more confidential our relationship with someone, the less we are entitled to ask about what we are not voluntarily told." — Louis Kronenberger

"The truth. It is a beautiful and terrible thing and should be treated with caution." — J. K. Rowling

"When arguing with your neighbor, don't betray another person's secret." — Proverbs 25:9

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