

LESSON NUMBER 1

TASK: ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE

CONDITION: In a small group discussion environment.

STANDARD:

- All participants will be able to define prevention.
- All participants will be able to explain the three levels of prevention.
- All participants will be able to explain three models of prevention.

TIME OF INSTRUCTION: 1 Hour

Notes to instructor: This lesson is a summary of several longer classes, which deal extensively in these areas. Your local military medical facility and/or Alcohol & Drug agency can assist you if you choose to explore these subjects in more depth with your soldiers.

LEAD IN: Drug and alcohol abuse is a serious problem whenever and wherever it occurs. Both drug and alcohol abuse often result in tragic circumstances. The real cost can be measured not in broken laws but in broken lives. This lesson will help you understand preventive steps that you can take to reduce drug and alcohol abuse. Some of the concepts are fairly simple others are more difficult. This effort, however, is vital and deserves your full attention—not only in this class but also in your day-by-day duty conduct.

PART I: PREVENTION

1. Prevention may be defined as: A proactive process which empowers soldiers to meet the challenges of life (and life changing events) by creating and reinforcing conditions which promote healthy behaviors and lifestyles.

2. What does this mean? "Proactive" means that prevention looks ahead, focusing on seeing problems before they occur, rather than simply reacting to them. Both individual soldiers" and "systems" (like the chain of command) are involved in prevention. Prevention deals with both day-by-day life and with major, stressful events (like divorce or death). Finally, prevention involves positive lifestyles, not simply avoiding harmful practices.

Discussion Question: What are some examples of prevention, that you see, happening in this unit?

PART II: THREE LEVELS OF PREVENTION

1. *Primary Prevention.* This type of prevention promotes healthy individuals, lifestyles, and behavior. An Army-wide example is the Fit to Win program.

2. *Secondary Prevention.* This type of prevention intervenes at the early signs of trouble or disease to change troubled behaviors, reduce the crisis, or stop disease. An individual example might be a First Sergeant noticing that a soldier is experiencing a great deal of stress and recommending that it would be a good time to take a few days leave.

3. *Tertiary Prevention.* Tertiary means third or third level. Tertiary prevention treats, rehabilitates, or reconstructs. An example of tertiary prevention is the military's Track III Alcohol Abuse Program.

Discussion Questions: Other than the examples given above, what are some examples of each level of prevention in this unit or in your community? Prior to enlistment, what were your experiences with prevention?

PART III: THREE MODELS OF PREVENTION

Although individual responsibility is the key to prevention of drug and alcohol abuse, there are many things which commanders, installation agencies, and the Army as a whole can do to help individual soldiers choose healthy lifestyles. Since these things involve many different people working together, they are called systemic models. There are three of these models which are often used as a means to plan the mission of prevention.

a. *The Public Health Model.* This model is based on identifying three things which lead to a problem: the host (or individual), the agent (or substance), and the environment (which is the conditions in which the host and agent exist). For example, in the case of alcohol abuse the host is the soldier abusing the alcohol, the agent is the alcohol itself, and the environment is where the soldier drinks. (Actually there can be several environments. The physical environment is where the soldier drinks, the social environment involves when and with whom the soldier drinks.) The point of this model is that prevention involves dealing with each aspect of this problem, host, agent, and environment, not just one. Using the example above, it would do little good to try and attack the environment (i.e. closing down the club and placing all off-post bars off limits); an alcoholic will always find a place to buy liquor. Likewise it is probably not very practical to solely attack the agent—alcohol itself—which is present almost everywhere in one form or another. However, trying to deal with the host, the soldier, without providing that soldier some tools to resist the environment where drinking occurs or with the affects which alcohol may have already had on his or her body, is also an incomplete approach.

Discussion questions. How would you use this model to examine a health or safety problem you are aware of?

b. The Risk Reduction Model: This model focuses on primary and secondary prevention. It attempts to identify behaviors (and occasions) which are high risk, and reduce or eliminate them. Importantly, this approach includes discouraging things, which lead soldiers to believe that high-risk behaviors are a good or cool thing. A specific example might involve prohibiting soldiers from displaying drug-related symbols or posters in the barracks.

Discussion questions: What are some behaviors or beliefs in your unit that could benefit from this model?

c. The Systems Thinking Model. This model emphasizes that solutions to problems often involve the commitment of a system in addition to assumption of responsibility by individuals. This model involves multiple agencies or commander, assumes that they will work together (collaborate), and understanding that prevention efforts must involve support and mobilization of the community (just like Block Watch programs assist in crime prevention).

Discussion questions: Do you think there are other ways to look at these problems? Which of these models do you see at work in this unit? Do you think this unit is doing a good job? How would you do it better and how would you suggest that the commander do it better?

PART IV: CLOSING

Soldiers who are involved in drug and alcohol abuse are not combat ready. Their conduct affects their units, their families, and destroys their own lives. It is important that we reinforce responsible behavior and choices with prevention at every level.