

Self Mastery to National Power

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The Background

Per Ardua Ad Astra. Through adversity to the stars. This blog will explore why self-mastery is of utmost importance and will give the Royal Australian Air Force the performance edge. The Air Force Senior Leadership Team have stated that our workforce has reached its maximum capacity for employment within our current resources and budget. Compared with the United States Air Force of 300,000 personnel, the Royal Australian Air Force has a substantially smaller force of 15,000 permanent personnel and 5,500 reserve personnel. Noting the disparity between these figures, it is clear that we have to maximise the potential and readiness in our people.

Skills such as personal growth and self-mastery, failing forwards, high-performance habits, leadership and interpersonal skills are of paramount importance, now, and into the future. Having individuals who are focused on self-mastery enables success in each concentric circle of their influence. This improvement in individual preparedness of our people across the Air Force subsequently supports the whole of government approach to National Power. The Air Force five lines of effort; delivering air and space power as part of the joint force, develop an intelligent and skilled workforce, deepening relationships, strengthen engagement, evolving Air Force culture and having an agile and coherent governance all stem from individual performance.

The Problem

At the turn of the decade, 2020, the world became unprecedentedly complicated and the complexity of these problematic, multi-faceted areas are growing exponentially. With the rapidly increasing threats of the climate crisis, natural disasters, human-made pollutants in the air, sea, land and space, pandemics, overpopulation and resource shortages, it seems natural that geopolitical tensions are increasing across the planet. This substantiates an evolution in the way the Royal Australian Air Force and the wider Australian Defence Force needs to operate. The way war is conducted continues to evolve, and so must we. With the birth of the internet on 01 January, 1983 came a new platform that the world uses, including the Defence Force, with varying levels of intent.

With the escalating innovation of drones, Space Force, Cyber Warfare and other areas of innovation and threat, Australia is exposed to a multitude of factors that must be considered now, and in the future. As an Air Force, and as a Joint Defence Force, we will be asked to raise our performance in responding to humanitarian aid, natural disasters, and security threats more frequently, in shorter timeframes and with greater agility. The success of every Operation begins with self-mastery. We need to master our minds and our decision-making

to evolve and adapt to how quickly this new world is changing and presenting more challenges. This is what will give the Royal Australian Air Force the performance edge.

The Solution

Self-mastery. Self-mastery is vitally important with the upsurge of global, environmental and social issues. We need to be constantly evolving into better versions of ourselves to deliver a greater output as a small Air Force. For us to evolve at a higher rate, we must use our strengths and work on our insecurities and weaknesses. We all have areas to improve and it is up to us as individuals to dive deep into our consciousness and confront those things, nurture them and allow them grow into one of our assets. Your success is infectious. It will rub off on others and inspire them to become better versions of themselves, influencing their teams, sections and task groups. Self-mastery will grow a culture of high-performance across the Australian Defence Force, and it all starts with you.

The common thread between the problems listed above is the human factor. Your self-mastery is the first step in changing this world. The more you work at becoming a better version of yourself today than you were yesterday, the more capacity you have to create change and influence success. It all starts with you and your decisions. Once we have continual personal growth more heavily embedded in the Air Force culture, we can more effectively contribute to military power with smarter, healthier and more team-oriented individuals. And it's ok to regress and fail! Do it. Do it a thousand times, but do not stop moving in a forward direction, and have the tenacity, grit and persistence to just keep turning up.

My Personal Example

In June 2021, I had a brainwave. This thought was of a personal project that would not only push me to become a better version of myself but to support the environmental community and motivate my peers to become better versions of themselves too. This idea was to run 5km a day, every day, for 50 consecutive days to raise \$5,000 for Greenpeace. I resented running and I thought, what a great way to improve in this area, so I completely immersed myself. It was a long slog but I did it. My first 5km run was 33.00 minutes, I ran a personal best of 24.07 minutes and I raised \$4,140. There were so many unexpected benefits to conquering something within myself which I saw as a weakness. I was fitter, healthier and more confident which subsequently improved my performance at work. I raised a substantial amount of money for an organisation that I believe is making progress in moving our planet towards a greener future. My new found confidence supported me to take greater risks and fortunately for me, it paid off for both myself and the Air Force. I was selected to participate in the inaugural Leadership Enrichment Program in 2021 and was fortunate enough to be further selected to pitch my innovation ideas in CAF's boardroom later that year. I pitched an idea to stand up a green team, an environmental sustainability and innovation award to shape the culture of the Air Force, and to create biodegradable sonobuoys.

From this opportunity I received 6 months of support and \$50,000 to start rapid prototype testing a solution for my green initiative. I have also been selected to collaborate with the University of Sydney and their Aeronautical Engineers on this exciting project. This is an example of what can happen and how much you and the organisation can benefit when you dedicate yourself to self-mastery. I've had peers, friends and colleagues tell me how much I

inspired them to start running and improve themselves. It all started with one thought that I put into action that moved me a step closer toward self-mastery.

The Summary

The effectiveness of the Air Force and the Defence Force starts with your choices, your actions, your attitudes and your hunger to become a better version of yourself. Master yourself and Australia will have a stronger Defence Force with team-oriented individuals that are more hardworking, fit, intelligent and empathetic leaders. Your self-mastery will inspire others in a ripple effect across the Air Force and Defence community. Self-mastery allows us to do the best possible job of executing government-directed objectives and protecting Australia and its national interests to advance Australia's security and prosperity.

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