

ORDINARY PEOPLE WITH EXTRAORDINARY ABILITIES

BY NELLIE FELIPE

“We first must break them [the recruits] down [and all of their strongholds] and then build them back up for success [both mentally and physically stronger than ever]. Their success is a testament to our ability to develop their greatness. When they succeed we all succeed, individually and collectively.” These were the words of a Marine Corps Drill Instructor. Speaking of excellence! The Marine Corps boot camp program is simply first class for developing EXCELLENCE.

My family and I recently visited a Marine Corps Recruit Depot, otherwise known as boot camp, in Parris Island, SC. All east coast enlistees, both men and women, complete their initial training here. This training has a physical and academic component; each equally grueling physically and mentally.

We witnessed a group of recruits in their 5th week, of the 12-weeklong boot camp training, in action. It blew my mind! I struggled to grasp what my eyes were witnessing. In 5 short weeks these recruits were marching with such precision, in one accord. Every move so coordinated, every foot lifting and landing at the same time; their stance and formation so straight,

confident, and strong. Their Marine Corps Combat Utility Uniforms, better known as the camouflage uniform, were impeccably worn - crisp and polished.

You may say okay, so what. Why is this so surprising to you? We are talking about the military here. Well, let's take a deeper look at what my mind was processing through these live, visual scenes.

These recruits were enlistees which mean they came in straight from high school. Their average age was **19 years old**. They were young, in training for just over a month and already they were transformed! Without much experience at all, they quickly learn the meaning and value of excellence and respect... even in their speech.

There is a level of respect for rank [leaders] regardless of how they personally feel about them. Their performance and strive for excellence did **not** drop because they did not like who was leading them. They perform their work to a high standard; understanding that their assigned tasks are their responsibility and they are fully accountable for the output and quality of it. Nothing is taken personally.

These recruits quickly learn that everything is just for a period of time --- a season. Each season is a time of preparation and learning to enable them to move on to the next assignment --- no matter how long it takes.

Their speech provided insight into their excellence, dedication, pride of their beloved Corps, and love for their country. It was filled with gratefulness and thanksgiving for the privilege of serving this nation.

By the time our tour ended, I was so overwhelmed with pride for our men and women in the military, our great nation, and the immense privileges (and responsibilities) that we have just to be called an American. I already had a vast appreciation for those who serve our nation in any public servant capacity. Many of my family members have served in the military and/or in other public servant positions. Yet this experience gave me a deeper understanding of their commitment to us all.

What I wanted more than anything at that moment was to get their training --- their grueling yet transformational training! My husband, a former Marine himself, looked at me as if I had just lost my mind when I suddenly, in my heightened state of wanting to achieve that level of excellence, blurted out, "Is it too late for me to enroll for boot camp? I want that training!" Okay, not possible for me as there is an age limit, about 27 or 28 for someone without prior service. I am over a decade past either number.

The lessons they imparted on me that day after just 3 short hours will remain a lifetime. It is not that I did not already know most of these things. It was the first time I saw a clear visual of these principles.

Here's what these young men and women imparted on my family and I on that day:

- 1. Practice Discipline:** We must deny our wants today (for just a season) in order to achieve our goals. There is a sacrifice that must be made. The beauty here is that what looks, feels, and hurts like a sacrifice today becomes as nothing. The gains far exceed our "small" sacrifice. We will not want to go back to what we have given up (or at least not in the same way). Many times we hold on to things out of comfort, familiarity and/or habit. The things we hold on to, more often than not, hold us from achieving our goals. What we find when we do let go is that, what we receive is infinitely greater than anything we have "sacrificed".
- 2. Strive for Excellence:** We must develop a deep (*strong, genuine, and sincere*) desire to do your best in ALL things. Nothing was too small for the recruits not even how they tied their shoelaces. We must take the utmost care in everything we do. This means holding ourselves to a higher standard of ethics, morals and diligence. Holding ourselves to higher standards is not the same as "thinking higher of whom we are in comparison to others." To think we have more value than a fellow human being goes against excellence at every level.
- 3. Exercise Respect:** Get this... we are to respect others no matter what. This must be a deliberate choice we make daily. There is a difference between respect and admiration. We respect someone simply because they are a human being... period. Respect does not mean we agree with or like a person. It simply means we allow people to be who they are with no condemnation. This is just a fundamental part of growing in maturity

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and wisdom. There is an even higher level of respect and that is to respect and obey whoever is placed over you whether this is a manager, supervisor, pastor, teacher, or any other form of authority. Whether or not we consider ourselves to be smarter, better educated, know a better way, or straight out believe they are “*clueless*”. Believe it or not this is part of our leadership training. When we can follow, deliver on expectations, and perform with excellence under any leadership type placed over us... we are truly ready to lead any people.

4. **Training Continually:** No matter what level of leadership or success we have achieved we must never be above learning. When we stop learning we stop living. When we stop learning we give up on all that life has for us; we limit and handicap ourselves and those we lead. Learning is our road to wisdom, growth, knowledge, understanding, discernment and revelation. We must be a student all day long, in all we do, and most importantly when we are leading. A good student keeps an open and eager mind; always ready to learn something new and never considers themselves higher than their teachers.
5. **Stay Focused on Your Goals:** When we stay focused on what we want to accomplish we simply do not sweat the “small” inconveniences that **will** come our way. We start to understand that everything lasts for just a while. Hence why these young men and women can overcome their arduous training and remain focused, dedicated and positive. Staying focused means we do **not** accept circumstances as our reality but are

always seeking out opportunities that move us towards our goals. Staying focused means always being well-prepared to take on those opportunities when they come.

6. **Monitor the Words of Our Mouths:** What we say is based on what we think and what we think determines who we are and become. I know we have heard this over and over and over again. Yet we ignore this powerful and true principal. Every worthy book on success, biographies on successful people, how-to on leadership and much more... tell us to be positive, visualize what we want to achieve, strike down negative thoughts and speak encouraging words. In the book by James Allen, *As a Man Thinketh*, the author says, *“Right thinking begins with the words we say to ourselves.”* The book opens with the following statement:

*Mind is the Master power that molds and makes,
And Man is Mind, and evermore he takes
The tool of Thought, and shaping what he wills,
Brings forth a thousand joys, a thousand ills: —
He thinks in secret, and it comes to pass:
Environment is but his looking-glass.*

Another aspect of monitoring what we say is to under NO means speak negatively of anyone. This means we are never to slander nor malign any person no matter how we view them at the present time. When a recruit arrives on base there is absolutely no visible evidence of what he or she is about to become. The Drill Instructor, on the other hand, knows that each recruit is a future leader; one that will be called upon to manage equipment worth millions or billions of dollars and potentially lead thousands of men

and women. We are to see people as what they can become not who they are today.

When we do this we empower and encourage them to reach for their highest potential of excellence.

7. **Your Success is NOT Just Your Own:** We begin to see that when we succeed – we help others succeed. We suddenly come to the realization that we are truly interdependent. No person ever succeeds by themselves nor do their successes benefit solely them. When a person on a team excels in excellence, not only does that person get rewarded with success but the team also rises to another level of excellence. We all impart knowledge on others – good or bad. When we succeed we enable others to succeed whether directly or indirectly. Hence the words of the wise Drill Instructor, *“When they succeed we all succeed, individually and collectively.”* Society wins with every success story!



Nellie Felipe is the founder of [ARIZE Coaching and Consulting](#). As a certified personal growth and leadership coach, she aspires to provoke people to rise in excellence. She believes everyone is born with a purpose that is not just their own; that every person's success impacts and facilitates the success of others. No vision is too small or too large to achieve. If you are truly ready to do what it takes to get to your mountain top, she will be there to evoke the leader in you. She will come along side you as an accountability partner, a godly counsel, a seasoned professional, a caring friend.

As a consultant, Nellie will equip you with repeatable processes, systems and organization. The consulting services offerings consists of process improvement, project management and change management utilizing proven Six Sigma, Lean Six Sigma and PMI PM methodologies.

She has substantial experience helping leaders achieve greater goals. Attend one of Nellie's online teleseminars, take her on as a coach, or bring her in as a consultant to help you with your business needs. Invite her to speak at your next team building or leadership event. [Check out her services](#). Subscribe to the [free newsletters](#) and [follow her on Twitter!](#)

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