



# PREP TIMES

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FREEDOM'S  
EXPEDITIONARY FORCE  
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ANY MISSION, ANYWHERE!



ISSUE EIGHT

V CORPS ARTILLERY MINISTRY TEAM

OEF/OIF

## PRIORITIZING

### PREP TIMES FINAL ISSUE

PREP TIMES has examined six issues that impact on families preparing for the stress of deployment. They are:

- Loving Unconditionally
- Decisiveness
- Renewing Resources
- Savoring Time Together
- Harmony and Humility
- Improving Communications

This final edition focuses on **Prioritizing Efforts**. Having experienced a number of deployments, I recall some of the frustrations of NOT knowing what needs to be done first. With work schedules, school events, sports, family demands, training requirements, and all the other things that have to happen, everything seems chaotic.

I recall hearing of a commander who said that families are in the top five of the battalion's priority. The problem was that they only ever worked on the first four. With all the mission requirements, the maintenance of families cannot be neglected. If you have family issues that need some resolution, schedule a time to work on that with whatever agency can be most helpful. There are competent and caring professionals willing and able to assist in that process.

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### What To Do First!

I read the following quote from writer and humorist David Barry,

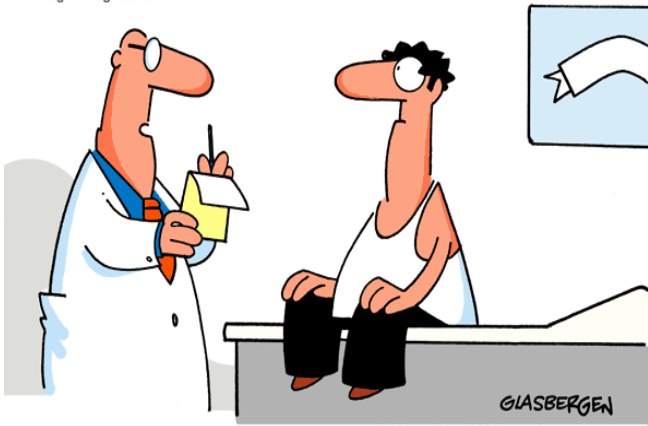
“Decades ago, when I was full of energy I was going to not only END WORLD HUNGER, but also STOP WAR and ELIMINATE RACISM. Whereas today my life goals, to judge from the notes I leave myself, tend to be along the lines of BUY DETERGENT.”

What do your notes say about your goals? All of us set certain goals and priorities. Some of them are short term, some long term.

Talking with families, I have discovered that, although husbands and wives have goals and priorities, they often do not discuss them until there is a crisis. Perhaps they simply assume the spouse knows and understands and agrees with these priorities.

I made a visit to the emergency room recently and saw a sign posted. It said simply, **“Worst First!”** That meant that the worst injury or illness would be treated first. Why? Because some emergencies are more critical than others. It takes a trained medical person to determine (triage) the priority.

It is important that families work on issues that are most pressing before they become emergencies. Like a visit to the dentist. It is best to take care of a tooth when it just needs a filling then wait until it needs a root canal.



"I'm prescribing a low-carb diet for your diabetes, a high-carb diet for your colon, a low-fat diet for your heart and a high-fat diet for your nerves."

## BALANCE IS THE KEY

The cartoon above rightly describes a common **health** dilemma. We always seem to be trying to balance what is best for our health based on our age, physical condition, the latest trends, medical expertise and technology, as well as what's available on the market.

The same holds true for our family's health and well-being. We try to balance our own needs with the needs of others. We can read books, attend seminars, listen to experts, watch *Dr. Phil* and *Oprah*, and **STILL** not find the right formula. Questions about methods of discipline, who makes critical decisions and when, roles and functions of family members, and managing stress are just a few that may surface during pre-deployment.

Dr. John Gottman, founder of Gottman Institute, suggests 7 things that will help keep marriages and families strong.

- **Seek help early.**
- **Edit yourself.**
- **Soften your "start up."**
- **Accept influence.**
- **Have high standards.**
- **Learn to repair and exit the argument.**
- **Focus on the bright side.**

After years of study and research involving hundreds of couples, Dr. Gottman finds that families that incorporate these traits have a balance that helps them

to weather crises and functions efficiently. **Seeking help early** is obviously a step that will prevent damage. This requires acknowledging a problem and needing assistance. The primary obstacle in this step is pride, or unwillingness to admit there is a need. **Editing yourself** means avoiding saying every critical thought when discussing touchy subjects. **Softening the startup** is simply beginning discussion of sensitive issues uncritically, softly, and non-confrontationally. **Accepting influence** is a willingness, on the part of BOTH spouses, to be influenced. According to Gottman, men are more resistant than women to be influenced. **Have high standards** begins right away in marriages. I have never met a couple that intentionally said, "We only want a mediocre marriage!" Yet many couples quickly "settle" for the way things are and begin to lower expectations and standards. Healthy families do not accept anything but excellence and **WORK** to achieve it. **Learn to repair and exit the argument.** Successful couples know how to exit an argument. Happy couples know how to repair the situation before an argument gets completely out of control. Successful repair attempts include: changing the topic to something completely unrelated; using humor; stroking your partner with a caring remark ("I understand that this is hard for you"); making it clear you're on common ground. Finally, **focus on the bright side.** In a happy marriage, while discussing problems, couples make at least five times as many positive statements to and about each other and their relationship as negative ones.

As with our physical health, our emotional well-being needs balance, a balance of individual needs and the needs of others. Occasionally, we find ourselves off-kilter. If that occurs, there are resources to help. And remember Step One...seek help early.

**"Don't tell me where your priorities are. Show me where you spend your money and I'll tell you what they are."**

**-- James W. Frick**

A special thanks to Randy Glasbergen, the cartoonist who gave me permission to use his works in *Reunion Times*, *Post Times*, and *Prep Times*. His insights, talent, and humor are seen in his cartoons. Thanks, Randy.