

What Great Leaders Actually Do:

Lessons from a Command Sergeant Major

A lot of people think leadership is about authority.

Rank.

Position.

Control.

It's not.

In a recent conversation on *The Enduring Mindset Podcast*, I sat down with Command Sergeant Major Paul Ellis to talk about leadership, legacy, and what it actually means to lead people well.

Leadership Starts With Responsibility

One of the simplest and most powerful ideas he shared comes straight from the NCO Creed:

All soldiers are entitled to outstanding leadership.

Not some.

Not a few.

All.

That mindset changes everything.

Because it removes preference.

It removes bias.

And it forces you to show up for everyone, not just the easy ones.

It's Not About What You Say All the Time

One of the hardest parts of leadership is knowing when to speak and when not to.

Ellis explained that if you speak all the time, your words lose impact.

Leadership is about timing.

- When to step in
- When to stay quiet
- When to reinforce
- When to correct

If everything matters, nothing stands out.

The Leaders People Remember

When you ask people about great leaders, they don't talk about rank.

They talk about impact.

Ellis shared stories of leaders who:

- Showed up
- Invested time
- Paid attention to details
- Took care of their people

That's what sticks.

People remember how you made them feel.

Discipline and Consistency Win Over Time

One of the most important lessons from his early life came from something simple.

Setting the table.

Over and over again.

Not because it was complicated.

Because it required discipline and consistency.

That lesson carried into everything:

- Leadership
- Life
- Career

Because success is rarely about one big moment.

It's about doing the right things repeatedly.

Leadership Doesn't Change. The Application Does.

One of the best insights from this conversation:

Leadership itself doesn't change.

Providing:

- Purpose
- Motivation
- Direction

That stays the same.

What changes is how you apply it.

“The science of leadership stays the same. The art of it changes.”

Different environments require different approaches.

But the foundation remains.

The Three Ships That Build Everything

One framework he emphasized stands out:

- Partnership
- Relationship
- Friendship

You don't succeed alone.

You succeed by:

- Building the right partnerships
- Developing real relationships
- Creating genuine connections

That applies to:

- Leadership
 - Business
 - Family
 - Life
-

Gratitude Keeps You Grounded

One of the most honest moments came when he talked about gratitude.

Not as a concept.

As a perspective.

Gratitude reminds you that you didn't get here alone.

That changes how you lead.

Because you stop thinking:

“I did this.”

And start thinking:

“I was helped along the way.”

What Legacy Actually Means

Most people think legacy is:

- Titles
- Awards
- Recognition

He sees it differently.

Legacy is simple:

Leaving people better than you found them.

That's it.

What This Means for You

If you lead people in any capacity, take this seriously:

1. Show up for everyone

Not just the easy ones.

2. Be intentional with your words

Silence is part of leadership too.

3. Stay consistent

Small actions compound.

4. Build real relationships

That's where influence comes from.

5. Focus on impact

Leave people better than you found them.

Final Thought

Leadership is not about being remembered.

It's about how people live differently because you were there.



Listen to the full episode:

👉 <https://open.spotify.com/show/7fQ5oHIOZe94Jcjj6ytL2h?si=0c4c82fc29c6465f>

If you're a veteran or leader trying to figure out your next move, I share conversations and insights like this every week through The Enduring Mindset Podcast.

Related conversations:

- *Why Great Leaders Demand Excellence*
- *Character Doesn't Show Up in Crisis... It's Revealed*
- *Why Veterans Struggle After Transition (And What No One Talks About)*