

Leadership in Cinema



Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program

LONE SURVIVOR

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Studio: Universal Studios..... Released: 2014
Genre: Action..... Audience Rating: R
Runtime: 121 minutes

Materials

DVD, television or other projection system, [Wildland Fire Leadership Values and Principles](#) handouts (single-sided), Incident Response Pocket Guide (IRPG), notepad, writing utensil

Objective

Students will identify [Wildland Fire Leadership Values and Principles](#) illustrated within Lone Survivor and discuss leadership lessons learned with group members or mentors.

Basic Plot

Based on The New York Times bestselling true story of heroism, courage and survival, Lone Survivor tells the incredible tale of four Navy SEALs on a covert mission to neutralize a high-level al-Qaeda operative. The four men must make an impossible moral decision in the mountains of Afghanistan that leads them into an enemy ambush. As they confront unthinkable odds, the SEALs must find reserves of strength and resilience to fight to the finish. Academy Award® nominee Mark Wahlberg (The Fighter) leads an all-star cast including Taylor Kitsch (Savages), Ben Foster (3:10 to Yuma), Emile Hirsch (Into the Wild), and Eric Bana (Munich) in a movie hailed by critics as "unforgettable, tense, and inspiring." ([Universal Pictures](#))

Cast of Main Characters

Mark Wahlberg	Marcus Luttrell
Taylor Kitsch.....	Michael Murphy
Emile Hirsch.....	Danny Dietz
Ben Foster	Matt “Axe” Axelson
Yousuf Azami.....	Shah
Ali Suliman.....	Gulab
Eric Bana	Erik Kristensen

Facilitation Options

Lone Survivor illustrates an abundance of leadership values and principles. Students should have few problems identifying those that correspond to the Wildland Fire Leadership Values and Principles. The objective is not to identify every leadership principle but to promote thought and discussion. Students should be less concerned with how many principles they view within the film and more concerned with how the principles they do recognize can be used to develop themselves as a leader.

Lone Survivor: The Eyewitness Account of Operation Redwing and the Lost Heroes of Seal Team 10 by Marcus Luttrell and Patrick Robinson is a selection in the [Professional Reading Program](#).

The film can be viewed in its entirety or in parts, depending on facilitator intent and time schedules. Another method is to have the employee(s) view the film on his/her own and then hold the discussion session. When doing the full film style, it is suggested that the facilitator watch the movie at least once or twice prior to presenting this to a group.

Full-film Facilitation Suggestion

When opting for the full-film method, the facilitator should determine a good breaking point near the middle of the film to go over any questions and refocus the students on the objective.

1. Review the Wildland Fire Leadership Values and Principles with students.
2. Review Guided Discussion questions with student
3. Break students into small discussion groups if necessary.
4. Show students Lone Survivor.
5. Begin the guided discussion.

6. Have students discuss their findings and how they will apply leadership lessons learned to their role in wildland fire suppression. Facilitate discussion in groups that have difficulty.
7. Wrap up the session and encourage students to apply leadership lessons learned in their personal and work lives.

Mentor Suggestion

Have students view the movie on their own, then hold a discussion session(s) as time allows.

The mentor should be available to the student to discuss lessons learned from the film as well as incorporating them to the student's leadership self-development plan.

Encouraging individuals to keep a leadership journal is an excellent way to document leadership values and principles that are practiced.

Suggest other wildland fire leadership toolbox items that will contribute to the overall leadership development of the student.

References

- Official film [website for Lone Survivor](#)
- Luttrell, Marcus with Robinson, Patrick, Lone Survivor: The Eyewitness Account of Operation Redwing and the Lost Heroes of Seal Team 10. Little, Brown, and Company, November 2013.
- Search online videos for various speeches by and interviews with Marcus Luttrell.

Hyperlinks have been included to facilitate the use of the [Wildland Fire Leadership Development Program website](#). Encourage students of leadership to visit the [website](#).

Lone Survivor

Guided Discussion

1. During the introduction of the movie one of the SEAL instructors says, “Winning here is a conscience decision. Make up your mind whether you want to pass or choose to fail.” How does this question, this mentality, apply to leadership? Is leadership a conscience decision?
 - **Answers will vary.**
2. What are the leadership implications of the “new guy presentation” done by Shane Patton early in the movie? Is this considered hazing or just building crew cohesion? What do firefighters do that is similar?
 - **Answers will vary. Hazing is not allowed in fire operations; crew cohesion activities are allowed. A fire leader is responsible for knowing the difference and ensuring crew cohesion activities build the team and don’t destroy individuals.**
3. After the three (3) Afghani farmers are captured, what are the SEAL’s options for continuing on? As they discuss their options, what kinds of rationalizing are they using to justify their preferred options?
 - **Let them go and have them alert the others, tie them up and leave them to the elements, or kill them and just continue on their mission.**
 - **Doctrine vs. policy (what needs to be done vs. rules of engagement), considering the greater good, the ends justifies the means, etc.**
4. Describe a decision you have had to make where there is no real best choice. How did you come to your decisions and what was your thought process to get you there?
 - **Answers will vary based on past experience(s).**
5. During the discussion, the team leader (Mike Murphy) stayed out of the discussion. Was this avoidance or good leadership? Why?
 - **Answers will vary.**
6. Right before the fire fight starts, Marcus Luttrell says, “Looks like I voted wrong.” To which Murphy replies, “Negative. We just got the opportunity...” How does this reply show good leadership?
 - **Even though the decision put them in this bad position, it can be seen as the morally most correct decision. Maybe also the most “legal” or most in line with policy.**
7. Throughout the firefight, what are some of the things the four (4) SEALs say to each other to keep them going? How is this similar to what a leader can/does say late in the shift or on day 12 of your third roll? How does attitude affect/influence leadership, on the fireline or otherwise?

- **Answers will vary.**
8. Why do you think Murphy made the decision to go out in the open under heavy fire, on the rock outcropping, to make that final phone call? Hero? Leader? Bravado? All three?
- **Answers may include looking out for subordinates well being and putting the safety of your subordinates above all other objectives (Respect).**
9. Mohammad Gulab took in Marcus Luttrell and risked the lives of his village by offending the Taliban. Have you ever made a decision that was morally or ethically right at the risk of offending your supervisor or other leadership above you? Why?
- **Answers will vary based on past experience.**
10. As a leader, what does Pashtunwali mean to you? Do we have any similar code of honor in the fire world?
- **Answers will vary.**

DUTY

Be proficient in your job, both technically & as a leader.

- Take charge when in charge.
- Adhere to professional standard operating procedures.
- Develop a plan to accomplish given objectives.

Make sound & timely decisions.

- Maintain situation awareness in order to anticipate needed actions.
- Develop contingencies & consider consequences.
- Improvise within the commander's intent to handle a rapidly changing environment.

Ensure that tasks are understood, supervised, accomplished.

- Issue clear instructions.
- Observe & assess actions in progress without micro-managing.
- Use positive feedback to modify duties, tasks & assignments when appropriate.

Develop your subordinates for the future.

- Clearly state expectations.
- Delegate tasks that you are not required to do personally.
- Consider individual skill levels & developmental needs when assigning tasks.

Know your subordinates and look out for their well-being.

- Put the safety of your subordinates above all other objectives.
- Take care of your subordinate's needs.
- Resolve conflicts between individuals on the team.

Keep your subordinates informed.

- Provide accurate & timely briefings.
- Give the reason (intent) for assignments & tasks.
- Make yourself available to answer questions at appropriate times.

Build the team.

- Conduct frequent debriefings with the team to identify lessons learned.
- Recognize accomplishments & reward them appropriately.
- Apply disciplinary measures equally.

Employ your subordinates in accordance with their capabilities.

- Observe human behavior as well as fire behavior.
- Provide early warning to subordinates of tasks they will be responsible for.
- Consider team experience, fatigue & physical limitations when accepting assignments.

Know yourself and seek improvement.

- Know the strengths/weaknesses in your character & skill level.
- Ask questions of peers & supervisors.
- Actively listen to feedback from subordinates.

Seek responsibility and accept responsibility for your actions.

- Accept full responsibility for & correct poor team performance.
- Credit subordinates for good performance.
- Keep your superiors informed of your actions.

Set the example.

- Share the hazards & hardships with your subordinates.
- Don't show discouragement when facing setbacks.
- Choose the difficult right over the easy wrong.

RESPECT

INTEGRITY

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