

Basic: Surviving trials through one Airman's eyes

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My Basic Training experience has been one of the hardest experiences I've ever encountered. On a mental level, it has tested me daily. I feel exhausted at the end of each day. Physically, it has demanded that I push myself to the point of faint dizzy spells, soaked in sweat. Every time I feel I'm getting the hang of things, the bar is raised. BMT does not get easier, you get better.

There is a fellowship/ brotherhood that exist in each flight. These individuals experience the same hardships and highlights of their shared existence in this moment in time. Each brings something different to the table, and it's amazing to see us transform as each week passes by.

When we arrived, this place was terrifying. During "Zero Week," you live in constant fear, stressed to the point of constipation. They come in during the middle of the night screaming at you. They want you to "make the walls sweat," and they do their best to make that happen. Every man has a puddle under them when it's over. It's all because of something ridiculous like a sock misplaced or a shoe unaligned or the laces not loosened properly.

You can't look at the small picture. Those laces represent "attention to detail" and it's simply to demonstrate that you can follow simple instructions without question of "why?" No trainee understands this during the first weeks. What they immediately think is, "What have I done!?" or "I cannot believe I have to do this for six weeks!" It's an overwhelming thought process.

But actually, you go through phases. It's a daily grind that speeds up as you go. Zero week will feel like an eternity, time moves very slowly when you feel vulnerable. A moment in fear stands time still. Every move you make can or will be corrected with a punishment of any training instructor's choice. You have to pay attention, keeping your mouth shut and your ears open. There is no other productive choice. There is a ton of information to take in all at once for the first two weeks and you will feel overwhelmed, frustrated, homesick, depressed,

and degraded. In short, they will break you down.

You are now a moldable putty that can easily be shaped into the foundation of an Airman. You are accepting your role in BMT at this point rather it be a leader or a follower, but you will not "arrive" until you are being both. Knowing when to lead and when to follow is not going to come natural for most, because prior to BMT each individual can be placed into one group or the other. When they leave Lackland, they will be better at both. The cliché "there is no 'I' in TEAM" is understood and applied.

After being "broke down" as an individual you are "built up." In a new and exciting way... you are seeing transformations in the way you look at yourself, present yourself to others and ultimately the way others treat you.

Nobody makes it through BMT without realizing a lot about themselves. When you think of decisions you made in the past, you really notice in your mindset. When people expect more out of you, you put more thought into your actions prior to your decisions. Pushing yourself more than you ever would have when people expected so little of you.

If you think of BMT as a horrible experience, then likely it will be. If you just go through the motions you will not feel these transformations. Your mind is a very powerful tool. It is your greatest strength and your weakest link. It is crucial that you make a conscious effort to see the glass as half full. An optimist mindset will give you an edge in life. Remember that someone always has it worse.

You never appreciate things until they are gone. BMT will remove things you have always taken for granted. For instance, time

to savor your meal. I never in a million years would have truly appreciated a sit down dinner had I not experienced the "chow hall." When you can relax, chew and taste each bite without a single person telling you that you are "done"... well that's an amazing feeling that I will always cherish with every meal three times daily for life. Without BMT, I would have never realized the freedom I had.

The attention to detail with hospital corners and the perfect wrinkle free clothing drawer, a real pain in BMT, but for the rest of my life I will notice these details and feel the urge to fix them.

I will no doubt live a cleaner and healthier lifestyle and naturally try to organize my personal items in a more efficient way because I will feel sloppy now if I don't. I would have never noticed the toothpaste buildup around my cap before, let alone clean it up after I used it. I am only using that as one example, because the list of minor details goes on indefinitely.

The bottom line is that any Airman has an acquired heightened sense to detail and will apply it naturally to everything they do subconsciously. That will no doubt help set anyone up for success in life.

I cannot pretend that I am a great ex-

ample of how an Airman should look or act. What I can say is that BMT has made me realize how I should act, how I should be, and what qualities to look for in people. That training is just what it is called, Basic. That's more than most will ever know in the general public.

With this knowledge, one can apply what they have been taught to everything in life, and proudly consider themselves better for it.

Basic Military Training isn't always fun, isn't always easy, but neither is life. We live and we're lucky we grow from it.



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