Celebrate Memorial Day By Serving Others

A selfless mindset is the best way to honor others' service and sacrifice.

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Memorial Day is about honoring the men and women who died while serving in our armed forces. This three-day weekend is also the de facto celebratory kickoff to spring and summertime fun, and every veteran I know likes the idea of having a party to celebrate the fallen. Honoring and celebrating are what soldiers call Battle Buddies. They go hand-in-hand; they are teammates, and you need both to do it right. So how do we honor and celebrate those who paid the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms?

The answer: Honor their service by serving others.

Let me explain.

When I served, there was no SEAL in any of my three platoons who had a death wish to die in combat, let alone to die for our country. Don't get me wrong, we were all highly patriotic and willing to push ourselves to the extreme. However, the one common commitment every platoon mate shared was their willingness to place themselves into harm's way for the

team. This selfless mindset is what makes our military special. We are teams of volunteers and willingly place the needs of our teams in front of our personal needs. This service-minded commitment to training and fighting gives our troops a force-multiplying effect on the battlefield. When teams are built with compatriots willing to give their all so the whole can succeed, then those teams become unstoppable.

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The best way to honor veterans is by emulating their actions of service. I am not talking about running into the line of fire or jumping on a grenade. Instead, I am referring to serving your team with the same relentless action found in those that serve our country. Those who serve in uniform and die serving do so because the American way of life is worth protecting.

I grew up in a family of entrepreneurs. Some were solopreneurs, like my large-animal veterinarian grandfather, and others were entrepreneurial team builders, such as my great-grandfather, who started a company from his garage in 1926 (and is still going today). And they all served in uniform as well. They took that service mindset they learned in the military and put it to use serving their co-workers, customers and communities. Their ethos was take care of your team, and they will take care of you.

One of my mentors in SEAL Team, a Senior Chief Petty Officer nicknamed the silver fox for his shiny coiff, would remind me of this ethos daily, if not hourly: “Sir, take care of your team, and your team will take care of you.” It’s not complicated, it’s just hard to place others before yourself. It can be hard to care for others when they don’t seem to care. It can be hard to serve when others only want to serve themselves. But trust me, serving with relentless action is what separates real entrepreneurs from wannabe-preneurs. And it’s what separates our military from other forces around the

globe.

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This Memorial Day, take a moment to think about what it means to truly serve your co-workers, customers and the communities in which you live and operate. Serve like your lives depend on it. After all, that’s how our troops serve. The best way to honor our fallen is to pay their service forward by serving others. And remember this: There are men and women in far off places around the world committed to serving you. Now that’s worth celebrating. Happy Memorial Day.

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