

LEGO® Serious Play™: A Powerful Sense-Making Tool in Military Contexts

Kevin Thorn (USA Ret.)
NuggetHead Studioz, LLC.
Hernando, MS
kevin@nuggethead.net

Josh Squires
First Presbyterian Church
Columbia, SC
JSquires@firstprescolumbia.org

ABSTRACT

In recent years, the stress of multiple deployments takes a toll on Soldiers' relationships, mental and spiritual well-being and the Chaplain Corps. is there to support their mental and spiritual health. There is a belief that relationships will strengthen the whole Soldier, but the Chaplain-to-Soldier ratio is high. According to AR 600-100, U.S. Army Professional and Leadership Policy, investing in developing Mentors would enable Chaplains to identify issues early. Mentors would be trained to assist Soldiers as a liaison between the Chaplain and the Soldier at the unit level.

The U.S. Army contracted a counselor and consultant to design and deliver A 4-day workshop for the Chaplain Corps. Strong Bonds program backed by research for Chaplains and Religious Affairs Specialists. To emphasize the importance of mental and spiritual health in a relationship, LEGO® Serious Play™ (LSP) methodologies were implemented as activities to communicate and discuss complex topics. LSP is an emerging communication, thinking, and problem-solving set of techniques based on the theory of *constructivism* (Piaget and Inhelder, 1958), *constructionism* (Papert and Harel, 1991), and Play™ (Roos and Victor, 2004) where subjective views matter, and metaphors and storytelling are powerful sense-making tools.

This methodology was delivered at U.S. Army installations with high interest. Chaplain feedback of how tools and resources are being used suggests that implementing LSP in this context provides a low-cost, high impact means of instruction. LEGO® Serious Play™ demonstrated reinforcement of concepts by building metaphorical models to discuss difficult topics such as trust, forgiveness, service, sacrifice, and more.

This paper describes the instructional design process behind implementing LSP into a military training context, its challenges, and opportunities for improvement. In particular, we will describe how the underlying principles behind LSP can inform best practices in instructional design for soft skills in military contexts.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Kevin Thorn is an award-winning trainer, elearning designer & developer, consultant, and owner of NuggetHead Studioz, LLC., a boutique custom design and development studio specializing in online learning experiences. Based in the North Mississippi Delta, Kevin works with other creative practitioners in instructional design, elearning development, illustration and graphic design, animation, play and game design, and serious comics to develop creative and innovative solutions. Kevin is a well-known industry speaker and trainer on elearning development, design workflows, and is a certified facilitator in LEGO® Serious Play™ methodologies. He holds a BS in Information Technology Management from Christian Brothers University and a MS in Instructional Design and Technology from the University of Memphis.

Rev. Squires joined the First Presbyterian Church staff in January 2014. He is a graduate of Belhaven University with a B.S. in Psychology; a graduate of Reformed Theological Seminary (RTS) with both a M.A. in Marriage and Family Therapy, and in Counseling. Josh started a private practice counseling company and was a private therapist before returning to RTS to earn an M.Div. While pursuing his divinity degree, Josh served as the Christian Education intern at First Presbyterian Church of Jackson, Mississippi, and later as the Interim Director of Christian Medical and Dental Association at the University of Mississippi Medical Center. He also writes for Desiring God. He is married to Melanie, and they have two daughters and three sons.

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INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Army Chaplain Corps is dedicated to serving Soldiers and their families and vows to guard religious freedom. To fulfill that mission, the Chaplaincy provides worldwide ministry and a variety of services and programs.

One such program is called Strong Bonds where Chaplains attend training workshops and seminars to learn more about how to assist commanders in building individual resiliency for their units. Following Strong Bonds training, Chaplains design unit-based offerings where they lead weekend retreats for Soldiers and their spouses.

According to the Strong Bonds core mission, it is designed to increase individual Soldier and family member readiness through relationship education and skills training.

Chaplains are asked to support the overall Chaplaincy mission, which includes leading in a faith-based way, guarding religious freedom, and serving as relationship experts.

The course was designed with the Chaplains in mind. Themes in the course drew heavily from Protestant religions based on a traditional relationship marriage between a man and a woman. However, new methods were developed during the delivery of this course with Chaplains attending from the Muslim, Mormonism, and Jewish faiths that can be applied in different contexts. This paper presents a use case using traditional Christian themes, but in future work the authors will use lessons learned to expand the program to other faiths.

Additionally, guarding religious freedom also means to help and serve non-believers in any faith. The underlying framework for any healthy relationship includes mental and spiritual health and for non-believers, spiritual health in this context relates to their individual belief systems.

The Chaplain-to-Soldier ratio is high. As of June 2019, the Army active duty population is 472,209 with 375,600 enlisted soldiers. With ~2,900 Chaplains as of 2011 equates to 1 Chaplain per 129 Soldiers.

The Chaplains accept these responsibilities but can be challenging and overwhelming, serving all Soldiers in their unit regardless of faith or non-traditional relationships. The Chaplains needed training and education with a new approach than repurposing existing off-the-shelf training programs.

This paper is divided in two major parts. The first part describes how and why LEGO® Serious Play™ was implemented as a way to deepen thinking, unlock knowledge, and help frame new solutions to existing problems the Chaplains face. The second part describes how the Rally Points workshop became part of the Chaplain Strong Bonds training. In summary, an exploration of how LEGO® Serious Play™ can be implemented as leadership training or unit-level training in support of a Soldier's mental, spiritual, and emotional well-being.

PROBLEM

As shepherds and US Army officers, the Chaplains are leaders in both rights and are the first line of defense in the fight of family and faith. Soldiers struggling with their marriage or unit-level relationships should rely on their unit shepherd, the Chaplain.

Through our research and conversations with Chaplains, we found that getting the help that Soldiers need is complicated. Furthermore, the message being communicated to Soldiers and their families is that they should seek out the help they need, but with that brings substantial risks.

The promotion process is largely awarded to those that appear to be the most reliable and strongest (physically and mentally). A Soldier admitting they need to talk to someone puts a level of vulnerability on them and they tend to not take those signals seriously by attempting to address their own problems in isolation. This often, unwittingly, creates a system whereby those who seek counsel from Chaplains and mental health professionals are so far along in their crisis that the probability of positive change is remote. Not only is this ineffective for the people with whom the Chaplain is working, consistently seeing a population that has the lowest possibility of a positive outcome exhausts helpers.

Chaplains require new tools to reach those Soldiers, and Soldiers need an unconditional comfort to reach out to their unit Chaplain. To shift the paradigm, Chaplains need help. Instead of looking at their Soldiers and families that needed the highest levels of help following a Strong Bonds retreat event, Chaplains were looking at the highest functioning relationships.

Using the LEGO Serious Play methodologies, Chaplains can appeal to Soldiers that everyone has something important to say, that Soldiers are the key to an Army's success and Soldiers can and want to do well. No one has all the answers. Leaders that are truly committed to optimizing the potential of Soldiers want the information to flow in more than one direction.

Interactive methodologies, such as LEGO Serious Play help with the idea that information should flow between and among Soldiers, unlocking stronger relationship bonds, whether in their personal lives or within their units.

APPROACH

As of 2017, the Strong Bonds training for Chaplains largely consisted of week-long workshops around relationship building and communication from existing well-known material and with very little faith-based training. At the time, Col. Stan Smith of the Army Chaplaincy Corps. Strong Bonds at the Pentagon was looking for a new program to add to the Strong Bonds professional development training for Chaplains.

The Army reached out to Mr. Josh Squires, a contributing author for the Desiring God blog and pastor at 1st Presbyterian Church in Columbus, South Carolina. Col. Smith asked Mr. Squires if he would be interested in designing a faith-based workshop on developing healthy marriages.

With the extensive experience, knowledge and material, Josh Squires was perfectly suited to teach Chaplains a faith-based approach to help them serve their unit-based Strong Bonds retreats, and Kevin Thorn assisted with instructional design, facilitation coaching, and implementing LEGO Serious Play. The agenda and activities would be designed based on Mr. Squires' writings and backed up by relationship research and play theory.

Living near the Chaplaincy school, Mr. Squires had first-hand opportunities to conduct interviews with Chaplains to determine what was working with Strong Bonds and what was not working. The challenge we had in designing a completely new learning experience was to develop a program and be prepared to deliver it in three months.

The workshop went well for the first offering, but something was missing. We had built-in activities and role-plays, but there is only so much one can endure during a single day workshop, let alone a week. The conversations were meaningful around the various topics and lessons, however, there was little to solidify the messages in a practical application other than crafted scripts in a staged role-play activity. We needed something or a vehicle in which to tell those stories and ensure every Chaplain in the room participated at an equal level.

LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY™

LEGO® Serious Play™ (LSP) is a collection of application techniques where participants answer tough and complex questions by building 3D metaphorical models with LEGO® brick. The act of thinking with your hands stimulates a

part of the brain that pushes you into your “Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience” where the increase of the challenge and the increase one’s skills intersect along a continuum (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) (see Figure 3).

LSP was first developed by LEGO® Education in the early 1990s. Since then it has evolved into a certifiable training mechanism based on research in constructivism, constructionism, and the theory of play. Johan Roos, seeing turbulent times ahead of the LEGO® Group developed a program to help senior-level managers think and act differently. He suggests that “changing the constraints of strategy processes would also change the content generated” (Roos, 2004). In this research, LEGO® bricks were used to express meaning instead of traditional methods of slides presented with a summary of bullet statements.

The LEGO Serious Play method is based on the belief that there is a vast untapped potential in people. Designing Rally Points with this belief and structuring the workshop to help Chaplains at the unit level ultimately helps unit leadership. When leadership understands that their success depends on all the voices, Soldiers will have the resources and imagination to resolve the most challenging issues and accomplish the most complex of missions.

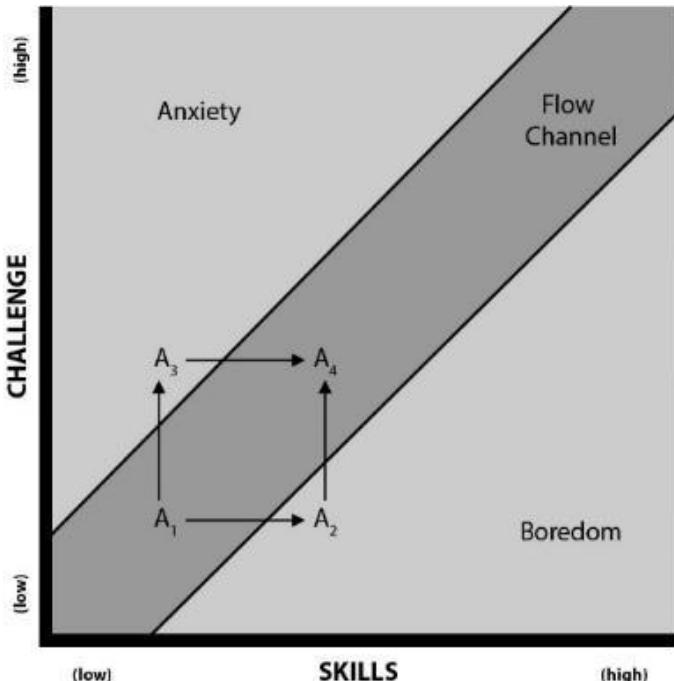


Figure 3: Flow Channel

The Core Process

The methodology for implementing LSP follows a core process of, Question, Build, Share, and Reflect (see Figure 4). To begin, the facilitator poses a question or statement and allows a specific time limit to complete the task. Participants then build a 3D metaphorical model using an assortment of LEGO® brick to answer the question. Once the allotted time ends, the facilitator asks participants to share their models and explain its meaning in the form of a story. After all, participants have shared their models, the facilitator pulls the conversation back and offers a reflection. A typical training session using LSP begins with individuals building models and builds into shared models where two or more participants work together to answer a question or solve a problem.

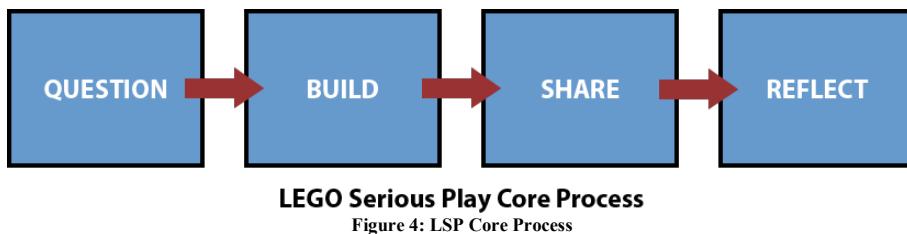


Figure 4: LSP Core Process

The application techniques of this methodology start with a basic question to allow all participants to become familiar with building with the bricks. There are usually one or two participants who have extensive experience playing with LEGO®, but there are also several who may have never used LEGO® let alone in this context. After a few basic activities, the facilitator moves to a metaphorical storytelling question or statement. By now, it becomes evident that participants are beginning to find their “Flow.” Ideally, LSP is conducted in the form of a workshop no less than two hours up to more complex strategic development workshops lasting two days.

Drawing upon Vygotsky's (1964) social learning theory, Kinder et. al. (2018) conceptualize play as a group activity from which new ideas emerge is enhanced using the LSP methodology in both individual and shared models.

LSP was the vehicle needed to enhance the workshop. Halfway through the second iteration of the workshop, I proposed we implement an LSP activity in place of an existing activity as the time allotted was about the same. If it didn't work, the scripted agenda was the contingency plan. LSP was a success and we found ourselves meeting early each morning to redesign that day's agenda to fit in more LSP activities.

RALLY POINTS

In general terms, a rally point is a place where others may assemble and reorganize along a route. We designed and developed a program called *Rally Points – The Fight of Family and Faith*. A system of high functioning relationships whether in a traditional marriage, a young couple starting out, a non-traditional relationship, or an individual Soldier struggling with identity.

In a traditional marriage, the assumption that falling in love is the easy part. The hard part is staying in love through relationship trials and ensuring the relationship is growing in the right direction. There is really no difference in a non-traditional relationship with the assumption that it too started with love. Individual Soldiers also have relationships with peers, supervisors, and subordinates but also may struggle in isolation, not knowing how to nurture their own relationship and the confidence within themselves.

The route to developing and maintaining a long-lasting relationship takes effort and by having *rally points* along the way may help relationships reassemble and reorganize when the route becomes difficult.



Image 1: Rally Point Logo

The *Fight of Family* refers to a relationship between two people up to and including the Army as a whole, and *Faith* refers to the foundation of Biblical principles. Chaplains would identify these high functioning individuals and couples as mentors. *Family* is the young couple starting, a mid-career Soldier with children, a single career Soldier nearing retirement, a squad deployed overseas, or any number of situations the two or more people bond in shared a commitment. *Faith* is a Soldier's belief in something other than themselves be it spiritual or scientific that drives their value system. The *Fight* lies in building up Soldiers in strong mental and/or spiritual high functioning people.

Faith in the context of a relationship suggests there is a foundation of trust and commitment, and a shared belief system to have faith in the relationship during difficult times. Rally Points is developed in a series of modules designed to look deeper into what makes a healthy relationship with the first module setting the tone with the essentials. This structure allows for Rally Points to be easily adopted by re-crafting the essentials in support of other religions or belief systems where the remaining four modules are independent and backed by research.

The Curriculum

Rally Points is in fact, a series of "rally points". A method that is easy for both the Chaplain and potential mentors to use and remember where both can respond to the needs of others. The workshop is outlined by day as rally points:

- **Day 1 – The Essentials.**
 - The 3 P's – Prayer, Presence, and People. No matter if the Chaplain or mentor is ministering to a single soldier, a couple, a family, or their own lives and have nowhere to go or what to do first, turn to the 3 P's. We begin with prayer and discuss how prayer can be frustrating, confusing, and fraught with mystery (Yancey, 2010). We flank by then discussing People before digging into what it really means to be Present, and the ease and effectiveness of being with people in difficult and awkward situations.

- **Day 2 – The Functional**

- A discussion of the normal trajectory of healthy marriages and relationships which includes the intense seasons of difficulty as well as enduring seasons of hope. To help soldiers and couples recover from difficult seasons and thrive in seasons of health (mentally and emotionally), we discuss what it means to be ‘connected’. Here, we introduce the 3 C’s – Chemistry, Character, and Compatibility, which all tie into the fourth C of Communication. Lastly, we discuss how different dispositions process similar information. People are often attracted to those who have very different dispositions from themselves. Being able to value those with different dispositions is key to helping them thrive.

- **Day 3 – The Dysfunctional**

- This rally point is where to turn to if the Chaplain’s protégé or the mentor’s couple is very contentious or appear to be in a crisis. When a relationship is in crisis, there is usually little if anything nice to be said about one another; and when there is, it is usually to soften the blow of a litany of wrongs. At this rally point we introduce the 2 M’s and discuss the actions that characterize unhealthy couples and relationships – Mistrust and Miscommunication. Understanding these two will help mentors better identify couples who need more long-term and consistent care. Lastly, we discuss the Big 3 – Money, Sex and, Children. The goal is not to be a financial planner or family expert but to offer guiding principles and to know when it is time to refer to other services.

- **Day 4 – The Individual**

- Mentors do not only work with couples. This rally point is to discuss the basic framework for individual soldiers and why people act the way they do. Understanding human behaviors, resistance to change, and the way to encourage change will help Chaplains and protégés. We discuss a behavior change plan for soldiers who want to be more emotionally and spiritually healthy. Lastly, with the emotional context around deployment separation and friends and family, we discuss the two most common counseling issues individuals face in Depression and Anxiety. As with the Big 3 counseling issues with couples, the objective here is to lay a foundation for a basic response to know when to refer.

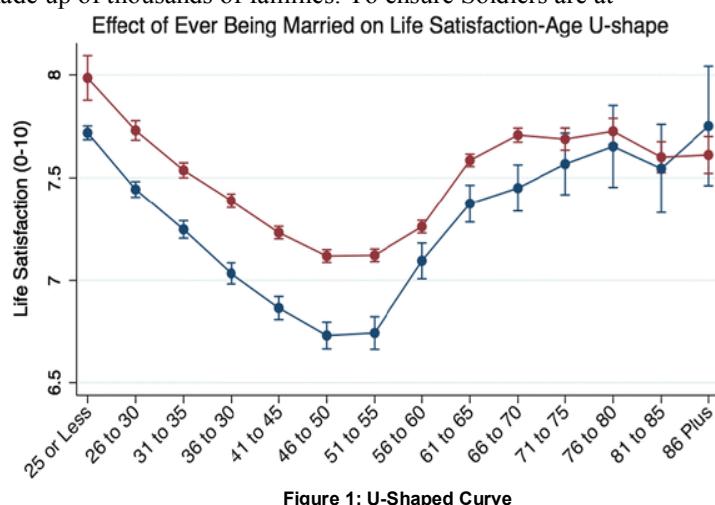
- **Day 5 – The Mentors**

- Finally, the last day we discuss the qualities Chaplains are looking for in a protégé to mentor unit-level couples and single soldiers. This is not about the mentors ministering to others as it is critical that the Chaplains minister to them and their families. We discuss boundaries and whether or not they are okay, why boundaries are difficult to implement, and when they should be put into place.

Key Focus

The US Army is one big family. That family is made up of thousands of families. To ensure Soldiers are at warfighter lethality, they need to stay focused on their individual responsibilities and their unit-level mission. A soldier who is confident in their role arguably suggests they are confident in their relationship with their spouse, friends, and command. Ultimately, that confidence in a soldier’s marriage is anchored in trust.

Before Chaplains are trained on identifying mentors, a refresher in understanding the Marriage Satisfaction Across the Family Lifecycle U-Shaped curve (see Figure 1) first published by David H. Olson (Olson, 1983) is discussed. Olsen’s work suggests our relationship satisfaction is at its highest at the beginning when nothing but dreams and future



lie ahead. As we settled into raising a family and building a career, our satisfaction dips to its lowest point in the mid-to-late 40 yr. old range where one questions the relationship. As children move away and the light of retirement is near, there is a sense of rejuvenation and satisfaction levels rise back up to almost the level when the relationship first began.

Where a soldier's marriage lies on this curve is critical in assessing family issues, whether it be the stress of a spouse raising preschool children during deployment, or the celebratory phase of launching children into adulthood. The U-Shaped curve can also be used as a guide to assist single soldiers from lonely new recruits away from home for the first time to the anxiety of a career soldier nearing retirement.

A new study by Shawn Grover in the Journal of Happiness Studies states, "the U-shape in the relationship between life satisfaction and age exists for both married and unmarried but is deeper for the unmarried" (Grover et al., 2019).

David Branchflower argues the research around the U-shape curve does not account for cohort effects (generations born in good or bad times) and conducted a test that a robust U-shape of happiness is found in age (Branchflower, 2007). This understanding of the U-shape curve will help the Chaplains in better serving their soldiers by knowing where they lie on the curve, whether married or unmarried.

During the lesson on the U-Shaped curve, we implemented LSP as an activity. We asked Chaplains to build a model that represents someone they know and where they are in the U-shaped curve. Chaplains immediately thought of a current soldier they were counseling, and some Chaplains used their own marriages as an example. Building a metaphorical model and telling a story based on research data and life experiences was extraordinary.

Rally Point Mentors

Mentoring and mentorship is not a new concept to the Army according to the Leadership Manual ADP 6-22. Specifically related to Chapter 7 - Develop Others, refers to helping people learn through counseling, coaching, and mentoring. This is the fundamental core of Rally Points. Chapter 7-65 dives deeper into the concept of mentoring as a developmental tool that can effectively support the learning objectives or professional expertise, maturity, and conceptual and team-building skills.

ADP 6-22 (7-67) reads, "Mentorship is the voluntary developmental relationship that exists between a person of greater experience and a person of lesser experience that is characterized by mutual trust and respect. Mentoring takes place when the mentor provides a less experienced leader with advice and counsel over time to help with professional and personal growth."

Rally Points couples and/or individuals initiate relationships with others in their unit to facilitate personal growth of their protégés, especially in relation to their marriages. Rally Points mentors are identified by the Chaplain where he/she asks them if they would be interested in participating. Those that accept receive personal training by the Chaplain to help identify those in need. The mentors will then foster a mentorship relationship with others in their unit and ideally raise up more healthy relationships. Conversely, mentors are at the unit level and can be the eyes and ears for the Chaplains when additional help is needed for more serious issues. In these cases, the mentor informs the Chaplain of someone in particular or a family in crisis, and the Chaplain can get involved before the issue becomes irreversible.

With an idea to develop a workshop where Chaplains can receive training that ties back to the Chaplaincy's core mission, have a fundamental faith-based framework, we turned to the Bible to support the idea of a mentorship program.

A biblical perspective for the mentor to protégé, "And what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy 2:2, New International Version). Also in Titus 2:7 (New International Version) it says, "Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us."

Lastly, we needed to tie the entire program back to the overall Army's leadership policy where we are reminded in ADRP 6-22 as it describes mentorship as, "a relationship initiated by a more experienced leader for the benefit of all."

Pilot Launch



Image SEQ Image 1* ARABIC 2: Josh Squires leading the first Rally Points workshop

Our first offering of Rally Points was delivered the beginning of FY18 the week of October 16, 2017 at Fort Robinson, Arkansas. We were confident we put together a solid program that touches all aspects of relationship building whether it is husband and wife, soldier to soldier, or soldier to command. What we were not confident in was the timing of delivery and how the planned activities would be received.

The Chaplains who registered for that first offering were also unsure because there was no time to advertise or market the workshop prior to this already Strong Bonds training week. Fortunately, the Chaplains who did register turned out to be the ideal size for this workshop and when asked "Why Rally Points?", they all unanimously said because it was the only faith-based and research-based program Strong Bonds offered.

This is not only a workshop to share and give Chaplains more resources, it is also for them to use freely and implement any or all of the rally points in their own weekend Strong Bonds retreats. While there was much to do in refining the material and adjusting the timing after the first offering of Rally Points, the initial feedback received was overwhelmingly positive with an overall average feedback score of 91.75 (see Table 1)

Table 1: Rally Points pilot launch participant feedback scores

FEEDBACK QUESTIONS	PARTICIPANT CHAPLAINS									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
How confident are you in meeting the pastoral needs of:										
healthy couples	25	25	20	25	25	20	20	20	20	20
unhealthy couples	20	20	20	20	20	20	15	20	20	20
individuals	25	25	25	25	25	20	20	20	20	20
yourself and your family	25	25	25	20	25	20	25	20	20	20
Information was relevant	25	25	25	25	20	25	25	25	25	20
Learned something new	25	25	25	25	20	25	25	25	25	20
Knowledgeable speaker	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25
Will use material within next three months	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	25	20	20
	97.50	97.50	95.00	95.00	92.50	90.00	90.00	90.00	87.50	82.50

We also asked the Chaplains what their favorite part of the training was and any suggestions they cared to share. Several of the general comments were also positively toned:

- "The tools I learned will help me with soldiers and their families communicate better and for me to be a better listener."
- "This was easily the best training I've had as a Chaplain and believe this could be a senior leadership program."
- "Get this training in the hands of as many Unit Ministry Teams (UMT), spouses, chapels, etc. as possible."
- "Not only faith-based but very practical application to tie into our core mission to serve our units."

With the humbly positive comments, there were also constructive suggestions:

- "The role play activities while helpful, it is only one situation. There are countless issues to deal with."
- "I enjoyed the group discussions, but I would like to see more practical application techniques demonstrated."
- "Five days is a long time to listen and group discussions. Not enough activities."
- "The role PlayTM activities were mostly about communication, and more types of skills are needed."

We took this feedback seriously and re-worked the material, reorganized it and prepared for the next offerings. The second offering of Rally Points was just two months away at Bellows AFB in Honolulu, Hawaii in December 2017. The feedback was generally the same, including constructive suggestions. The activities planned and conducted were not hitting the mark, not memorable, not practical, and we again went back and gave the program serious attention. The third offering of Rally Points was three months after Hawaii at Clay National Guard Center in Atlanta, Georgia, March 2018 and where we first introduced LEGO® Serious Play™ as an activity to test its viability. Only one activity was replaced using LEGO®, but the feedback was very welcomed with more suggestions to include additional LEGO® Serious Play™ activities.

The fourth and fifth offerings of Rally Points at Camp Zama, Tokyo, Japan in January 2019 and Salt Lake City, Utah in April 2019 respectively replaced all activities initially designed with LEGO® Serious Play™.

RALLY POINTS AND LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY™

Keeping true to the core process of LSP, the challenge was how to implement the application techniques into the Rally Points curriculum. First, a skill-building activity was necessary to ensure all Chaplains were comfortable with the technical aspects of assembling LEGO® brick while easing them into the conceptual idea and the benefits of play. As this methodology is designed to begin and end the session or day-long workshop using nothing but LEGO®, we had to restructure the Rally Points curriculum to allow time to for each activity while maintaining the discipline of the core process.



Image SEQ Image 1* ARABIC 3:
Rally Points and LEGO

We decided the fourth offering in Camp Zama, Tokyo, Japan, would be the first Rally Points to replace all current activities (role plays, discussion groups, etc.) with LSP activities. The LEGO® activities were very well thought through but there was a risk of not getting the Chaplains into their "Flow" as each activity was scheduled for one hour at a time. In between activities, the Rally Points curriculum would continue on the agenda.

The objective was to summarize key topics within the curriculum to anchor that lesson and set the groundwork for the next lesson and activity. At the same time, balance the number of activities across the five days where not too much use of LEGO® initially and not too much Rally Points curriculum between the LEGO® activities. The focus was on these key topics and spaced out where two-three activities per day, leading up to shared models by the end of the week (Image 4).

Day one begins with the introduction to LEGO® brick and technical aspects of building, building in metaphors, and learning how to tell a metaphorical story. Day two and three delve into deeper thinking and drawing upon emotional contexts of the metaphors. Day four and five introduces shared models (Image where two or more Chaplains work together to answer a question. The following table outlines the day, activity number, topic, and purpose of LSP activities for the week.



Image SEQ Image 1*
ARABIC 4- Shared Model

LEGO® Serious Play™ Activities

Table 2: LEGO Serious Play™ Activity Agenda

Day/Activity #	Question/Statement	Purpose/Lesson
Day 1 – Activity 1	Build a Tower	Establish technical aspects of working with LEGO® brick, thinking with hands, and sharing by telling a story.
Day 1 – Activity 2	Build a model that represents three aspects of who you are as a Chaplain	Establish deeper thinking into one's self and telling a metaphorical story.
Day 1 – Activity 3	Build a shared model with only one aspect from Activity 2	Combining personal traits into a shared model exposes peer-to-peer understanding of many contribute to the whole.
Day 2 – Activity 4	Build a model that represents someone you know and where they are in the U-shaped curve.	Begin to think externally than one's self by telling a personal story of someone you know.
Day 2 – Activity 5	Build a model what Service and Sacrifice look like in a healthy connected relationship.	Drawing upon emotional contexts and in sharing metaphorical storytelling.
Day 2 – Activity 6	Build a model about forgiveness. When someone forgave you or you gave forgiveness to someone else.	Continue drawing upon emotional contexts and improved storytelling.
Day 3 – Activity 7	Build a model that represents three (3) aspects of Trust in a healthy connected relationship.	Introduce mixed thoughts around a central concept.
Day 3 – Activity 8	Build a shared model of Trust using only one aspect of individual models from Activity 6.	Introduce shared modeling and perspective through reflective storytelling.
Day 4 – Activity 9	Build a model that represents one aspect of a dysfunctional relationship.	Shift thinking away from positive to negative emotional contexts
Day 4 – Activity 10	Build a shared model of what redeeming dysfunction looks like using aspects from Activity 8.	Compare and contrast perspectives given same aspect and continued reflective storytelling.
Day 5 – Activity 11	Build a model that represents one constraint that will prevent implementing Rally Points back at the unit level.	Tie conceptual thinking to the real-world.
Day 5 – Activity 12	Build a model that demonstrates one step you will take in the next 30 days to overcome the constraint of implementing Rally Points.	Anchor the week with a commitment to taking steps to solve a problem.
Bonus	Build a Duck	Perception

Chaplains at Play

The natural reaction to seeing a small pile of LEGO® brick while attending a professional development workshop raises a few eyebrows. Chaplains are leaders and officers with the highest levels of integrity and discipline. LEGO® is generally seen as a toy, yet our experience has been the Chaplains welcomed the unconventional approach. At the first use of LEGO® in Rally Points at Camp Zama, Tokyo, Japan, the consensus was perceived as a light-hearted break from the material and deep discussions. After warming to the idea, Chaplains would first ask each morning “When do we get to play with LEGO® again?”

Each Chaplain received the same small inventory of random LEGO® brick, known as the Windows Explorer Kit available through the LEGO® Group. The constraint of only having a small inventory of various colored brick pieces including several specialty pieces forces participants to think strategically on which bricks to use to tell their stories.



Image 5: Chaplain building LEGO model

Results

LSP was initially developed primarily for business contexts for problem-solving and emerging strategic directions. Because the LSP methodology is made up of several application techniques, there are countless ways to combine those techniques into a flow of instruction for educational contexts. We found that using these application techniques in a workshop designed to train Chaplains on how to better serve their units uncovered tremendous potential, exposed deeper emotions, and fostered a lasting bond among those in the room far more than a typical workshop could ever hope to achieve.

The three methodologies in LSP that help frame the overall experiences are, *Real-Time Identity*, *Real-Time Strategy for Teams*, and *Real-Time Strategy for Organizations*. Each audience is different depending on participant roles as an individual contributor, as a team member working together for a common goal, or part of the strategic direction for larger enterprises. Chaplains know their roles as a Chaplain and know their role as an officer in the US Army, but we wanted to find out if Chaplains knew their self in all three methodologies as an individual, contributing member of a team, and who they are in the larger Army family.

The *Real-Time Identity Model* is a 3-part activity with the first two activities as individual builds and the last activity as a shared model build. Due to time constraints, we modified the Identity Model as a two-part activity. Outlined in the Table 1 above, the first activity pushes the Chaplain to look at themselves from a broad perspective of who they are in their role. This early activity on Day 1 also pushes some Chaplains out of their comfort zone as well as learning how to tell metaphorical stories when sharing. The second activity in the Identity Model is a shared build between 3 or more Chaplains. Instead of starting a new build, Chaplains must choose one aspect from their individual models and combine it with the others into a single shared model. This exercise is where we saw the first reactions to how powerful LSP is used where the Chaplains saw distinct patterns and similarities of each other even though they were stationed worlds apart. The reflection discussion that followed set the stage and proved that Chaplains really have three roles – as an individual, as a unit-level Chaplain, and as an officer in the US Army.



Image SEQ Image 1* ARABIC 6: Chaplain building LEGO® model

Rally Points was designed specifically for Chaplains. We learned through observation and direct feedback from the attending Chaplains that Rally Points with LSP should be widely available to include Spouses, Religious Affairs Specialist, and Unit Ministry Teams. The power of the stories shared, the connections and new bonds formed, and the overwhelming support to continue looking for ways to implement LSP into not just Chaplain training but Army training as a whole.

There is still a great deal to explore within the Chaplain corps. and the Protestant religion. We'd like to expand into other religions and belief systems with the assumption LEGO Serious Play can help in any context. Further, LEGO Serious Play is widely used in organizational and business settings on areas of leadership, project management, strategic positioning, and team building. We believe LEGO Serious Play can be a significant tool for the U.S Army for a host of various applications.

CONCLUSION

In the five offerings of Rally Points thus far and two of which implementing LEGO® Serious Play™, we were fortunate to have a diverse audience of attendees including active duty unit-level Chaplains, field grade Command Chaplains, Army Reserve Chaplains, National Guard, Spouses of Chaplains, and Religious Affairs Specialist. This diverse audience gave us a peek inside the Chaplaincy Corps and the varying challenges the organization faces as a whole.

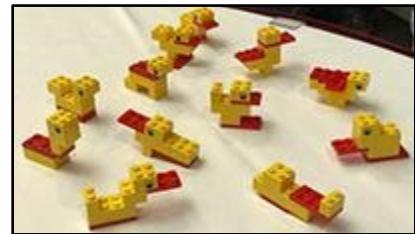
The LSP activities conducted at Camp Zama, Japan and again three months later in Salt Lake City, UT were identical in their execution. However, the interesting dynamic at Camp Zama was that the Chaplains, spouses, and Religious Affairs Specialists in attendance were all from across the Pacific Command. Whereas, in Salt Lake City all the Chaplains were in the Utah National Guard or Army Reserve. In both locations the Chaplains have a singular goal to help serve the soldiers and their families. Although, Chaplains in the National Guard do not have the convenience of interacting with their unit on a daily basis like regular Army active duty. This gave us pause in empathizing with National Guard Chaplains and the exponential challenges they face to serve and meet the same goals.

Well-defined problems are structured in three parts as 1) the problem itself (initial state), 2) set of operators (rules and strategies), and 3) the goal state (the solution) (Stokes, 2007). Ill-defined problems, on the other hand, lack sufficient information to reach the goal state (e.g., “What does trust look like?”) yet allow for a varying number of potential solutions. (Moreau, 2016).

There is little doubt Rally Points is a successful training program. We believe there are many more applications to implement LSP that encourages participation, unlocks creativity, and to explore and seek answers to questions of ill-defined problems.

Looking beyond Chaplain training, we see LSP as a mechanism in further developing the mental, emotional and spiritual well-being of Soldiers. Similar to the Chaplains, Soldiers at the squad level are expected to be disciplined, focused and meet the warfighter lethality the Army expects of them. As the Chaplains can contest, individual Soldiers have a myriad of issues that may prevent them from being as focused. Implementing similar LSP activities at the squad level can help Soldiers know who they are as an individual contributor, as a member of a team, and serving the US Army as a whole.

In closing, accomplishing a mission is dependent on every Soldier’s understanding of knowing how to execute. When details are vague, a soldier must perceive those details by filling in the blanks. The last activity of the last day we gave the Chaplains each a set of the same six LEGO® brick pieces with a vague directive – build a duck. Pulling from long-term memory and formalizing a mental model of a “duck,” assembly began. In the end, not a single Chaplain built the same duck from the six brick pieces. LSP is a powerful tool to break down perceptions, and a door to better and open communication with a set of research-based methodologies unlocking creativity in problem-solving.



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