**Sara’s Thinking Toolbox (JAN2024-current)**

**Life Events/Jobs Held:** Graduated the Naval War College (Army CGSC equivalent), tore ACL and had reconstruction surgery, traveled a TON with Sam and mom, PCS’ed to Germany to start my new job as Brigade Fire Support Officer for 41st Field Artillery Brigade.

**Movies/TV Shows**

1. **Band of Brothers**: A series following the 506th PIR of the 101st Airborne during WWII. I like to focus on Dick Winters, whose values-driven leadership and steadfast actions in moments of crisis set an enduring example for leaders at every level.
2. **The West Wing**: I like this show because it explores leadership in high-pressure environments, teamwork, and moral dilemmas (I know it first came out in 1999, give it a chance).

**Podcasts**

1. **From The Green Notebook**: I listen to this podcast because of its down-to-earth conversations with military and civilian professionals to provide diverse perspectives on all aspects of life, helping leaders refine their identities.
   1. They also have a weekly newsletter and regularly publish thought-provoking articles.
2. **Huberman Lab**: I listen to this regularly as it focuses on human optimization across mental, physical, and emotional domains—essential knowledge for leaders looking to sustain and promulgate peak performance.
3. **MOPs and MOEs**: Part of my weekend routine, I like this military fitness-focused podcast because of its insights into optimizing physical readiness and crafting effective training plans for Soldiers.
4. **JRTC “The Crucible”**: While niche in its topics, I listen to this because they host Army leaders who share lessons from one of the Army's premier training centers, which can be applied to any training environment.
5. **NPR any and everything**: A treasure trove of current events, diverse perspectives, and human-interest stories to expand a leader’s worldview. I like NPR because it is a trusted unbiased news outlet.
6. **A Bit of Optimism:** Hosted by Simon Sinek, this podcast dives into conversations about purpose, connection, and inspiration with a range of fascinating guests. I listen to it because it aligns with my passion for purpose, offering fresh perspectives and uplifting ideas to fuel meaningful leadership.
7. **Finding Mastery:** Michael Gervais explores the science and stories behind mastery, delving into how high performers excel in their fields through mindset and practice. I find it insightful to refine my leadership approach and stay grounded in strategies for continual growth and self-improvement.

**Books (Can be audiobooks or paperback)**

1. **Man’s Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl:** Hands down, my favorite book which I try to read annually. It is a powerful exploration of finding purpose in adversity and offers reminders about resilience and values you can apply to any aspect of life.
2. **Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking by Susan Cain**: This book highlights the unique strengths of introverts, challenging the cultural bias toward extroversion in leadership and collaboration. As an introvert in an extrovert-dominated organization, I found it empowering and validating, showing that authentic leadership comes in many forms.
3. **A Higher Loyalty by James Comey:** Insights into ethical leadership and decision-making from the former FBI Director. I appreciated how it challenged me to reflect on the importance of values in leadership, even when making tough or unpopular decisions.
4. **2034 by Elliot Ackerman and Admiral James Stavridis:** I appreciated this novel because it challenged me to think critically about the future of war and leadership in a degraded environment.
5. **With the Old Breed by Eugene Sledge:** To me, this book serves as a reminder of where we came from, why we serve, and the gray areas that come with war. It is a raw, first-hand account of leadership and camaraderie in extreme conditions during WWII.

**Journals/Newsletters**

1. **Your Branch-Specific Journal**: Stay informed and connected to current developments within your specialty.
2. **Harvard Business Review (Leadership Section)**: Rich, evidence-based articles on leadership trends and techniques (also available on podcast).
3. **The Harding Project**: Insights into leadership, ethics, and professional growth for military professionals.
4. **Center for Army Lessons Learned**: Practical guidance and case studies to refine your approach to leadership and mission planning.

**Mentors (direct and indirect)**: Leadership is often learned through observation and interaction. Engaging with mentors allows for real-world examples, feedback, and personal growth.

1. **MG Ken Kamper**: inspired me to be a values-based leader.
2. **MG Pat Work**: inspired me to be an enthusiastic leader who leads by example and brings out the best in my teammates.
3. **COL Dan Blackmon:** taught me how to create a unit identity and culture; he also cultivated my understanding and respect of the role I play in others’ lives.
4. **LTC Wayne Fogel**: inspired me to be my true self and taught me to effectively speak my mind (he bestowed the title “open protester” onto me once I learned this tenet).
5. **Simon Sinek**: regularly inspires me to reflect on the tenants of leadership and our responsibility to create a sense of purpose.

**And the best method, YOU! (retro/introspection):** Writing regularly about experiences fosters self-awareness and helps leaders process emotions, track progress, and set goals.

Reflection promotes metacognition, enabling leaders to think critically about their decisions and interactions.

1. **Prompt Journals:** Use guided prompts to explore key leadership topics.
   1. From The Green Notebook Founder Joe Byerly recently published, “[The Leader's 90-Day Notebook](https://www.amazon.com/Leaders-90-Day-Notebook-Journal-Busy/dp/B0DFWCN7PD?dplnkId=c7c92917-a977-405b-ab0a-68eab7a4c361&nodl=1)”, which I just started using. High Recommend!
2. **Open Journals:** Create a personal leadership journey by freely documenting lessons learned.
3. **Surround Yourself With Thinkers:** Engage in meaningful conversations that challenge your ideas and encourage growth.
4. **Daily Stoic Journal by Ryan Holiday**: A guided journaling resource based on Stoic principles, perfect for leaders seeking clarity and resilience.