



Scenario: Careful What You Wish For

Group Size: 4-15

This scenario may contain explicit language and references to harmful situations which may be emotionally activating for some people. If you need support, services are available through the [CAF Member Assistance Program \(CFMAP\)](#) and the [Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#).

"Hello, Joe Karam speaking," says Joe after picking up the ringing phone.

"Hello Joe. My name is Diane Sirois and I'm calling for a reference check on one of your employees, Will McIntyre."

"Hello Diane," says Joe. "What can I tell you about Will?"

Joe Karam is a supervisor in a large directorate of the National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ). Will McIntyre has been an employee in his section for the past few years. Joe considers Will to be the most challenging employees on his staff since is often late for work, extends his breaks and lunches, and frequently calls in sick. Joe has had to seek guidance from human resources on more than one occasion. While he has spoken to Will about these issues, Will's attitude is indifferent, and the behaviour never improves.

Although Joe has never expressed his frustration with Will to anyone else, he has secretly hoped that Will would look for a position somewhere else. So, he was very happy when he received the call from Diane Sirois asking for a reference check.

However, Joe had never thought about what he would say – until now.

Categories

Principles:	Respect the Dignity of all Persons, Serve Canada before Self, Obey and Support Authority
Values:	Integrity, Courage, Stewardship, Excellence
Cultural Themes:	Leadership, Teamwork
Misconduct Types:	Not Specific
GBA Plus Themes:	Not Specific
Audience:	Defence Team

Facilitator's Guide

Learning Objectives:

- Discuss the ethical principles of Respect the dignity of all persons, Serve Canada before self as well as Obey and support lawful authority in this scenario.
- Discuss the ethical values of integrity, courage, stewardship, and excellence in this scenario.

Facilitation Questions:

1. What is the problem in this scenario?
 - Open group discussion.
 - In this situation, the supervisor is faced with either stretching the truth to portray Will as a good employee or explaining why he thinks Will is challenging to manage.
2. What considerations are at play with respect to Defence Ethics?
 - Open group discussion.
 - Discuss how the three ethical principles apply to this scenario.
 - Discuss the values of integrity, courage, stewardship, and excellence in this scenario as they related to Will.
 - What are Joe's obligations as a supervisor to the values?
 - As a supervisor, Joe has leadership responsibilities that non-supervisors do not have. In terms of the values of stewardship and courage contained in the DND and CAF Code of Values and Ethics, Joe is obligated to work with Will to help him improve his behaviour. Courage compels Joe to face this challenge with character. Honesty and integrity compel Joe to explain that Will has been a "challenge."
 - Discuss what it means to consider peoples personal lives outside of work. Is Joe aware of potential issues in Will's life that might have cause these issues? does not know what is happening in Will's personal life and has never asked if there is a personal reason for him arriving late or using sick days. Perhaps Will has a chronic illness or supports his family as a single caregiver. Ethically, what is owed to subordinates in terms of humility and empathy? How does that impact the way in which we reply to these questions by the person calling for a work reference? How does a supervisor's biases and misconceptions affect their subordinates?
 - Discuss work related factors that could be causing Will to be late and absent, including team morale, work distribution, management style, etc. Could Joe be a factor that is causing Will to less present at work?
3. What are some potential courses of action that could be taken in this scenario? What should Joe do in this situation?
 - Option 1: Lie about Will's behaviour in the hopes that he would be selected for the position in Diane's organization. Outright lying is never the best choice. In this case, Joe would be compromising his own professional credibility and integrity, not to mention attempting to pass off a problem employee rather than working harder to help Will improve his behaviour or understand Will better. By lying in a reference check, Joe would be using his public role irresponsibly and inappropriately.
 - Option 2: Be honest and explain the challenges he has had with Will. He will have to face the reality that the feedback he provides could influence Diane's decision.
 - Option 3: Call Diane back later and have an honest and empathetic conversation with Will about his work habits, career goals, and how he needs to be supported, which can inform the upcoming conversation with Diane.