



Scenario: Conformity and Uniqueness

Group Size: 4-15

Robin is a team leader in a mixed military and civilian organization within the Department of National Defence (DND). They work with people from different backgrounds, cultures, gender-identities, ranks, and levels. Robin wants to create a sense of belonging and cohesion amongst the team members, but also wants to respect and value their unique personalities and ways of self-expression. Robin notices that some of the team members tend to conform to the dominant culture and norms of the defence organization, while others try more to show that they are distinct and unique from those cultural norms.

Just last week, a DND civilian employee, named Khalil, approached Robin to discuss what has been happening. The employee told Robin, "When I joined the defence department as an analyst, I was excited to work with the military members and learn from their experiences. I soon realized, however, that they have a very rigid and hierarchical way of doing things, and that they also expected me to follow their direction and ways of doing things without question. They told me that this is the way that it had always been done in defence, and that I have to fall in with their leader's commands and ways of doing business if I want to be part of the team. I feel like I have no voice or autonomy, and that my ideas for improving our work are ignored or dismissed. I want to try new things, experiment with different approaches, and challenge the status quo. I want to express my individuality and creativity, not just conform. Every time I try to do that, however, I face resistance and criticism from the military members. They say that I am being disrespectful and unprofessional. They say that I don't understand the culture and the mission of defence, and that I have to adapt or leave."

As the leader of the team, Robin wonders how to balance Khalil's needs for self-expression, uniqueness, and drive for innovation, while still absorbing Khalil into a group that has strongly engrained cultural way of doing things. Robin thinks about how they can foster an inclusive team environment where everyone feels they belong but also feel comfortable to express themselves and contribute to the team's goals.

Categories

Principles:	Respect the Dignity of All Persons
Values:	Courage, Excellence
Cultural Themes:	Leadership, Teamwork
Misconduct Types:	Not Specific
GBA Plus Themes:	Culture, Rank
Audience:	Defence Team

Facilitator's Guide

Learning Objectives:

- Discuss the ethical principle of Respect the dignity of all persons in this scenario.
- Discuss the ethical values of courage and excellence in this scenario.

Facilitation Questions:

1. What is the ethical dilemma in this scenario?
 - Open group discussion.
 - The ethical dilemma in this scenario is that Robin wants to foster a sense of belonging and cohesion among their team members, who come from diverse backgrounds, cultures, identities, and ranks, while also respecting and valuing their individuality and self-expression.
2. What considerations are at play with respect to the DND and CAF Code of Values and Ethics?
 - Open group discussion.
 - Respect the dignity of all persons: All persons, regardless of their diverse backgrounds and perspectives, must be shown respect to promote an inclusive culture at DND/CAF.
 - Courage: Khalil is showing courage in bringing forward their concerns about the team culture and inclusiveness.
 - Excellence: Promoting a diverse and inclusive workplace can improve innovation, teamwork and improve the quality of the services given by a group.
3. What possible courses of action could Robin take in this scenario? Which is the best option? Why?
 - Option 1: Act. Robin could discuss the topic of inclusion with their team. An inclusive workplace has been defined as “a collective culture in which people feel valued, respected, connected, psychologically safe, involved in decision-making, recognized as having unique characteristics that contribute to organizational success, and empowered to bring their authentic selves to the workplace.” An inclusive team works to find a balance between making everyone feel that they belong based on their commonalities but also respects that all members are different, and individuality and authenticity are valued.
 - Option 2: Tell Khalil that they should work harder to fit in with the group. The DND/CAF culture is what it is and is unlikely to change. The Commander of the unit does not accept any dissent or questioning of commands. Khalil would do well to “fall in” and get on with their tasks.
 - Note to facilitator: this is not an acceptable answer and can be interpreted as harassment or discrimination. This approach will be disrespectful over Khalil identity
4. Can conformity and absorption into a group coexist with individual uniqueness and authenticity in a team? Can you describe, with examples, how this might look within your team?
 - Open group discussion.
 - Celebrate and appreciate similarities (e.g., all part of Defence Team and of a specific command or Level 1) and differences (e.g., military/civilian; combat/support trades; introvert/extrovert, cultural backgrounds, etc.) within the team.
 - Encourage team members to express their opinions and ideas without fear of judgment or rejection.