



Scenario: Hands Tied

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 \(EAP\)](#).

You are the Adjutant (Adjt) at a training establishment. One day, you notice that the Commandant's (Comdt) Administrative Assistant (AA) is preparing to leave at midday. You ask if everything is all right, since it is unusual for him to leave early. He replies that everything is fine but that he has some personal errands to run and was asked by the Comdt to complete a few of her personal chores.

You are surprised and ask if this is a regular occurrence. He replies that he sometimes does other personal errands for the Comdt, but what he really wishes, is that she would stop hitting on him. Your jaw hits the floor! You ask for an explanation. He then tells you that the Comdt has on several occasions and always in a "laughing" manner, stated that they should have an affair. He has always declined and explains that she should not be saying things like that, but the behaviour has continued.

You become angry and mention that you will speak with the Comdt about the issue. He does not want you to say a word and explains, "It's not that big of a deal. I can handle it." He feels that if you say something, it may make the working environment awkward. Despite the personal tasks and inappropriate behaviour, he still likes his job and does not want anything to jeopardize his position. You insist that something must be said, but once again, he is adamant. He insists that you do not intervene.

Categories

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| Principles: | Respect the Dignity of all Persons |
| Values: | Integrity, Loyalty, Courage, Excellence |
| Cultural Themes: | Service, Identity, Leadership, Teamwork |
| Misconduct Types: | Abuse of Power, Harassment |
| GBA Plus Themes: | Gender, Rank |
| Audience: | Defence Team |

Facilitator's Guide

Learning Objectives:

- Discuss the ethical obligation of “Respect the Dignity of all Persons” in the workplace.
- Discuss abuse of power and the ethical values of loyalty, courage, and integrity as well as duty, a professional expectation in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) ethos, in the workplace.

Facilitation Questions:

1. What would you do in this situation? What are the considerations?
 - Allow open discussion from the group.
 - Ethical concerns: The Comdt is taking advantage of her position by asking her AA to do personal errands for her. More importantly, she is harassing him and abusing her authority.
 - Personal factors: You are torn between intervening and not intervening. Speaking to the Comdt would be against the wishes of the AA and betray the trust that he has put in you by sharing that information. The Commandant is your boss, and in retaliation, could make your life unbearable too.
 - Environmental factors: She is the Comdt of the training establishment. She might perceive criticizing her behaviour as a challenge to her authority. As a result, the work environment will likely be strained, and morale could be affected.
2. What is the ethical dilemma in this situation?
 - It is your duty and responsibility to support any possible victim of harassment.
 - You face a dilemma because the AA asked you not to intervene. Now you must choose between reporting the incident and remaining loyal to the AA's wishes. Furthermore, by intervening, you might be viewed as disloyal to the AA and disloyal to your Comdt by questioning her unethical behaviour.
 - You are also facing an internal challenge of confronting gender bias. Film and media productions sometimes portray that it is exciting and desirable for a woman leader or supervisor to want to have an affair with her assistant. However, you know that a man leader making the same advances on a woman assistant is predatory. How do gender bias and gender stereotypes impact the way we see this scenario?
3. What are some potential courses of action that could be taken in this scenario?
 - Option 1: Speak with the Deputy Commanding Officer (DCO) to verify the AA's account and ask him to investigate the allegations. You may be perceived as interfering with the Comdt's business. Also, the AA would be questioned by the DCO to confirm the allegations. This option would break his request for confidentiality.
 - Option 2: Address the situation directly with the Comdt by requesting a private interview. This could put a stop to the Comdt's behaviour, however, her professional relationship with you and her AA could be affected.
 - Option 3: Without disclosing the specifics of the case, seek advice from the harassment advisor. Your information could lead to a formal investigation.
 - Option 4: Respect the AA's wishes and do not intervene. If the allegations are true, the Comdt will continue to harass him.