



Scenario: Office Culture Shock

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 \(EAP\)](#).

Major Garnier has just joined an organisation located at the National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) in Ottawa after serving in Army units for the past fifteen years. The office has some military members but there are many more civilian employees than he is used to working with.

Major Garnier is currently telling stories and laughing with the Senior NCMs near his cubicle. The humour makes him feel good as it reminds him of the fun he used to have in the field. It is comfortable, familiar, and helps him bond with his Army colleagues.

Maya Ahuja, a civilian finance officer, works in a cubicle close to Major Garnier. She is sick and tired of the loud discussions, laughing, swearing, and vulgar jokes. She knows that the quiet office environment is new to her colleagues, but it makes it hard for her to concentrate on her work and she feels disgusted by some of the stories and jokes that are being told. On the other hand, she does not want to look like the office stick-in-the-mud. She stands up and eyes down Major Garnier and the group, conveying clearly that she is displeased.

Major Garnier gets the message but is frustrated. He's used to the field talk of his former unit, where off-coloured jokes and swearing were common and accepted. In his new office, he finds that his colleagues are too formal and that they are overly sensitive to his language. He feels alienated in this new environment and wonders if he made a mistake by coming to work at NDHQ. He knows that creating an inclusive workplace is important, but he wonders if he can still actually bring his authentic self to the office or if needs to change himself in order to fit in. Perhaps, he thinks, it's the defence civilian colleagues who need to adapt to working with him and his Army colleagues. He ponders what he should do.

Categories

Principles:	Respect the Dignity of all Persons
Values:	Integrity, Excellence, Courage
Cultural Themes:	Teamwork
Misconduct Types:	General Misconduct
GBA Plus Themes:	Culture
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 Integrity, Excellence and Courage in this scenario.
- Discuss what makes an inclusive workplace.

Facilitation Questions:

1. What is the ethical dilemma in this scenario?
 - Open group discussion.
 - The ethical dilemma in this scenario is how to balance the respect for diversity and workplace etiquette in the office and the need for cohesion among military and civilian staff.
 - If the vulgar jokes include themes of sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, racism, antisemitism, or any other form of hateful, discriminatory or hurtful behaviour, how does the scenario change? How does the response change? What if the vulgar jokes were speaking to a group someone in the office, or Maya themselves was a part of?
2. What considerations are at play with respect to Defence Ethics and the CAF ethos?
 - Open group discussion.
 - Respect the dignity of all persons: Maya has the right to work in a respectful and quiet environment.
 - Discuss how the values of Integrity, Excellence and Courage are at play in this scenario.
3. How would you define an inclusive workplace?
 - Definition from a Chief Professional Conduct and Culture (CPCC) [Initiating Directive on the Integration of the Measurement of Inclusive Behaviours in the Defence Team](#) (2021): 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.”
 - Definition from [CAF Ethos: Trusted to Serve](#) (2023): Those who are inclusive reject racism, sexism, heteronormativity, homophobia, xenophobia or any other form of hateful, discriminatory or hurtful behaviour, conduct or association. They take a proactive approach to prevent, stop, and report such conduct and support those affected. Inclusive leaders and team members take deliberate steps to identify and challenge inequities both within their teams and within the institution.
4. This scenario highlights an apparent paradox of inclusion, as we typically say that individuals need to be able to bring their “authentic self” to the workplace. However, if the actions or words of their “authentic selves” impinge upon another’s rights or comfort, each party will need to work to construct an environment that is inclusive. What actions could Major Garnier and Maya take in this situation?
 - Option 1: Major Garnier and Maya could discuss the issues respectfully, openly, and honesty between themselves and try to find solutions. What could those solutions potentially look like?
 - Option 2: Ignore the situation. This may not be the best option as resentments could grow and lead to issues with group cohesion and effectiveness.
 - Option 3: Seek advice. Advice could be sought from a unity ethics officer or the chain of command.
 - Option 4 (if the vulgar jokes were discriminatory or hateful): Maya can launch an official grievance, or report the incident to the chain of command. If Maya needs support afterwards due to the effect of the comments, she could reach out to EAP or similar support services.
5. How can Major Garnier adapt to the different norms of his new office without losing his identity and the sense of belonging that he felt while working in army units?
 - Open group discussion.
 - *Facilitator note: if vulgar joes include themes of hateful conduct, discrimination, or hurtful language, this is not a matter of identity and belonging, but a serious matter of harassment, hateful conduct, or other related topics.