



Scenario: Tough Training

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 one of a group of officer cadets (OCdt) that has just finished the first part of the Basic Officer Training Course (BOTC). Your group has formed close bonds because of the hard training you've all endured at the hands of an unusually demanding directing staff. The directing staff (DS), that included two infantry sergeants, recently returned from an overseas deployment. As you begin the next phase of your training, new candidates are joining, and it soon becomes clear that some of them are not up to the task. In particular, Naval Cadet (NCdt) McBanes seems unprepared for the gruelling physical demands.

The morning runs are led daily by the star infantry OCdt Bruno Lee, whose physical prowess and natural leadership ability have made them a favourite amongst the directing staff. OCdt Lee has been told by the DS to "weed out the weak" by making the runs as hard as possible. One morning, you notice NCdt McBanes beginning to slow down and stumble. The DS encourages OCdt Lee to "motivate" their faltering teammate. OCdt Lee screams at NCdt McBanes to pick up the pace, but to no effect. Frustrated, and hounded by the DS, OCdt Lee shoves NCdt McBanes, who then falls.

You and three other candidates see the incident unfold and stop to assist. You are, however, quickly dissuaded by the screams of the DS to keep moving. Later that day, you learn that NCdt McBanes was taken to hospital by ambulance and will not be returning. You and your three comrades are ordered to write witness summaries. That evening, one of the DS confronts you and strongly suggests you change your report to bring it in line with the other three reports which do not mention OCdt Lee shoving NCdt McBanes or being encouraged to do so by the DS.

The DS asks you if you are comfortable being a "rat." They also explain that while it may seem cruel, it is essential to "cull the useless." If not, they assure you, these people will get somebody killed someday. This is just training, they say, but "over there," it's life or death. For the first time in your short career, you are truly torn. Part of you can't help but agree with the DS. Due to their operational experience, they must know what they're talking about. Everybody else seems to accept that what happened to NCdt McBanes was inevitable and bound to happen sooner or later.

You do not, however, like the idea of leaving important facts out of your report. You also recall what your friend, an infantry captain, told you about their time as a DS. What surprised them the most was the way that training could transform soldiers as they moved through their phases. "Some of the best officers I've ever seen were the weakest performers at the early stages, and vice-versa," they would insist.

Categories

Principles:	Respect the Dignity of all Persons, Serve Canada before Self, Obey and Support Lawful Authority
Values:	Integrity, Loyalty, Courage, Stewardship
Cultural Themes:	Service, Identity
Misconduct Types:	Hateful Conduct, Abuse of Power, Harassment, General Misconduct
GBA Plus Themes:	Not Specific
Audience:	Canadian Armed Forces

Facilitator's Guide

Learning Objectives:

- Discuss the ethical principles of Respect the Dignity of all persons, Serve Canada before Self, and Obey and Support lawful authority in this setting.
- Discuss the ethical values of integrity, loyalty, courage, and stewardship in this scenario.

Facilitation Questions:

1. What is the problem in this scenario?
 - Open group discussion.
2. What considerations are at play with respect to Defence Ethics and the CAF ethos?
 - Open group discussion.
 - The mistreatment of NCdt McBanes, including the aggressive behavior and shoving by OCdt Lee, is a clear violation of the ethical principle of Respect the dignity of all persons. Not only is NCdt McBanes' dignity disregarded but their physical wellbeing has been compromised. There is also the issue of harassment.
 - What are the tensions between the three principles in this scenario? Does – or can – group think (including the pressure to conform) influence how the principles are perceived?
 - Is the order to “cull the weak” lawful and ethical? Does it contradict Obey and support lawful authority as leadership’s duty towards stewardship of its subordinates?
 - Serve Canada before Self – In this context, it means prioritizing the safety, well-being, and ethical conduct of the training program over the pressures to conform. OCdt Bonhomme's actions, driven by pressure to “weed out the weak,” conflict with this ethical principle.
 - “Obey and Support Lawful Authority” – While the cadets are expected to follow orders, this obligation does not absolve them of their responsibility to question and report unlawful or unethical orders (“cull the useless”).
3. What are the potential consequences of choosing to remain silent and change your report to align with the others? Is it ethically justifiable to omit crucial information from a witness report to protect a fellow cadet, even if it was a direct order from your superiors?
 - Discuss the option of staying silent and altering the report. You risk perpetuating a culture that tolerates hazing, bullying, harassment, or harmful practices in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). This can have long-term negative effects on morale, team cohesion, CAF professional conduct and culture, and the ethical climate within the organization.
 - Discuss courage and integrity in relation to this scenario, and how those values are or can be demonstrated in this scenario.
 - Discuss service offence related to “false statements” (QR&O 103.57) by a perpetrator, including career implications as a result.
4. What would you do in this situation?
 - Option 1: Report the incident truthfully. Adhere to the duty to report the incident truthfully, even if it means going against the directive of your superiors and potentially facing the consequences for doing so. This involves maintaining the integrity of the witness report and serving the principle of Respect the dignity of all persons.
 - Option 2: Report the incident to chain of command/superiors. Pass information to senior leadership to have them determine the best course of action.
 - Option 3: Change the statement to omit crucial details. You risk perpetuating a culture that tolerates hazing, bullying, harassment, or harmful practices in the military. And it is also a service offence.