# De-escalation Protest

## Description

This scenario is based on an actual event at a protest rally. A male police officer intervened in a conversation between a female officer and a female protestor. The situation escalated, as is shown in the video.

## Notes to Facilitator

There can be four to six participants in each breakout group. While gender could be a significant factor in the scenario, the make-up of participant groups need not be; however, a mixed gender group is recommended. Recognize that the content and discussion may be triggering for some participants.

Ask the participants to note their general reaction. After viewing the Foundational Scenario video, ask them: “Who did you align with most? The female protestor, the female police officer or the male police officer?”

What are your learning objectives for this exercise or course? What prompts could you add to extend or expand the simulation in that direction? What additional resources or assignments might you add?

## Foundational Scenario

[**Watch *Officer Bubbles***](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7dk4KusnyfQ&feature=youtu.be)***[[1]](#footnote-1)***

## Scenario #1

You have been asked to serve on a task force to explore how the police department can use news footage such as this in de-escalation training. Consider who might be asked to serve on this task force (e.g., police leadership, training officers, experienced frontline officers, human resource personnel, union executive, etc.) and assign individual group members to these specific roles. After reviewing the video, articulate whose position, if anyone’s, you most closely align with. From that position, discuss how each officer might have behaved differently to resolve and de-escalate the situation. Discuss factors such as whether they did or did not work as a team, tipping-points where things could have gone either way, and what might have been done to better assess the protestor and mitigate the situation.

## Scenario #2

In groups of three or four, role play a conversation between the female police officer and the male police officer at the station after the events in the video. Things that might be raised include whether they did or did not work as a team, their rationale for behaving as they did, and how each is feeling after-the-fact about their actions. Depending on group composition, as well as exploring the role play with one male and one female, try exploring the role play with two males or two females, or nonbinary participants. Do the dynamics change? How? Other team members should take notes and be part of the discussion once the role play is completed, noting any issues of power that may arise during the role play.

## [Watch an Example with Learners of Case 7](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=12xaI235BiU)

## Debrief

### *Interpersonal (in role as task force)*

* Sometimes we enter a situation with a predetermined agenda, or having made assumptions about the other players. How does this support and/or interfere with resolving an issue?
* As the task force, what possible remediation or training might you recommend to the officers involved in this incident?
* Having considered some of the reasons the officers behaved as they did, and perhaps having role played the aftermath in Scenario #2, how did you feel? What might you consider doing differently in a similar situation?

### *Issues*

* Power can be used, abused (intentionally) or misused (unintentionally). Carefully review the scenario, examining how each character may be using, abusing or misusing their power.
* Could the standing orders to the officers have contributed to the escalation? How?
* What might the professional relationship between the officers be? Do you think the officers’ working partnership might be impacted by this incident?

## Extensions

* Hot Seating: In groups, take on the roles of the various participants and ask questions of each other in character:
	+ Male officer’s position
	+ Female officer’s position
	+ Protester’s position
* Consider what you learn about each character, and their motivation for behaving as they did in the video. Does the conversation alter your perspective of the characters? How?

## Assignments

The following suggestions could be undertaken either as a group or individually. They could be written as reflections, offered for discussion, or submitted as assignments for grading.

1. Based on the discussion in Scenario #1, create an outline of ideas to be part of a de-escalation training manual.
2. Based on the discussion and notes from Scenario #2, consider how issues of perceived differential power might be added to the de-escalation training manual.
3. Research to find various de-escalation techniques. Given the variety of situations officers might encounter (e.g., domestic abuse, mental health crisis, addiction crisis, etc.), consider which techniques might work best in a given situation.

## Readings

[Alvarez, N. (2020). Stop. Rewind. Replay.: Performance, police training and mental health crisis response, Performance Research, 25(8), 69-75.](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13528165.2020.1930783)

[Di Nota, P. M., Chan, J. F., Huhta, J. M., & Andersen, J. P. (2021). Considering Objective and Subjective Measures for Police Use of Force Evaluation. International journal of environmental research and public health, 18(10), 5351.](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18105351)

[Giacomantonio, C., Goodwin, S. & Carmichael, G. (2020). Learning to de-escalate: evaluating the behavioural impact of Verbal Judo training on police constables, Police Practice and Research, 21(4), 401-417.](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15614263.2019.1589472)

[Norris, J., & Saudelli, M. (2018). Heating Up Online Learning: Insights from a Collaboration Employing Arts Based Research/Pedagogy for an Adult Education, Online, Community Outreach Undergraduate Course. Social Sciences, 7(104), 1-23.](http://www.mdpi.com/2076-0760/7/7/104)

[Oliva, J., Morgan, R. & Compton, M. (2010). A Practical Overview of De-Escalation Skills in Law Enforcement: Helping Individuals in Crisis While Reducing Police Liability and Injury, Journal of Police Crisis Negotiations, 10(1-2), 15-29.](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15332581003785421)

[Staller, M. S., & Koerner, S. (2021). Commentary: Observational Behavior Assessment for Psychological Competencies in Police Officers: A Proposed Methodology for Instrument Development. Frontiers in psychology, 12, 686576.](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.686576)

1. © Mirror Theatre retains the rights to all videos and scripts produced by them, as indicated in the simulations. Go to [*mirrortheatre.ca*](http://mirrortheatre.ca) for more information. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)