

Please Take Off Your Shoes

CMHA and RCMP Educational Event

Police Scene

In car

- Trainer Hey did you hear about that call in Vancouver last weekend? Someone attempted a police assisted suicide.
- Trainee What's that?
- Trainer It's when someone wants to commit suicide and they threaten a police officer with a deadly weapon. The officer has to respond with lethal force in self defense.
- Trainee How do you know when it's someone having a crisis and when it's someone attacking you?
- Trainer You don't.
- Trainee Yeah, Suk took a call at a rave. He thought a guy was having some sort of breakdown and went to help him. Turns out the guy was on cocaine and ecstasy and it turned into a really violent fight.
- Pause
- Trainee I got this voicemail from someone who is really angry at me. I took her call just before the start of my four days off. When I got back she left several message wanting to know what was happening with her case. I was off shift for four days, what am I supposed to do?
- Trainer With the four days on, four days off shift rotation, what can you do?

Call arrives on computer

- Trainee There's a noise complaint from a neighbor here. We've got eight other priority two calls waiting, which one should we take? These other ones look more urgent.
- Trainer Yeah, but that noise complaint has been waiting for awhile. It's not as urgent as the others, but we need to get to it because they've been waiting for so long. Maybe it'll be short, and we can move to those other urgent ones.



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Does it say what kind of noise complaint? Is it a party? Run the address on the computer.

Trainee The address says there was some kind of disturbance at the address 18 months ago. There was a rowdy party with teenagers drinking. There's no name here but the complainant mentioned the neighbor is Chinese.

Trainer OK, remember to emphasize confidentiality. If it's a Chinese family, lots of times their biggest concern is confidentiality. If it's a mental health crisis, under the Mental Health Act we have to keep everything confidential. "Saving face" is really important to them.

I went to a call like this once and I had to explain to them that we're here for public safety. They thought they'd have a criminal record, but there no criminal record for this kind of thing. They didn't know we were there to arrange medical support and referral. Sometimes they think we're only out here to get the bad guy. It's not a shame if we come to help them.

Trainee What can I expect on this call?

Trainer Well, if it's a mental health issue, about half the time we have to take the person to the hospital. It's under Section 28¹ of the Mental Health Act. Lots of times these kinds of calls become two person, sometimes even three or four person calls. They can become very violent.

Our goal is officer safety, the safety of the person involved, safety for the public around the scene, and the benefit of the patient.

1 British Columbia Mental Health Act. Part 3 Admission and Detention of Patients.

Section 28 (1) A police officer or constable may apprehend and immediately take a person to a physician for examination if satisfied from personal observations, or information received, that the person:

- (a) is acting in a manner likely to endanger that person's own safety or the safety of others, and
- (b) is apparently a person with a mental disorder.



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About half the time mental health calls become violent. Either the person will be aggressive as soon as they open the door, or it might gradually build up. You have to wait and see. It's unpredictable. After you decide the person needs to go to the hospital, gradually they get angrier and angrier. I don't like using handcuffs, but safety for everyone is our first priority. I don't want to get hurt in the scuffle, and I don't want him to get hurt either. When you start to reach around for your cuffs, things can escalate quickly.

Arrive on scene from inside the car

Trainer Let's just drive by first and check out the house. We'll turn around at the corner and drive by again.

Lets' park here. Back in because we might need to leave in a rush.

Let's check the license plate on the car in the driveway.

OK, check for safety on the site. What do you see from here?

Trainee All the windows on the ground floor are covered with black plastic bags. It looks like they're doing renovations to the house and the grass hasn't been cut in a couple of months. There's lots of crap around the house, pieces of wood and tools from the renovations. I see a crow bar by the ladder and that looks like a hammer on the ground. There's lots of stuff that could be used as a weapon.

Trainer Yeah, do you see those empty bottles lying around? Any dog signs? There are a lot of things that could be dangerous. Let's get out and take a closer look around the house.

Get out of car and walk premise

Trainee Let's look along the side of the house.

I see someone looking at us from that window. I can't hear what they're fighting about, can you hear what's going on? Can you hear who's fighting? What are they saying?

Trainer No. There are no lights on inside either. Most of the curtains are closed. Looks dark inside.



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Trainee I saw a woman at the window. It's getting dark out. Should we call for backup just in case?

Trainer Maybe. Let's keep looking around the house.

Approach door

Trainer Before we go to the door, where is your escape route? [They both stop and look around] What's the safest way for us to get to safety if there are a whole bunch of people fighting inside?

OK, remember to keep an eye on her hands in case she's carrying anything.

Oh yeah, they might ask you to remove your shoes before going in.

Trainee What?

Trainer It's a common custom to remove your shoes in lots of cultures before entering a home.

Trainee I'm supposed to work in my stocking feet? My boots are part of my uniform. What if an emergency comes up and I have to run?

Trainer I know.

Trainee knocks on door

[Door opens and a woman with an angry facial expression steps out. She makes no eye contact. She's holding a tool used for the renovations. In a stressed loud voice, she says in the opposite language of the trainee]

"Can you help me?"

Scene ends



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Family Scene

Agnes What are you doing? You're so lazy. We're supposed to finish the house renovations before father comes back to Richmond. You're so lazy.

You've been like this for over a year!

Julie [Peaking out the window]

They told me to watch out. They're controlling you too. I told you about the little white robots ... they say you don't believe me.

Agnes Why can't you just be normal? You're stressed that's all. Just start working harder and our life will be fine.

We don't want anyone to know about your crazy talk.

Everything comes from hard work

Julie Fine. I'm not going to talk to you about it.

That contractor working on our house is stealing from us. He's taking our tools home with him. They're our tools.

Agnes He's not stealing. You're sick. You went to a Doctor at home, why won't you go now? You better go because we don't want to catch your sickness.

You're embarrassing us. You have a lazy personality. Just act normal!

Don't let anyone know you're crazy; people will stay away from us. No one wants to be near a sick person like you, no one wants to get your disease.

Julie [Starts hiding a chisel under her seat].



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Look at this article in the paper; it says there is more stealing in Richmond. I know who's doing it. You won't listen. You're ignoring me! You don't believe me!

Agnes [Ignores her.]

Stop hiding tools under the couch! The contractor needs those to finish fixing the doors!

Julie They're going to steal it. [hiding the nail puller under her chair]

Agnes Nobody is going to steal it. Who is going to? Who's here? No one. You haven't seen the contractor steal anything from us. What's missing? Huh? What? You tell me! Where are they? This place is a mess. You're supposed to clean up so he can do his job, and why are all these tools hidden all over? It's his tools; you shouldn't hide them. You're lazy and won't do your job.

I'm so tired of telling you to clean up. I tired - so tired of our running our business and tired of living abroad."

Julie [Voice tone starting to escalate. She feels annoyed]

I told you to watch out! They'll take it from us. Where did the blue handled hammer go? [pause as she listens to the voices] ... and the roll of tape ... he took the roll of tape. I saw him. Why don't you listen to me!? Why don't you believe me!? I'm telling the truth.

Agnes You're just lazy.

Julie I can hear them telling me now ... [pause to listen to voices] the little white robots are talking. They're controlling you too.

Agnes [Returns to reading her magazine, turns her back and ignores her]

Julie [Not getting the response she wants, and gets more excited]

Watch out! Agnes, hide your stuff. Are you listening to me?! Why won't you listen to me!?

[No response from sister, she turns to the window to warn the neighbors]



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Watch out! Hide your stuff. They'll steal it!

Agnes Stop that. They'll think you're crazy!

Police dialogue

Agnes Stop that. They'll call the police. If the police come, everyone will know. It's embarrassing. You'll shame us. People will think we're criminals.

Julie The white robots say the police will protect us.

Agnes No, if they come we'll be punished.

You'll ruin our image if the police come. If they come it only means more trouble. Mom and Dad will be shamed if they come here. Stop it!

Sit down. Please just sit down. I'll take care of everything for you. You're stressed. I'll fix everything ok? OK? Just sit down and be quiet. I'll fix it. No one needs to know. I'll fix it.

Julie [Sits down. Puts a screwdriver under her chair] They're controlling you too you know.

Agnes [Sees a police car drive by]

Oh no, there's a police car driving by. They'll come in here and we'll lose our permanent residence status! Now we'll be on record for ever. The government will think we're all sick.

Julie [Goes to the window] Where'd they go? I bet they're coming here. Why aren't they stopping? Why are they just driving by?

Agnes I hope nobody is watching.

Julie There they are. Why are they backing in to our driveway? And they're just sitting there. What are they doing? What are they doing? Why don't they get out?



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I'm scared. I don't trust them ... the white robots say we should go out there. They're here because things are being stolen. They can help us.

Agnes Just stay inside!

Why don't they come in? People will see them. They're just waiting there.

Get away from the window. They'll think we're spying on them.

Constables get out of car.

Julie They're getting out. They're just standing there. What are they doing just standing there? Where are they going? I can't see them. Where did they go?

Agnes Are they spying on us? Why don't they just come in? Shh. Don't say anything. They're walking around the house. I bet they're trying to hear us.

Julie Are they going to sneak in?

They can help us; they can help us with the people stealing from us

Knock on door

Julie [runs to open the door while carrying a nail puller]

They can help us.

[Opens door and with an excited facial expression steps out. She makes no eye contact with police. In a stressed loud voice, she says in the opposite language of the trainee]

"Can you help me?"

Scene ends

