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Session 1: You are here

The first day of the experiential learning sessions was upon us. I would be meeting the group for the first time, and I would be working with Chris Honeyman and Maria Volpe in the classroom. Some of the participants would be students, some would be police officers, others would be conflict management professionals. At the start of the class I wanted to circumvent any role identification (so that people wouldn’t segregate themselves into cliques based on job or status) and to establish co-ownership of the process. I made a few choices to facilitate this. I left introductions until the end of class, I put the group into randomized subgroups in which they had to do time-limited activities that required sharing personal information, and I also offered lunch every day for the cohort, as a way of making this more of a project than a class: “it’s a place where we share activities together.” The theme of this class was You are here, and the design of this class was intended to express the sense that they had entered into something that had already begun. They had entered into their lives.

Key day one activities:

1. Draw a mental map of how you got here today.
a. Include one sound you heard and a description of one thing you touched.
b. Make a list of everywhere in New York City and the surrounding counties where you’ve travelled this week.

2. Take those maps and lists to your small group. Each group has a map of the tri-state area.
   a. With markers, map your usual routes on the group map
   b. Identify two areas you don’t go to — one you’re curious about, but don’t have a reason to go to, and one you feel like you don’t belong in. Write those down — we’ll collect them, and use them to set your homework assignment.

3. Foreground, middle ground, background
   a. In small groups, consider an image. Describe it.
   b. Now focus just on the background.
   c. Now focus just on the middle ground.
   d. Now focus just on the foreground.

   How do you now describe the image differently?

4. Listen to the room.
   a. In a circle, sit with your eyes closed. We’re going to listen to the room for one minute.
   b. Now try to focus in on any sounds you hear outside of the room — the background sounds, the far-away sounds. Call out anything you hear.
   c. Now focus in on the sounds in the middle distance — inside the room, perhaps in the hallway, until maybe a few feet in front of your face.
   d. Now focus in on those sounds closest to you.

5. Field observation.
   a. Get into pairs.
b. Your partner picks a location for you in the building [the building was large, with many kinds of spaces.]. You will both travel there.
c. Your partner will ask you to close your eyes, and then give you a series of prompts to describe, one at a time, for one full minute each:
   what you hear
   what you smell
   what you taste
   what you feel
   and then to open your eyes, and describe what you see.

Your partner will document your observations. Then you will switch and repeat the task.

6. Gather together as one group again.
The pairs will share their findings from the observation exercise. We will share the group maps and discuss patterns of movement and what we overlook in our daily movement patterns. We will now introduce ourselves by name, and share the places we don’t go to.

   You will be given a specific location to travel to, based on where you identified you don’t go to. During the next week you will travel there to repeat the Field Observation project by yourself, following an observation log we will hand out.

7. Discussion about this project.
This is the Emotional Competence in Policing Project. Let’s focus on the word project. In light of what you’ve done today and what you see you’ll be doing going forward, what does that mean to you?

   The discussion following this set-up leads us to identifying this as a learning environment that we are co-creating. We will be building it together.
A Place of Peace

Jenny Pacanowski

I don’t usually look for places
Maybe people
Maybe noticing drug addicts
Maybe drunks
Maybe disorderly types
Maybe just guns
Weapons to analyze
That smell
Always present
Gunpowder
I can still smell
The unfiltered air
Sticks to my nose hairs
Seeps into the crevasses of my nasal cavity
Ballistics
I am Ballistics
Splatter
Shooter
The ear plugs have molded to my physique
The pleasant shape of my skull
Distorted by their presence
Protective presence

My direction is clear
I peel the protective layer off my body
The transition is smooth
From the conformity of the uniform

The subway has the usual bumps
Screeches of metal on metal
On my time
I am searching
Searching for a place
Outside my normal view

I look up
Just in time
To slide off my seat
And sail through the doors
Towards the gate

“Crack head theater” is in full swing
They are presenting
A little poetry
A little devastation
A little desperation
The stage in their mind
Ever changing
Just shifting from the crack
To the begging
To the shelter
To the crack
To the next high
To the moment of slight content
To the scheming
To the begging
To the next high

I can hear the birds singing
Not the pigeons
Many varieties
In pitch
In strength of projection
The rustle of the leaves above
Holding the bird’s song

My feet move from the concrete
To the gravel crunching
Poking up into the soles of my shoes
I see the grass
Peeking up around the sides
Of this walk

I am staying on course
No time for barefoot in the grass
No time for the massage of
Mother Nature
On the toes of my inner child

I find it
The bench
Worn and brown
Wooden and solid
As I descend into the smell of freshness
The lake breeze is my therapy
I absorb the serenity
Breaking free of the stuffy
The mission complete
Finding a moment of peace
In my mind
Session 2: Wherever you go, you are there

What’s the point of all this listening? I had asked the cohort to do pretty far-out exercises without much explanation. In the second session, I needed to address concretely the purpose of these multi-sensory listening exercises. I wanted to do so without changing the tone of the project toward something didactic.

Jack and I facilitated this session together, modeling conversation, reflection and collaboration throughout. Jack has a charming and disarming presence, backed up by a work record that engenders respect and honor. His presence in a room is one of strength and experience. My “character” for this project is to be utterly non-threatening, a warm and kind outsider who is interested and creative, who can unlock places of self-reflection that would normally be guarded. My presence in a room tells the cohort that they’re in caring hands, and that I’m taking them somewhere good, even if they have no idea where that will be. Jack and I are a pretty interesting duo. We model similar leadership styles from very different backgrounds. This modeling was the foundation of the session in which a person’s presence was the core topic. After asking the cohort to tune into their awareness, we would ask them to take one further step, to reflect on just what they as individuals bring into any situation. The message of this class was, “Wherever you go, you are there.”

Key day two activities:

1. A ten-minute written reflection on their homework assignment. Include in this time a sketch of the place you went to.

2. Rachel and Jack in discussion, with Rachel basically interviewing Jack. Key questions included:
   What’s one thing you wish people would be trained for more?
What are the five top skills you need to have as a hostage negotiator?
Where in life and on the job do you learn these skills?
What’s one word you would use to describe every situation you go into as an HN?

3. Group discussion:
How much set-up did we do last week? Not much.
How much context did I give you for why you were doing certain things? Not much.
Shall we talk about that a bit, and what you guys experienced in your field assignment?

Wait, before we do that, I have another question for you, Jack: How much set-up and context do you have when you go into work every day, for what is going to happen? Not much.

The way we’re organizing this project is so that the sessions and the activities model some of the key lessons that are vital to Emotional Competence in Policing.

We’re going to ask you to do things, to get into situations, and to let any learning come from them.

This characteristic of uncertainty in the activities should also make it apparent how important time for reflection and discussion are.

4. I’d like you to take the reflections you wrote, and give us the highlights. You’re going to tell us your name, your place you went to, you’ll show us your sketch, and then you’ll read your written reflection.

5. Group discussion: On competence
This is called the Emotional Competence in Policing Project. This week I want to speak about the word Competence. What does that mean?
To be able to do something.
To have the skills and to know how to use them.
What does tuning in to our senses have to do with that?

Our senses, our ability to perceive and to be aware of what it is we are perceiving, is the first step in building up a facility, a competence, with our emotions. We have to be able to recognize what we’re feeling and what others are feeling in order to be able to have a real competence with managing these things. We have tools. We just don’t take time to learn how to use them.

There are a couple ideas we’ll work with over the course of this project. Last week was *you are here*, and tuning your senses. This week, we’ll add to that and say, *wherever you go, you are there*.

That’s pretty big, right? Let’s talk about that.

You can’t separate work and life. You can’t remove your self from any situation you are in. And if you think you can, you’re fooling yourself. And when you fool yourself, you miss sometimes vital information, about yourself or about someone else or about a situation. And this can lead to big mistakes.

6. Group discussion: On role identification
Jack, can you tell a couple stories now from your work where you’ve seen people try to take themselves out of the equation? And what I mean by that in this case really is, when you’ve seen people you work with act like their role as an officer, rather than the person you know them to be?

This type of over-identification with a role happens throughout all walks of life of course, with a dad/mom saying “cause I’m the dad/mom, that’s why”, rather than listening to what their child needs or really being aware of what they themselves are feeling. The first step in to being able to step back from this type of over-identification with a role is awareness — awareness of what you’re sensing, and an ability to perceive those sensations without letting them control your actions.
7. Practical application of these ideas: Wherever you go, you are there. Let’s practice with some of this.

**Activity:**

a. Draw a floor plan of a place where you feel really comfortable. Try to be as specific as possible about the details.
b. Write a number from zero to your age on the page. Write one memory (of any type) next to each number.
c. Share with a partner, building a picture of the floor plan and then listing the numbers and the memories.

**Discussion:**

Wherever you go, you are there. You carry all of these memories, places and experiences around with you as well, everywhere you go. You carry your spaces of care and comfort. You also carry your memories in all types of sensory packaging.

8. Fieldwork assignment for next week: You’re going to do another observation in your location this week. But this week, you’re going to put *yourself* there.

**Activity:**

Travel to your assigned location. Walk around the entire perimeter of the area. OBSERVE what you perceive through all your senses. Use SOFT FOCUS.

Once you’ve walked the perimeter, stop and answer the following questions:

- Describe everything you hear, right now.
- Describe everything you taste, right now.
- Describe everything you smell, right now.
- Describe everything you feel, right now.
- Describe everything you see, right now

Now, choose one specific location to station yourself. This can be the same place as last week, or it could be a new one if you’d prefer to change. You will need to be comfortable here for approximately the next hour.
You will now observe the changing environment, and connect these to memories from your life.

You will focus on one sense at a time, for a period of 10 minutes each.

You will take a note of what you observe through that sense, recording at least 5 notes for each sense.

Remember to observe across locations: foreground, middle-ground and background.

Once you take note of an observation, then let your mind wander. Write a reflection on what this observation reminds you of? What memories from your life does this observation connect to?

Don’t judge, go with your gut. Approach this process of connection through soft focus.
Session 3: Wherever you are, you belong

Finding ways of navigating your sensory input in a Policing context

The biggest underlying issue at this point became “Belonging.” It’s all well and good to tune into your senses and to become more aware of who you are, but what if you’re not in your private space? What if you’re on the job? What if you’re acting as “police” and not yourself? The message we needed to reinforce for the cohort at this time was precisely the error in this thinking. No matter what role you’re taking on, wherever you go, you belong.

At the top of this session, we discussed what a police officer’s job is. Zeroing in on the slogan “to serve and protect”, we started to unpack what that meant. Through discussion, we looked at this from different angles, and tried on a few ways of understanding it that are different than the ones we normally think about. Building on the work from the previous “tuning in” sessions, we hit upon the metaphor of the skin. Our skin as a sensory organ, which shields us, and protects us, which regulates our different bodily systems, but which undeniably belongs to our bodies, seemed a revelatory comparison.

Jack then turned the discussion toward a direct policing context. He wove a journey through personal and public examples of police, both in successfully using active total sensory listening, and in historical and contemporary examples of missed opportunities that result in tragically mishandled crises. The main learning points did not directly deal with the examples he enumerated, but rather centered around ways of entering into a process of active listening. These he describes below, to introduce an audience who have never engaged with these concepts before to ways of starting out with the practice of active listening. For those with more experience with this style of communication, these summaries are worth reflecting upon as a way of articulating technique.
Jack: On Active Listening

**Emotion Labeling:** It is important for the emotions of the person speaking to be acknowledged. Identifying the person’s emotions validates what they are feeling instead of minimizing it. During a negotiation, people can act with their emotions and not from a more cognitive perspective. Labeling and acknowledging their emotions helps restore the balance. It’s OK if you get the emotion wrong, for example, if the negotiator says “you seem sad.” The other side may retort by saying “I’m not sad, I’m angry!” The negotiator would then apologize for the misinterpretation, but will now have the emotion identified and can start the process of building rapport.

**Paraphrasing:** This includes repeating what the person said in a much shorter format that is in your own words, while also making sure to not minimize what the person has experienced.

**Reflecting/Mirroring:** When the person has finished speaking, reflecting and mirroring is a much shorter option compared to paraphrasing as it includes repeating the last words the person said. If the person concluded by saying, “…and this really made me angry,” you would say, “It really made you angry.”

Reflecting/Mirroring should be limited to strictly repeating no more than 3 or 4 of the last words spoken by a person. It might seem silly or even odd to do this, but try it — you will see it helps validate with the speaker that you are listening and understanding.

**Effective Pauses/Silence:** Research has shown a major difference between expert hostage and crisis negotiators and non-experts is that experts listen much more than they speak. A general rule for the hostage negotiator is 80 percent listening and 20 percent talking. Part of listening includes utilizing silence, and pausing before taking your turn to speak. Also described as dynamic inactivity, silence allows the other person to continue speaking,
while combining it with pausing prior to speaking helps calm a situation. Again, remember, calming the situation is critical as it helps move the person from acting out of their emotions to a mindset that is more cognitive based. Whenever emotional levels are up, rational thinking is down; it is when rational thinking is down when we make wrong decisions.

“I” Messages: This is used to counteract statements made by the person that are not conducive towards working collaboratively. The active listener states, “I feel___ when you ___ because ___.” The ‘I – When – Because’ equation provides a “timeout” or reality check to the other person, letting them know you are trying to work together and they, from your perspective, are not. It is important to be mindful when using this to not do it in a way (be aware of your tone) that is aggressive and creates an impression of being judgmental.

Open-ended Questions: Asking open-ended questions invites the person to speak longer. Thus it can help diffuse the tension as well as provide you valuable information and insight into their perspective of the situation. Open-ended questions discourage a simple yes or no response. Whenever utilizing open-ended questions, always lead with ‘how, what, where, who, and when.’ This will convey sincerity and interest in understanding the other side, and fosters continued dialog.

Minimal Encouragers: What seem like simple verbal actions, such as “mmm,” “okay,” uh huh, and “I see,” and nonverbal gestures like head nodding, further establish the building of rapport with the person, by you subtly inviting the person to continue speaking.

Summarizing: Summarizing is an extended version of paraphrasing. It is wrapping up everything the person said, including the elements important to the person as well as acknowledging the person’s emotions. Summarizing validates for the person that they have been heard and understood. This is critical to do, as it
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can bring a sense of relief to the person and reduce their actions being dictated by their emotions.

Summarizing is also a valuable tool for a negotiator to use when he or she is unsure what to do or say next. Summarizing what the person has said has multiple benefits in this situation. First, it buys you time, and as already stated, slowing the process down is an important element to contribute to a peaceful resolution.

Second, summarizing can further contribute to the negotiator building rapport and developing trust. Rapport and trust then allow the negotiator to eventually move towards influencing the person to reappraise their situation, and consider alternatives — suggestions from the negotiator, and eventually, a resolution.

After Jack’s presentation, the cohort was then tasked with a three-part fieldwork assignment activating the learning points from this session. It built upon the previous weeks’ work combining active listening, reflections on the job of a police officer, and this week’s intentional interpersonal engagement.

Part One:
Travel to your assigned location.
Walk around the perimeter of the area, with soft focus and with awareness.

Once you’ve walked the perimeter, stop and consider the following questions:

What protects this place?
What regulates this place?
What are the sensations of this place?

Answer these questions by collecting information that you can bring back and share in small groups next week. You will collect the following:
One rhythm
One sound
One smell
Three images
Two tactile sensations
One taste
Three memories from your three times visiting this location

You can bring in objects, photographs, drawings, voice recordings, words, and anything else you can think of to complete this assignment.

Part Two:
Approach an individual on site. Ask them if they will help you with a project you’re doing. You can describe the project to them. You will be asking them to simply answer a series of questions. Ask them if you can record their answers using your phone. (Don’t worry if they say no, you can offer instead to just write down their responses.) The questions you can ask them are:

Describe to me everything you hear, right now.
Describe to me everything you taste, right now.
Describe to me everything you smell, right now.
Describe to me everything you feel, right now.
Describe to me everything you see, right now.

Thank them.
Ask them if you can take their photograph as well.
(Once again, it’s fine if they say no.)

Part Three:
Bring in an additional object for next week that is meaningful to you.
Lament For Officer Friendly

*Maurice Emerson Decaul*

I heard a woman lamenting the death of Officer Friendly
he was a pillar in her community. Once
when she & her friends
were about to get into trouble, it was
Officer Friendly
who knowing their parents, took them home. Officer Friendly
was also the crossing guard. Officer Friendly
would sometimes show up in the cafeteria of her elementary school.
He always carried a smile to share with her & the other children. Her own cousin
had been an Officer Friendly. He was struck & killed on a highway outside Chicago, a week before leaving the force because he’d become disillusioned. She was terribly angry at the death of Officer Friendly because in his wake came a new Officer who was less than friendly, who patrolled the neighborhood but knew no one, who rarely carried a smile or shared a laugh who over her fifty years had developed into an adversary.
Session 4: Crossing contexts and reading a static scene

At this point in the process we began transitioning to expand our introspection to include the public sphere. What happens when we incorporate others into our practice of awareness? As a practical “provocation”, during this session five poets from Poetic Theater joined our cohort. Jenny, Allison, Maurice, Kelly and Teniece were now a part of the group, and they were integrated without much explanation. The group work now included “outsiders” — who were treated as if they had been there all along.

These weren’t just any random people, however; they were artists. They are people who have made radically alternative life choices, and they were a group that came from very different walks of life. Also as artists, they have been trained in the practice of observation, reflection, and listening. They are also five people who are exceptionally interested in the world around them. Incorporating them into the activities opened a new dimension for the participants. Likewise, this was a revelatory experience for the artists. They had a basic idea of what they were getting into, and they had been given task 3 from the previous week’s field assignment; but much as with the rest of the participants, they were to learn by doing as they went along.

This session was broken up into two distinct parts. The first was about crossing contexts, identifying emotions, and experiencing someone else attempting to put themselves in your shoes. Key points of consideration for this are, what is happening when someone else tries to understand you? The second part flipped this investigation and put participants in the role of someone making sense of a situation external to them. The activity animating this investigation focused on reading a static scene, with the key question here being: What happens when you try to understand someone else?
Part one:
1. Get into small groups of four. Folks who were here last week will present their fieldwork experience of their place to these small groups.
2. Still in your small groups, make a list of all the emotions you can think of. Share the master list with the group.
3. Individually, take out your personal object, and write three words that you relate to that object.
4. Unpack each word, one at a time, in a short descriptive free write.
5. Get in pairs and swap writing. Your partner will read aloud your words describing the object, without any context, just your words. How do your words sound different, coming from someone else’s mouth? How does it feel to hear your words? How does hearing them from someone else make you understand your own feelings and emotions differently?

Part two:
This part of the session asked small groups to read a scene through an analysis of the “given circumstances,” a technique from theatre in the Stanislavsky tradition that breaks down the different parts of a situation into specific contexts that will allow an actor to play the situation. The fundamental question for the participants here is: How do you apply the information from your sensory input and your own personal perspective, and make meaning out of something that is external to you? Can you ever actually put yourself in someone else’s shoes (remembering Jack’s question to the man on the bridge and his response to “I know exactly how you feel”)? What transformations happen when you try to put yourself into someone else’s shoes?

Activity:
Look at this photo and describe as much as you can about it, according to the observable given circumstances. You can read any scene following these categories.
The World — (when/historical, where/geographical, political, social, etc. — everything about the environment)
Time (character’s relationship to immediacy, time pressure, etc.)
Character (who is in the picture?)
Relationships (what is the relationship between the characters?)
Events (what is happening?)
Wants (what do the characters want?)
Tactics (how are they going about trying to get what they want?)

Discussion:
The groups then shared their analysis of the photo with the whole cohort. What happened in the second part of the session is that each group made assumptions about the image based largely on the dress and their awareness of the social and political landscape of the time period. What was a bunch of kids at a puppet show, became terrified or angry children in turmoil in World War II. Each of the groups had particular assumptions about the context of the time period, and made broad generalizations about what life was like for everyone who wore a certain set of clothes. They were shocked both to hear the similarities between the groups’ stories, and to see the underlying prejudice that came out of a place of interest, care and empathy.

Activity:
Now we’re going to read a real life scene.
As a small group, you’re going to go out and find a location with people within a five-minute walk from here. Make sure it is a place you have never simply stopped to observe before. Make sure it is a very specific location.
You’re going to observe it for 60 seconds and record the given circumstances. Then you will come back and describe the location as a group.
**Homework:**
After the groups came back and described their location, they were given a task to do independently in preparation for the next week’s session: You will then individually come up with challenges for people in your group to undertake next week. Something achievable, something visible, an action. We’ll use these next week.
The Ideal Police Academy, Part One

Jenny Pacanowski

Low lights illuminate the stage. It is a classroom with a whiteboard and some desks and chairs pushed against the walls. There is movement on the floor of the stage but it is difficult to make out the shapes...of the beings...

A tall broad shouldered man named Gary enters with 4 new recruits.

2 men

Caleb and Dave

2 women

Nissa and Jackie

Gary: Well cadets, here is your first “hands on” exercise. Now that you have passed the tests in emotional competency...we are going to put your knowledge of patience and compassion TO THE TEST!

(He flips on the lights of the classroom. The stage is now bright and full of puppies of all breeds and sizes, between 2 and 6 months old.)

Jackie: (proclaims) What are WE going to do with a bunch of dogs???

Gary: (smiles) Serve and Protect them!!!! Of Course!! With professionalism!
Caleb: But they can’t talk!

Gary: Well, that’s not entirely true. They have their own language!

(he points his finger in the air)

Now, let’s see what skills you really have! Get the puppies to safety.

Each cadet individually tries to scoop up many puppies or one at a time and put them in the playpens and crates. They fumble around and the puppies squirm away, running through legs and jumping out of the playpens. Eventually the cadets are all panting and sweating.

Gary watches laughing to himself

Dave: (highly frustrated, with one particular puppy, winds up and kicks the pup into the crate and slams the door): Ha! Got ya now!

(In one swift motion Jackie pins Dave against the wall.)

Jackie: What the hell?

(She shakes him as he squirms)

Gary: Freeze!!!! Everyone!

(Jackie drops Dave to the floor)

Gary: As you have been taught, there are many ways to accomplish a task especially when dealing with other beings. There is a forceful way which can lead to violence, riots, chaos, looting, etc…. This could cause undue harm
to you, your fellow officers and the people you are trying to protect.

However as a police officer, you want to build respect through cooperation, awareness and understanding in the community YOU SERVE!

Dave: How are we supposed to learn that by wrangling puppies?!

Gary: Start by changing perceptions on how to achieve your task. Your perception is what, Dave?

Dave: To do this efficiently and quickly. Since they can’t talk and they are smaller than me. I assumed it would be easy to wrangle them to the destination of confinement.

Gary: By using the word, “wrangling” what does that imply?

Jackie: That you will be using force.

Gary: YES! However by simply using different WORDS could start a new thought process and action.

And what about the assumptions that because something is smaller it is easier to move?

Caleb: Assumptions are dangerous. The puppies may be smaller however their quantity is more than us.

Nissa: What about using the word, “Gather” or “Corralling.”

Gary: Not exactly. How about persuading or even better MOTIVATING?
And what about the idea of “confinement” being “safety?”

Jackie: Maybe instead of confine, it could be a safe place for observation? Or maybe escort home…?

Gary: Possibly….

(Gary walks to a jar by the door. It contains bacon strips. He pulls out six pieces.)

(The six puppies notice his movements and start following him. He moves from the door to find an expandable large exercise playpen. He opens it up, places himself INSIDE…..and the puppies follow. He closes the entrance around them. He gives each puppy a piece of bacon.)

Gary: Nissa, give me the marrow bones from the crates. Dave, give me the tug ropes from the floor. Caleb, grab some tennis balls from the basket in the corner.

(As Gary places each toy in the ex-pen, the puppies happily play as he REMOVES himself)

Dave: So, we are supposed to give bones and toys to criminals to keep an eye on them in one place.

Gary: (looks at the other cadets): What do you think?

Jackie: I don’t think it was about treats or toys.

Gary: Why?

Jackie: It was about motivation and how to change our perception on achieving tasks without force.
Nissa: (sarcastically) I think we are starting with the puppies so Dave can kick them and not be sued.

Caleb: Or because they don’t speak, so we must work extra hard about thinking how to communicate. First we can adapt the way we think and then add words to it. So when we work with people we can be more effective in communicating.

Gary: Let’s break for lunch!
Session 5: Acting and listening — reading a live action scene

The fifth session was where the dramaturgical climax needed to be. They need to have a breakthrough. I believed it had begun the previous week with the “given circumstances” activity, and the intention was to ramp that up today, putting it into action, and putting themselves in the hot-seat. Poet Kelly Tsai kicked off this hot-seating by facilitating a few activities followed by readings of the writings.

A guided free write with the prompt: “What you don’t know about me.”
A guided free write with the prompt: “My ideal police academy.”
Kelly calls on individuals to read out what they wrote. This was uncomfortable at times because people felt this was very exposing. However, with Kelly’s warm and inspiring leadership, several people came forward to read their pieces, and with each reading came an appreciation for their words, their insight and their bravery.

I then got people to write down their specific tasks that they came up with over the preceding week, on small strips of paper which I collected and put in a basket.

They re-formed into small groups, and were tasked with going out to their nearby locations from last week. But this time they would each have a task they would need to do, one at a time. Everyone picked a strip out of the basket — it was luck of the draw what they would be asked to do. These tasks included activities such as: buy a stranger a coffee, help someone cross the street, sing a song to a stranger, etc. The groups would go out and position themselves on location, taking up the place of an observer while one member of their group took a turn completing their task. The observation group would record what they saw happening, following the “given circumstances” breakdown. Then the next member of
the group would do their task, and the group would observe and record. Once completed, they were to return to discuss what happened as a whole group.

People returned and then talked about what they found. There was such discrepancy in how individuals saw the same experience. It was staggering. Individuals in the same group described the situations and what they observed, and what they experienced, in completely different ways. They had even read the tone of the situation entirely differently.

The explanation for these differences was clear: all of the specifics for how people read the situation came from their own previous personal experiences. If they were conditioned to be hyper-aware of danger, they would read a situation as dangerous. If they had had ample experience with dealing with harmless yet annoying people being flirtatious, they could read a situation as funny rather than threatening. Job experience, social experience, gender, socio-economic class, everything from the cohort’s individual backgrounds came into play when doing this group task, and deeply colored their readings of the same scene.

This discussion led into a reflection on how entrenched we are in our own perspective, even when we’re trying to be objective. How could we possibly ever come to a common understanding of anything then, the cohort lamented! Will we never be able to stand in someone else’s shoes? What can possibly guide us through?

I didn’t offer anything but a “Yes. That is the question. Those are the questions of this project. Now, how will you answer?”

I held a silence of about five full minutes, which, if you’ve ever held a space in silence before, you will know, feels like an eternity.

Then one person said, “Compassion.”
“All right, what about Compassion?”
“Compassion may be our way through.”
A full group discussion followed on this subject that was thoughtful, personal, probing and searching. We talked around what compassion is for each of us. Much of what was discussed was that compassion was about seeing and understanding that someone else was in need, and also wanting to help them. It’s different from empathy, because you don’t have to feel what someone else is feeling, you just have to see that they are experiencing things in a certain way that is most likely different from yours. And, if you’re in a position to help, that you can.

They had led themselves toward a powerful personal and policing tool.
Most Officers Fall Back On Drinking
In Order To Deal With Stress

Maurice Emerson Decaul

I just focus on how to use police force to control the situation, forcing someone to cooperate with me I think about law enforcement & police & how that’s changed over my fifty years I speak about something after much inner debate I protect you I don’t sleep I take risks & chances & I hate that you don’t I see what you can’t see I ended up on the floor I always feel like I feel bad about people I am a target, I am a friend, a husband, an uncle I can listen I can judge I can kill I’m not sure — I started thinking differently, the 1968 democratic convention in Chicago I look at the bright/other side of everything & you’re afraid to change I would train & inform officers how to better deal with stress I want to fix the system from inside out I feel bad for you & that’s what you don’t know I’m the minority I would accomplish this by using supportive hobbies: hiking, photography, scuba, yoga, shooting NOT TACTICAL BUT RECREATIONAL I think of the park experience the smell of trees sit & experience this place running in the park swimming in the lake cooking out in the park laying down on a bench I’ve worked in communities that distrust police I feel that police protect me I would make better use of
the time we have I am a person I recently broke up with my girlfriend I need to go on a long drive I can turn the music up I am alone I say things a lot that I don’t mean I do think you’re strong I grew up thinking & being trained to think the policeman was my friend I’d be there — I thought I don’t want to hurt anyone I don’t want to get hurt either I’m human I bleed I love I will still do it I will always come running I am in a place of peace
Session 6: Compassion and self-compassion in crisis situations

The group, having led themselves toward the tool of compassion, would need that concept unpacked from a practical point of view. What is compassion? How does it fit into policing? How do you apply it in crisis? How do you apply it to yourself, as well?

For the final session, Jack led a talk on this subject of compassion in crisis, from the point of view of working in law enforcement and working specifically within the NYPD. Dr. James O’Shea gave a parallel but shorter talk on the same subject for the final session as well, from the point of view of an emergency room physician working at Newark’s Beth Israel Hospital. The common ground for these talks revolved around how individuals, working within a flawed system, deal with and manage crisis constructively. How can recognizing this flawed nature help people be more compassionate toward the people you encounter on the job? And equally important, how can this recognition help you be more compassionate to yourself? Jack’s and James’s reflections follow:

Jack:

Hostage Negotiators are a group of law enforcement officers who attempt to resolve high-crisis situations with their words. They must have the ability to remain calm under emotionally demanding circumstances. Demonstrating self-control is one of their most critical attributes. The negotiator is expected to possess the ability to set his or her emotions aside during intense negotiations, be non-judgmental in approach, and to do so, in most instances, in a harmonious fashion. They are required to bring a lifetime of experience to the table in order to manage potentially volatile situations, and be the calming voice of reason in the most unreasonable and chaotic of situations. Being a negotiator man-
dates a mature and stable individual who can adapt to quickly changing circumstances. They do this in highly unpredictable situations, knowing that the stakes are high, understanding that if they fail in their negotiation attempt, lives could very well be lost. A critical component of being a hostage negotiator is to possess the virtue of compassion; without it, one could not hope to have any real measure of success.

In this last section, I spoke to the principles that hostage negotiators rely upon to manage highly emotional encounters. Compassion is something that not everyone possesses. If one does have the good fortune to possess it, then it can be advanced further through life’s happenstance. This proved to be the case with me very early in my career.

As a young police officer, I was returning from court on the subway. As I got off the train in Brooklyn, the station clerk called over: “Hey Officer, there’s a guy who just went under the turnstile, a homeless guy, just went down toward that end of the platform; didn’t pay his fare!” Being new to policing, I wasn’t exactly sure what to do with such a minor problem; whether to issue a summons or arrest the man. I decided the best way to handle it without undue expenditure of time would be simply to tell the homeless man to get out on the street, because obviously people cannot use the subway without paying. I walked all the way down to the end of a long platform, where I saw the homeless man, disheveled, about 50 years old — although the streets had not been very kind to him, and so he looked much older. I firmly told him “You didn’t pay the fare. You have to leave the subway now!” Having issued a firm statement, I anticipated some degree of aggression, but the man merely said, “Okay Officer, I understand, I will leave.” The homeless man and I began walking back down to the exit at the other end of the platform. As we were walking I paid attention to a satchel under his arm, being concerned about pos-
sible weapons. I asked firmly, “What do you have in the bag?”

The homeless man replied “Oh, in my bag, Officer, it’s a manuscript of a play that I wrote.” Taken aback and curious, I asked with some cynicism what the play was about. The homeless man replied that the play was entitled Crabs in a Basket. “It’s autobiographical,” he said, “it’s about my life. If you’ve ever seen a basket full of crabs, you’ll notice that they’re all trying to get out. When one finally gets almost to the top of that basket to get out, another crab comes from behind and pulls it back down, grabs it back down. It’s kind of like my life... every time I try to get out of the hole that I always find myself in, some force always comes along and brings me back down.” I found myself being “blown away.” As we approached the exit, I stopped the homeless man and said, “Sir, this ride’s on me. Have a good day.” I told the man that I hoped to see the play on Broadway someday.

At the cost of irritating the station clerk, I felt that I owed the homeless man that free ride, for teaching me an important life lesson: I had approached the homeless man with a preconceived notion, and had learned that just because the man was homeless didn’t mean he was ignorant, or dangerous. This homeless man was down on his luck, yet he was a human being, with a sense of himself and of his circumstances, and an ability to explain them with eloquence — if given the opportunity. Common sense and compassion are not something you can learn in the Police Academy; they are virtues that you either have or you don’t. Police officers should assign worth whenever and wherever it is deserved. I have never viewed homeless people in the same regard after that encounter. I thank that homeless man wherever he might be in the world for that powerful life lesson very early on in my career! By the way, I have been looking for that play on Broadway ever since, but still haven’t found it.
What I believe the students derived from this personal compelling example was that they must strive hard to develop their emotional competency by nurturing such virtues as common sense, empathy, benevolence and compassion so that it becomes intuitive in their daily interactions with people whom they encounter.

*James O’Shea, M.D.*

Compassion requires one to recognize the pain experienced by a suffering other, and then to feel motivated to alleviate that suffering. In fields where workers are routinely exposed to the suffering of other people, such as regular police work, hostage negotiation and my own field, emergency medicine, it is important to consider how compassion influences such work.

As with all innate tendencies, there is a wide variety of individualized responses to situations that call for compassion. Some naturally feel a great deal of compassion towards people who are suffering and in crisis, and some others feel very little. That’s OK. Probably at the extremes there is more potential for maladaptive responses. If you are crippled by the pathos of a suffering human being and overwhelmed by a pressing urge to help them, you will probably be ineffective as a worker in these situations, or quickly find yourself overwhelmed with compassion fatigue. If you feel too little it may be difficult to connect with the people you serve in a way that allows you to build productive relationships with them. The goal is to simply know the importance of compassion and to develop a mindful appreciation of how you feel compassion as an individual, and how that varies from day to day, and from situation to situation. This skill of self-awareness has been carefully cultivated in the rest of the course and is directly applicable here.
Compassion can be demanding. Anyone can feel moved to help people who are “like them”, and there is neuroscience research to show that our compassion responses are loaded with social and racial biases. It is harder to feel compassion for someone in a situation that is considered to be of their own making, or people who may have hurt themselves and other people, and who are living lives that are bizarre and unfathomable to us, and outside our own life experiences. However, we should prepare to be able to do that, because we don’t choose whom we are called upon to serve, and if we don’t do this emotional work, we will be eaten alive by the job. In human services work there is a documented higher risk of occupational burnout.

Here we discussed Maslach’s 3-part definition (Maslach, C. et al 1996, 2016) of burnout, including emotional exhaustion, low sense of personal accomplishment and depersonalization. If you work in a job where you have to deal with other human beings and serve them in some way, you can reasonably expect to have to deal with an element of compassion fatigue, which is related to emotional exhaustion. So, we discussed the implications of that. If you arrive to work in the morning and are fresh, emotionally balanced and ready to serve the good citizens of NYC (or in my case the injured and sick of Newark, New Jersey), then you can think of that as having a pocket full of currency, you’re starting the day a rich man or woman. As you encounter other human beings in your work, demands are placed on your energy and your compassion, but it’s all good, you can put your hand in your pocket and “spend” some of yourself, and move on. The difficulty is when you put your hand in your pocket and you come up empty, because you haven’t been conscious of the need to refill that bank of energy.

But you still have to do the job, right? It’s not like you can say to your Sergeant or Medical Director, ‘sorry man, I’m all out of caring for today, see you tomorrow’. So you
have to take that energy in a sense from your own flesh, the substance of yourself, and it costs more and leaves you more depleted. Being more depleted, you need to close an even bigger energy gap in order to perform the next time, and so you start to circle the toilet. Now if you play that forward, that toilet flush should flush you right out of the job, and maybe you’d end up doing something completely different. But actually, for many people that doesn’t happen, either from the constraints of finances or imagination. They just sort of circle the drain emotionally and energetically over a long time, and they develop a new status quo. In an effort to recharge, you might seek support from colleagues who are just as burnt out as you, or seek support in the culture of your profession or organization, which is often simply an institutionalized version of a collection of people across time who were just as burnt out as you.

It doesn’t have to be that way, and the greatest weapon against burn-out is self-awareness. When you are in crisis situations where compassion would naturally be called for, and you feel nothing, take that as information for how you are doing. Perhaps you need to make a few regular deposits in that bank of energy that keeps you happy, productive and human.

After a question and answer session with both Jack and James, I asked the participants to reflect on the time we spent together. As a closing exercise, they were asked to generate a set of practical guidelines that they had learned throughout our time together. This is their learning, and their advice to anyone interested in Emotional Competence in complex situations.
Seven Commandments of Emotional Competence

Know yourself.
Observe your surroundings and do not have tunnel vision.
Understand your current state of mind and your past.
Listen to others and always listen actively.
Be open to understanding and accepting different people’s perceptions.
Let the scene itself change your perceptions.
Practice being compassionate.
Open to Understanding and Accepting new Perceptions (aka Allowing the scene itself to Change your Perceptions)

Teniece Divya Johnson

Being

Soluble

in multiple situations

Asks that We, collectively, need more

Bend
Ease
Sway
Give

Forgiveness
Gentle
Pull
Mix
Stretch

a multi-fabricated light-weight Yogic Blend

Of flexible Acceptance

Alive
within our Interpretation

An Active Invitation to Expand Reaching Wide Inclusivity

Permission to be Malleable

Moving Flowing Meshing Integrating Orchestrating

Within the conversation Because at its Root

Listening Communication Interpretation

[Investigation Policing Protecting Our People and our Nation] It is
THE CURRICULUM

Compromise

Compassion
  Sensitivity

Balance

Liberty
  Justice

And
Solution Making
Conclusions

Our starting point, three years previously, was that the Hostage Negotiation Team was a silo of space in the police department in which applying the “whole person” to the job was perceived as acceptable. However, this silo of space was proving to be equally detrimental for people who were allowed only temporary access to it as for people who were barred from it altogether, because it was only sanctioned in particular, crisis oriented, branded situations. Our pilot project created a new space, for a broad cohort, inviting people from diverse walks of life together, to engage with the question of applied emotional competence in ways that applied in both daily life and crisis situations.

Time and again, I would hear that the character of the police department was one in which individuals “couldn’t feel like people.” I would also hear that whenever officers were offered sessions from psychologists or therapists, no one would show up. The perception of engaging with your mental or emotional life was something that itself was silo-ed. One big “ask” of this project, as I heard it, was to create something that was an integrated training, that provided practical skills, incorporated an influential and powerful “Police voice,” and also engaged the whole person in a way that the learning arc would override task specific application. We were trying to impact the culture of policing from the position of a human in community.

What did participants take away from this project? I know that they felt like they had been a part of a community of people. I know that this community was comprised of people that many of the participants would normally view as really very different from themselves. I know that they felt like they had gone on a journey of self-reflection and personal growth. I know that many of them would be very averse to engaging with these processes in other contexts. I know that many of the officers felt consistently burnt out and isolated.
I know they had now experienced a “Police Training” that offered them opportunities that counteracted these feelings. How does this challenge get integrated into formal police training? In the past few years, there have been many initiatives that have begun to emerge in police academies and continuing police education that are geared toward sensitivity training. While this is a positive step, it still represents a siloed approach to education, and misses some very important aspects of the problem of integrating emotional competence in policing. It does not address issues around weak systemic trust, it does not foster integration of knowledge into the whole person, and it runs the risk of being seen as a tool to apply in rigidly specific instances.

Applying a course of study such as this one to a formal police training would require multiple parties to be open to changing themselves. We would all need not only police officers, but the administration, the communities and the local governments to be open to going on a journey of communal growth together. We do learn this lesson as children: we do what we see, not what we’re told. Why should we expect police officers to change the way they act and react in high-stakes situations if we’re not open to going on a journey of transformation ourselves?

The course of study we have developed offers a small-scale model for initiating a cultural shift that integrates practical policing tools with a personalized understanding of difference, perspective and communication in crisis. It could be applied within communities as well as within various police agencies. We welcome any interest from those who are really committed to finding a new way to work together. Our police do not need to be separate from ourselves if we can together make a shift to see their role as dynamic, as our skin is to the health and regulation of our bodies.
All eye Seeing

Teniece Divya Johnson

All eye Seeing
Void of judging a book by its cover
Investigating to discover
the P.O.V of the other

Balance
In life is maintained
through seeing yourself
And those you love
In the eyes of strangers

An empathy
that dissolves distance
Turning each woman, man and child
Into that of your neighbor
mother, brother or friend

All eye Seeing
Void of judging a book or person by their cover
Actively seeking to discover
The P.O.V. of the other

Allowing you to serve
and protect all under the sun from danger
Void of prejudgment,
Open hearted as you step up to the table
Bringing all of yourself, all your senses
Curious, willing, and able
All eye Seeing
Blind folded like Lady Justice
Committed to a making a better city like Dare Devil Marvel in the revel of a positive perspective

All eye Seeing
Void of judging a book or person by their cover
Actively seeking to discover
The P.O.V. of the other