

**Ask a Priest!**  
**August 11, 2021**

***Question:***

**A. I realize that soldiers and law enforcement officers may have to kill in the line of duty, but what about the things that occur during training, preparing for duty, the anxiety, and the stress? The psychological and physical preparation of these jobs can be less than Christian. During training, officers get a chance to be the criminal and act out against a fellow officer during the scenario. Both male and female trainees are talked down to by the criminal, especially in an explicit sexual manner, because that is what criminals do. They will tell a female officer the things they want to do to their bodies and males alike. This is done to see if a trainee has what it takes to survive on the streets. So during training, is this all considered a sin?**

**B. [*To be answered separately:* Depending on your role in life, are certain things overlooked that are deemed a necessity?]**

**C. Does a catholic need to confess after each training session?**

**This is something that I have dealt with for a while. Any clarification would be appreciated. Thank you and God bless!**

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**Answer:**

***A. Should a training exercise employ immoral language or behavior?***

We begin by asking what the person intends to do. Is the trainer willing evil upon the trainee? The answer is no: the trainer is training the other person, with the goal of educating or preparing that person for real and intimidating situations. The means employed are realistic scenarios, proportionate to military or police circumstances. However, the offensive words or actions are “pretended”—not “intended” as wrong or harmful.

That being said, the use of such means (offensive words/behavior) for training should be limited—only as necessary to offer a realistic experience.

Over-indulging in words or actions that would otherwise be offensive is inappropriate.

An altogether different case is the “hazing” of trainees, which entails the intent to actually harm them verbally, emotionally, or physically, against their consent. This

would be immoral, even if intended for the purpose of preparing them for worse cases.

One suggestion might be to announce a “disclaimer” or an exception for using the offensive words and actions, prior to or after the training, so as to make clear the intention and also to remind everyone involved that these behaviors are inappropriate in themselves and only employed for training purposes.

***B. Depending on your role in life, may certain [sinful] things be overlooked that are deemed a necessity?***

Short answer: The end never justifies the means. It is never acceptable to commit a sin in order to bring about a greater good.

***[We’ll be answering another “Ask a Priest” question on How do I judge the basic moral goodness or evil of any action?]***

However, we should address an apparent contradiction above: is it ok to even pretend immoral behavior (a wrong) for training (a greater good)?

The distinction is in the soul of “what’s” actually being done, what is my action, and is it wrong:

-the offensive words or actions may look the same. But they are united as one action: simulating an intimidating moment, for the purpose of training.

Imagine your mom walks in and sees your offensive behavior or language, and gets upset. You might have two answers:

“Mom, we’re pretending. I am only training him (action), for the purpose of preparing him (intention)” – Oh, ok. ...Do you have to make it seem so realistic, or aren’t you over-doing it a little? (Your Mom is asking a valid question to help clarify.)

-Vs. - “Mom, I meant what I said/did (offensive behavior, action), because I wanted to finally get his attention (intention)” – not ok.

In training, I am simulating, pretending, creating a realistic scenario. Outside of creating that scenario, the same offensive behaviors would be just that—offensive to God, myself, or others – and therefore sinful.

***C. Answer to - Does the Catholic need to confess after each training session?***

In this case, the intent to offend or harm is missing; the purpose is training. The means employed need to be realistic for the training to be effective; but they also need to be reasonably limited. Sin requires full awareness and consent to offend others, God, or self. I do not need to confess actions performed, reasonably and without excess, that are merely simulation, for the purpose of training.

See the Catechism of the Catholic Church paragraphs #1849 - #1869 for greater detail.

Great reminder of confession: <https://www.hnoj.org/sacrament-confession>

See the following articles:

<https://catholicstand.com/the-military-and-the-catholic-faith-training/>