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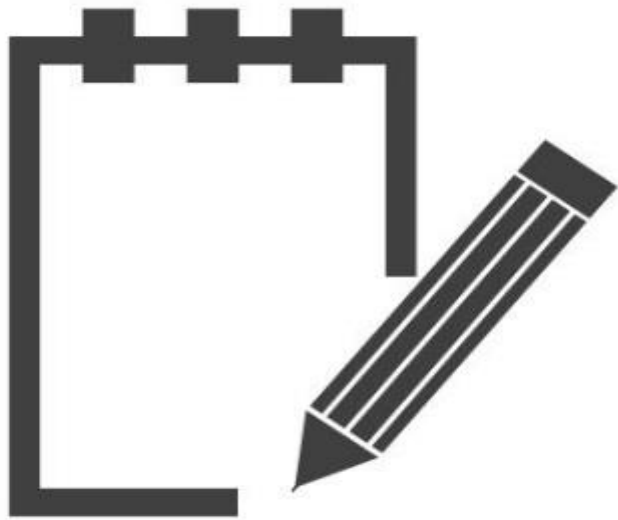
Preventing Violence Against Law Enforcement  
and Ensuring Officer Resilience and Survivability

BUREAU OF JUSTICE ASSISTANCE

# Psychotic Disorders

Law Enforcement and Community:  
Crisis Intervention Team Training

# Module Overview



- **Psychosis**
  - Symptoms
    - Delusions
    - Hallucinations
- **Psychotic Disorder**
  - Schizophrenia
- **Tips and Tools for the Field**

# Psychosis

## **Psychosis is a loss of contact with reality.**

- The ability to perceive and respond to the environment is significantly disturbed; functioning is impaired.
- Symptoms may include hallucinations and/or delusions
- People experiencing psychosis may be very frightened





# Delusions

- Delusions are firm, fixed, false beliefs contrary to the person's cultural & economic background
- The content of delusions has a variety of themes – persecutory, referential, somatic, religious, grandiose
- Bizarre delusions usually express a loss of control over mind or body



# Hallucinations

- Perception-like experiences that occur without an external stimulus. Hallucinations are usually vivid and clear, and not under voluntary control
- Auditory hallucinations are the most common
- Voices may be derogatory, or they may be commanding
- Someone experiencing hallucinations may have a hard time filtering out irrelevant information.



# Schizophrenia Experience



[Experience a psychotic episode as described by people with Schizophrenia. - YouTube](#)

# Schizophrenia



- Typically emerges in late adolescence/early adulthood and is a chronic life-long illness with some periods of remission
- Affects about 1 percent of people worldwide, at any given point
- Estimated that 3 out of every 100 people may experience this disorder throughout their lives
- Presents equally across both sexes

# Schizophrenia

## Schizophrenia Symptoms

- Delusions
- Hallucinations
- Disorganized thinking
- Grossly disorganized or abnormal motor behavior (e.g., too much or too little body movement)
- Apathy
- Lack of emotion
- Poor social functioning



# Schizophrenia

Schizophrenia also includes:

- Disorganized thinking (speech): switching from one topic to another, completely unrelated answers to questions (tangential) or inappropriate use of words and/or sentences (word salad)
- Grossly disorganized or abnormal motor behavior: unpredictable agitation, "silliness," unusual gait

# Examples of Disorganized Thought



## Did you know loitering is against the law?

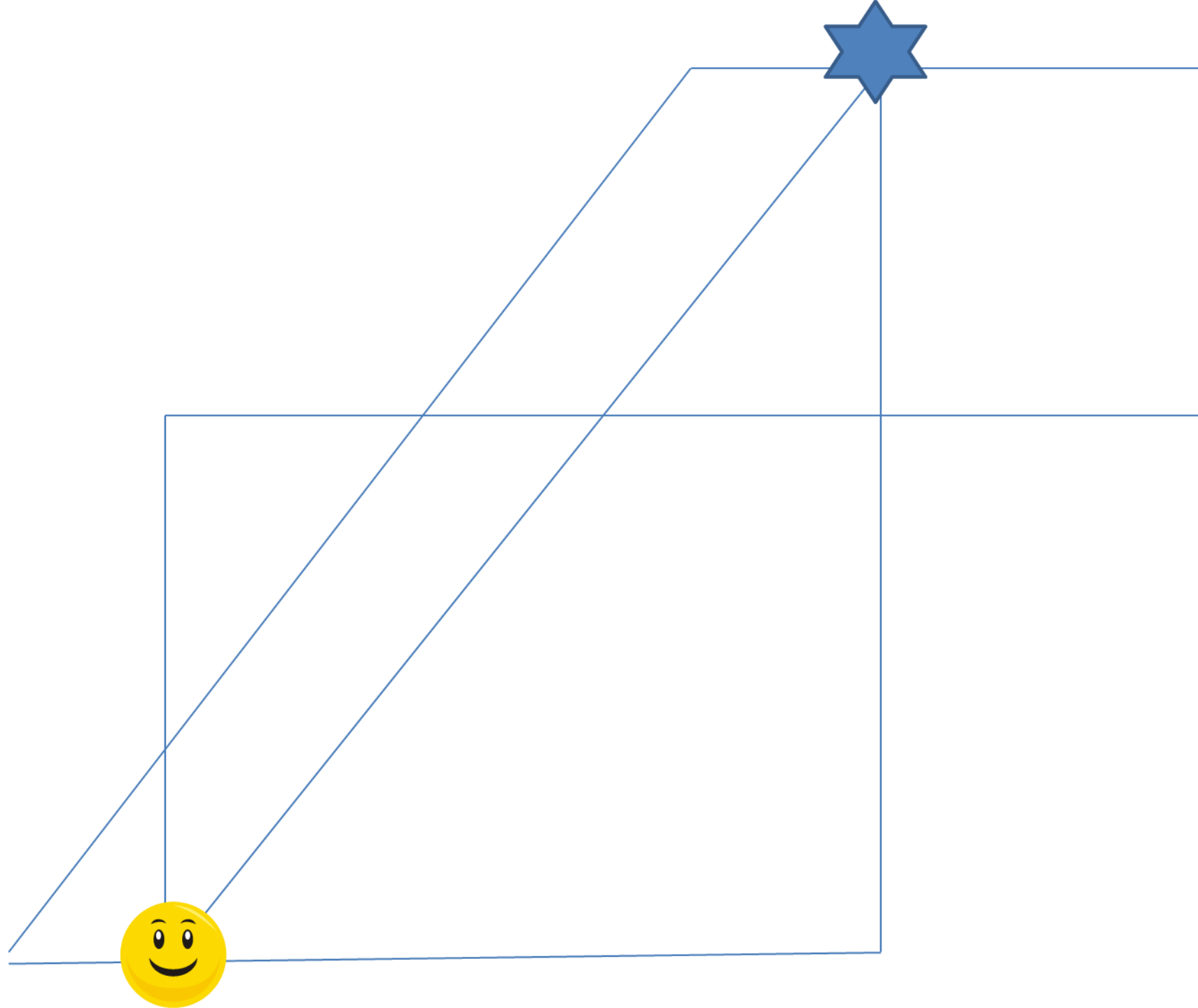
- *I don't want to go to jail. Jail is for the birds. One time I saw birds flying around in the jail. Birds should be out in the air. The air is dirty in Chicago. All of these big buses. I ride the bus to get my groceries. Jewel is my favorite store.*

# Video: Schizophrenia





# HEARING DISTRESSING VOICES EXERCISE





# Tips and Tools for the Field

**Your ability to defuse a mental health crisis is important.**

- People experiencing psychotic symptoms may be genuinely terrified.
- People typically fight or flee (“flight”) when scared.
- Reasoning with a person in crisis is difficult. Go slow.
- Reduce the level of arousal so discussion is possible.



# Tips and Tools for the Field



- Be sensitive to personal space/comfort zone
  - Set limits as necessary
  - Limit interaction to just the contact officer
  - Keep their focus on you
  - Avoid sudden movements – slow things down; reduce distractions
- Be patient and calm
- Acknowledge their delusions/hallucinations or feelings are real to them
  - Help them feel safe

# Tips and Tools for the Field

## Officers should demonstrate:

- **Non-threatening stance:** open, but not vulnerable
- **Eye contact:** not constant, but brief to show concern
- **Commands:** brief, slow, only as loud as needed, and repeat as needed
- **Movement:** not sudden; announce actions when possible
- **Attitude:** calm, interested, firm, patient, reassuring
- **Acknowledge:** their delusions/hallucinations or feelings are real to them



# Module Wrap-Up

**Questions?**