

DEALING WITH THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF PEOPLE/SITUATIONS IN GROUP SESSIONS

The following descriptions of different types of people and potentially difficult situations are presented here to stimulate your thinking about how **you** might handle these effectively during a workshop, focus group or public forum.

PEOPLE

The “Too –talkative person”

Someone who talks all the time and monopolizes the discussion

- Remind the person that we want to provide everyone with an opportunity to participate
- Refocus the discussion by summarizing the relevant point and move on
- Inform the person that you will talk with them more outside of the group about this issue
- Thank the person for their comment and tell him/her that you want everyone to have a turn at providing information and asking questions.
- Say you will not call on anyone twice for comments until everyone has had a chance to speak

The “Silent” Person

Someone who does not speak in discussions or does not become involved in activities.

- Watch for any signs that the person wants to participate.
- Call on this person first – seek their feedback
- Talk to them during a break or after the forum and find out how they feel about the discussion
- Respect their wishes if they are there to listen but do not want to talk.

The “Yes, but ...” Person

Someone who agrees with ideas in principle but goes on to point out, repeatedly, how it will not work for him/her.

- Acknowledge the participant’s concerns or situation
- Open the discussion up to the group (What do others think?)
- After three “Yes, but’s” from the person, state that we need to move on and offer to talk to the person later.
- If the person is interrupting the discussion with problem solving, remind the person that right now we are only trying to generate ideas and identify issues.

The “Argumentative” Person

This is the person who disagrees, is constantly negative and undermines the group. This person may normally be good natured but is upset about something.

- Keep your own temper firmly in check. Do not let the whole group get excited.
- If in doubt clarify the intent.
- Call on someone else to contribute to the discussion
- Have a private conversation with the person, ask his/her opinion of the discussion forum and whether he/she has any suggestions or comments.
- Tell the person you will discuss it further after the session
- Ask the person for the source of information, or for the person to share a reference with the group.
- Offer to contact the health service to get someone to discuss the issue with the person
- Suggest that this person writes their concerns and forward to the health service as per the advertised address.

The “Angry” of hostile person

You will know one when you see one. The anger most likely has nothing to do with the leader or the group discussion. Usually the group and leader can be adversely affected by this person and can be a target.

- Do not get angry yourself
- Use a low quiet voice
- Validate the persons perceptions, interpretations and emotions where you can
- Try to listen attentively and paraphrase the person’s comments/statements to better understand what they are saying
- If the angry person attacks another participant verbally, stop the behaviour immediately by saying, “There is no place for that kind of behaviour in this group. We want to respect each other’s views”.
- Ask the person what would make them “happy” and refer them onto that.

The Questioner

The person who asks a lot of questions

- Don’t bluff if you do not know the answer. Say, “I do not know, but I’ll find out” of get someone to contact them
- Redirect the group. “That’s an interesting question, would anyone like to respond.”
- Move closer o the person and offer to discuss further after the forum
- Let the person know that they have lot’s of good questions that we don’t have time to address during the forum but will discuss after.
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The “Know it All” Person

The person who constantly interrupts to add a comment, answer or opinion. Sometimes this person actually knows a lot about the topic others have their own pet theories.

- Restate the issue
- Limit the contribution by not calling on the person when seeking input.
- Establish guidelines at the beginning of session – allow everyone an opportunity to be involved.
- Thank the person for positive comments
- If the problem persists, invoke the rule of debate: Each person has the right to speak twice before people have the opportunity to speak for a third time.

The Chatterbox

The person who carries on side conversations, argues points with the person next to him/her or just talks all the time about topics not relevant to the discussion.

- Stop the discussion and silently wait for the group to come to order.
- Stand beside the person while you go on with the discussion activities
- Arrange the seating so the facilitator is sitting on the side of the person
- Restate the purpose of the discussion to bring the person back to the task at hand or say “Let me repeat the question.”
- Ask the person to please be quiet.