

Dealing Effectively With Difficult Situations

Here are some challenging behaviors and situations, and suggestions to help you deal with each. These situations require your best communication and facilitation skills.

Non-participant

Validate. Call the person by name. Direct an easy, non-threatening question to them. Respond to their body language (Is it fear of speaking, resentment at being there, or boredom?) Check in with them after class.

Monopolizer

Summarize quickly, then move on. Call name to get attention. Use hand signals and body language to recognize others. Interrupt, if the behavior continues. Ask for input from those who have not been heard from.

Challenges Facilitator/Doubting Thomas

Generalize. Remind group that there is no “one way.” Cite sources. Recognize frustration with the challenges and complexity of youth work. Use “I” statements.

Demands “The” Answer

Generalize. State that there may be many answers. Invite others to express opinions. Remind the group that facilitators are not experts.

Rude Behavior (laughing, side conversations)

Review ground rules. Invite back into conversation “Sue, do you have something to share on this?” Ask another member to repeat what they said, because you are not sure everyone was able to hear.

Mandated Group Member (resistant, non-participant)

If you suspect or know that some people were required to attend by a supervisor, acknowledge it at the first session. Doing so respects both the employee and the employer that sent him/her. “Some of you here today were required to come. We recognize that you may be feeling some frustration or resentment. Your supervisor must feel that this training will be valuable for you and the organization. We hope that you give it a chance, and that we have a chance to learn from you as we discuss our common goals and share our experience and knowledge. We hope too that in the end, you are glad you came and feel it was a good use of your time.”

Know-It-All

Generalize. “What works in one situation or with one young person may not work with another.”

Gives False Information

Summarize and ask for group input: “What do the rest of you think about that? Have others heard of this? Ask member to recheck source. Check your resources and clarify at the next session.

Wanderer (from the topic)

Ask if you may put this topic on an Issues List of topics the group will come back to, if time permits. Return to the scheduled topic. You might also suggest that those who would like to continue this discussion do so at break or lunch.

Cultural Differences

Acknowledge at the first session that culture influences our values, behaviors, and interpretations in our professional and personal lives. Ask participants to speak up if they have a different perspective or interpretation to share. Use the contribution as a teachable moment, to increase understanding and value diversity. Thank the group member for speaking up.