

Keeping Group Sessions on Track

Situation	Facilitator Action
One person dominates the conversation.	<p>Involve other members in the conversation. “I understand what you are saying. I’d love to hear more later, but now it’s time to hear from somebody else.”</p> <p>Go around the room with a question and intentionally ask for everybody’s input.</p> <p>If necessary, use a ground rule.</p>
A participant offers an idea which is ridiculed or attacked by others in the group.	<p>Remind the group of the ground rules or expectations they agreed on. These usually include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - no put downs - no personal attacks - be supportive, respectful of each other <p>Make sure to write down the idea and to thank the participant.</p>
<p>Group gets off topic.</p> <p>Participants interrupt each other.</p> <p>There are constant interruptions.</p>	<p>Comment on what you observe: “I think we are off the topic.” “I notice we are having quite a few interruptions.”</p> <p>Remind group of agreements/rules.</p> <p>Refocus the group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Restate the purpose of the session - Summarize progress up to this point - Ask a question to bring the group back to the topic.
A participant becomes emotional.	<p>Remain calm. Your behavior determines group behavior.</p> <p>Make eye contact. Acknowledge the situation.</p> <p>Identify the issue behind the emotion “So you are concerned because...”</p> <p>Take steps to resolve the issue or post it for later discussion.</p> <p>Ask if it is possible to move on.</p> <p>Refocus the group.</p> <p>If necessary, take a break and talk with participant individually.</p>

<p>Two participants are stuck in a conflict of opinions.</p>	<p>Comment on what you observe.</p> <p>Remind participants of the purpose of the meeting/session.</p> <p>Express confidence that an agreement can be reached.</p> <p>Identify/list items the participants agree upon.</p> <p>Identify/list items they do not agree upon.</p> <p>Resolve disagreement.</p> <p>Refocus the group.</p>
<p>Group is not making useful comments or contributions.</p>	<p>Ask the group why the topic is not relevant.</p> <p>Ask if there is anything else going on that needs to be dealt with.</p> <p>Check prepared questions. They might not go in the right direction. Rephrase questions.</p>
<p>Group is not focusing.</p>	<p>Rearrange space to ensure a quiet setting.</p> <p>Plan a limited, informal time when people are gathering. Respectfully call their attention to begin the group session.</p> <p>In your opening be clear about the purpose and agenda of the meeting/session.</p>

Adapted from: Sonawane, M., & Noll, G. (2004). Training the E-Z Way: A Guidebook for Trainers and Facilitators.