

How to Meet Challenging Behaviors in a Meeting

Behavior	Why	What to Do
Overly talkative	<p>They may be an “eager beaver” or a show-off.</p> <p>They may also be exceptionally well informed and anxious to show it, or just naturally garrulous.</p>	<p>Do not be embarrassing or sarcastic...You may need their talents/traits later on.</p> <p>Slow them down with a difficult question.</p> <p>Interject with: “That’s an interesting point. Let’s see what the group thinks of it.”</p> <p>In general, let the group take care of them as much as possible.</p> <p>Keep your own temper in check.</p>
Asks You for Your Opinion	<p>Trying to put you on the spot.</p> <p>Trying to get you to support one view.</p> <p>May be simply looking for advice.</p>	<p>Generally, you should avoid solving the problem for them.</p> <p>Point out that, as facilitator, your view is relatively unimportant, compared to the views of everyone else at the meeting.</p> <p>Don’t let this become a phobia. There are times when you must and should give a direct answer.</p> <p>Before you do so, try to determine the reason this person is asking for your view.</p> <p>Say, “First, let’s get some other opinions. “Joe, how do you look at this?”</p>
Definitely Wrong	<p>Member comes up with comment that is obviously incorrect.</p>	<p>Say, “I can see how you feel,” or “That’s one way of looking at it.”</p> <p>Say, “I see your point, but can we reconcile that with the situation at hand?”</p>

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Side Conversation	<p>May be related to the subject.</p> <p>May be personal.</p> <p>Distracts members and you.</p>	<p>Don't embarrass them.</p> <p>Call one by name, ask them an easy question.</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Call one by name then restate last opinion expressed or last remark made by group member, and ask their opinion of it.</p> <p>If you are already in habit of moving around the room, amble over and stand casually beside members who are talking. Your move should not be obvious to group but may get the pair to be quiet.</p>
Rambler	<p>Talks about everything except subject.</p> <p>Uses farfetched analogies, gets lost.</p>	<p>When they stop for breath, thank them, refocus their attention by restarting the relevant points, and move on.</p> <p>Grin, tell them their point is interesting, point to blackboard and in a friendly manner indicate, "We are a bit off the subject."</p> <p>Last resort: glance at watch.</p>
Griper	<p>Has pet peeve.</p> <p>Professional griper.</p> <p>Has legitimate complaint.</p>	<p>Point out we can't change policy here. "Our challenge is to operate as best we can under current rules" – or something to that effect.</p> <p>Indicate you'll discuss problem with them privately, later.</p> <p>Have a member of group answer them.</p> <p>Indicate pressure of time.</p>
Care Taker	<p>"I can do it all" person is really trying to help – but actually makes it difficult to forge community response.</p>	<p>Thank them but suggest that others may want to be part of the solution. "Let's put others to work" as well.</p>

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Won't Talk	Bored; indifferent; feels superior; timid; insecure.	<p>Your action will depend upon what is motivating them.</p> <p>Arouse their interest by asking for their opinion.</p> <p>Draw out the person next to them, then ask the quiet person to tell the person next to them what they think of the view expressed.</p> <p>They are seated near you. Ask their opinion so that they will feel they are talking to you, not the group.</p> <p>If they are the "superior" type, and you know something about the person, ask them to weigh in. "Kevin, you have worked on this in the past. What do you think?"</p> <p>If the sensitive person won't talk, thank or compliment them the first time they do. Be sincere.</p>
Highly Argumentative	<p>Combative personality, Professional heckler</p> <p>Or</p> <p>May be normally good natured but upset by personal or job problems.</p>	<p>Honestly try to find merit in one of their points. Express your agreement, or get the group to do so. Then, move on to something else.</p> <p>When they make an obvious misstatement, toss it to the group. Let them turn it down.</p> <p>As a last resort, talk to them privately during a recess. Try and find out what is bothering them. See if you can win their cooperation.</p>
Wrong Subject	Person is raising something totally off the subject.	<p>Take blame: "I must have not been clear. This is what we should be discussing."</p> <p>Restate point or use board.</p>

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Obstinate	Won't budge; prejudiced; has not seen your point.	Repeat the person's view and ask the group for direction -- if you can trust the group to set the person straight.
Inarticulate	Lacks ability to put thoughts into proper words. They are getting an idea but can't convey it in a way that makes sense to you.	Don't just ignore or brush past the person's comment because you don't understand it. Don't say, "What you mean is this." Say, "Let me see if I can understand what you are saying." Then put it in clearer language. Then ask, "Is that right?" Alter their ideas as little as possible as you try to restate them.
Personality Clash	Two or more members clash. Can divide your group into factions.	Emphasize points of agreement; minimize points of disagreement, if possible. Draw attention to objective. Interject with direct questions on topic. Bring a neutral or even-handed member into the discussion by focusing on the issue rather than the personality conflict. "Sarah, Joe and Gary seem to be at odds on this point. How would you approach it?" Or: "I understand this is an emotional issue, but can we focus on the decision in front of us? Mary, what are your thoughts here?"