

Coping with Challenging Group Participants

Challenging Characteristic	What to do...
<p>Overly Talkative</p> <p>An “eager beaver” or a showoff is always the first to respond to a question and has lots to say. If allowed, will monopolize the conversation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge the person’s comments and interject with, “That’s an interesting point...now let’s hear what other people have to say.” • I’d like to hear more about that the break, who else would like to share.
<p>Argumentative</p> <p>Combative person always disagrees with something.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep calm and turn it over to the group “Would anyone like to comment about what was just said?” • After enough debate, state the importance of moving on and if necessary, agree to disagree. • As a last resort, talk to the person privately during the break. Try to find out if there is an immediate problem that can be worked out. Negotiate a standard of group conduct.
<p>Rambler</p> <p>Lacks focus on the subject. Basically not on the same page and likes to talk regardless of the lack of relevancy to the current topic of discussion.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When an opportunity arises, politely interject with “I’m sure that is interesting, how does it connect with (agenda topic)?” • Attempt to make some connection of what was said with the group’s discussion and ask if there is anyone else who would like to comment. • Re-emphasize issue or topic at hand.
<p>Distracter</p> <p>Distracts by having a side conversation while someone else is talking</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop the group discussion and simply remark that it is difficult to hear when more than one person is talking. • Ask the distracter if she/he would like to comment on the last comment made by someone else.

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<p>Misstatement Stater</p> <p>Makes an obvious incorrect statement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn it over to the group, “Would anyone like to comment about what was just said?” • If no one chooses to respond, then state that while some people have said or believed <i>so and so</i>, (correct statement).
<p>Inquisitor</p> <p>May put you on the spot by asking your opinion. May want you to take sides.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Again, turn it over to the group. “I’m more interested in what other might have to say, who has a comment?” • If appropriate, give your opinion in a diplomatic way without taking sides.
<p>Griper</p> <p>Likes to stand on soap box and gripe about one’s own pet peeve.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge that the person has an issue. Point out that solving the issue is well beyond the scope of this group session. • Offer to talk during a break.
<p>Quiet</p> <p>Is silent because of boredom, indifference, timid, etc?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address this person by name and ask intermittently if there is anything he/she would like to add or comment on. • Structure the discussion in round-robin fashion. Ask the question and state, “I’d like to hear from everyone, so let’s start with Mark on my left and to around.”
<p>Groupie</p> <p>Agrees with everything that is said and doesn’t voice her/his own opinions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate discussion that encourages divergent point viewpoints.
<p>Other:</p>	

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Reference: Julius Eittington, *The Winning Trainer*, Gulf Publishing Company, Houston Texas, 1989.