

Strategies for Handling Dysfunctional Group Behaviors

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1. Side conversations

REASONS BEHIND IT:

- may be related to discussion
- boredom
- sitting too long
- may want attention
- may be confused
- may have questions

HOW TO HANDLE:

- pause / ignore it
- ask them if they want to share
- do an energizer
- do a more active learning activity
- confront at break
- walk towards them
- mix up seating
- give option to leave
- eye contact

2. The "expert" challenges presenter

REASONS BEHIND IT:

- may be more knowledgeable

- may need attention
- may need "ego massaged"

HOW TO HANDLE:

- recognize their expertise
- confront at break
- use as group leader
- redirect comment to group for their opinions

3. Clown

REASONS BEHIND IT:

- needs attention
- bored
- releasing tension

HOW TO HANDLE:

- give chance to succeed
- change teaching techniques
- allow laughter
- "let's get back on track"
- confront at break
- confront off-color comments

4. Low participation

REASONS BEHIND IT:

- bored
- shy

HOW TO HANDLE:

- change activity

- small group work
- give more openings for participation
- talk at break
- allow time to prepare thoughts

5. Tangents / rambling

REASONS BEHIND IT:

- misunderstood question
- needs attention

HOW TO HANDLE:

- try to use their comment
- redirect attention
- thank them and go onto next point
- state how they are off the subject, discuss at break
- "Your point is interesting ."
- try to refer back to it later

6. Idea killer / negative comments

REASONS BEHIND IT:

- has a legitimate point
- needs attention
- personality conflict

HOW TO HANDLE:

- ask them to clarify
- ask group or their reactions
- ignore it
- don't reinforce

- ask for a positive idea
- try to make a positive point from their idea

7. Distracting nonverbals

REASONS BEHIND IT:

- bored
- unaware

HOW TO HANDLE:

- change activity
- talk at break
- eye contact
- walk towards them
- ignore it
- get them involved

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