

Navigating Challenging Behaviours Summary

As a Practice Facilitator, you may encounter behaviours that can be challenging to manage. It's important to be prepared for this and to navigate in a way that ensures that you maintain an individual's dignity and the group's trust. The following are some suggestions for facilitating some of the more commonly encountered behaviours. Although we have given character names, remember that what we are referring to is a behaviour that can present from any person.

Characters	Challenging Behaviours	Strategies
Chris Contrary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Argumentative • Needs to be seen as an expert; information may be inaccurate. • Disruptive to the team • Impedes progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge then redirect • Give them homework
Ira Inquisitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curious • Wants to know all the details and understand everything. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Park the questions for later • Move closer • Give them homework
Bunny Babblor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Super talkative • Sidetracks the meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take the blame • Agenda check • Give them a task • Move closer • Acknowledge then redirect
Harry Hostile	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expresses anger 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge • Be on their level • Stay calm
Sasha Silence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn't say much <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Potentially in response to someone else dominating the discussion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for and use body language • Encouragement • Pair or small group discussion



Strategies for Navigating Challenging Behaviours

Acknowledge then Redirect

Acknowledge the person and their idea and then redirect back to the group, verbally as well as physically turning to face other group members. Team may correct them during the redirect, if not, you can.

- *"That's a really interesting point. Let's hear some other perspectives from the group."*
- *"You know that's a common belief and I have heard others make similar points. I appreciate you sharing your perspective. The latest research indicates..."*

Give them Homework

This can help to diffuse argumentative behaviour or correct misunderstandings.

- *"That's interesting. We would love to know more about that. Would you mind doing some research and bringing us the evidence for our next meeting?"*

Park the Questions for Later

Consider using a parking lot on a flipchart. Remember to determine a time to come back to the question when it fits the agenda or at the end of the meeting.

- *"I hear that this question or topic is important to you. Can I place it in the parking lot, so we don't lose track of it?"*

Move Closer

Moving physically closer someone can make them quieter. This technique requires you to already be standing and moving about, otherwise it could appear abrupt and obvious. If in a stationary position, using body language to redirect to the broader group can be useful.

Take the Blame

You could take the blame to protect their dignity while helping to re-focus the group.

- *"Oh, you know what, I realize I didn't give a clear explanation of this agenda item or topic. Let me try that again."* or *"I think something I said must have taken us off track. What we meant to be discussing is this."*

Agenda Check

Ground the group by summarizing, checking the agenda together and noting the time.

- *"That's a great topic, but I'm worried we'll run out of time for our agenda items. Let's revisit the agenda as a group and prioritize what we can still cover with the time left."*

Give them a Task

It can be helpful to put some people to work during the meeting. Ask them to write on the flip chart, document action items or take on another supportive task. You may have to wait until the next meeting to implement this, so they don't feel targeted.

Acknowledge

Often the best thing to do when someone is displaying anger is to acknowledge it.

- *"You know, you seem to be upset. Is there something that we can talk about that will help the situation?"*

Be on their Level

When someone is angry, your posture and body language can make a big difference. Staying calm, sitting or moving to their level helps remove any power differential.

Body Language

Use your own body language to encourage quieter participants by smiling, nodding, leaning in if they do speak and looking or turning away from someone else in the group that's dominating the discussion.

Encouragement

Regularly using encouraging phrases to open the door to quieter participants and direct away from more dominant participants can help balance the input.

- *"I'd love to hear from someone who hasn't gotten a chance to speak up yet."*
- *"That's a great idea, I really appreciate your input!"*

Pair or Small Group Discussion

Try pairs or small group activities and brainstorming on paper. Often smaller groups, especially pairs, will help someone who is feeling shy speak up. If nothing else, this will capture their ideas somewhere, often as someone builds courage in a smaller group, their confidence can translate back to the larger group.

Stay Calm

When encountering challenging behaviours while facilitating, it is normal to feel frustrated and it takes effort to avoid being pulled into the higher intensity emotional state. Always stay calm, cool and collected on the outside, even if that's not exactly how you feel on the inside.

Traffic Cop

The Practice Facilitator could hold up their hand in a stop motion like a traffic cop while using a phrase like:

- *"I'm sorry to cut off this great discussion, but to stay on track, we'll need to move forward with the agenda."*

Traffic cop gestures can also be used when redirecting to others in the group, using an open palm.

Private Conversation

Have a private conversation at a break or between meetings if addressing problem behaviours within the group has been unsuccessful. If meeting one-on-one with a dominant group member, you could take a moment to praise their avid participation and then ask for support getting others more involved. If you're meeting with someone who rarely speaks up at team meetings, the conversation could involve finding out what might help them feel more comfortable or how to bring some of their great ideas back to the group.