

# Intervention Strategies

## BEFORE THE MEETING

If you anticipate difficulties from a particular individual, your best defense is a good offense. Meet with the individual in advance and discuss the meeting. Be clear about your objectives for the meeting and ask about the participant's expectations. Your goals are (1) to build a relationship and try to establish common ground and (2) to "smoke out" any indication of problems on the horizon.

Strategies you can use with an individual before a meeting include the following:

- Request support and cooperation for the meeting.
- Try to find a way to address the individual's concerns and remove any legitimate reason for objection.
- Assign a role that will occupy the individual's attention and focus constructive behavior. For example, ask the person to be the note taker or timekeeper.

## DURING THE MEETING

During the meeting, there are basically two broad strategies you can use. One is to confront the individual directly. The other is to use the group to help maintain constructive behavior. Here is a potpourri list of facilitator tactics you can use during a meeting to handle disruptive individuals or difficult behaviors.

- **Start your meeting on time.** If you wait for latecomers, you reward late behavior and establish a norm that it is acceptable to be late.
- **Clarify the length of the meeting at the beginning.** Make sure that everyone knows what time the meeting will end, and then stick to that time. This makes it more difficult for individuals to leave early and allows you and the group to make adjustments up front if there is a legitimate reason to do so.
- **Make sure all views get heard.** If a participant won't let go of a viewpoint, hear the participant out. Record it on the flipchart to validate it, and ask directly if there is anything else the person needs in order to let go of it and move on. Record viewpoints without names so that you can depersonalize differences.

## Intervention Strategies (cont.)

- **Call on participants directly, or physically move close to them** if they are doing something else (text messaging, etc.). If this doesn't get them refocused on the meeting, speak to them during a break.
- **Touch base with people who are demonstrating dramatic nonverbal signals**, e.g., shaking their head negatively: "I see you're shaking your head. Do you have some disagreement you want to express?" The participant may not be aware of the behavior and may try to control the body language. If the participant's behavior continues and becomes disruptive, share your observations at the next break: "When you shake your head, I perceive it as disagreement or disapproval. I'm finding it distracting. Please tell me what's bothering you."
- **If a side conversation begins** or there are perpetual whisperers, move close to these individuals and they will usually stop. Ask people to maintain their focus on the group discussion at hand. If necessary, confront the group's or individual's tendency to start side conversations, and directly and constructively, share your frustration.
- **With overly verbal people**, your most subtle technique is to manage your proximity to them. While they are talking, move closer and maintain eye contact until you are standing right in front of them. Then, shift your focus and call on someone else. You may have to deal with verbose people outside the meeting. If nothing else works, you may have to confront them directly.
- **Call a halt to verbal intimidation.** Validate the participants' rights to disagree with you or with each other, but redirect them to negotiate constructively rather than using power or threats. If necessary, call a break and meet with the "intimidator." Ask for this person's support in putting the discussion on hold until it can be dealt with constructively.
- **Interview the "dominant" participant.** Try to discover needs or expectations that you may be missing. You may learn something that can add value to the meeting.

## Intervention Strategies (cont.)

- **Reverse viewpoints with the participant.** Or, ask other participants to represent both sides of the issue while you and the difficult participant listen.
- **Call on "non-participants" by name.** Ask for their views or opinions without embarrassing them. Offer positive reinforcement when they participate.
- **Use hand gestures to put "interrupters" or "intentional misinterpreters" on hold** while the speaker finishes a point. Ask them to let the speaker make the point. If necessary, paraphrase the statement so that it's presented as the speaker intended, rather than being misrepresented.
- **Don't get defensive when participants are critical of you.** Defensiveness will prevent you from hearing any constructive potential in their comments. You aren't perfect (and you don't have to be). Listen to criticism and suggestions. Model adaptability and flexibility if appropriate. Rephrase your understanding of the feedback or criticism, and ask for suggestions. Acknowledge the input and promise to respond once you have fully considered it.
- **Ask for help or suggestions from the group.** If you are unsure about what to do to make the meeting more effective, ask participants for their suggestions. You may ask the group to set ground rules for interactions to prevent polarization. This reinforces the idea that everyone, not just the facilitator, is responsible for the success of the meeting. You may also learn something that will help you in this situation, as well as strengthen your meeting skills.
- **Break into sub-groups.** Ask sub-groups to come to consensus on the issues at hand. Participants who have been too intimidated to speak may express their views more readily in smaller groups. Sub-grouping allows you the opportunity to pair people with similar (or different) points of view, and then to have them report to the whole group. This strategy also gives the difficult individual a smaller group or audience to influence.

- **Don't get sucked into "non-questions."** Turn rhetorical questions into statements. This encourages the speaker to "own" comments rather than allowing him or her to dominate the discussion by hiding behind false questions.
- **You may need to ask a disruptive participant to leave.** When a problem remains despite your best efforts, you must protect the meeting environment by asking the participant to leave. You may also need to let the participant know that you will have to tell the boss. This is uncomfortable, and it can be disruptive to the meeting, but it is sometimes necessary.

Keep in mind that your role as a facilitator gives you power in the meeting setting. With legitimate organizational objectives behind your effort, you should not automatically "cave in" to participants who are attempting to dominate or sabotage your meeting. Conversely, be aware that pointed confrontation on your part will make the group uncomfortable. It is not helpful to "win the battle and lose the war". You will want to ensure the group's continued willing participation during the rest of the meeting and in future meetings with you.

## Difficult Situations and Behaviors: Possible Causes and Strategies

Situation/ Behavior	Possible Causes	Strategies
Interrupting or talking over you or group members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Need to be heard</li> <li>▪ Worried their opinion won't be heard or valued</li> <li>▪ Doesn't use listening skills well</li> <li>▪ Could have hearing problem</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ask the person who was interrupted to continue</li> <li>▪ Hold hand, palm out, in front of interrupter without looking at them</li> <li>▪ Directly ask interrupter to wait until first person is finished</li> <li>▪ Ask interrupter to paraphrase what other person was saying</li> </ul>
Won't participate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Negative attitude toward the meeting</li> <li>▪ Not feeling well</li> <li>▪ Personal issues</li> <li>▪ Fear of rejection</li> <li>▪ Poor past meeting experiences</li> <li>▪ Shy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Use techniques to build participation</li> <li>▪ Try to determine cause of non-participation</li> <li>▪ Acknowledge them and encourage them to share their valuable insight</li> </ul>
Domination (talks too much)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Likes to talk; highly extroverted</li> <li>▪ Hyperactive</li> <li>▪ Overly excited or enthusiastic</li> <li>▪ Is already an expert in the topic or has been involved in similar meetings before</li> <li>▪ Unmet needs to be heard</li> <li>▪ Personal issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Thank them for sharing and ask for others' views</li> <li>▪ Tell them you want to hear from the rest of the group</li> <li>▪ Ask them to please give others a turn</li> <li>▪ Call on specific individuals</li> <li>▪ Use a "talking stick" or poker chips:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Only person with talking stick can talk then must pass stick on</li> <li>▪ Give each person same amount of poker chips; when they share they must give up a chip; if no more chips, no more talk</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

Situation/ Behavior	Possible Causes	Strategies
Arguing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Resentment about the meeting</li> <li>▪ Outside work issues</li> <li>▪ Personal issues</li> <li>▪ Not feeling well</li> <li>▪ Unclear about the purpose and goals of the meeting</li> <li>▪ Not understanding or grasping the issues being discussed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Acknowledge their opinion and ask if others feel the same</li> <li>▪ Tell them you appreciate their point of view and ask to "agree to disagree"</li> <li>▪ Try to determine root cause (are there issues not related to the meeting this person is dealing with?)</li> <li>▪ Ask participant to explain argument from the opposite point of view</li> <li>▪ Take a break</li> </ul>
Negative/cynical comments or body language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Resentment about the meeting</li> <li>▪ Outside work issues</li> <li>▪ Personal issues</li> <li>▪ Not feeling well</li> <li>▪ Unclear about purpose and goals of the meeting</li> <li>▪ Stress</li> <li>▪ Fear/anxiety</li> <li>▪ Not understanding or grasping the issues being discussed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ask if others agree or disagree, and why</li> <li>▪ Use humor, e.g. "wow, that sounds bleak"</li> <li>▪ Try to determine root cause</li> <li>▪ Ask participant directly to explain his or her negativity toward the meeting, topic, etc.</li> <li>▪ Take a break</li> </ul>
Side conversations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Not engaged in the meeting</li> <li>▪ Outside issues</li> <li>▪ Social needs</li> <li>▪ Personal issues</li> <li>▪ Needing clarification about the meeting</li> <li>▪ Not understanding or grasping the issues being discussed</li> <li>▪ Fear of speaking up in a group or asking questions</li> <li>▪ Not able to hear discussion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Pause and wait while looking at the participants</li> <li>▪ Ask one of the participants a question</li> <li>▪ Ask participants directly if the conversation is related to the topic, and if not, to please wait until a break</li> <li>▪ Break participants up into sub-groups, separating the talkers</li> </ul>

Situation/ Behavior	Possible Causes	Strategies
Arriving late to the meeting, or being late after breaks or lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Busy/deadlines</li> <li>▪ Outside issues</li> <li>▪ Traffic/weather issues</li> <li>▪ Lack of time management skills</li> <li>▪ Not interested or engaged in the meeting</li> <li>▪ If held in building of work, getting tied up with work issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Begin on time without late participant</li> <li>▪ Greet participant and ask him or her to get caught up on a break or during lunch</li> <li>▪ Remind participants of starting times</li> <li>▪ Ask participant directly to please make an effort to be on time</li> <li>▪ Ask if there is something you can do to help him or her be on time</li> </ul>
Doing other work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Busy/deadlines</li> <li>▪ Not interested or engaged in the meeting</li> <li>▪ Doesn't see the value of the meeting</li> <li>▪ Stress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ask group to remove all items from table top</li> <li>▪ Provide a table in back of room for "baggage"</li> <li>▪ Ask the participant to assist you, e.g. pass out materials, write on flip chart, facilitate a discussion, etc.</li> <li>▪ Put participants into small groups</li> <li>▪ If participant continues, ask participant directly if he or she needs to be somewhere else</li> </ul>
Attacking or putting down you or group members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lack of self-esteem</li> <li>▪ Personal issues</li> <li>▪ Interpersonal conflicts</li> <li>▪ Lack of communication skills</li> <li>▪ Frustration with the meeting</li> <li>▪ Not understanding or grasping the issues being discussed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Tell the participant directly that the behavior is not appropriate</li> <li>▪ Ask the participant to identify at least three positive things about the topic or other person</li> <li>▪ Ask the participant to rephrase his or her point of view by focusing on the situation or behavior, not the person</li> <li>▪ Take a break</li> </ul>

Situation/ Behavior	Possible Causes	Strategies
Excessive storytelling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Personal issues</li> <li>▪ Unmet social needs</li> <li>▪ Not clear on the purpose or goals of the meeting</li> <li>▪ Not interested or engaged in the meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ask participant how the story relates to the discussion topic</li> <li>▪ Ask participant to summarize the story with two main points</li> <li>▪ Ask participant to stay focused on current discussion</li> </ul>
Bringing up unrelated topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Unclear about purpose or goals of the meeting</li> <li>▪ Outside issues</li> <li>▪ Not interested or engaged in the meeting</li> <li>▪ The persons needs don't match the meeting's purpose</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ask participant how it relates to current discussion</li> <li>▪ Review the point or goal of the current discussion</li> <li>▪ Ask group if there are things needing to be discussed or issues to be aired before moving forward</li> <li>▪ Ask group if there is a need to discuss the unrelated topic</li> </ul>
Sleeping or constant yawning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Not feeling well</li> <li>▪ Room too warm</li> <li>▪ Not interested or engaged in the meeting</li> <li>▪ Personal issues</li> <li>▪ Lack of energy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Take a break</li> <li>▪ Do an energizer or ask group to take a walk</li> <li>▪ Do a temperature check</li> <li>▪ Move behind the participant and raise your voice</li> <li>▪ Ask participant a question</li> <li>▪ Use humor if appropriate</li> <li>▪ Provide refreshments</li> </ul>
Repeating a point of view or an opinion over and over	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Feeling unheard or misunderstood</li> <li>▪ Not understanding or grasping the issue being discussed</li> <li>▪ Personal issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Paraphrase the participant's view or opinion</li> <li>▪ Ask another participant to paraphrase the participant's view or opinion</li> <li>▪ Ask permission to move forward</li> <li>▪ Ask the participant to discuss the issue further during a break or after the meeting</li> <li>▪ Take a break and refocus on a new topic upon return</li> </ul>

<b>Situation/ Behavior</b>	<b>Possible Causes</b>	<b>Strategies</b>
Clicking or tapping pen or pencil, or drumming fingers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Kinesthetic participant</li> <li>▪ Hyperactive</li> <li>▪ Nervous or experiencing stress</li> <li>▪ Impatient, needing to move forward</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide quiet toys, markers &amp; scrap paper on tables</li> <li>▪ Provide non-clicking pens or pencils on the tables</li> <li>▪ Talk louder and ask if participants can hear you</li> </ul>

## Handling Unusually Disruptive Behavior

Disruptive behavior in meetings, particularly if it derails the meeting or makes people feel uncomfortable, must be addressed. It is wise to start with a low-key but firm reminder about the agreed-on ground rules and to escalate your responses if the situation continues. The following steps illustrate that escalation process:

1. If something is said that is disruptive, inflammatory, or inappropriate, ask the person to rephrase the comment without the invectives.
2. If repeated, tell the person the outburst or behavior is inappropriate and it must stop.
3. Call for a break and talk to the person privately. Ask the person to get it under control or he or she will be asked to leave the meeting.
4. If the person doesn't stop after the break, ask him or her to leave the meeting.
5. If the person won't leave and won't stop disrupting, adjourn the meeting. Plan to reschedule with or without the person, but only after the issue has been resolved.

Clearly there is also a disciplinary issue in this situation that would need to be addressed, but that is outside the scope of this course. Be aware of your body language when confronting disruptive behavior. Be direct and look the person in the eye. Also, move closer to the person to talk further, but not in a confrontational way. Make certain you are being clear in your expectations and that your voice is steady.

Source: *Planning and Leading Productive Meetings*, Jeffrey H. Davis, 2001.

## **Exercise: Facilitation Challenges**

At your tables, discuss the situations assigned to your group (using your experience and information on the previous pages). Decide the best course of action and prepare to report back to the large group.

1. You have good participation, except for one person. You notice he hasn't joined in the lively discussion.

Intervention:

2. Several people are talking at once during your meeting. It's getting confusing and a little chaotic.

Intervention:

3. One member is so negative during your meeting (both verbally and body language), that it's beginning to impact the "mood" of the meeting. You don't want to embarrass the person, but you have to do something.

Intervention:

4. One member gives a very complex answer to a question you ask. You're just not clear on what this person is talking about.

Intervention:

# The Team Development Model

Bruce Jackman

<b>Stage One Issues: Testing/Forming/Orientation</b>	<b>Role of Leader/Participant</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Direction and clarification sought by team members.</li> <li>• Polite impersonal, watchful behavior</li> <li>• Team members evaluate the nature of their involvement.</li> <li>• Will I be accepted / capable? Will the leader value me?</li> <li>• <b>Focus is on relationship to team and leader: Who am I in this group?</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide direction, structure, and expectations.</li> <li>• Provide safety and respect for all.</li> <li>• Chart mission, goals and contract.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage Two Issues: Controlling/Storming/Conflict</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who controls the team? How much autonomy/influence will I have?</li> <li>• Testing of leadership: How is control exercised?</li> <li>• What happens to the "delinquents"?</li> <li>• <b>Focus is on interactions. How will we solve interpersonal problems on this team?</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to and address challenges to leadership.</li> <li>• Protect minorities.</li> <li>• Gain agreement on dealing with conflict.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage Three Issues: Getting Organized/Norming</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developing team skill and norms for meeting behavior: How honest will we be? How will we communicate?</li> <li>• Focus on establishing group procedures: How do we want to do things?</li> <li>• Leader gives more responsibility to group, but confronts issues when necessary.</li> <li>• <b>Agree on guidelines for giving and receiving feedback.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get input, participation, and ownership.</li> <li>• Give more control to the group.</li> <li>• Clarify and agree on norms.</li> <li>• Clarify roles, expectations and standards.</li> <li>• Surface and agree on communication honesty</li> </ul>
<b>Stage Four Issues: Mature Closeness/Performing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mature closeness; open discussion and respect for differences in background, style, and mode of operation.</li> <li>• Challenging one another leads to creative problem-solving.</li> <li>• Clear roles with each person's contribution being seen as distinctive.</li> <li>• Joint setting of goals.</li> <li>• Mechanisms developed for ongoing self-assessment of group.</li> <li>• Resourceful and distinctive contribution to the organization.</li> <li>• <b>Focus on task completion.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get out of the team's way.</li> <li>• Resource provider / organization advocate.</li> <li>• Turn over leadership to members.</li> <li>• Reward new behaviors.</li> </ul>
<b>Stage Five Issues: Adjourning/Dissolution</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaving, endings.</li> <li>• Task completion.</li> <li>• <b>Focus on celebration.</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thank team.</li> <li>• Provide recognition.</li> </ul>

5. One member rambles on and on and never seems to get to the point. You don't want to abruptly cut the person off, but you're concerned about others' reaction to this person's comments.

Intervention:

6. You find that one member is dominating the discussion, and you want to ensure that everyone gets an opportunity to be heard.

Intervention:

7. It's clear to you that the members have something else on their minds besides the meeting at hand. Their undertone conversations and body language indicate they are upset about something. You need to address this before moving on.

Intervention:

8. During your meeting you (and others) are distracted by constant side conversations of between two members of the group.

Intervention:

