

Section 2: Creating an Atmosphere for Respectful Dialogue

2.1 The Do's and Don'ts of Creating a Respectful Meeting Environment

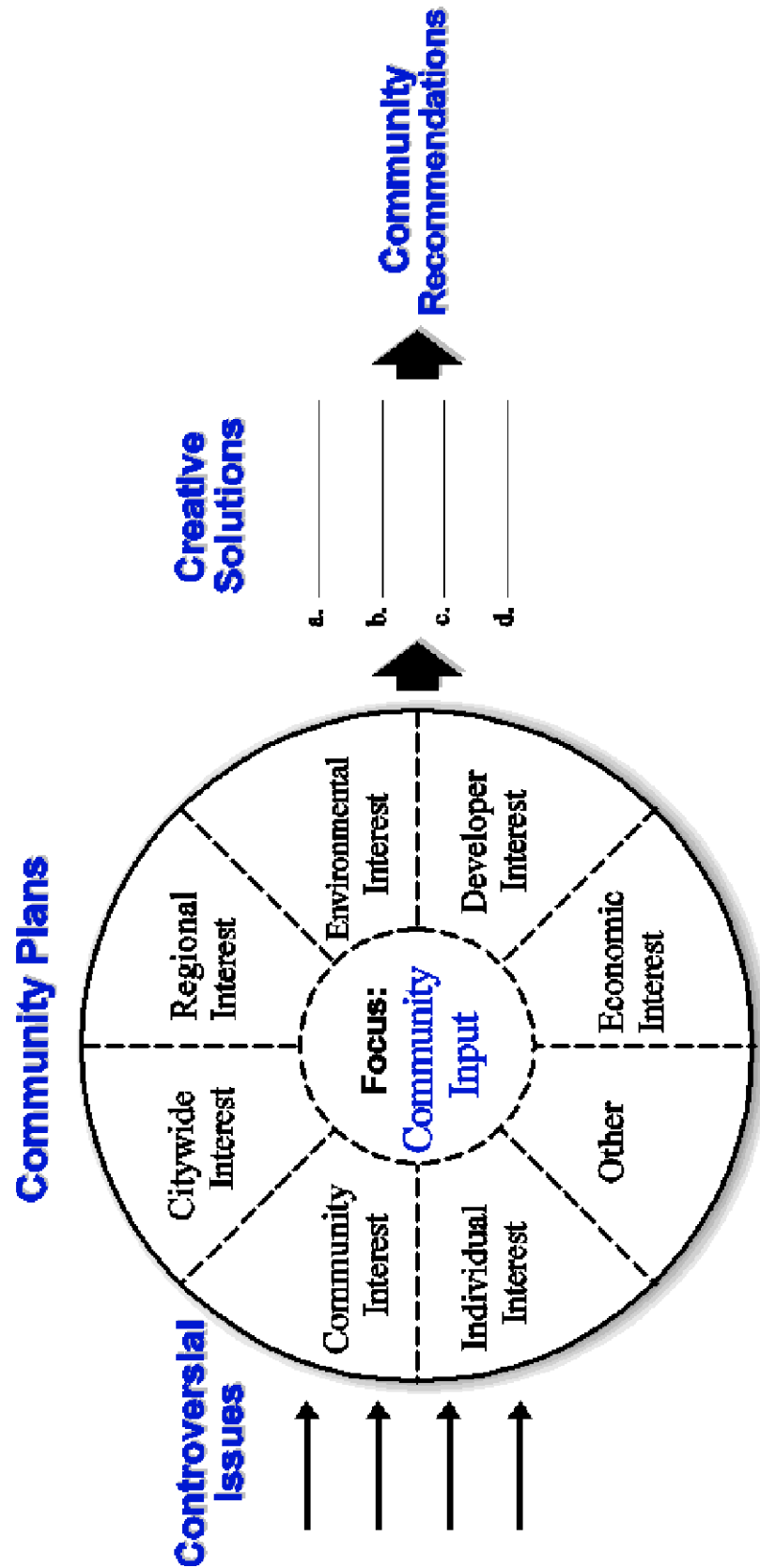
DO	DON'T
<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Treat each person with respect.◆ Create time for everyone to express their opinion.◆ Be inclusive.◆ Treat people fairly and honestly.◆ Model integrity.◆ Call people by name.◆ Express empathy. Acknowledge the feeling another expresses.◆ Recognize emotions and body language.◆ Focus on mutual solutions.◆ Break up two way conversations that dominate the meeting.◆ Schedule and review projects in a timely fashion.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Keep the public waiting until the end of the meeting to express their views.◆ Ignore people because they do not speak up.◆ Allow people to interrupt while someone else is speaking.◆ Allow someone to insult another speaker.◆ Let one person dominate the conversation.◆ Pretend that the emotion has not been expressed.◆ Express your own anger inappropriately.◆ Expect your solution to be selected.◆ Allow planning group board members to argue amongst themselves.◆ Delay project review unnecessarily.

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2.2 Characteristics of Respectful Dialogue

DEBATE	DIALOGUE
Latin Root of Debate: To Kill the Alternative	Greek Root of Dialogue: Meaning Flowing Through
Debate Fosters : Problem Solving	Dialogue Fosters: New Understanding
I MAINTAIN MY CERTAINTY	I SUSPEND MY CERTAINTY
♦ I <u>Tell</u> You What I Want	♦ I <u>Ask</u> Questions About...
♦ I <u>Defend</u> My Point of View	♦ I <u>Reflect</u> On <u>All</u> Points of View
♦ Someone Is Right/Someone Is Wrong	♦ I Form a New Perspective

From Controversy to Solutions



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2.4 Attributes of Good Facilitators

(Adapted from University of Nevada Cooperative Extension

“Community Leader Guide” developed cooperatively by:

Community Colleges of Spokane,

Institute of Extended Learning and

Washington State University Cooperative Extension.

<http://www.unce.unr.edu/publications/EBPubs/EB0103CLG/mtgmgmt6.htm>)

- ◆ **Objectivity** - A competent facilitator must set personal desires and biases aside and operate within the bounds of group generated discussion.
- ◆ **Communication** - A facilitator must model how to engage in relationships characterized by mutual respect. They need to be able to a) paraphrase and do perception checks; b) help everyone participate in the discussion and resolution; c) interpret nonverbal messages; and, d) recognize and accept cultural norms different from their own.
- ◆ **Teambuilding** - The facilitator needs to help the group grow by focusing the group's attention on the dynamics of its own operation. The facilitator may need to help a group establish and enforce the ground rules by which it operates.
- ◆ **Planning Skills** - The facilitator needs to help the group accomplish its tasks by using problem solving techniques, accessing external information, and reaching group agreement on its purpose, goals, and strategies.
- ◆ **Collaborative Skills** - The facilitator needs to be able to identify other groups in the community whose cooperation or resources are needed. The knowledge and experience required to help a group form workable partnerships is also desirable.
- ◆ **Motivation for Personal Development** - Facilitator skills grow over time and through practice. Good facilitators seek opportunities for training and ask for feedback so they can continue to improve their effectiveness.

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2.5 Ground Rules for Running Effective Meetings *

- ◆ Start on time.
- ◆ Develop and review the agenda.
- ◆ Conduct one piece of business at a time.
- ◆ Participation is a right...and a responsibility.
- ◆ Initiate ideas, support, challenge, counter. Differences, resolved constructively, lead to creative problem-solving.
- ◆ Encourage others to talk.
- ◆ Actively listen to others' ideas.
- ◆ Communicate openly and honestly.
- ◆ Conduct group business in front of the group.
- ◆ Conduct personal business outside of the meeting.
- ◆ Develop conditions of respect and trust.
- ◆ Summarize what has been accomplished and record.
- ◆ Record decisions made.
- ◆ Assign follow-up actions and responsibilities. Record them.
- ◆ Assess the way the group works together.
- ◆ End on time.

* You may want to use the entire list or chose those most applicable to your needs.

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2.6 Helpful Hints for Facilitators

- ◆ Develop Ground Rules and use them.
- ◆ Summarize what's happened or ask someone else to.
- ◆ Refer back to the Agenda.
- ◆ Stop the action and ask the group to critique itself.
- ◆ Take a break.
- ◆ Use appropriate humor.
- ◆ Stop the action and ask everyone to take a breath.
- ◆ Express your concerns.
- ◆ Handle inappropriate behavior.
- ◆ Model appropriate behavior.
- ◆ Introduce yourself and define your role at the beginning of the meeting.
- ◆ Arrange the meeting environment to make it the most comfortable and efficient space possible.
- ◆ Talk less. If the group asks you a lot of questions, ask someone else to answer. In general, it's best to phrase your comments as questions: "Sally wants to know what we should do next...what does everyone else think?...Everyone agree?" Get the group to talk to each other, not to you.
- ◆ Be aware of the group's energy level.
- ◆ Set a positive tone. Compliment the group when it is working well. When the group is not functioning well, state the case in such a way as to encourage the group so the situation can be changed: "Well, it looks as if we're getting bogged down. Some of you look as if you've tuned out. How are you feeling? Let's see how we got off the track. I think we can still head back in the right direction."

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Other Helpful Hints for Facilitators (Continued)

- ◆ Protect the group from one person's domination.
- ◆ If outside experts are invited to the meeting, define the amount of participation the group wants from them. Create a climate of respect for the people providing the report.
- ◆ Nip constant repetition and prolonged comments in the bud: "We have heard your concern about that. Is there anything new you'd like to add? Let's move on."
- ◆ Avoid interpersonal confrontations. Keep the discussion on the point. Protect individuals from being interrupted.
- ◆ Respect silence.
- ◆ Be aware of body language; yours and others.
- ◆ Admit mistakes and correct them.
- ◆ Educate the group as to the process techniques. If group members cannot stay within the problem definition stage, you might say "Let's make sure this is really a problem before we start to offer solutions. Let's deal with one issue at a time."
- ◆ Be honest. Let the group know if you are feeling particularly tired, upset or distracted, or if you are beginning to feel too much personal involvement in the discussion. Ask for suggestions if you're in deep doubt about how to handle a difficult situation.

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2.7 Communication Tips

- ♦ **Think before you speak and plan before you write.** Understand your message before you expect others to. Target your communication to the intended audience by using terminology they are likely to understand. If possible, “pre-test” important communications on individuals who will give you candid feedback.
- ♦ **Be concise and specific.** Avoid ambiguous words and phrases that may mean different things to different people (e.g., usually, sometimes, a lot, rarely, etc.). The listener may interpret information in a way that supports his or her assumptions.
- ♦ **Stress a few major points.** One can only comprehend a limited amount of information at any given time. Carefully consider what points need to be made.
- ♦ **Over-Communicate!** When you think you’ve made a point clear, communicate it again. Don’t underestimate the power of redundancy.
- ♦ **Use a variety of methods or communication.** People learn and understand information in different ways.
- ♦ **Use right brain messages.** Try communicating creatively with stories, examples, pictures, props, etc., to help convey your message and increase retention.
- ♦ **Never assume others understand what you say or write...** Check to be sure. Ask them to describe their understanding of your message. This will allow you to clarify and correct any misunderstandings.
- ♦ **Listen! Use active listening.** Don’t formulate your responses while you’re hearing an incoming message.

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2.8 Blocks to Active Listening

- ♦ **Judging people.**
Our tendency to judge people distorts our ability to really hear their message.
We often spend more time applying labels to people than listening to their message.
- ♦ **Thinking in advance that you know what someone is going to say.**
This can lead to mentally “tuning out” before the speaker is finished talking.
- ♦ **Twisting a message to make it say what you want someone to say.**
The result is that you only hear the message you want to hear, not what is really being said.
- ♦ **Your own emotions.**
“Emotional cotton” can cause you to misinterpret what someone is saying.

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2.9 Empathetic Listening

(Pickering, Marisue, "Communication" in EXPLORATIONS,
A Journal of Research of the University of Maine,
Vol. 3, No. 1, Fall 1986, pp 16-19.)

Characteristics of Empathetic Listeners

- ◆ Desire to be other-directed, rather than to project one's own feelings and ideas onto the other.
- ◆ Desire to be non-defensive, rather than to protect the self. When the self is being protected, it is difficult to focus on another person.
- ◆ Desire to imagine the roles, perspectives, or experiences of the other, rather than assuming they are the same as one's own.
- ◆ Desire to listen as a receiver, not as a critic, and desire to understand the other person rather than to achieve either agreement from or change in that person.

Ten Skills for Empathetic Listening

SKILLS	EXPLANATION
Attending, acknowledging	Providing verbal or non-verbal awareness of the other, i.e., eye contact
Restating, paraphrasing	Responding to person's basic verbal message
Reflecting	Reflecting feelings, experiences, or content that has been heard or perceived through cues
Interpreting	Offering a tentative interpretation about the other's feelings, desires, or meanings
Summarizing, synthesizing	Bringing together in some way feelings and experiences; providing a focus
Probing	Questioning in a supportive way that requests more information or that attempts to clear up confusions

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Empathetic Listening (Continued)

Giving feedback	Sharing perceptions of the other's ideas or feelings; disclosing relevant personal information
Supporting	Showing warmth and caring in one's own individual way
Checking perceptions	Finding out if interpretations and perceptions are valid and accurate
Being quiet	Giving the other time to think as well as to talk

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2.10 Effective Ways to Stimulate Discussion

◆ Initiating

“I propose we begin by discussing...”

◆ Ask for Feelings and Opinions

“How do you feel about...?”

“What is your thinking on...?”

“What brings you to conclude that...?”

◆ Paraphrase

“Are you asking me to...?”

“Let me see if I understand your position. Are you saying that...?”

“What I am hearing is... Is that right?”

◆ Encourage Participation

“Carlos, how do you feel about this?”

“Mary, how would you answer John’s question?”

“We haven’t heard from Jack yet. Jack, how do you feel about this?”

◆ Summarize

“A lot of good ideas have been presented in the last few minutes. Will someone please summarize the major points before we go on?”

“I have lost track. Will someone summarize what has been done so far?”

◆ Ask for Clarification

“It is still not clear to me. What do I do when....?”

“I did not understand the last comment. What would you do if...?”

◆ Ask for Examples

“Cynthia, will you give some examples of what you mean?”

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Effective Ways to Stimulate Discussion (Continued)

◆ Test for Consensus

“Does everyone accept the idea that...?”

“Before we go on to the next issue, let me check to make sure that all have agreed on...?”

◆ Explore an Idea in More Detail

“Does anyone have anything more to add to what’s been said?”

“What are some other ways to approach this problem?”

◆ Do a Quick Survey

“Let’s see a show of hands. How many are for this proposal?”

“How does everybody feel about this? Let’s start with Luis.”

◆ Check Targets or Orientation

“Are we asking the right questions?”

“Are these the most important goals?”

◆ Confront Differences

“Nick, you haven’t said so, you are shaking your head, does that mean you don’t agree?”

“Martha, you seem to be holding back on this. Is there something you disagree with?”

◆ Look Into the Future

“If we did it this way, what is the worst thing that could happen?”

“If it works, how will it affect our community?”

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2.11 Encouraging Participation

(Adapted from Anderson, Karen. Making Meetings Work. West Des Moines, IA: American Median Publishing, 1994.)

- ◆ Ask the group to identify its needs. Have group representatives record them on a marker board or flip chart.
- ◆ Ask participants to do something with the information they have, such as “Check two items on this list that you think are top priorities.”
- ◆ Tell a story. People get involved in stories, especially if you ask them to imagine themselves in the situation you describe. “Imagine our community in five years. What do you want it to look and feel like.”
- ◆ Encourage the group to share leadership. Ask for a volunteer to lead a small group discussion or subcommittee.
- ◆ Call someone by name and invite that person to comment.
- ◆ Ask someone to summarize what has happened in the meeting so far.
- ◆ Acknowledge emotions expressed and body language. “We can hear that you are angry about...”
- ◆ Ask whether the group has any questions, concerns, or suggestions.
- ◆ Focus on mutual gain so that everyone feels like a winner.
- ◆ Build in time on your agenda for public participation.

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2.12 Influencing Personal Agendas

The Personal Agenda	Why It Happens	What To Do About It
The Quiet One	Bored... Indifferent... Timid... Superior...	...gain interest by asking for opinion. ...Question the person next to him/her. Then ask the quiet one to comment on the view expressed. ...Compliment the first time this person contributes. Be sincere. ...indicate respect for this person's experience, then ask for ideas.
Bungler	This person lacks the ability to put good ideas into proper order. Has ideas, but can't convey them and needs some help.	Don't call attention to the problem. Say, "Let me see if we are saying the same thing." (Then repeat the idea more clearly.)
Obstinate	This person can't or won't see the other side. He/she supports his/her own viewpoint no matter what.	Ask other members of the group to comment on the ideas. Remind the person that time is short and suggest he/she accept the group consensus presently. Indicate your willingness to talk to him/her at a later time. Then follow up.
Conversationalist	Side chatter is usually personal in nature, but may be related to topic.	Don't embarrass... but call by name and ask easy question. Call by name, restarting last opinion expressed and asking his or her opinion of it. Participation is the best solution. Include this person in the discussion.

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The Personal Agenda	Why It Happens	What To Do About It
Personality Problems	Two or more individuals clash, dividing your people into factions, a danger to the success of the meeting.	<p>Maximize points of agreement; minimize disagreement. Draw attention to the objective at hand.</p> <p>Pose a direct question to an uninvolved member to the topic.</p> <p>Frankly state that personalities should be left out in this discussion. (Last resort)</p>
Wrong Track	Person who brings up ideas that are obviously incorrect.	<p>Say “That’s one way of looking at it,” and tactfully make any corrections.</p> <p>Say “I see your point, but can we reconcile that with out current situation”?</p> <p>Handle this tactfully, since you will be contradicting him/her.</p> <p>Remember, all members of the group will hear how you respond to each individual, and you can encourage or discourage further participation.</p>
The Talker	<p>Highly motivated...</p> <p>Show off...</p> <p>Well informed...</p> <p>Plain talkative...</p>	<p>...Slow this person down with some challenging questions.</p> <p>...say, “That’s an interesting point. Now let’s see what the rest think of it.”</p> <p>...draw upon his/her knowledge, but relay to the group.</p> <p>...in general, for all overly</p>

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The Personal Agenda	Why It Happens	What To Do About It
		talkative, let the group take care of this person as much as possible.
The Griper	This person has a pet peeve, gripes for the sake of complaining, or in some cases, has a legitimate complaint.	<p>Point out that the problem at hand is to operate as efficiently and cooperatively as possible under present circumstances.</p> <p>Indicate you'll discuss his/her personal problems with him/her privately at a later date.</p> <p>In some cases, it is helpful to have another member of the group respond to his/her complaint.</p>
Again, it is important to point out that the manner in which the leader handles the ideas of each individual at a meeting is heard by all members of the group, and, the way situations are dealt with will serve to encourage or hinder the group's participation and support.		

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2.13 Managing Confrontation in Meetings

The following ideas should help you handle confrontations in a positive way.

- ♦ **Clarify Objectives:** Conflict sometimes develops because participants have different understandings of the meeting's objectives.
- ♦ **Strive for Understanding:** Make sure each party in a confrontation can state the opposing party's position and supporting reasons.
- ♦ **Focus on the Rational.** Keep attention focused on rational consideration – facts, supporting reasons, potential problems if a certain course of action is followed, etc.
- ♦ **Generate Alternatives:** What alternative solutions integrate the needs of the diverse points of view involved in the confrontation? Ask for assistance from group members who are not at either extreme. They can become a resource to generate some reasonable alternatives.
- ♦ **Table the Issue:** Tabling can be an effective way to deal with conflict when you feel a party needs time to consider the arguments that have been presented.

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2.14 Tips to Transform Disagreement

(Adapted from Anderson, Karen. *Making Meetings Work*. West Des Moines, IA: American Median Publishing, 1994.)

- ◆ Use appropriate humor to defuse tension. A spontaneous laugh can offer the fresh perspective your group needs.
- ◆ Find a way to agree. Find something in the other argument or comment that you can agree with at least partially. I understand and agree that what happened is unfortunate. Let's see how it could be dealt with differently.
- ◆ If someone from the audience verbally attacks you, thank that person for the comments or the concern, break eye contact and either proceed to your next point or ask other participants to respond. It is important to demonstrate that you have confidence in leading the group objectively.
- ◆ Use the group to keep divergent comments to a minimum. Ask the group early in the discussion to remind one another to stay on the topic. Identify a signal that members can use to suggest the speaker get back to the point at hand.
- ◆ Ask the group to verify any interpretations that appear in the meeting in order to avoid perpetuating rumors or assumptions. *"How do you know what?" "Where did the information come from?"*
- ◆ Restate a person's disagreement, and ask if you understand it correctly. Be sure you hear what that person is saying and that the person feels you are taking the disagreement seriously.
- ◆ Ask the person who disagrees if she or he wants it stated in the record of the meeting, or ask if the point is appropriate for the next meeting's agenda. Delaying or rescheduling such points will often defuse them. With time between this meeting and the next, some of the points will resolve themselves.
- ◆ Focus on current issues – the here and now. You can't change the past, you can change how you respond to the present and to the future.
- ◆ Focus on the behavior and the issue, not the person. If someone calls you "incompetent," reply, *"I hear your frustration that this matter is not resolved yet. Work with me, and together we'll find a solution."*
- ◆ Use a mediator or an arbitrator. Ask the dissenting parties to agree to abide by the outcome that will be facilitated or decided by a person they mutually appoint.

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2.14 Tips to Transform Disagreement (continued)

- ◆ Describe observations in non-threatening, nonjudgmental language. *“You claim that...”* suggests that the person is lying. A more neutral response is, *“Is my understanding correct? Are you saying that...?”*
- ◆ Use an “I Message.” This is a direct, clear, and non-threatening statement that allows the speaker to describe personal feelings, observations, and perceptions in a specific situation. Four parts of this message work together to form a complete communication about a current situation: observation, emotion, impact, and action.

When I receive a report late (observation), I feel flustered (emotion). Then I don't have time to prepare in advance (impact). Please make a realistic deadline getting out the agenda so that we can all count on it (action).”

The “I Message” says *“This is how I understand the situation, how I feel about it, what happens, and what I want you or me to do about it to keep it from happening again.”*

- ◆ Use the FOCUS model to transform complaints that are not negotiable into targets that are. Individuals or teams can use this process:

What are your feelings about the situation?	<i>I feel...</i>
What are your objections or concerns?	<i>I am frustrated that...</i>
What are the consequences?	<i>I worry that...</i>
What would utopia be?	<i>I wish....</i>
What satisfaction are you looking for?	<i>I want...</i>

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2.15 Dealing With Challenging Behaviors

(Adapted from University of Nevada Cooperative Extension

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Washington State University Cooperative Extension.)

<http://www.unce.unr.edu/publications/EBPubs/EB0103CLG/mtgmgmt7.htm>

Type of Difficult Behavior	Ways to Cope
Complainers gripe continuously but never act to resolve the reason for their unhappiness.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Listen attentively.◆ Acknowledge and paraphrase the complaint.◆ Don't agree or disagree.◆ Keep conversation focused on the complaint.◆ Pin the complainer to specifics.◆ Avoid the accusation-defense-reaccusation loop.◆ State the facts without comment or apology.◆ Move to a problem solving strategy.◆ Be prepared to start this process over several times. Complainers do not want to solve the problem. This robs them of their power.
Super-Agreeables are sincere, supportive and agreeable to your face or in public, but may act in a contrary way behind your back. They often fail to follow-through on commitments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Make honesty non-threatening.◆ Be personable if it is genuine.◆ Curb their willingness to make commitments they cannot possibly fulfill.◆ Seek win-win situations.◆ Establish specific responsibilities and deadlines.◆ Listen carefully as the truth often lies in their humor.

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<p>Negativists object to everything and assert that whatever is proposed won't work or is impossible. They rob any group of enthusiasm and optimism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Counter their attitude with realistic optimism.◆ Do not agree with them.◆ Don't hurry to propose solutions.◆ Use their negative attitude as a "devil's advocate."◆ Work with those who are enthused.
<p>Silent-Unresponsives appear indifferent and answer every question or request for help with a short nod or grunt.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Ask open-ended questions.◆ Use the friendly, silent stare.◆ Pause for long periods, inviting them to fill the void.◆ Comment on what is happening in the discussion.◆ Break the tension by helping them say what is on their mind.◆ Recycle the conversation back to them.
<p>Indecisives put off making a decision until it is too late or the decision is made for them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Bring issues out in the open and deal with them directly.◆ Engage them in problem solving activities.◆ Identify all alternatives and prioritize.◆ Provide lots of support after they make a decision.◆ Watch for signs that the stress of making a decision is getting too high.◆ Stay focused on the issue and don't allow deflection.

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<p>Hostile-Aggressives intimidate and bully others to get their own way. They use anger and cutting remarks to cower others into following their lead.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Confront but do not threaten.◆ Give them time to run down.◆ Forget being polite, charge in and make your point.◆ Ask them to sit down. This reduces their aggressiveness.◆ Speak to the issue, do not launch a personal attack.
<p>Know-It-All Experts want you to believe they know all there is to know about anything worth knowing. They are usually condescending, imposing or pompous.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">◆ Do your homework on the subject.◆ Provide adequate background materials for group members.◆ Listen and acknowledge what they say.◆ Question them firmly but do not attack.◆ Avoid being the counter-expert.

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2.16 Ten Steps for Controlling Emotional “Hot Buttons”

(Bone, Diane. The Business of Listening.
Los Altos, CA: Crisp Publications, Inc., 1988)

The following is a list of coping skills for preventive maintenance when a “hot button” is activated:

- 1. Listen attentively without interrupting.**
Take several deep breaths to help you control your physical reactions.
- 2. Make a conscious choice about your response.**
You can get angry, try to solve the problem, or ignore it. (Trying to solve the problem is the best way to keep it from happening again.)
- 3. Acknowledge the other person’s feelings.**
Make it okay for them to feel the way they do.
- 4. Ask objective questions for clarification.**
Open ended questions are useful.
- 5. Try to see the other person’s point of view.**
Agree where you can and feed back what you are hearing.
- 6. Stick to the subject.**
Define your problem and don’t let other issues interfere.
- 7. Be patient.**
Problems don’t always have immediate solutions. Be patient with the other person – and yourself.
- 8. Express your point of view.**
Don’t force proof. Present your evidence without backing them into a corner.
- 9. Explain why.**
A reasonable explanation can often take the sting out of an emotional issue.
- 10. Work out a “win-win” plan.**
Make sure your solution is fair and workable for both (or all) of the people involved.

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2.17 Brainstorming Guidelines

- ◆ Listen to all ideas offered by group members.
- ◆ Do not evaluate or judge ideas at this time.
- ◆ Do not discuss ideas except perhaps briefly to clarify understanding.
- ◆ Welcome unrealistic ideas. It is always easier to eliminate than to accumulate. Realistic ideas often emerge from what appears unrealistic at first.
- ◆ Repetition is okay. Just keep going.
- ◆ Encourage quantity. The more ideas, the greater the likelihood of a useful one.
- ◆ Let the brainstorming come to a natural close. If a plateau is reached midstream, wait, and then start again.

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2.18 Steps in Creative Problem – Solving

- ◆ **Define the Problem/Issue**
Apply a definition as a way to address the problem/issue.
- ◆ **Gather Information on the Problem**
Is there information you need to know? Aiding or restraining factors.
- ◆ **Brainstorm Solutions**
Quantity not quality. No evaluation/remarks/criticism.
- ◆ **Evaluate and Weight Proposals**
Weed out those you do not want; select among those left.
- ◆ **Ensure Successful Implementation**
List supporting forces and restraining forces.
- ◆ **Assign Individuals for Implementation**
- ◆ **Follow-up**