

- Conflict means people care about something— with conflict there is creative energy to be tapped.
- Difficult situations are a reality of meetings and group dynamics. You may need to remind yourself that conflict may be the most important juncture of the meeting process. If handled effectively, conflict can help the group move forward.

People Dynamics: Tough Behaviors

“There is a subtle balancing act between maintaining control of the meeting and not embarrassing the participants or creating any unnecessary tension. A skilled facilitator should be able to walk that fine line.”

Behavior	Tip
Lisa the Late - Always 15 minutes late	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leave a voicemail for the latecomer. Tell latecomer they play a crucial part in the initial part of the meeting. Add it would be quite embarrassing to miss their time to shine. Build that role into the agenda • State explicitly no one should be late
Technology Tim - Constantly on technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ground rule TTO “Turn Technology Off” • Have partner conversations • For web meetings, let participants use the chat box to chime in whenever they like
Boris the Boss - Thinks their opinion is twice as important as everyone else	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus discussion on importance by reviewing a list of the impractical or impossible options that have been eliminated. • “Parking Lot” for important items to take up another time.
Danny the D.A. - Devils Advocate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to the D.A. They may be bringing up something important. Once complete, ask them “Do you feel there is absolutely no way this can work?” Then ask, “Ask them what might work?” • Ask if they could suspend the disbelief and think of opportunities how this might work? • Use voting methods such as Fist of Five to see where the D.A. stands
Tangential Tim - Conversation always goes somewhere else	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try moving forward by reminding Tim of the meeting purpose or objective. • Empower participants to ask, “Is the new topic more important and urgent than other agenda items?” • “Parking Lot” for important items to take up another time.

Tips for Handling Difficult Situations

Behavior	Tip
<p>Terry the Talkaholic - Keeps talks in circles jamming the agenda</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try paraphrasing what the person has said. Seek the nugget, they have expressed. You might also add a question like: In what ways can the group build upon Terry’s ideas? • Point to the previous points made “Ask if it is a different issue?” This works best when you have used flip charts or other form of graphic facilitation. • A “Well Done” agenda item that turns into “Burnt Toast” gets a call of GEPO (Good Enough, Press On) • Vote to move forward
<p>Sarah the Sleeper - Looks tired lost or disinterested</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show general concern by letting Sarah know that you’re worried about her slipping away. Let her know you notice her slipping away. Ask what you can do. • Interaction wakes people up. Ask questions and assign roles to participants • Don’t schedule meetings after lunch • Include coffee • Use a moving energizer - Group stretch, move around the room, write on Post It’s then organize them on a wall.
<p>Jerry the Joker - The more serious the subject the more they joke</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the joking relieve the tension for more ideas to come or does it derail the conversation? If it derails the conversation, emphasize the problems, penalties, and cost of failure to bring the focus back.
<p>Dominating Donna - Her way or the highway.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call on others first • Use discussion groups. Switch them regularly so no one gets stuck with Donna. And donna gets to hear many views. • Use a silent vote if people are intimidated by Donna • Let her know the implications of “Her way is the Highway”
<p>Silent Sam - Doesn’t speak up but has great ideas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage Sam by asking for his opinions later • Give Sam a speaking role if he is comfortable. For instance, review the action items from the last meeting. • Step by step he can be coached into participation
<p>Blamer - Pins the issue somewhere else</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage that we are all in the same boat. • Point to previous votes where you were all “on board.”

Universal Ways of Dealing with Tough Behaviors

- Enforce ground rules.
- Use incremental interventions
 - Body language
 - Eye contact
 - Noticing/mirroring
 - Call on the group's help
 - Confront respectfully
- Call a break.
- Take turns with meeting roles. Choose a new facilitator, note taker, and subject matter expert for each meeting.

Don't let yourself get hooked.

- Breathe
- Keep calm
- Observe, observe, observe and listen, listen, listen
- Focus on the group process
- Remember—you can stop the process and contract with the group to adjust the agenda

Help individuals and the group maintain their dignity and save face

- No blame—no one's wrong
- Try to reframe a speaker's accusatory comments in terms of the person's needs
- Call a break to stop immediate interaction; give time for cool down and talk with conflicting individuals one on one

Above all—Facilitate!

- Use and remind others to use the guidelines or group norms (the group established)
- Ask clarifying questions: Can you tell me more about your concern?
- Paraphrase people's comments
- Remind the group of the agreed upon meeting objective
- Acknowledge and capture non-meeting issues in the parking lot, a posted flip chart sheet with the title, PARKING LOT. This is where all the good ideas get recorded that are beyond the meeting scope. (I have a personal preference for "Bike Rack"!)

Constructive Feedback

- Begin with "Well Dones"
- Move to "Ideas for Improvement"
- 4 Key Elements of Effective Feedback:
 - Specifics—be specific here and now
 - Impact—describe the impact on you
 - Feelings—tell how you feel
 - Wish—tell what it is you wish
- "I experienced confusion when you said..."
- "I felt uncomfortable in not knowing..."
- "It would help me if..."
- "I would like it if you..."