

Common Challenges



As the facilitator, you may need to deal with difficult situations. Some common problems are listed below with suggestions of how to deal with them.

- o **Problem:** A member of the group is not contributing to the discussion.
Possible solution: Pay attention to his/her body language—does he/she look uncomfortable? Encourage participation but be careful not to put a quiet individual on the spot. Talking to them during a break or after the session may make them feel more comfortable.
- o **Problem:** The discussion drifts off topic.
Possible solution: As the facilitator, it is important to keep the conversation on track. When the conversation wanders, bring the group back to the original topic. Listen for any side conversations that may be going on and remind the group of the ground rules to ensure everyone is focused.
- o **Problem:** A talkative person is dominating the conversation.
Possible solution: When one individual is “hogging” the discussion, acknowledge those who have not spoken yet and ask them to share their thoughts. If the person continues to take over the group, remind everyone of the ground rules. You can also call on the individual by name and point out the issue in a respectful manner. The group may also be aware of this behaviour and help to shift the dynamic.
- o **Problem:** The group is stuck on a subject, preventing the discussion from moving forward.
Possible solution: The group may not realize that they are stuck. At this point, summarize what has been discussed and ask the group if they would like to move on. If closure cannot be reached on a topic—take note and leave time at the end to come back to it.
- o **Problem:** A conflict emerges within the group.
Possible solution: Try reminding everyone of the ground rules. If the conflict is personal rather than discussion-based, intervene immediately. Remember, some disagreement is normal in group discussions.
- o **Problem:** The group appears to be uninterested in the discussion.
Possible solution: This may be a good time to ask a probing question to generate further discussion. If the group’s energy is declining, it may be a good time for a break.

