

# Dealing with Difficult Issues (or people)

## Safe Zone Training

First thing is to know to NOT TAKE IT PERSONALLY! Don't get caught into power struggles over the group. Use good-natured humor and attempt to connect with people on a personal level. Broaden the participation of others in the group and sometimes protect participants as needed from distractions or others.

Aggressive people are trying to get you upset. Remain calm and don't attack back. The best way to confront this is to acknowledge and even agree with what is being said. It can disarm an argument very quickly because there is nowhere else to go with it!

These are 10 difficult behaviors in groups and potential solutions.

1. **Monopolizing**
  - a. Ask others for input, summarize and move on, use small groups or pairs
2. **Tangents**
  - a. Ask to hold off until later in the training, summarize and move on, address directly that a tangent has been raised and restate the purpose of the discussion.
3. **Private Conversations**
  - a. Use nonverbals to regain participant's attention, lower your voice or pause, ask one of them a question directly, ask them to refrain from talking (privately if possible).
4. **Jokes**
  - a. Ignore them, reinforce by complimenting the humor, privately ask person to minimize the jokes
5. **Disagreeing**
  - a. Summarize and ask others for their opinions, agree to disagree, agree in part and then state how you differ and why.
6. **Distractions**
  - a. Use non-verbals to get participant's attention, ignore if not distracting from the session, privately ask participant to stop.
7. **Doing one's own work or stuff**
  - a. Ask all to participate, ignore if not affecting others, switch into pairs
8. **Time schedules** – people arriving late, leaving, etc.
  - a. Ignore the behavior, remind everyone of timeframes, request promptness.
9. **Nonparticipation**
  - a. Ask direct but nonthreatening questions, ask a participant to be the leader in a discussion, leave people alone since nonparticipation doesn't always indicate not learning.
10. **Sleeping**
  - a. Walk near person without being obvious, vary your voice, shift into pairs or small groups, do a physical activity.