

## Hints for Facilitators:

### Handling Difficult Behaviors in Meetings

how they behave	why	what to do
heckler	aggressive, argumentative, gets satisfaction from needling others	Don't let him/her upset you. Try to find merit in one of his/her points; express your agreement, and then move on to something else.
overly-talkative	These people usually fall into four categories: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an "eager beaver"</li> <li>• a show-off</li> <li>• someone exceptionally well-informed and anxious to use it</li> <li>• just plain talkative</li> </ul>	Wait until he/she takes a breath; then thank him/her and say something like "Let's hear from someone else." Or say "That's an interesting point... what do the rest of you think?" Try slowing the person down with a difficult question If he/she makes an obvious misstatement of facts, toss the comment back to the group and let them correct the person. In general, let the group take care of him/her as much as possible.
griper	They may have a particular pet peeve, or may just gripe at random, for the sake of complaining. In some cases they may have a legitimate complaint.	Point out that the purpose of the meeting is to find better ways to do things by constructive cooperation. In some cases, have a member of the group answer instead of you.
won't talk	This person may be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• bored</li> <li>• superior</li> <li>• timid, uncertain</li> </ul>	Arouse interest by asking directly for his/her opinion Ask for his/her view after indicating respect for his/her experience (but don't overdo this!) Compliment or encourage him/her the first time he/she talks
personality clash between members	Sometimes differences of opinion get too heated; other times, people just don't get along.	Compliment the individuals on their enthusiasm and participation, but ask them to focus on constructive solutions. Emphasize points they agree on. Toss out a question to the rest of

		the group, bringing them back into the discussion.
side conversations	May be commenting on the discussion, or may be having a personal conversation.	Don't embarrass the person, but call him/her by name and ask an easy question. Or, call him/her by name, then restate the last opinion expressed or the last remark, and ask what he/she thinks.
definitely wrong	This person may be confused or misinformed.	If he/she is confused, say something like "Let me see if I understand you..." and tactfully restate the comment more clearly. If misinformed, thank him/her, then ask for another comment on the same subject. This permits a member of the group to do the correcting.

[Return to Tools for Organizers, Activists, Educators, and Other Hell-Raisers](#)