

Dealing with Difficult Interactions

Sometimes when you are running assemblies, or doing community work in general, you might have difficult interactions with people. Whilst there is no easy way to overcome these, here are some suggestions:

- Refer to the line from the inclusivity statement: We welcome all people, but not all behaviours.
- Move in when people are interjecting, challenging or talking too much, stating that radical inclusivity means we need to have time for everyone and equal sharing/hearing time.
- Thank them for their input and seek the positive intention of their behaviour (what are they seeking to achieve that is positive?)
- Remember, discussions can be won by people who make the most noise. Your job is to ensure all voices are heard.
- Explain the situation & encourage a quick round-up: "I am conscious of time and our agenda - what is the final point you want to make?"
- If someone interrupts, state the importance of ensuring people are listened to without interruption.
- Offer to talk to the person exhibiting difficult behaviour in more detail during a break or afterwards. If you need someone to behave differently it can be an expression of Radical Inclusion to connect with them in a break or afterwards to keep in relationship with them.
- Sometimes with someone who is very unconsciously in need of attention and can't be satisfied with a short interaction, avoiding eye contact may keep them quiet or let them know they have been talking for too long.
- If necessary, overtly clarify the objectives of the session again and what is needed to achieve those objectives.

Handling Tricky Situations

- You may experience a situation where a person is triggered or emotionally overwhelmed, if the topic relates to a sensitive issue for them.
 - Suggested response: Give them a minute to compose themselves, but if they are struggling, ask if they would like to take time out to catch their breath. If you have trained counsellors as volunteers, suggest they may talk with them in a safe space.
- You may have someone who feels so strongly that they talk for longer than their allotted time and do not acknowledge your 'round up signal', or they may go off topic.
 - Suggested response: "Thank you for sharing that (check participant's name on their name tag). Just to say though, that as a volunteer facilitator, I have to keep the discussions on track to keep us on time. I don't mean to diminish the value of what

you are sharing, but can I bring you back to the question we're discussing together here? If you feel you want to elaborate on your concerns, then let's talk one to one later. OK?"

- You may have a couple of people talking among themselves while someone is taking their turn to speak.
 - Suggested Response: "So everyone can hear everyone's comments, can I ask you to hold your thoughts and share with the group when X has finished speaking? Thanks"
- You may identify other tricky situations that can disrupt the process. Talk these through at your debrief to help everyone learn from your experience.

Trust the People's 'Engaging Communities' module has a document on [how to deal with conflict when engaging with strangers](#), which uses methods from Non-Violent Communication (NVC) - it is worth reading to prepare for community assemblies.
