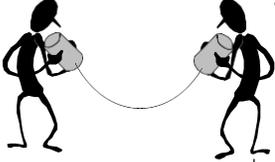
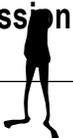


## Handout 3: Managing Difficult Issues in a Training

The Behavior	Possible Reasons	Interventions That Allow for Continued Learning
<p><b>1. Side Conversation</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talking about something that is relevant to the session</li> <li>• Not engaged in learning therefore talking to keep involved/awake</li> <li>• Talking about something relevant to work but not relevant to the event</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behave as if you “know” the side conversation is session-related and ask the participants to add their thoughts. In the event that the side conversation actually was session related, you have reinforced their involvement and participation.</li> <li>• If you are lecturing or leading a discussion, slowly move into the part of the room where the disrupters are, continue lecture/discussion and don’t look at them as you continue (this only works if you have already established a habit of moving around the room). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✎ Change the pace of the activity; do something active; put participants in pairs or in groups.</li> <li>✎ Create new groups to separate the disrupters.</li> <li>✎ At the start of the next session or content chunk, revisit the group norms/ground rules.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Not engaged; does other work or reads the newspaper</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✎ Required to attend</li> <li>✎ Content not relevant</li> <li>✎ Assumes that this is just another initiative that will pass</li> <li>✎ Feels pressure to be doing other work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✎ Prevent by assigning seats; getting participants in groups and talking soon after you begin.</li> <li>✎ Speak to participant during a break and point out if the behavior leads you to believe the session is not meeting his/her needs. Ask how the session can better serve his/her needs.</li> <li>• Acknowledge the pressure. Negotiate with the participant to appear engaged so that his/her behavior doesn’t affect the rest of the group. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✎ Offer to have him /her attend another session.</li> <li>✎ Change the current activity to make it more active/involving.</li> <li>✎ Frequently link the content to participant work.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Complains; is negative about the organization or event</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doesn’t want to be there</li> <li>✎ Has other things on his/her mind that are more important to him/her</li> <li>✎ Wants complaint to be acknowledged</li> <li>✎ Has political or personal issues with the session</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask if others feel the same way. If they don’t, then offer to assist and/or listen to the participant during break.</li> <li>• If others do feel the same way, you might have a productive tangent to deal with. Negative feelings and complaints must be acknowledged and handled, or they will simply fester, and learning won’t happen.</li> <li>• Acknowledge the complaint, and then turn group discussion to strategizing ways to overcome the issue.</li> <li>• Put the issue on the parking lot.</li> <li>• Last resort: ask the person to leave (if the behavior is disrupting learning).</li> </ul>

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 <p><b>4. Talks too much; monopolizes discussion</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✎ Wants attention</li> <li>✎ Thinks out loud</li> <li>✎ Well-informed; Wants to demonstrate knowledge/expertise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If participant is on topic, thank the person and summarize the point. Then turn to others and invite their participation: “What does everyone else think?”</li> <li>✎ Avoid eye contact with the participant.</li> <li>• If participant is off target, say “Great point, but it is beyond the scope of this session . . . Let’s talk about this together offline.”</li> <li>✎ Last resort: glance at your watch.</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Challenges the facilitator on content or technique; “know-it-all”</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✎ Wants to be recognized for own expertise</li> <li>✎ Wants some of the spotlight</li> <li>• Wants to destroy facilitator’s credibility</li> <li>✎ May be worried about change; resists change</li> <li>✎ Feels superior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✎ Give the person the spotlight for a few minutes. Participant expertise will add to the learning. (Your credibility comes from your ability as facilitator as well as from your own expertise).</li> <li>✎ Turn the exchange into a discussion by implying that there are multiple points of view and all should be addressed.</li> <li>✎ Ask for other opinions from members of the group; pull group into discussion.</li> <li>✎ State that time is short and you would be glad to discuss later, after the session.</li> </ul>
<p><b>6. Silent; doesn’t participate verbally</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✎ May be shy and not comfortable speaking up in front of others</li> <li>✎ Could be participating by listening and thinking, etc. (just not speaking)</li> <li>✎ May be an introvert; must observe/reflect on a situation before forming an opinion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create opportunities for participant to participate safely—as in pairs or small groups.</li> <li>✎ Pace some activities so there is a reflection time included (during break, lunch, or overnight) before participants discuss and share opinions.</li> <li>✎ If you can tell by body language that participant is engaged, listening, reacting, and thinking, consider simply leaving the person alone.</li> </ul>
<p><b>7. Goes off on tangent; misses the point</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✎ Has misunderstood a point</li> <li>• Is on the wrong track and doesn’t realize it</li> <li>• Is purposefully being “wrong” to see what you will do</li> <li>✎ Likes to talk but misses social queues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✎ If possible, find one thing to agree with in what the participant has said.</li> <li>✎ Affirm and compliment participant effort to stay engaged with the content.</li> <li>• Say, “That would be a logical assumption; however, the truth is . . . “</li> <li>• If participant’s effort is contrived to see what you will do, the most effective behavior is to address the content of the question rather than take the bait.</li> </ul>
<p><b>8. Makes inappropriate remark (sexist, racist, etc.)</b></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Truly unaware of how the remark sounded</li> <li>• Is aware of how the remark sounded and is purposely making the remark anyway</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitator must deal with it in front of the group; it cannot be ignored</li> <li>• First, give participant a chance to retract: “I’m sure you didn’t mean that the way it sounded . . .” If participant does retract, move on. If not, say in front of the group, “Unfortunately, that view is not in keeping with the values of our organization, and we can’t have any more of that.” May need to speak to the person at break or if the behavior persists, ask participant to leave.</li> <li>• Revisit norm/ground rules for respect of others.</li> </ul>

Adapted from McCain, D. & Tobey, D. (2004). *Facilitation Basics*. Alexandria, VA: ASTD Press.