

## Keeping Groups Focused

Situation	Facilitator Action
One person dominates the conversation.	<p>Involve other participants in the conversation.</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“I understand what you are saying. I’d love to hear more later, but now it’s time to hear from somebody else.”</p> <p>Go around the room with a question and intentionally ask for everybody’s input.</p> <p>If necessary, refer to group agreements.</p>
A young person offers an idea that is ridiculed or attacked by others in the group.	<p>Remind the group of the ground rules or expectations they agreed on.</p> <p>These usually include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- no put downs</li> <li>- no personal attacks</li> <li>- be supportive, respectful of each other</li> </ul> <p>Be sure to write down the idea and to thank the participant.</p>
<p>Group gets off topic.</p> <p>Youth interrupt each other.</p> <p>There are constant interruptions.</p>	<p>Comment on what you observe:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“I think we are off the topic.”</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“I notice we are having quite a few interruptions.”</p> <p>Remind group of agreements/rules.</p> <p>Refocus the group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Restate the purpose of the session</li> <li>- Summarize progress up to this point</li> <li>- Ask a question to bring the group back to the topic.</li> </ul>
A participant becomes emotional.	<p>Remain calm. Your behavior determines group behavior.</p> <p>Make eye contact. Acknowledge the situation.</p> <p>Identify the issue behind the emotion:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">“So you are concerned because...”</p> <p>Take steps to resolve the issue or post it for later discussion.</p> <p>Ask if it is possible to move on.</p> <p>Refocus the group.</p>

	<p>If necessary, take a break and talk with participant individually.</p>
<p>Two participants are stuck in a conflict of opinions.</p>	<p>Comment on what you observe.</p> <p>Remind participants of the purpose of the meeting/session.</p> <p>Express confidence that an agreement can be reached.</p> <p>Identify/list items the participants agree upon.</p> <p>Identify/list items they do not agree upon.</p> <p>Resolve disagreement.</p> <p>Refocus the group.</p>
<p>Group is not making useful comments or contributions.</p>	<p>Ask the group why the topic is not relevant.</p> <p>Ask if there is anything else going on that needs to be dealt with.</p> <p>Check prepared questions. They might not go in the right direction. Rephrase questions.</p>
<p>Group is not focusing.</p>	<p>Rearrange space to ensure a quiet setting.</p> <p>Plan a limited, informal time when people are gathering. Respectfully call their attention to begin the group session.</p> <p>In your opening be clear about the purpose and agenda of the meeting/session.</p>

Adapted from: Sonawane, M. & Noll, G. 2004. Training the E-Z Way: A Guidebook for Trainers and Facilitators.