

CHALLENGING LEARNER BEHAVIOURS

As a trainer/facilitator, you will most certainly come across situations in your training sessions where delegates will behave in ways that you and other participants may find challenging or even disruptive. Challenging learner behaviour is defined as **any type of behaviour that interrupts the learning process.**

In the video about challenging behaviours, the different participators are discussed. This document will provide you with more details, strategies and examples of the different challenging behaviours you may encounter.



CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR: OVER-PARTICIPATOR	
HABITS	TECHNIQUES TO MANAGE THE BEHAVIOUR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pretends to be the most important person in the room. • Talks too much and does not listen to others. • Usually interrupts and shuts down the other delegates. • Speaks on behalf of other delegates without invitation or consent. • Repeats points already made and adds unnecessary weight to them. • Displays constant dissatisfaction and finds fault with everything. • Exaggerates 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Refer back to the rules of engagement.</i> Use these rules to encourage the desired behaviour and participation. 2. <i>Acknowledge the delegate's point of view.</i> Inform the delegate that his/her opinion has been heard and is valued. Phrases like "That is a great point" or "I can hear your enthusiasm" can be used. Also acknowledge complaints by saying: "When the room is too cold, it is difficult to concentrate". 3. <i>Ask others for their opinions.</i> Shift the focus away from the delegate in a friendly manner. Direct overhead questions to the group or pose directed questions to other delegates. 4. <i>Ask closed directed questions</i> to the delegate to limit responses. 5. <i>If appropriate, take the issues off-line</i> and try to resolve them. 6. <i>Ask for links to the topic.</i> Use the group or another delegate to steer back to the topic at hand. 7. <i>Summarise and continue.</i> Summarise key points to signal the intent to transition to the next topic. 8. <i>Address over-participation during a break</i> by thanking the delegate for insights, then asking him/her if they wouldn't mind giving some of the quieter delegates also a chance to participate.

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR: OVER-PARTICIPATOR		
CHALLENGE	STRATEGY	EXAMPLE
The delegate tends to dominate the discussion.	Ask for responses from other delegates by using overhead and directed questions.	Overhead question: “Does anyone else have any other ideas about this?” Directed question: “What has your experience been?”
The discussion gets off track and becomes unproductive.	Point out what has happened and ask a question to refocus the group.	“Even though it is an interesting point, it is getting us off-topic. To ensure we get the most value from this discussion, let’s step back. What do you...?”
The delegate is belabouring a point and uses up too much discussion time.	Intervene politely by finding a neutral break or pause in the story. Acknowledge that you understand the relevance to the topic. Ask an overhead question to include other delegates or restate the urgency of the discussion’s objectives as well as time constraints.	“It seems as if you are referring to _____. There are a few more questions that I would like the group to consider in the restricted time that we have. Do you mind if we move on?” and then ask “Can anyone else share a work-related example of _____?”

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR: **AGGRESSIVE PARTICIPATOR**

HABITS	TECHNIQUES TO MANAGE THE BEHAVIOUR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launches personal attacks on other delegates or on you. • Displays inappropriate emotions inappropriately. • Jumps to conclusions. • Gets angry when frustrated. • Continuously engages in side conversations with other delegates. • Does not see own behaviour as disruptive. • Shows no attempts to end the disruptive behaviour once highlighted. • Constantly challenges your knowledge of the subject matter and your competence as a trainer. • Argues with other delegates • Acts as the trainer by elaborating on what you say or summarising discussion points. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Your body language and facial expressions should remain non-threatening to encourage other delegates to participate.</i> 2. <i>Don't get defensive and see the behaviour as a personal attack. Don't justify your position as trainer or subject matter expert.</i> 3. <i>Clarify and acknowledge.</i> Check your understanding by asking questions. Show the delegate that you are interested in his/her point of view by paraphrasing key statements. 4. <i>Let the group help.</i> Give the group a chance to work out some of the issues. 5. <i>Discuss the concern privately.</i> Allow a quick break and call the delegate aside. Use the Know-Feel-Do model as well as the Plus-Delta method. Refer to the rules of engagement and indicate in a polite way that a change in behaviour is needed. Be specific about the behaviour required and that it is required for the remainder of the programme. Explain the impact that the delegate's current behaviour has on the group. Give an opportunity to act on your feedback.

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR: AGGRESSIVE PARTICIPATOR

CHALLENGE	STRATEGY	EXAMPLE
The delegate offers mostly negative comments about a certain topic.	Use the attitudes and beliefs of the other delegates to balance these views.	“Does anyone else have an opposite opinion or point of view?” or “Does anyone feel differently?”
The delegate raises concerns that seem to have been designed to get reactions from you and other delegates.	Confirm that you understand what is being said.	“If I understand you correctly, you are saying/asking _____?”
	If the concern is raised in the form of a question, refer the question to the group or back to the delegate who raised it.	“Does anyone have any ideas about this” or “What would you do in this instance”
	Park the issue on the parking lot.	“You have raised an important point that will be best addressed when we work with...To ensure we don’t forget to address it, I am adding it to the parking lot.”
Delegates are carrying on with side conversations.	Pause and look directly at the delegates having these side conversations, maintaining neutral eye contact. Keep eye contact until they stop talking.	

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR: AGGRESSIVE PARTICIPATOR

CHALLENGE	STRATEGY	EXAMPLE
Delegates are carrying on with side conversations.	Ask the delegates that are having side conversations to share their ideas with the group.	“Is there something that you would like to share with the rest of us?”
	Repeat the objectives of the discussion and say that the group will accomplish more if only one person speaks at a time	“We are discussing _____ because _____. We will get the most value from the session if we only have one discussion at a time.”
	Move closer to the delegates having the side conversations and remain standing close to them until they cease to talk privately.	
	Address the concern privately. During a break, speak to the delegates. Refer them to the rules of engagement and advise them that their behaviour is affecting other learners. Use Know-Feel-Do and Plus-Delta.	“I can see that you are enthusiastic about participation in the training programme. It would be in the best interest of the group to share your insights, comments and questions with all of us.

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR: NON-PARTICIPATOR	
HABITS	TECHNIQUES TO MANAGE THE BEHAVIOUR
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appears to be distracted. • Arrives late for the start of the training session and returns late from breaks. • Highlights the sacrifices made to be there and expresses annoyance at having to attend the training session. • Appears restless and continuously ducks in and out of the training room. • Requests help with activities that isn't really needed. • Does not interact with other delegates in a meaningful way. • Isolate themselves during group activities making excuses to answer or make urgent phone calls. • Agrees with everything. • This delegate usually has good ideas and they surface when encouraged to participate. • Shows some concern about disrupting the session. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gradually start involving these delegates by directing easy questions at them that you know can be answered. 2. Use verbal and non-verbal reinforcement of participation. Show and tell delegates that their participation is valuable and important. 3. Implement small group activities to get these delegates comfortable with participation on a small scale first. 4. Use voting that requires a show of hands to involve quieter delegates. 5. Be available for assistance during small group activities to gain their trust and build their confidence.

CHALLENGING BEHAVIOR: NON-PARTICIPATOR		
CHALLENGE	STRATEGY	EXAMPLE
The delegate contributes too little to a discussion.	Use directed open questions to encourage participation and stimulate further thoughts.	“How would this be addressed in your department?”
	Share your personal opinions and give examples of past experiences, then pose overhead questions to delegates to do the same, drawing out quieter delegates with directed questions.	“Here is a situation to demonstrate what we have just ...” “Has anyone else had similar experiences?” “How about you (refer to a particular delegate)?”
	Transition to the next topic.	“Maybe this situation does not apply to your environment, so let’s move on.”