

Common issues & changing dynamics

Both a blessing and a challenge of working with people is that everyone is different. There may be clashes of personalities, slow progress and other frustrations. Here are some of the common problems people who work in groups have faced, and ideas on how to handle them effectively.

Taking control

One of the greatest difficulties facilitators may face is the temptation to **take control of a discussion or change process**. Whilst this is often out of a genuine desire to help the group move forwards, it can be damaging in the long run. *Try to push it back to the group - ask, don't tell. Facilitate discussions by asking questions and letting the group take it forward.*

Dominant Voices

In all group settings there are more confident people and those who find group discussions more intimidating. **Respectfully listening to these louder voices while making room for quieter ones requires a delicate balance** - you do not want to discourage others, but it's important to make everyone feel heard. *Use a variety of discussion techniques, for example talking in pairs or writing things down for the facilitator to read aloud.*

Difficult questions

Facilitators may feel that they should have all the answers or lack confidence in their own ability to deal with questions on a particular subject. **It is not a facilitator's role to know everything!** *Simply say that you don't know enough about a particular question to provide an answer but will look into it before the next meeting. You can draw on the wisdom and knowledge of other members of the community, outside of the immediate group.*

Handling conflict

Sometimes people will have strong and conflicting ideas on a subject. Poor relationships within the group will also affect the way the group works together as a whole. *A facilitator needs to be sensitive to differences and tensions and to encourage people to work through these, keeping their common goals and interests in mind.*