

# Dealing with Difficult Members

---

## The Six Cs

### COMPLIMENT

Difficult members need affirmation as much as any other member, maybe more.

### CONCERN

Genuine caring for the welfare of another will help you begin to build trust.

### COMPROMISE

Attempting to meet in the middle and make concessions may help you come to a solution faster.

### CHOICE

Give your difficult member a choice or multiple choices. This will help them feel empowered and less victimized.

### CHALLENGE

Boredom is sometimes the culprit for odd behavior, and providing them with a challenging task may encourage different behavior.

### CONFIDENCE

Expressing confidence in someone's abilities can lead to confidence building.

*Adapted from a handout by Roy E. Harper and Jennifer Ireland, Central Missouri State University*

## Six Types of Difficult Members

### HOSTILE AGGRESSORS

Members who try hard to bully and overwhelm the group by bombarding others with cutting remarks.

#### TIPS

- ❖ Stand firm and confident when speaking with them
- ❖ Give them time to run out of their aggressive energy
- ❖ Step in when a conversation between members turns sour
- ❖ Remain calm, don't argue or try to cut them down
- ❖ In a private conversation, ask if there's a reason for their hostility
- ❖ If there is a reason, ask what can be done to help resolve the issue
- ❖ Ask them to consider how their actions affect the entire group

### STRONG AND SILENT

Members who rarely respond. When they do respond it is often with yes or no answers or simple responses.

#### TIPS

- ❖ Don't interrupt their silence, give them some time to think and respond; some people need time to process internally
- ❖ Ask open-ended questions
- ❖ If you still get limited responses, address the elephant in the room and ask why such limited response.
- ❖ Listen attentively if and when they do provide more extensive answers or comments

### KNOW-IT-ALLS

Condescending, pompous members who claim to know it all about everyone and everything.

#### TIPS

- ❖ Listen attentively to them, then paraphrase the main points they made
- ❖ In a private conversation, question firmly about inaccurate facts or inconsistencies
- ❖ Ask them how they think their behavior or attitude might affect group meetings or tasks
- ❖ Show appreciation for their willingness to speak up, but ask them to consider their tone

### COMPLAINERS

Members who gripe without ceasing (and who never have solutions to the issue they complain about).

#### TIPS

- ❖ Listen attentively to them
- ❖ Acknowledge by paraphrasing their concerns
- ❖ Don't agree with or apologize for their allegations
- ❖ State and acknowledge facts without inserting your own opinion
- ❖ Ask them if they have suggestions as to how the situation might be remedied or what they might personally do to remedy the situation.

### CLASS CLOWNS

Very personable, funny members. However, they never act the way they say they will or follow through.

#### TIPS

- ❖ Let them know you value them as a person and the light-heartedness they bring to the group
- ❖ Ask them to be honest with you
- ❖ Carefully point out inconsistencies in their behavior
- ❖ Listen to their humor, as there may be hidden messages in their comments
- ❖ Ask them how they think their positive energy can be used for the greater good

### NEGATIVE NANCYS

Members who always expect the worst and who never look on the bright side.

#### TIPS

- ❖ Be alert to avoid being pulled down into their despair
- ❖ Don't try to argue them out of their pessimism
- ❖ Try to find the problem at the source of their pessimism
- ❖ Play the "devil's advocate" by providing solutions to combat the worst-case scenarios