



Facilitation Tactics for Challenging Participants

A participant is having an extremely hard time grasping the content and is not moving forward in their learning.

Strategy: Let them know it is okay to be confused. Give them some extra time and ask to see them at break or during lunch to work more with them. A co-trainer could also work one on one with them as the rest of the participants move forward in the training. Check in with them throughout the training to see if their understanding is growing.

A participant feels confused but actually is working through their own bias. This participant states they are confused, but has implicit or explicit resistance to the material actually underlies this “willed” confusion. An example might be, “I am too confused about gender pronouns and I am not going to ask a youth what their gender pronoun is.”

Strategy: Validate that it can be confusing material but emphasize the importance of the skill or practice. Restate the research of standards of practice that support the skill being taught.

A participant overestimates their experience and knowledge with and about LGBTQ competency while strongly insisting on arguing the wrong information.

Strategy: Do not be afraid to assert and exert your expertise. Reply with best practice standards and research. If applicable, pick out the logical flaws in the argument.

A participant uses personal experiences of bias to justify global statements. An example might be, “In my experience, every LGBTQ youth has been sexually abused.”

Strategy: Acknowledge their experience but correct misinformation. Bring in best practice standards and research.

A participant asserts that there is no heterosexism in the world anymore. An example might be, “Heterosexism is no longer a problem because everyone has equal rights.”

Strategy: Acknowledge that their experience might make them feel as such. Talk about how heterosexism affects the LGBTQ community at a local, national, and



global level. Use real life, and recent examples, so that the participant can clearly see that heterosexism still exists.

A participant seems to be upset, angry, or uncomfortable and is communicating this through non-verbal communication.

Strategy: Engage participants in group work to get them talking about some of the concerns or issues. The trainer could also say, “I am noticing that some people seem uncomfortable with this material. Does anyone have any questions or concerns?” Stay positive and remember that the scowl and negative and non-verbal communication is about that person and the material, not about you as a trainer.

A participant feels that the material does not apply to them or the people that they work with. An example might be someone who says, “The problem with LGBTQ youth is not rejection, it is that they have trouble with illegal substances.”

Strategy: Ask the group a question to survey their experiences. For example, you might ask, “Does anyone here think that rejection could lead to illegal drug use?” or “Has anyone had a similar experience?” Rely on research and best practice standards to educate participants on the misinformation.

A participant laughs, whispers, or gossips during a training.

Strategy: Consider revisiting the participant guidelines and remind participants of the agreement that was made prior to the start of the training. If you have a co-trainer, the co-trainer could go stand by the participant to discourage the discourse. The trainer could also pause and ask the participant if they have any questions or what their thoughts are.

A participant discloses that they identify within the LGBTQ community but then uses their experience to assert wrong information during the training.

Strategy: Validate their experience, but correct misinformation. Bring in research and best practice standards.

A participant uses training time to ask advice, or talk, about family and friends who are LGBTQ.

Strategy: Put the question or comment in the “parking lot” to be addressed later. Re-frame the comment or question back to the experiences of youth in the child welfare system or back to the learning content. The trainer could also ask the participant to



tie their question or comment into the learning objective to get the training back on track.

A participant asks a question or makes a comment that contains several biases. An example of this might be, “The youth wanted to dress like a girl, and I said that I wasn’t going to support his gay lifestyle choice because he was really just confused.”

Strategy: A trainer might say, “There are several layers to this. Let me first address the difference between sexual orientation and gender expression.” From here the trainer should prioritize what to address and try to connect it back to the learning objectives. In some cases, the trainer may have to put it in the “parking lot” to address later.

A participant leads other to be disruptive or challenging during a training.

Strategy: A trainer could mix up the groups and have participants count off for a group number. The trainer should remain firm and strong to maintain the authority in the room.

A participant says something positive and affirming followed by something that is negative and bias. An example of this might be, “I want to support any youth in my care the best I can, and I will treat LGBTQ youth just like I would any youth with a drug addiction or behavioral issue.”

Strategy: Validate the good, but call out the bias. Inform the participant of how that bias could affect and harm the youth. Rely on research and best practice guidelines to strengthen your argument.

A participant is eager to answer all the questions posed to the group.

Strategy: The trainer could ask to hear from other members of the group or from different sections of the room. The trainer could also ask that participants raise their hands before speaking out.

A participant says something in between the lines. An example of this might be, “the youth is so pretty for being a lesbian.”

Strategy: Call out the bias in the statement and bring in research and best practice standards to highlight the harm in the statement.