

2011 SPRING GROUP PCE TRAINING: RESPONSES TO GALLERY WALK

Dealing with Difficult Group Situations

Disruptive Adult

Scenario 1: Two participants continually engage in distracting side conversations.

Strategies:

- Redirect the conversation to include them, ask “What would you like to add?” “It sounds like you have some thoughts to share...”
- Acknowledge the behavior and redirect, “It looks like both of you are really enjoying having the chance to visit. I’d be interested in hearing what you think about this subject...”
- Divide the group into smaller discussion groups by counting off or break into pairs that separate the talkers
- Stand next to them
- Ask one of the talkers to record answers or assign some other responsibility in the group
- Engage the talkers with an open-ended question and follow up with opportunity for everyone to respond
- Pause and wait for the group to quiet down
- Redirect the discussion by using a sound like a bell or shaker.

Scenario 2: A participant constantly gets off subject, interrupts and talks out of turn.

Strategies:

- Offer opportunity to discuss other topics following the session, “Perhaps we can talk more afterwards...”
- Acknowledge input, ask others for their ideas and bring back to subject, “I appreciate your questions/comments. Let’s see what others have to say on this subject...”
- Reflect and open it up to others in the group, “Sounds like you have many concerns. What experience have others had with this?” “What thoughts do others have about this?”
- Respectfully remind them of the topic, time frame, and need for everyone to have a chance to speak without interruption
- Assure participant that topic related concerns will be addressed later in discussion

Scenario 3: A participant answers phone calls and loudly makes negative remarks about the group.

Strategies:

- Acknowledge the behavior and offer the opportunity to take calls outside of the meeting room, “It sounds like you have some important calls to make. Please feel free to step into the hallway for privacy.”
- Ask if the participant would prefer to reschedule the appointment for a different time or type of visit
- Acknowledge behavior and redirect, “It is difficult to hear when there is more than one conversation happening at the same time. In order to be respectful, let’s listen first to what everyone has to say on this topic before moving on to other conversations.”
- Maintain neutral, non-judgmental tone of voice and body language
- Encourage participants to complete a group evaluation form to provide an appropriate place for feedback
- Set ground rules at the beginning of the session so participants know what to expect

Scenario 4: One participant dominates the discussion and routinely contradicts the group leader, a “know-it-all” with a response for every question or statement made during the group.

Strategies:

- Acknowledge, add and move on; thank them for sharing, offer insights and ask group for other opinion, “It seems like you have a lot of information on this topic. It is an interesting idea/ suggestion/statement. I’m curious about what others have heard?”
- Open the discussion up to the group, “What do others think about this?”
- Use body language to redirect focus toward other participants
- Reflect the emotions, “Sounds like you have a lot of passion about this subject.”
- If information presented by participant is not valid/correct, reference authority to clarify, “WIC recommends...”
- Affirm and redirect, “Thank you for sharing your view. Now let’s hear from some others.” or “ Let’s hear from someone with a different idea”
- Use humor to give attention then move on
- Maintain neutral, non-judgmental tone of voice and body language
- Offer opportunity to talk more after the group session, “Let’s talk more after the group.”

Disruptive Children

Scenario 1: Child is upset and crying; mom remains with the group and tries to calm child down without success.

Strategies:

- When opening the group and setting the agenda, remind moms that if their child becomes upset, they are welcome to take a break with their child in the hallway and return when the child is calm
- Acknowledge the situation and offer the opportunity to take the child outside of the meeting room, “It sounds like your child is really upset. Please feel free to comfort them outside.”
- Acknowledge that this is a challenging situation, show compassion to the parent
- Normalize child’s behavior by acknowledging typical behaviors for age
- If possible, engage the child in group activities, ask them a question or offer something for child to do to redirect them
- Address the child; bring humor to the situation, “This little one is not the biggest fan of this topic!”
- If children are expected to be present, be prepared with activities, i.e. have quiet toys/activities available for mom to use to distract child
- Check in with mom to assess the needs of the child, “What can we do to help?”

Scenario 2: Overactive child is running around the room, climbing on and jumping off furniture in the meeting space.

Strategies:

- Invite mom to take child outside of room to give them an opportunity to calm down and then return. Include this suggestion when opening the group session or setting the agenda
- Provide games, toys and quiet activities like coloring or puzzles that mom can use to redirect child’s energy
- Acknowledge challenging situation; communicate compassion for the parent, “Kids certainly have lots of energy! Sometimes it can be hard to keep up.”
- Offer incentives like stickers for good behavior
- Involve older children in the group activities or make them the focus of the activity
- Acknowledge that healthy children have lots of energy and that this setting may not always be the best fit for everyone.
- Have a child friendly space with big pillows and picture books to entertain/occupy them quietly
- Identify groups where parents do not need to bring their children and market this during the appointment reminder phone calls: “Please note that you are not required to bring your child to this appointment.”
- Have other staff or volunteers entertain older kids with snacks, stories or games while group is in session

Scenario 3: Child is kicking, biting or hitting, taking toys away and bullying other children.

Strategies:

- Ask the parent to take the child out of the room until calm
- Offer to reschedule their group appointment to another time
- Suggest rescheduling to a one on one appointment so child would have undivided attention (and not need to be around other children)
- Change activities to modify group dynamics
- Remove whatever toy is a problem and redirect the children's energy to a short game or exercise for parents and children together to distract from the current situation, "Lets take a stretch break"
- Attempt to engage the child, ask child to help the facilitator, ask the child a question, use the child's name
- Acknowledge the behavior and express support for mom's efforts to redirect, "It is hard when children get upset and act out. I can tell you want what is best for your child by giving him/her some privacy to calm down."

Scenario 4: Extremely large group in a crowded room during nap time, multiple children are fussy.

Strategies:

- While setting the agenda, acknowledge the challenges that this setting represents and give permission for parents to remove fussy children from the room as needed, "Please feel free to step out into the hall if you would like a quiet place to calm your little one."
- Use microphone so everyone can hear, allows session to move forward more smoothly
- Offer quiet toys, coloring books and crayons, puzzles or a small snack for parents to use to distract/comfort children
- Provide a place for children to play
- Empathize with parents regarding normal child behavior, "It 's difficult time to be out and about with little ones who typically rest at this time of day"
- Offer the opportunity to reschedule the appointment
- Offer menu of options, "We have some toys here if your children would like to play. We also have a quiet area where you could take him/her for a break. We can also reschedule if needed. What would be most helpful for you?"
- Stay neutral and non-judgmental
- Revisit group scheduling to try and avoid traditional nap times for groups where children may be present

Quiet Participants

Scenario 1: Participants answer questions but do not contribute much more; there is little interaction or dialogue.

Strategies:

- Ask open-ended questions and go around the group to give each participant a chance to answer
- Utilize pair share
- Open a treasure box, have each participant select an item from the box and state how that item relates to the group topic
- Join the group, sit down with them to create a comfortable, informal environment
- Assure participants that it is fine to share both positive and negative experiences

- Give a sticky note to each participant and have them write down a question they would like addressed or one thing they want to get out of the group. Save the questions to use as conversation starters in future groups
- Set the agenda by emphasizing voice by choice
- Consider a variety of adult learning styles when choosing activities and incorporate props, handouts, power point, posters, hand on activities, etc into the presentation
- Share personal experiences or another mom's story to help start the conversation
- Show a brief video and ask for responses to what they saw
- Display an image related to the topic and ask participants to share what they think about it
- Rearrange the larger group into smaller groups and give each a project or task to work on
- Review a specific handout and ask for feedback about the information

Scenario 2: Adults are encouraged to participate with their children; no one moves or talks.

Strategies:

- Invite children to participate first and then have the children encourage mom or dad's involvement
- Offer a paired activity between parent/child and siblings
- Give prizes or rewards for participating like stickers, cups, toothbrushes
- Ask for a volunteer to assist the facilitator, helper could be an adult or an older sibling
- Ask open ended questions and allow time for each individual to respond
- Incorporate props, music, visual aides to trigger responses
- Consider active icebreakers
- Break the group into smaller groups and give each a task or project to work on
- Model activities, facilitator participate with the group
- Offer information/activities to take home and do in private

Scenario 3: A group of participants are very quiet except for one or two who dominate the discussion.

Strategies:

- Consider an icebreaker on a neutral subject so everyone can share
- Go around the group and give everyone an opportunity to share something about the topic
- Utilize pair share
- Acknowledge talkers then shift focus to others, "That is an interesting suggestion/idea. Let's hear from another person...", "What do others think about that statement?" "I'd be interested in hearing from the rest of the group..."
- Incorporate activity that is hands on or active with limited talking
- Ask permission to share a few suggestions and then ask for their input from the rest of the group
- Accept the quiet since that is their choice and utilize the talkers to drive the discussion

Differing Viewpoints

Scenario 1: Two participants have different opinions about a topic.

Strategies:

- Affirm that both views are worthy of being heard and that choice is personal to each family
- Acknowledge different needs , what works for someone doesn't work for everyone
- Create an advantage/disadvantage chart, identify + and -, pros and cons
- Engage other group members, ask for their ideas/experiences, "We have heard two differing viewpoints, how does this match your experience?" "What do others think?" "What have you heard about this topic?"

- Encourage informed decisions, talk to health care providers, access current information on trusted websites
- Offer information; ask permission to share professional recommendations, “I have additional information on this subject. Can I share with you what the AAP recommends?” “Information is always changing. Would you be interested in hearing about the latest WIC recommendations?”
- Ask probing questions to further explore their thoughts and reasons, “Sounds like you’ve had experience with that. Tell me more ...” “What is the basis for this approach?” “How does this work for you?”
- Utilize a window pane activity to clarify viewpoints and incorporate other opinions
- Offer confidence statement, “I know you’ll each make the best choice for your family”
- Acknowledge thoughts/views of both without judgment or taking sides
- Acknowledge that each parent is the expert of their child.

Misinformation

Scenario 1: Participant shares incorrect information with the group but believes their opinion/position is true.

Strategies:

- Acknowledge the contribution and ask the group for their thoughts, “That is an interesting comment. What have others heard about that?” “I have heard other parents express that opinion. What do others think?” “It sounds like you’ve given this some consideration. How do others feel about this idea?”
- Ask permission to offer information, “I have additional information on this subject. Can I share this with you?” “Information is always changing. Would you be interested in hearing about the latest recommendations?” “May I share some of the latest research on this?”
- Encourage informed decision, talk to health care providers, nutrition professionals, “What has your doctor said about this?”
- Summarize and reflect what the participant is saying to clarify their remarks, thoughts or suggestions
- Ask probing questions to clarify the participant’s statement, “Tell me more about your experience with that...” “Where did you hear about that?”
- Affirm, add and move on, “Thank you for participating. There are a variety of opinions on that subject and we will want to investigate several over the course of our time together.”
- Allow time between the incorrect statement and presenting the correct information so that the participant does not feel attacked or reprimanded
- Respond without judgment
- Normalize the misinformation before correcting, “We’ve heard that from other moms” “A lot of parents feel that way.”
- Ask how participant feels about the new information that is shared, “How does that sound to you?” “What would it look like if you tried this new approach?”
- Explore the pros and cons of the misinformation, “What might be some of the drawbacks?” “What benefits would there be to doing this instead of that?” “What might be the advantages and disadvantages?”
- Ask permission to share educational materials on the subject

Resistance

Scenario 1: Participant doesn’t want to attend the group session and asks why they have to be there.

Strategies:

- Reflect the participant’s feeling, “It sounds like you would rather be somewhere else. “
- Affirm attendance, “Thank you for taking the time to be here” “I’m glad you were able to come today.”

- Offer options reschedule group appointment, schedule one on one appointments, online nutrition education
- Explore reasons for not wanting to be there
- As sure that all staff are able to “market” the groups effectively so participants understand that the opportunity to attend education groups is one of the program benefits

Scenario 2: A parent argues with everything you say and insists that their own way is right.

Strategies:

- Acknowledge different views, each parent is the expert on their own child
- Include the group in the discussion, ask others for their ideas and opinions, “What have others tried?” “So what might be other options?”
- Reflect the emotion, “It sounds like you feel strongly about this subject.” “You are confident that this approach is best for your family.”
- Avoid debates.
- Affirm, add and move on, “Thank you for sharing. It is helpful to hear everyone’s ideas. Who else would like to share their experience?”
- Explore pros and cons, “What would be the downside of this approach?” “What might be a positive outcome?”
- Ask permission to share some information/ ideas, “Would you be interested in some additional information on this subject?” “I would like to share some other ideas about this topic. How does that sound to you?”

Scenario 3: A parent states that they have been to all of the groups and just need to pick up vouchers.

Strategies:

- Reflect the emotion you detect behind the participants’ resistance, “You feel that being here today is not a good use of your time” “You have learned all that you can from the groups.”
- Affirm their presence, “Thank you for coming.” “Your time is valuable so it is great that you came” “I would love if you’d stay awhile and share your expertise.”
- Engage them in the group conversation, “There may be others here, who feel that same way and it would be great if you would share some of what you’ve learned.” “Would you like to share something that you’ve found effective?”
- Request their feedback, “What have you learned from other groups that you’ve attended?” “What would you like to see done differently in the groups?” “What new topics would you be interested in the future?”
- Avoid getting into an argument or debate
- Remain neutral and non judgmental