

## **Tools for Program Leaders Conflict Management and Reflection**

### International Program's Mission Statement & Learning Outcomes

The Rollins College Office of International Programs (IP) oversees, coordinates, or supports all international programs and student travel abroad and all domestic off-campus, credit-bearing programs. IP is committed to developing students' intercultural knowledge and competence through diverse curricular and co-curricular programming that emphasizes immersion, reflection, and experiential learning. IP provides individualized, student-centered support and advising throughout the entire study abroad process and collaborates closely with faculty on academic projects, policies and programs. IP enhances student learning and internationalization through strategic program development and continuous assessment, as well as through professional and personal development opportunities for students before, during, and after study abroad.

International Programs utilizes diverse programming to facilitate student learning in a variety of areas, including civic engagement, teamwork, social justice, problem-solving, critical thinking and the areas listed below. However, we have identified the following core learning outcomes because they are applicable to a majority of our programs, regardless of program structure and content. These core learning outcomes will be used to inform IP programming related to student learning such as pre-departure orientations, blog prompts, returning student events, site leader trainings etc.; to inform program development and proposals; and to inform general IP assessment strategies such as questions on student evaluations, common reflection assignments, etc.

- Personal Development
  - Build self-awareness
  - Demonstrate emotional maturity
- Intercultural Knowledge and Competence
  - Develop awareness of own and other cultures
  - Gain knowledge about culture(s)
  - Engage and empathize with multiple worldviews
  - Act with open-mindedness towards other cultures
- Career Preparation
  - Articulate transferable skill attainment

### **CONFLICT**

You may encounter conflict within your group of participants and program leaders. Conflict during a study abroad program can be triggered internally (personality conflicts within the group, negative behavior from one person, etc.), or externally (exhaustion, logistical problems, cultural challenges, etc.). Either way, it is important that you are comfortable responding to and managing conflicts that arise. You should also be aware of how you tend to respond to conflict and you may want to have your participants and/or co-leaders reflect on this as well.



Source: <http://learningpursuits.wordpress.com/2010/12/13/group-conflict-4-part-process-to-break-down-a-stalemate/>

### Steps in Solving a Conflict

1. *Speak directly to the person, using his/her name:* Creates an environment of respect, honesty. Body language is key component
2. *State the problem:* Identify the conflict. This is not an accusation but rather a clarification/specification of the situation(s), circumstance(s), or action(s) that led to the problem.
3. *Tell the person how you feel:* Do not blame, but be sure to identify your feelings. Stress that your feelings are the result of the situation and not a reflection of your feelings toward the person with whom you are in conflict. "I" statements work quite well in this step.
4. *Tell the person what you need:* Identify your needs, as well as the root of the problem. Ask for a specific result/solution/change in action that will enable you to move past the conflict.
5. *Work together to negotiate a solution:* The person(s) can respond with what he/she can/cannot try to do in order to resolve conflict and/or avoid creating a similar conflict in the future. Share expectations, take turns, and encourage communication. This step enables the other person(s) to avoid feelings of guilt by being given the opportunity to change the next situation.

*\* This model is intended to help individuals communicate to others in a way that enables conflict resolution. However, this model can be adapted so that a third party mediator walks the conflicting parties through the necessary steps toward conflict resolution." (Conflict Resolution handout, Break Away: The Alternative Break Connection, Inc.)*

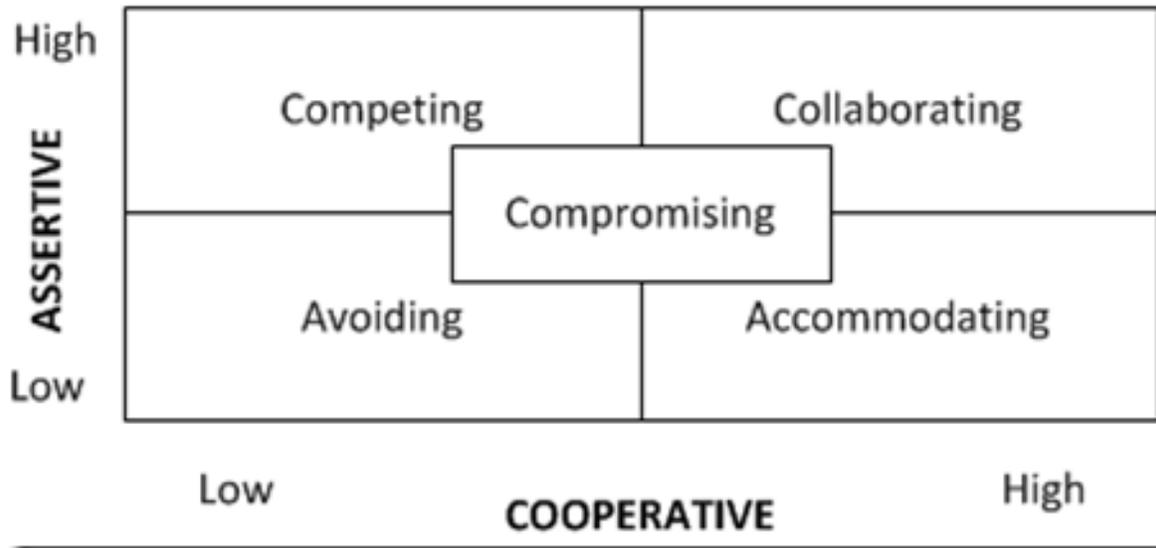
### **Conflict Response Activity: LARA**

*LARA is a nonviolent model for responding to hostile or ignorant arguments. When someone makes a hostile or ignorant comment, our first impulse is to directly respond by pointing out why that opinion is invalid. This is a natural tendency in a society where speech is made out to be an instrument of competition and aggression. LARA works to reduce this tendency and proposes a more effective alternative. In debates, we often listen to our opponent until we hear their weakest argument and then attack that point. LARA suggests we do the opposite: listen until we hear more reasonable or agreeable point and use it to build a connection to them. By acknowledging the basic good human character - we make it more likely they will hear and consider our facts than if we had started out criticizing their ignorance or negating their point.*

- L - Listen closely to whatever valid motives, however misguided, one must hold in order to make a hostile or ignorant comment or question. Here will be the common ground that is needed to build conversation from. To get there, you listen to all they have to say, with no interruption. Then, you must find a piece of what they say to honestly agree with.
- A - Affirm this common ground and the good intention of the person who made such a comment.
- R - Respond to the issue raised. Identify the issue raised. Preface the next sentence with AND not BUT.
- A - Add relevant information or opinions that will help them see the issue in a new light or redirect conversation in a positive direction.

Practice LARA: Facilitator makes sure that people have a thorough look at the model. Pair up participants and have them identify “hot buttons” - a comment made that makes them almost immediately crazy, often connected with a social identity. Meanwhile, co-facilitators are prepared to model LARA. After the pairs have time to identify hot button and share with partner, the co-facilitators demonstrate LARA and then give time for the pairs to practice also. Wrap up the exercise asking questions like: How did this go? What were the difficulties? What were the successes? How could a skill like this be valuable to your participants? To leaders? (*handout*, Break Away: The Alternative Break Connection, Inc.)

### The Thomas Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument:



- “Accommodating – This is when you cooperate to a high-degree, and it may be at your own expense, and actually work against your own goals, objectives, and desired outcomes. This approach is effective when the other party is the expert or has a better solution. It can also be effective for preserving future relations with the other party.
- Avoiding – This is when you simply avoid the issue. You aren’t helping the other party reach their goals, and you aren’t assertively pursuing your own. This works when the issue is trivial or when you have no chance of winning. It can also be effective when the issue would be very costly. It’s also very effective when the atmosphere is emotionally charged and you need to create some space. Sometimes issues will resolve themselves, but “hope is not a strategy”, and, in general, avoiding is not a good long term strategy.
- Collaborating – This is where you partner or pair up with the other party to achieve both of your goals. This is how you break free of the “win-lose” paradigm and seek the “win-win.” This can be effective for complex scenarios where you need to find a novel solution. This can also mean re-framing the challenge to create a bigger space and room for everybody’s ideas. The downside is that it requires a high-degree of trust and reaching a consensus can require a lot of time and effort to get everybody on board and to synthesize all the ideas.
- Competing – This is the “win-lose” approach. You act in a very assertive way to achieve your goals, without seeking to cooperate with the other party, and it may be at the expense of the other party. This approach may be appropriate for emergencies when time is of the essence, or when you need quick, decisive action, and people are aware of and support the approach.
- Compromising – This is the “lose-lose” scenario where neither party really achieves what they want. This requires a moderate level of assertiveness and cooperation. It may be appropriate for scenarios where you need a temporary solution, or where both sides have equally important goals. The trap is to fall into compromising as an easy way out, when collaborating would produce a better solution.” (<http://sourcesofinsight.com/conflict-management-styles-at-a-glance/> 10/15/2014)

### Activity for Reflecting on Conflict Style

When you need to confront me, you should consider the following beforehand:

1. I do not respond well to approaches which...
2. The best way to approach me or to confront me is...
3. Regardless of how well you confront me, I will always...

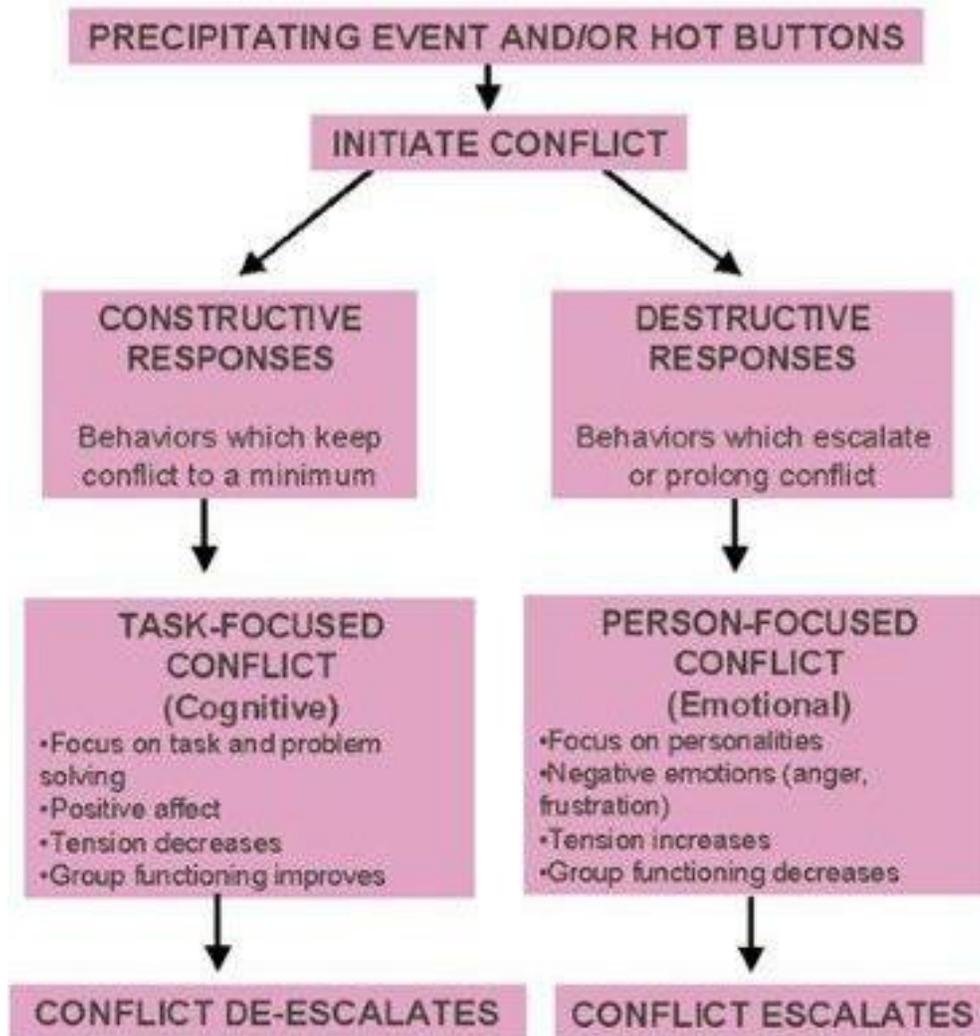
Now that people know how to confront me, it would be helpful if people know how I generally confront others:

1. I generally confront people in the following manner...
2. When someone offends me, I usually...
3. If you do not meet my expectations, I will...

Team Process:

1. For what do I want to be appreciated?
2. What irritates me on the job / committee work?
3. What do I do that most annoys others?

### Path of Conflict



(<http://www.hr.vt.edu/oea/conflictresolution/tertiary-indv-skills/indiv-skill-bldg.html>, 10/15/2014)

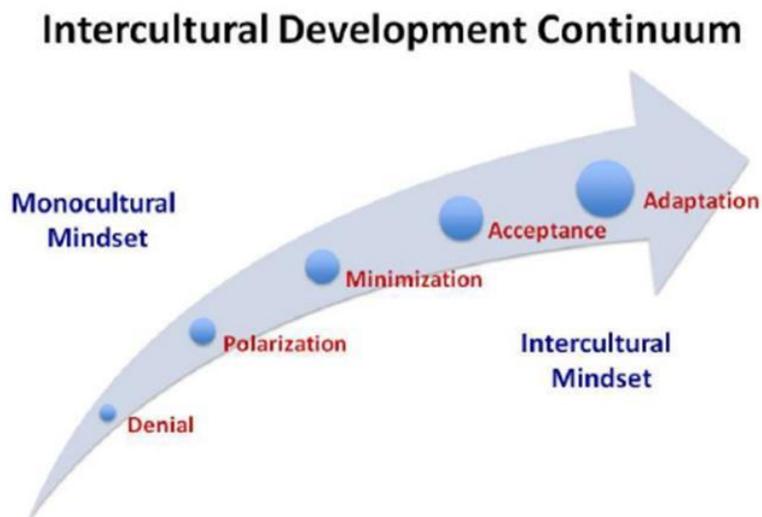
**Group Dynamics:** being aware of and helping to positively develop your group dynamics can prepare the group to manage conflicts successfully.

“Stages of Group Process

- Forming
  - Major issues: inclusion, individual identity
  - Member behavior: withdrawal, humor, silence
  - Leader role: explain ground rules, give purpose, goals, openness, honesty, clarity
  - Leader actions: lead icebreakers and group-builders
- Storming
  - Major issues: conflict, power, anger, rebellion, loss of purpose, questioned participation
  - Member behavior: dissatisfaction with group leaders, polarization of members
  - Leader role: confidant, problem solver, clarify, give direction
  - Leader actions: provide space and structure for discussions, ask for opinions (individual and group), help mediate conflict resolution and/or problem solving
- Norming
  - Major issues: group identity — do we cooperate or compete, what are the norms, roles, individual vs. group
  - Member behavior: testing, power struggles, establishing routines, failure to commit to group or experience, formation of cliques
  - Leader role: trainer, teach skills, empower, role model
  - Leader actions: ensure a voice for all, provide activities in which all can be involved, split up group to do different tasks
- Performing
  - Major issues: productivity, cohesion, pride, strong identity, accepting responsibility, independent
  - Member behavior: cooperation, enjoyment, productivity
  - Leader role: reinforce, back off as visible leader, challenge group
  - Leader actions: help focus on what was learned, educate on big picture, show different sides to issues
- Transforming
  - Major issues: letting go, fear of leaving, nostalgia, loss of intimacy, anxiety about what's next, application of learning
  - Member behavior: withdrawal, anxiety, floundering, detachment, blame
  - Leader role: support, affirm, focus on positive, solidify learning, validate experience, prepare participants with action plans, ceremonies, discuss transition and closure
  - Leader actions: set up service opportunities, educate others”  
(*Group Building handout Break Away: The Alternative Break Connection*)

## REFLECTION

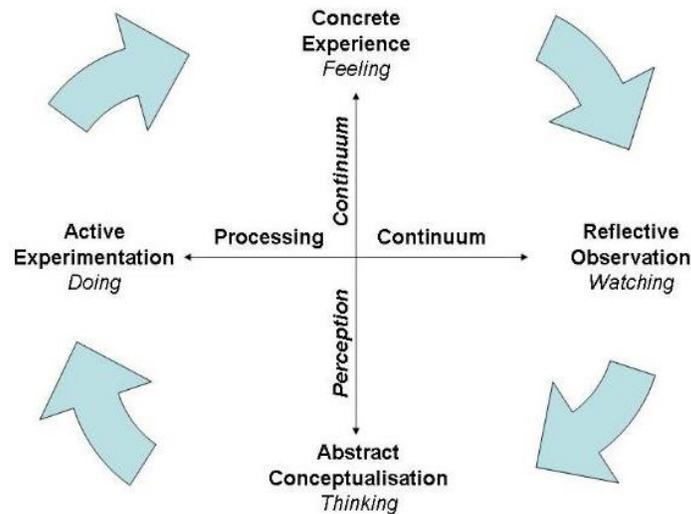
Your program may include activities that are challenging in some way or invoke powerful emotional responses. Facilitating reflection, particularly after such experiences can help you create positive group dynamics, reduce stresses among your group, and mitigate or diffuse potential conflicts. In addition, research conducted in Education Abroad shows that the most significant predictor of intercultural learning and development is mediated reflection on intercultural experiences and learning. Cultural intervention has a significant impact on intercultural development and the impact of education abroad.



**Denial:** Misses cultural difference, maintains separation from others who are different, may see everything through the lens of his/her own cultural perspective

- **Polarization:** Judges differences in other cultures, exhibits a strong commitment to one's own culture and a tendency to privilege the home culture over other cultures *or* may privilege the host or other culture over one's own culture.
  - Many students may be at this phase or between this phase and the next one
  - Strategies for helping students at this phase move forward including helping students focus on the commonalities across cultures, as well as learning to view difference without judgment
- **Minimization:** De-emphasizes difference, focused on the commonalities across cultures, feels people at the core are the same
  - Research shows *most* college-age students are at this phase.
  - Strategies for helping students at this phase move forward include helping students see the complexity of cultural differences and/or creating opportunities for students to confront cultural differences that cannot be explained away or managed by a focus on commonalities.
- **Acceptance**-Deeply comprehends difference, Curious about other cultures and Seeks opportunities to learn more about them
- **Adaption**-Bridges across differences, Recognizes the value of having more than one cultural perspective available to you
- **Resources:** Lou, Kris Hemming, Paige, Michael R. and Vande Berg, Michael eds., *Student Learning Abroad: What Our Students Are Learning, What They're Not, and What We Can Do About It*. Sterling: Stylus Publishing, LLC, 2012.

## Experiential Learning Cycle



## Building Experiential Learning and Intercultural Development Into Your Program

Programs can be designed to integrate all of the practices that we know impact intercultural and experiential learning:

- Create opportunities for engagement and experience
  - Whenever possible, create opportunities for interaction with the program location via people and/or environment
- Provide content and context for the experiences
  - Cultural content may include information about value orientations, communication styles, conflict styles, etc.
- Create opportunities for formal and informal reflection
  - Discussion, journaling, activities—see below for ideas
  - Reflection helps students understand their experiences.
- Provide feedback to students in real time
  - Formally and informally
  - Feedback can help students move through the experiential learning cycle and/or move forward along the intercultural development continuum
  - Aim to provide feedback that meets students where they are developmentally
- Aim to do all the above before, during, and after the actual travel dates

## The Learning Zone Model

“Although it is cozy to stay in our Comfort Zone, we have to leave it in order to get to know the unknown. We need to explore our Learning Zone, which lies just outside of our secure environment. Only in the Learning Zone can we grow and learn, live out our curiosity and make new discoveries, and thus slowly expand our Comfort Zone by becoming more familiar with more things. Going into our Learning Zone is a borderline experience – we feel we’re exploring the edge of our abilities, our limits, how far we dare to leave our Comfort Zone.

However, beyond our Learning Zone lies our Panic Zone, wherein learning is impossible, as it is blocked by a sense of fear. Any learning connected with negative emotions is memorized in a part of the human brain that we can access only in similar emotional situations. Experiences of being in our Panic Zone are frequently traumatic, and any sense of curiosity is shut down by a need to get out of our Panic Zone. Therefore, we should aim to get close to, but not into, our Panic Zone.”



It’s important to check in with students throughout an international experience to have them reflect on which “zone” they might be experiencing. If they are in the panic zone, reflection can help them verbalize this and strategies for moving back down to another zone can be discussed. <http://www.thempra.org.uk/social-pedagogy/key-concepts-in-social-pedagogy/the-learning-zone-model/>

## Reflection Facilitation

The following website is an excellent resource for reflection facilitators. It was developed particularly for service-learning and other educational experiences. These specific pages below may be particularly useful, but the whole manual is very good.

Facilitating Reflection: [https://www.uvm.edu/~dewey/reflection\\_manual/facilitating.html](https://www.uvm.edu/~dewey/reflection_manual/facilitating.html)

### Excerpt: Communication

- Set ground rules: Ground rules establish a foundation upon which the group's communication will occur. They help to create a safe environment in which participants can communicate openly, without fear of being criticized by others. Ground rules that have been arrive at by all members are the most useful and can be repeated if tension rises during reflection. Sample ground rules follow.
  - Be honest
  - Listen, even if you disagree
  - Avoid prejudicial comments
  - Criticize the idea, not the person
  - Pass if you're not comfortable
  - Use "I" statements
  - Don't interrupt
  - Be brief

- Everything is confidential
  - Agree to disagree
- Use "vibes watchers": In order to monitor ground rules the facilitator may choose to identify one or more "vibes watchers". The vibes watcher observes the reflection and takes note of group dynamics that are potentially problematic (for example, one person dominating the discussion, a participant's ideas being attacked, etc.). S/he can interrupt the discussion if the situation is particularly problematic, and explain, in a non-accusatory tone, what s/he observed. The facilitator can decide if all participants should be encouraged to voice such concerns during the session. At the conclusion of the session the facilitator should ask for a report from the vibes watcher, so that future sessions may be improved. Participants should not be forced to be vibes watchers, but should volunteer. Ideally, all members of the group will become sensitive to group dynamics, and, in a sense, monitor themselves.
- Promote "active listening": Staying quiet and considering others' remarks can be challenging when controversial topics are discussed, but is crucial to respectful communication. Facilitators should discourage participants from professing their opinions without considering and responding to others' comments. Instead, facilitators should model communication in the form of a dialogue, in which participants listen and respond to each other. The type of communication used (whether "polite conversation" is favored over informal or slang conversation) can vary, and should be determined according to such factors as the group's cultural background, familiarity with each other, goals for reflection, etc.
- Encourage participation by all: Facilitators should clearly communicate that reflection is an egalitarian process in which everyone has a right to speak, or to choose not to speak. Group members who have not spoken should be encouraged to do so, if they wish. This can be accomplished by creating a space for more introverted group members to speak. This can be accomplished by stating something like, "Let's give an opportunity to hear from some people who haven't spoken yet..."
- Use "stacking": In order to promote full participation, the facilitator should guide the allocation of speaking time by "stacking" (or "queuing"). This involves the facilitator identifying and placing in some order those individuals who wish to speak. One example of this technique is to list the names of the four people who have raised their hands, invite them to speak in order, and then indicate that you will recognize others who wish to speak after the four people have finished. Another technique is to simply give a nod to a person who wants to speak, acknowledging that they have been noticed and will be called upon soon. Additional strategies for inclusion can be found in the "Activities" section of this manual.

Other practices for effective communication include:

DO:

- Use open-ended questions (not "Should the welfare system be reformed?", and "What aspects of the welfare system would you change?")
- ask for specifics and examples
- Paraphrase and summarize ("So what you're concerned about is who defines what's best for these communities?")
- acknowledge contributions

- Redirect questions to group ("Rehabilitation may not be occurring in our prisons, should that be the goal of the criminal justice system?")
- be creative
- take some risks by posing provocative questions

DON'T:

- refute people's ideas
- put people on the spot
- downplay thoughts, feelings
- force people to speak

Excerpt: Trouble Shooting for Facilitators

Given the non-authoritative and flexible nature of facilitation, it is not unusual for situations to arise that can compromise the effectiveness of the reflection. Facilitators need to stay alert to these possibilities, and be prepared to deal with them. Following are suggestions for handling such situations, (taken from Catalyst):

- One Person dominates the discussion or continually interrupts it.
  - Make it clear that you want input from everyone: "Can I hear from someone that hasn't spoken yet?" "I've noticed that no women have said anything about this issue. Would any of the women like to say something about this?"
  - Use activities that require everyone's participation, i.e., gathering questions and ideas. If a person consistently talks for long periods of time, without singling out that person specify that you would like everyone to be brief.
  - If someone continually interrupts, don't become defensive or ignore him or her, Instead, acknowledge the value of their input. Point out that in the interest of the group, interruptions should be kept to a minimum. Offer to speak to them at length at the break or after the session.
  - If someone keeps their hand in the air while others are talking, explain that when you hand is up for you mind is processing what you will say so that you are not listening to the person talking. Keep track of people who wish to speak by "stacking" (verbally list names of people who have raise their hands, indicating the order in which people will speak).
- Several people refuse to talk or participate.
  - If some people refuse to participate in the large group, you might try dividing the group into pairs, threes, or fours. People who will not speak up in front of the full group will sometimes feel more comfortable sharing in a small group.
  - Distribute index cards and ask participants to respond to a question on the card. This is more comfortable for those who are shy in groups; you can shuffle the cards and have each person read someone else's response. In this way, everyone participates, but no one has to know who wrote what.
- The group becomes distracted and loses its focuses.
  - In refocusing a group it sometimes means interrupting someone or interrupting a two-way argument that is going nowhere. Although you may be hesitant about this, remind the participants of the original topic and put the tangent on hold, at least until the first topic is resolved.

- An offensive comment (e.g., pertaining to race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.) from a participant evokes angry reaction or shocked silence from the group.
  - If anyone makes an offensive comment, expect conflict. Your job is to control the processing of what happened and allow the workshop to continue. You can ask people to vent, but without argument. (refer to the previous section on diversity for specific suggestions.)
- Someone asks you if you're prejudiced, against who, and tries to test you.
  - The best response is honesty. Acknowledging that you - like everyone else - have learned prejudice and are working against it, will establish respect and lack of pretense in the group.
- Someone verbally attacks your leadership and completely throws you off.
  - Usually they are very upset and are to blame. **DO NOT TAKE THE ATTACK PERSONALLY.** Explain your rationale. Discuss it with the person privately during a break. If you actually erred, apologize and continue.
- Someone presents inaccurate information or strays away from the focus of discussion.
  - Allow participants to point this out and/or reject the comment. You should invite other participants to correct the misinformation; if they don't, correct it yourself. If you don't know the answer, acknowledge and commit to looking into it. Don't leave the group with any misinformation.
- Group participant states: "It's all hopeless anyway; you can't change people's attitudes. Why even try?"
  - Acknowledge their feelings. Point out the hopelessness, without buying into it yourself. Point out the hopefulness of the training itself, and that you have seen attitudes change and grow by doing this work. Don't get into a debate about whether the work makes a difference - you wouldn't be doing it if it didn't.
- You find yourself disliking a participant.
  - Remember that you are a human being and entitled to your own personal likes and dislikes. However, you must also keep in mind that as a facilitator, your neutrality is essential to the success of a workshop. Acknowledge your feelings to yourself, and move on.

For ideas on specific reflection activities visit,

[https://www.uvm.edu/~dewey/reflection\\_manual/activities.html](https://www.uvm.edu/~dewey/reflection_manual/activities.html)