

Common Problems

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(adapted from *How To Make Meetings Work* by Michael Doyle and David Straus)


Introduction -

Many of the difficulties in CFGs have to do with behaviors from group members that can be problematic, creating road blocks or difficulties in even getting a group to collaborate on anything. This protocol provides an opportunity to anticipate many of these kinds of problems and to discuss possible ways to approach them so they don't come as a complete surprise.

The Activity –

For each of the following “Common Problems Encountered in All Kinds of Meetings and Groups,” have two people take two of the problems and discuss among themselves how they might deal with those problems should they arise in a group with which they are working, which they are facilitating, and possibly Coaching as a CFG. Then, have each pair report out their ideas to the whole group :

- 1) multi-headed animal syndrome - everybody going off in different directions at the same time
- 2) confusing process and content – are we talking about how to discuss the topic or what topic to discuss?
- 3) personal attack – attacking individuals rather than their ideas
- 4) traffic problem – difficulty leaping into the conversational flow and getting a chance to participate.
- 5) unclear roles and responsibilities – who is supposed to be doing what?
- 6) data overload – having to hold onto too many ideas in your head at one time
- 7) repetition and wheel-spinning – going over the same old ideas again and again
- 8) win/lose approaches to decision-making – partial solutions, lack of compromises, polarization
- 9) confused objectives and expectations – what is the group supposed to be doing?; hidden agendas
- 10) unresolved questions of power/authority – do we have the power to make this decision?
- 11) problem avoidance – “everything is fine;” there are no problems around here
- 12) general negativity and lack of challenge – there is nothing we can do about it, so why try?

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- 13) communication problems – not listening to, or understanding others, making faulty assumptions
 - 14) poor meeting environments – can't hear, can't see, too stuffy, etc.
 - 15) personality conflicts – lack of openness and trust
 - 16) underlying tension, elephant in the room - racism, sexism, classism, homophobia