



Healthy Choices NY

Supporting evidence-based health promotion

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Managing participants in your workshop is crucial to program quality. Good participant management helps to ensure that all members of your group and their ideas are treated with respect. Good group management also helps leaders to manage time effectively which means there will enough time for participants to engage in all activities of the workshop; both content and process.

At times leaders will encounter workshop participants who present behaviors that can derail a leader and an activity possibly making the workshop less effective or desirable to other participants. Appropriate management by leaders in these situations is important to maintaining the integrity of the group and the program.

In addition to the resources available in the appendix of your leader's manual – the Progressive Participant Management model (PPM) provides guidance to participant and group management for leaders of the CDSMP and other small group programs. The PPM model suggests that managing participant and group interactions and behaviors be done on a continuum using the least direct strategies first and escalating to most direct strategies only when needed.

For example, using nonverbal cues like avoiding eye contact and ignoring a chatty participant is an indirect way to manage this behavior – if the behavior continues, the leader may try something a little more direct like calling the group to attention or using charts or other workshop tools to refocus the participant and the group – the most direct strategies include verbal cues where the leader directly addresses the participant or participants in a pleasant and respectful manner and asks them to stop the behavior or perhaps calls a break so the leaders have an opportunity to discuss the behavior with the participant or participants outside of the workshop – hopefully coming to an agreed solution to the problem.

PPM suggests that you use simple nonverbal and indirect strategies in challenging group management situations first and then increase the number, type and directness of strategies only as needed. If a simple indirect approach works – then use it until you really need to use something more complex and more direct. And don't forget – you have a co-leader who can help – and the group will help too!

This document provides guidance on the use of Progressive Participant Management in the Chronic Disease Self-Management Program. The table below illustrates non-verbal and indirect as well as verbal and direct strategies to managing workshop participants and groups. You may come upon a situation where a more direct strategy is needed right away, for example, if a participant is using profanity or verbally attacking another participant or the leaders. Most times beginning with the least direct non-verbal strategies is best and will allow you to increase strategies as you need to!

Non-verbal	Progressive Participant Management (PPM) Techniques		
		LEADER/TRAINER TECHNIQUE	RATIONALE
	INDIRECT	Ignore the behavior...carry on with your activities as if nothing happened.	Your action does not acknowledge or pay credence to the problem behavior and continues as scripted in the manual without hesitation.
		Avoid eye contact...focus your attention on someone or something else.	By withholding eye contact you are not giving up the spotlight to the behavior. You are maintaining command of the workshop.
		Become silent...stop what you're doing or saying and wait for the groups' attention, including the problem person, to settle on you again.	Sooner or later the person exhibiting the behavior will realize that they are the only one talking or doing something in the group.
		Move your body away from the behavior...move across the room or stand up, taking the groups' eyes off the behavior and onto you.	Here you are using your body to re-direct the attention of the group from the distracting situation or behavior to the session's activities.
	MODERATELY DIRECT	Turn away from the behavior...look in a different direction and focus your attention that way, rather than at the behavior.	Here you are using your body to neutralize the distracting situation or behavior from the attention of the group so that the session activity may continue without interruption.
		Stand next to the behavior...or, in a long-term situation, sit yourself next to the person exhibiting the behavior.	Here you are using your body to calm or stifle the distracting situation or behavior so that the session activity may continue without interruption.
		Walk or stand in front of the behavior, this blocks the person with your body.	Here you are using your body to block the distracting situation or behavior from the attention of the group so that the session activity may continue without interruption.

Verbal	DIRECT	Acknowledge the behavior... I hear what you're saying and it sounds like that works for you, but it may not work for others.	Here you are verbally acknowledging the distracting behavior without confronting it, and at the same time maintaining that not all participants will find it helpful so as to end the discussion.
		Manage the behavior...we have a lot of things to get through today. Let's hold our comments until later, maybe we can talk more at the break; or, everyone has a lot to say today and we want to hear from all of you so let's all give each other an opportunity to share.	Here you are verbally addressing the distracting behavior and managing it by acknowledging it and asking the person to refrain from anymore discussion at that time, but still offering to listen to his/her comments at break.
		Redirect the behavior...remember the guidelines (point to the chart), let's be respectful of everyone in the group; or, I can't hear everyone and I don't want to miss anything. - please limit your conversations with your neighbors.	Here you are verbally addressing the distracting behavior and managing it by redirecting everyone's attention, including the challenging participant, to the workshop guidelines, and/or your placing the problem on yourself and asking everyone's cooperation to alleviate it.
		Confront the behavior...in a private place away from the group, acknowledge the behavior and ask the person what's preventing them from being a productive part of the group. Tell the person that it can't continue and that they may need to leave the group.	Here you are verbally addressing the distracting behavior and managing it, with your co-leader, through private, direct confrontation with the participant. At such times the challenging behavior should be identified as well as what corrective action should be taken to remain a part of the group.