Tips for Running Groups When People Disagree

How to include members who do not get along

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Idea #1 - GROUP AGREEMENTS

- When groups get together, they decide that they’re going to come up with a list of rules that the entire group agrees to follow. We call these rules “group agreements” or “ground rules”.

- Write up your group agreements on flip chart paper and bring to them each meeting.
Idea #1 - GROUP AGREEMENTS

- Groups go over these rules at the beginning of every meeting. They make sure that everyone understands what they mean and still agrees with them.

- Some groups have had meetings and not used group agreements. They reported that the meetings ended up in chaos. They decided that it is important to follow the rules they had originally agreed to use.

- If you have group agreements already, it’s best to remind the group what they are.
Idea #2 - CHECK-INS

● A major goal of your group is to build positive relationships among members.
● Clearly, an important part of relationship building is being able to communicate effectively with others. Both to share your needs and opinions and being able to listen respectfully to others.
● “Check-ins” are a good way to practice these communication skills each time you meet.
● A “check-in” is simply a time when each person has a chance to talk.
Idea #2 - CHECK-INS

- Points out the importance and value of each person.
- A person can also use this time to share that they are having a difficult time. You need to limit time for personal stories so you can keep the meeting on track.
- This will alert others to be more sensitive and supportive.
- For new groups it can be helpful to provide a question or topic to reflect on. For example: How was your week? What is 1 thing you did you are proud of?
Idea #2 - CHECK-INS

- Over time, as members become more familiar with each other, the “check-in” can become less structured.
- “Check-ins” give each person a chance to reflect on various parts of their lives.
- For example, this can be a time to share accomplishments that may otherwise go unnoticed.
- An important benefit of “check-ins” is that it brings up issues that many people may be struggling with. Sometimes a group will decide to work together to tackle one of the issues discussed. This helps the group come up with possible goals to work on.
Idea #2 - CHECK-INS

● Try to keep the entire “check-in” time to around 10 to 15 minutes. Each person talks for a short time. If your group meets more than once a month you can take turns checking-in.

● “Check-ins” are usually done at the beginning of a meeting.

● People should listen and not interrupt. The person running the meeting should stop someone when they start interrupting.
Idea #3: This handout about fighting fair. Often people tell us just don't fight. But, that is not realistic. It is not life. People have disagreements all the time.

You might be afraid of conflict. But dealing with it - telling people how you feel and what you think is the ONLY way to have a real relationships. If you keep everything to yourself you can end up lonely. Having a true connection and relationship means trusting and sharing what you think and feel.


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Consider having your whole group do these kinds of workshops:

- **A Problem Solving workshop**
- Conflict resolution workshop
- **Communication styles workshops**
- Teamwork training

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An Example of What NOT to Do

In Vermont, a group had people who were constantly fighting. The officers met and came up with a plan. They met one-on-one with people. Each officer spoke to the person they knew best. They did not scold them. They checked-in. Things started to get better.

Then the agency stepped - without asking. Staff started meeting with people and coming up with consequences for fighting. It was a real mess. The officers were devastated.

The agency did not talk to the group before interfering. The officers were offended that the staff did not even give them a chance to support people to get along better. They stepped in and took over without asking and controlled the situation.