



Helpful Responses to Difficult Situations

Knowing when to encourage someone in your group to keep sharing or when to help them wrap up a thought and move on is a skill every leader should know.

As small group leaders, we also experience times when people in our groups have drifted away from our norms and values and need to be brought back.

Here are some helpful facilitating tips to assist you with both of these situations...

When someone says . . .	. . . you might do/say . . .
1. WRONG ANSWER: A participant has shared inaccurate or misinformation.	REDIRECT: "Thank you for sharing. As I think about this my understanding of this is . . . "
2. SILENCE: NO ONE ANSWERING: The group is silent and not answering the question you just asked. SILENT PARTICIPANT: There is someone in the group that hasn't spoken up at all that evening.	ASK: "So I'm curious what's going on for you as you are thinking about this question? CHECK IN: "I wanted to make sure everyone has a chance to share. So I just wanted to check in with you - no pressure - I was just wondering if you had anything you'd like to share?"

3. TIME MANAGEMENT:

- **DISCUSSION SEEMS UNPRODUCTIVE:**

You are having difficulty getting through the material or moving forward to the next point.

- **BIG SUBJECT BROUGHT UP AT THE END OF THE NIGHT:**

Someone begins a big or deep subject right at the end of the night.

STEP IN AND STATE: "It seems like we have a lot of thoughts about this and there is a lot of discussion, but in order to get through what we have for tonight, we are going to have to go on to the next question."

AFFIRM THE IMPORTANCE AND DEFER TO THE NEXT WEEK.

"This sounds like very important subject you are sharing right now. I'm noticing the time and I'd really like to give your question or your thought the attention it deserves. However, due to the time, we are not going to be able to do that tonight. Next week when we get started, we can begin right here if you'd like."

4. OFF TOPIC:

- **TANGENT:**

The discussion goes off on an apparent tangent . . .

- **FOCUS ON OTHERS/GENERAL:**

They talk about the impact to others rather than focusing on the impact to themselves.

- **NOT RELATED TO TOPIC:**

They begin sharing a personal situation that really has nothing to do with the subject that is being discussed.

REDIRECT/STEP IN: "I'm unclear how that connects to what we've been saying. Can you share how you see it connecting?"

"It seems like you are able to see how this impacts those around you. I'm wondering if you might be able to take a minute and check in with yourself and see how this might be impact you personally?"

"It sounds like you've had a difficult situation that you had to deal with.

or

This sounds like it is really hard for you.

or

This sounds really important . . .

but . . .

	I'm wondering if we might be able to re-focus on (subject) right now - if you feel like you'd like to talk further about this we can either talk more at the end tonight or set up a time to meet. This seems like a very hard situation for you, I'm curious . . . how do you see this relating to the question we looking at right now?"
5. EMOTIONAL REACTION: • TO A QUESTION OR COMMENT: Emotional response seems disproportionate to question asked. • STRONG VIEW EXPRESSED: Without a reason or illustration given.	RESPOND: "I'm noticing that you feel very strongly about this questions/issue. Do you know what this is hitting for you?" "You might be right, but I'd like to understand more. I'm curious, what led you to arrive at that viewpoint?"