

Coaching Strategies to Manage Behaviour In Sessions

- **Tactically ignoring**, do you need to highlight the issue? Will it stop itself? If you leave it, will it become a bigger problem? Will others join in or become affected by the behaviour?
- **'Smart groups'** Changing groups and moving people away from each other who may become easily distracted or fall out with each other. Asking people to pair up, and number themselves one and two, before putting the ones and twos together is an easy and non-invasive way to separate a 'challenging pair'
- **Proximity control**, we are always moving around the group and between activities. Often just moving closer to a disruptive or off task group is enough for them to return to the task or seek clarification on what they need to do!
- **Time of task**, it can be difficult for individuals to stay on task for a long period of time. By framing the activity duration will allow focus.
- **Verbal refocus**, a simple check in, ask what they are doing, asking if they understand the task, and naming the person and the behaviour can help. 'Chris, please stop swearing, I don't appreciate that in the session. Not everyone is comfortable with the language'. Remember the aim is to positively change the behaviour, praise publicly and challenge privately. People are more likely to challenge, push back and become frustrated if they are embarrassed as you spoke to them in front of others.
- **Acknowledging emotions**, it can be as easy as acknowledging how someone feels. They want someone to notice how they are feeling, and the behaviour is a way of signalling this. 'I can see you are frustrated; how can I help'; 'I noticed from your expression that you are unhappy'. Often this doesn't require a judgement or follow up, just an acknowledgement that you have noticed how they are feeling. Interestingly this helps build a social connection, increases relationships and has been shown to develop trust.
- **Safe space/time out**, there may be times when you need to ask someone to leave or take time out of a session. It's really important to do two things. Firstly, issue a warning (or two) and give the individual an opportunity to correct their actions and behaviours, then warn them of the consequences of their behaviour, the time out. If the time out takes place, reaffirm why they are having a time out, what behaviour or actions you would like to see and how long the time out is for. Often a few minutes is enough to 'break' the situation. If you have a time out or miss a session with a young person, take the time to follow up with the parent/carer.

- **Reflective conversations/restorative practice;** this may be at the end of a session, after a few weeks of minor incidents. Take the time to have a conversation and reset. This maybe with two participants who have had a disagreement and you would like them to work better together within your sessions. The key is that this is to restore and reset the situation to move forward not another opportunity to just remind them of what they have done. Reset to start afresh.
- **Catch them In,** see something that a participant is doing well, catch them in and praise them publicly. This is very powerful for an individual who maybe used to being challenged or 'told off'. Hearing praise and confirmation of good work/effort is very empowering and a big driver to change behaviour as they want more praise and affirmations.