



## **Before Meetings**

### **Communicate Purpose Clearly**

- Frame the meeting in terms that interest your audience.
  - *"We think we have new information that will be important to your plans and want to tell you about it."*
  - *We are required by Public Law 23453, section..."*

### **Set Expectations**

- Be upfront about how the meeting will be organized:
  - Will there be a Q&A?
  - Will attendees be able to speak or ask questions?
  - Will decisions be made or is this informational?

### **Commit to Listening**

- Listening does not mean endorsing someone's opinion.
- People are more likely to stay engaged if they feel heard, even if there's disagreement.

## **During Meetings**

### **Ground Rules & Why They Matter**

- Help guide how participants treat one another.
- Define procedures and clarify what will/won't be discussed.
- Essential when people are unfamiliar with each other or see one another as adversaries.



## Types of Ground Rules

- **Behavioral:** Respectful listening, no interruptions, no personal attacks.
- **Procedural:** Time limits, speaking order, decision-making methods.

Ask the group:

*"Can we all agree to these rules for the duration of our meeting?"*

## Stick to the Agenda

Develop a clear agenda and **follow it consistently**.

## Explore Ideas Thoughtfully

- Instead of dismissing unclear comments with a brisk thank you and moving on, ask:
- *"Can you tell us a little more about what you mean?"*  
*"I'm not sure how it applies. Can you explain further?"*

## Offer Process Suggestions

- Acknowledge group dynamics to keep things on track:
  - *"The group seems to be getting restless. Should we take a 10-minute break?"*
  - *"X seems to be a sticking point. Would a subcommittee help us move forward?"*

## Set Clear Expectations

- Arguments and **personal attacks** will not be permitted.
- Emphasize: *"Accusations and attacks destroy the chance of a productive meeting."*
- Most people see themselves as fair. **Appeal to that sense of fairness.**



## Manage the Process Transparently

- Let the group know:
  - How the meeting will be run, how comments will be recorded, how long each person may speak, what will happen with the meeting record.

## Acknowledge Feelings

- Strong emotions like **anger or fear** can derail a meeting if ignored.
- Ask openly about fears and concerns:
  - Write them on a flip chart where everyone can see.
  - Confirm: *"Did we get that right? Is that exactly what you said?"*

## Avoid Sensitive Language

- Identify and avoid words the group finds offensive or condescending.
  - *E.g., referring to mobile homes as "trailers" may alienate participants.*

## Ask the Group for Help

- When a small faction dominates with extreme views:
- *"Is this how the group wants to use our time?"*  
*"Does this serve the interests of everyone here?"*

## Be Willing to End the Meeting

- It's better to **pause or end a meeting** than to lose control.
- Regrouping later can preserve trust and order.

## Be Transparent About Your Role

- If neutrality is questioned, say:



EMPOWERING LIVES. CREATING STABILITY.

- *"Watch what I do. If you see bias, tell me right away."*
- Treat challenges as **reasonable concerns**, not attacks.

### **Build Trust Through Process**

- Acknowledge: *"You don't need to trust me, just watch the process and decide if it meets your needs."*
- Earn credibility through **consistency, clarity, and respect**.

### **Quickly Interrupt Personal Attacks**

- If things start to get out of hand, point out to the entire group (not the attacked) that the accusation is a violation of the ground rules.
- If the insult is directed at facilitator, they should not respond in kind.
- The group should be told that strong feelings are natural in the situation but if such feelings are not kept under control, they will destroy the meeting.

### **Act Incisively (Clear, Direct)**

- When the boundaries of decency and fairness are breached, explain what will happen next. You must keep control of the meeting

### **Name What's Happening**

- There are some strong feelings here. But no matter how justified you are in feeling the way you do, if you concentrate your energies on xxx (getting revenge on each other, lashing out at me) you are not going to get where you want to go.

### **Know When to Pause (If It Becomes Unsafe or Unproductive)**

- *"This isn't productive right now. Let's pause and return to this later."*
- Have a plan: support person, follow-up process, or cooling-off period