**Hints and tips for coping with problem participants in groups**

Group management can seem a daunting prospect if you have not done it before. Like all skills it takes time to develop. Remember that the skills that you use in one to one consultations to manage conversations are similar to those you use in a group and you can build on these.

If you deliver you DAFNE sessions in the spirit of the DAFNE philosophy, being open and honest, non-judgemental and valuing the contributions of the group, your group will help you to manage difficult characters.

Remember also that difficult behaviours are often a sign of underlying anxieties or fears and are not directed at you, or personal to you.

The following is a collection of hints and tips from DAFNE educators who have been delivering for a while, they have been added to some of the information on group management used in the DEP three day workshop. Just because a character type is listed doesn’t mean they will all be in your group, as the philosophy states the human condition is a positive one, we want to learn and improve, most people are glad to be there and happy to learn.

Effective group management begins before the course by ensuring people have a clear understanding of what is involved in attending a course and that their expectations of the course are realistic Use pre-assessment appointments to pick up on any issues or difficulties, the more we reduce barriers the less likely people are to be resistant.

**General tips**

Use your introductory session to signpost how the course will be run. Refer to the timetable and workbook to point out what a lot there is to cover, ask permission to move the discussion on if there is a risk of running over.

Use the timetable and workbook to point out that there are a lot of different elements/parts of the jigsaw of DAFNE; ask permission to park questions that will be covered in a later session to make sure we cover everything we need to.

As a new facilitator there is often an urge to jump in and take control actively, in most situations the group will self-manage effectively and we can step back and let it happen.

As a DAFNE trainee one of the reasons you have peer support on your first course is to help you with ideas/suggestions on group management. This can form part of your discussion in feedback sessions.

**Session planning**

When planning your sessions and writing your lesson plans think about how you can help to manage the group through the structure of your lesson.

Use an icebreaker in pairs at the beginning of day 1 as a way of introducing people in the group to each other.

Small group/pair work in sessions reduces the opportunity for challenging behaviour to emerge, keeps the group focussed on the task and helps with time keeping.

Move course participants daily as a matter of course so it is normal to move round, different people will learn from each other differently and quiet people can be paired with someone who will draw them out naturally.

Avoid pairing hesitant Hanna with an overpowering personality, at least at the beginning of the week, pair with a supportive group member.

Keep the group numbers over 6; larger characters can have a greater chance of taking control in a smaller group with less people to challenge them.

Make the most of your introduction to the course on day 1, especially ground rules e.g. one person to speak at a time allow everyone equal time to speak , listening to each other, trying something new/being open to new ideas, non-judgemental, respect for others, confidentiality, the more you put in the more you get out . Explain the ground rules are to help us keep on track. Once agreed use them, revisit them regularly from day 1.

Use the parking lot for irrelevant content have a flip chart sheet and park questions on post it notes refer to it in the introduction to the week.

Allow set times in individual dose adjustment sessions for each person to feed back, ask another group member to be time keeper.

Use introduction to session to point out purpose, content, how the session will run and timings. This can help to keep on track and to time when managing the group, say you will move them on if necessary to keep to time.

**Hints and tips for managing character types**

**Hesitant Hanna**

**Behaviours**: Shy, reluctant, silent most of the time, easy to overlook, melts into the background.

**Management**: Must figure out ways to draw her out. Smaller groups, pair work, ask easy questions that relate to back home experiences, socialise with them at breaks, and offer encouragement.

**Things to say**

Engage in small talk when they first enter the room, the sooner people talk the more likely they are to contribute.

Introduced to another group member who has something in common (came on the bus/problems parking/live in the same area).

Encourage group to relate their own experiences and value the contribution. What has happened before? Have you any experience of? What do you know about? What do you think might happen? Any experiences you want to share on this?

Address group members by name in turn go round the room (remember name badges on first couple of days) start with quiet one occasionally so that everything has not already been said.

To encourage working with others - why don’t we turn to the left today/why don’t we turn to the right today/in this session?

Thank for any contributions made and value them.

**Things to do**

* Sit next to them, look interested and positive, encourage with nods and smiles.
* Look to the quiet ones, make eye contact.
* Use ground rules “allow everyone equal time to speak”.
* In individual dose adjustment sessions ask people to look at each other’s results in pairs and discuss them before feeding back.
* Pair with someone in the group with similar experiences/ things in common.
* Don’t make it a big deal, the group will encourage them.

**Monopolising Mike**

**Behaviours**: Big talker, gobbles all the air time if allowed.

**Management**: Let him know you appreciate his input but on a more selective basis. We haven’t heard from…yet, can we discuss that further at break, rely on peer pressure, do not put him down, and use a rationing technique.

**Things to say**

Acknowledge contribution/concern and bring back to the point in hand.

That’s interesting and we will cover that tomorrow so we will park that for now if that’s ok.

I’m conscious of the time and I know you all want to finish on time so we will have to move on.

Can I just stop you there…

Ask to write down as a question for the doctor to answer later in the week

Can we give someone else some airtime on this point?

The group will often quieten a talker for you.

Ground rules and timetable – stress there is a lot to cover in the week so you will need to keep to timetable, get permission from group when you are agreeing ground rules that you can ask them to move on and keep to time.

Use gentle humour – give someone else a chance!

Ask a closed question “-did that work?” Then move to someone else – “what have you found in that situation?”

**Things to do**

* Make eye contact and hold it, I just need to but in here to make sure we keep to time.
* Avoid eye contact, make eye contact with someone else and invite them into the conversation.
* Slightly turn your body away and look for someone else in the group who wants to contribute.
* Walk towards him while he’s speaking, get in his space, if you are behind him walk up and put your hand on his chair, acknowledges contribution and ask somebody else to join in.
* At the end of the day take Mike to one side “you know your diabetes very well and seem happy to share your experiences however…”
* Some people in the group seem a little less confident to share than you are. What do you think we can do to encourage them to join in; it may help if you could just hold back a little bit?
* Put mikes diary sheet up first with a fixed time to review so he can’t use others time.

**Arguing Arthur**

**Behaviours**: Constantly looking for opportunities to disagree or to show others up, when beyond healthy disagreement can be annoying and disruptive.

**Management**: Let the group deal with him – anyone want to respond with that. Say ‘ok I understand your position, can we agree to disagree’. Remember no trainer ever wins an argument with a participant! (They will side together in the end).

**Things to say**

Use the ground rules – equal time to speak, keep to time to move on, be open to new ideas, try something new, non-judgemental, respect.

Acknowledge what he has to say, ask the group to respond, they can argue with each other rather than with you!

Be factual, refer to the evidence base, research, this is not just what you are saying, length of time programme has been running and number of graduates.

Use the individual dose adjustment sessions to take every opportunity to point out where the principles have worked for him/others.

I’m not sure this is the right place for this discussion, maybe we can talk about it at break?

Often peers will challenge Arthur-why are you here/ why have you come on the course?

“Sounds like that is something that has happened in the past, now you are managing your insulin differently do you think it will still happen? What does everyone else think?”

“There may be things you have been told in the past that have changed now – this is the most up to date information”

**Non-listening Norma**

**Behaviours**: Tends to interrupt, cut off, and leap into the fray before others have had their say, can be because she is too eager and wants to advance her ideas.

**Management**: Insist on sharing airtime. Ask Norma to restate what someone else has said to help her listen. Ask for a comparative analysis - how does your idea stack up with Anna’s. Help her to see to incorporate others views.

**Things to say**

Acknowledge her contribution then pass it to someone else – “that’s very interesting what do you think John?”

Use your partner to support you.

That seems quite specific to you maybe we can chat about that in the break?

Can we hear what Hannah has to say?

I just like to come back to Hannah on the point that she was making earlier.

That’s a really good question I think John was going to ask something similar?

“I’m glad you raised that, did you want to add something Chester?”

**Idea zapping Ida**

**Behaviours**: A master at putting down other people’s ideas, offers an endless barrage of suggestions to anything new or different – it’ll never work; we have tried that before, too late, too early – dangerous because it may inhibit others creativity.

**Management**: Rescue the idea from Ida’s trash bin – ask how do the rest of you see this? Ask Ida to come up with an idea of her own in lieu of the one she just zapped. Ask the group to come up with possibilities.

This behaviour is often a protective measure; it may be helpful to leave the group to manage her to give her a couple of days to settle in as long as she’s not undermining anyone else in the group.

**Things to say**

Use dose adjustment sessions to point out where things are working for her/others.

Ask her to come up with alternative ideas.

Ask the group what they think.

Highlight that this has worked for a lot of people but it is her decision to try something new or not.

Emphasise tiny steps and daily goals.

“For some people this is an opportunity for a fresh start, you might want to give it a go”.

Ask others if they have some experience of….

Acknowledge and move on/change the subject “Oh so that s difficult for you… (Continue with session)/ How would you tackle that Jim?”

“Why does that not work for you?”

**Complaining Chester**

**Behaviours**: Blames, faults gripes shares endless pet peeves.

**Management**: Force him to problem solve – ask for solutions. Encourage a search on the other side of things you told us how bad everything is – you are a fair person tell us one good things about ‘XXX’.

**Things to say**

“What would you do now you are following DAFNE principles?”

Emphasise the research base.

Your group will help you – heard it before.

“That isn’t something we can sort out this week, who do you think can help you with that?”

“That isn’t something I can comment on.”

“How can I support you/what would help/what can I do?”

“How will you use the DAFNE course to do this?”

**Things to do**

Use strategies as for monopolising Mike.

**Rigid Roberta**

**Behaviours**: Not obnoxious – but staunchly takes a stand on an issue and rarely moves.

**Management**: Get her to admit there is another side of the story and acknowledge her points loudly (even on a flipchart).

**Things to say**

Avoid being confrontational, (this is adult education),” we are here to support you this week, this is a safe place to try something new.”

Talking about DAFNE in the 3rd person, “DAFNE suggests….Why not give it a try?”

One-to-one private conversation-“how are you finding the week so far? I’m getting the feeling that you’re finding some of these ideas difficult? Is that right?”

“It will be really interesting to see how that works”

State the evidence base and leave it (let them think).

Roll with it – past experiences can lead to powerful barriers to change.

**Things to do**

* Use individual dose adjustment sessions to highlight where there is evidence against her view point.
* Pair her with someone who is getting a lot out of the course and is open to change.

**Angry Arnie**

**Behaviours**: Behaviour ranges from total silence to constant complaining, he is mad at the world, nothing is right.

**Management**: Try to eliminate threats, ensure the environment is friendly, and consider a role play to let him vent in a positive manner, one to one discussion, if the behaviour is having a negative effect on others highlight this, ask him to change, ultimately ask him to leave.

**Things to say**

Acknowledge the effort he has made to be there.

Acknowledge behaviour “you seem angry about….how can we help?”

Protect the group – “Are you sure this is the right time for you to be doing this?”

“Sounds like you have had an experienced that has made you feel angry, what we’re focusing on this week is how you can be in control of your own diabetes so maybe things like that won’t happen.”

**Negative Nelly**

**Behaviours:** Down about everything, nothing will work for her, she can’t do it.

**Management**: Ask her for something positive, just listen, ignore at times

**Things to say**

Highlight this is different to previous management. If you do what you’ve always done you’ll get what you always got – do something different to get something different

**Things to do**

* Be positive and encouraging.
* This may be due to a lack of confidence, pair with someone who is enthusiastic about changes and willing to share/ support.

**Charlie the clown**

**Behaviours:** Doesn’t take anything seriously, life’s a joke

**Management**: Deal with if hindering the group progress. Compliment him for worthwhile serious contributions, do not reinforce humour attempts, ask him to rephrase – I am sorry I did not get your point…

**Things to say**

“Moving on…..”

“I’m not sure what your point is there.”

“That’s a bit close to the bone for me, let’s calm it down now.”

“Ok, I’m feeling uncomfortable now let’s get back on track.”

“This can be difficult/ a serious subject for a lot of people let’s remember the ground rules and be respectful of each other’s views/ feelings.”

“I’m just going to ask everyone to settle down now; the next bit is a very important part of the course so it’s important we are all focused.”

**Things to do**

Use work in pairs/ small groups to shut down disruptive behaviour

**Show off Sandra**

**Behaviours**: Parades knowledge –big words, name dropping.

**Management**: Stifle her, give her a recording job, and wait for peer pressure.

**Things to say**

Tell me one thing you learned at the end of each session/ day.

**Tangent Tony**

**Behaviours:** Constantly talks about topics that are not relevant to the session.

Repeatedly discusses individual issues which are not relevant to the session or to other group members.

**Management**: Ignore, defer until a later more appropriate time, and canvas the group for agreement, one to one discussion – explaining why it is necessary to stick with the programme

**Things to say**

Can we leave that until break/lunchtime?

“That’s a good point and we will cover that tomorrow, write it on a post it and put it with the other parked questions to make sure we come back to it.”

“That’s not something the course can help you with; where else could you take that.”

“That’s an interesting point, I’m conscious of the time so I need you to focus on XXX for now.”

Refer to resources, workbook to re-focus the group.

**The unwilling participant**

**Behaviours**: Those who are neither volunteers nor willing attendees. HCP sent them.

**Management:** Acknowledge you are here against your will but you still have a choice – you can stonewall the programme or get the most out of it while you are here; work through what might be most appropriate for participant, make certain training is not dull or boring, stress what is in it for them; introduce scenarios relevant to them.

**Things to say**

“What are your thoughts now you are here?” (End of each day?)

“Why not try it? You’re here for the week you may as well get something out of it.”

“What you learn here will be helpful for a pump.”

Ask them if they want to stay? Be clear a condition of staying is being part of the group.

The group will include them.

**Things to do**

* Pair with someone enthusiastic.
* Check they are making a contribution in paired work.
* Be open, positive, try to engage them.
* Thank them for coming.
* Check daily something they are getting from the course/group members.