

C. Handling Challenging Situations- Handout

Getting a tough question or being challenged in the classroom can be a frightening situation. Knowing how to handle a potentially difficult situation will help you feel more confident in the classroom and will help maintain the positive teaching environment that you have created. Here are some suggestions for getting through challenging moments:

- ***Deflect the question.*** Ask others in the room what they have heard. This gives you time to word the answer in your head first. By deflecting, you can find out if others have heard this information and give participants the opportunity to correct misinformation or share their ideas.
- ***Let the evidence be your friend.*** Citing personal stories, studies and statistics can give you credibility as an instructor. Come with the information and materials to help support the class topic. Share stories that you have heard from other participants, and ask others to share their stories. Getting evidence from other participants will give more credibility to the message as participants are likely to listen to their peers.
- ***Don't let it get to you.*** If you find yourself in a difficult situation where your emotional temperature is shooting upward, take a deep breath and pause first before answering. Acknowledge the person and set a tone that is conversational, not confrontational. You can state something like “that’s really interesting that you’ve heard that. There is a lot of different information out there, but this is what WIC recommends...”

More suggestions on handling challenges in the classroom can be found in the Troubleshooting Guide for Classroom Management in ***Module 3 of the CCNE Toolkit.***

Handling Challenging Situations- Activity

Main Activity:

- Divide staff into small groups.
- Each person should think of the wildest story or question they have ever heard of during a NE class.
- Each person should tell the story to the rest in the circle
- As a group, vote on the best (or wildest) story you heard from the group.
- The person whose story was voted the best (or wildest) should then become the facilitator as everyone in the group discusses how they would have handled the situation.

Add-on Activity:

- The person whose story was chosen should give the group more background information on the story (lesson or topic being taught, how many people were in the class, how many kids, etc.) and ask two people to play out how this would happen in the class.
- One person should play the role of the client. The other person should play the role of the facilitator.
- The facilitator should try to work through the question and use the tips given in this handout and tips that were previously discussed in the group to see how it might play out live.
- Other group members can add onto the discussion so that the group really begins to simulate a class discussion (feel free to look bored, someone can cry or play the role of a two-year old, etc.).
- Once completed, discuss the activity as a group.
 - What were some things that the facilitator did to handle the class, the comments, the clients, etc.?
 - What would others have done differently based on the role-play?