

When emotions run high

Emotions are critical to organizational work. The emotional climate of organizations can vary, as does the tolerance for expressing strong emotions in a meeting. When people's emotions are preventing a group from making progress, your role as the facilitator can get tricky.

Here are a few tips on how to navigate high emotion.

- Insist on respectful, safe behaviour. Your role is to keep everyone safe and create a respectful environment.
- Make sure people aren't tired or hungry!
- Spot the emotion as it is brewing. For example, watch for incongruence between words and body language.
- Acknowledge rather than ignore what is going on.
- Ask questions – tease out what might actually be going on.
- Is this actually a problem, or should you ride it out?
- Manage your own emotions. Whose problem is this, really?
- Remember that the brain cannot learn or solve problems when it is in a high emotional state. Take a break, or schedule another time to return to the conversation in a different way or with a different group of people.
- Be sure to use the words of each participant – people want to feel heard.
- Channel what underlies the emotion toward positive group behaviour. For example: "I see that we have touched on something that is really critical to this issue/ process/ organization..."

For more tools and techniques to help you stay agile in tricky situations, like how to handle hijackers and deserters, check out our e-course [***Off The Rails but Still On Track***](#).

Our e-courses are designed to take your facilitation skills to the next level. Check the website for upcoming course dates and use coupon code **SAGE10** for a 10% discount.