Participants who have challenging behaviors interfere not only with your presentation but with the learning experience of the group. Listed below are some behaviors and tips to handle these behaviors.

- **Arguing** – looking for an opportunity to disagree or pick at an idea, making personal attacks, not letting go of their own idea to hear others

  Tips for handling arguing participants:
  - Change the participant’s focus.
  - Agree with their ideas.
  - Ask what the group thinks.
  - Ask the participant to discuss it with you later and continue the training.
  - Don’t push them because they will only get worse.
  - Keep your own sense of self-confidence.
  - Recognize their feelings and move on.
  - Acknowledge the positive points of the argument.

- **Withdrawn/Shy/Silent/Introvert** – acting indifferent or passive, not being involved in the discussion, occupying self by doodling or whispering to others, getting off the subject, lack of self-confidence

  Tips for handling shy participants:
  - Persuade participants to become involved and contribute to the discussion.
  - Get ideas in advance for withdrawn participants.
  - Have participants share ideas with someone else and then come back to the group.
  - Ask the participants open-ended questions.
  - Ask questions they can answer and give a positive reinforcement for any contribution.
  - Let them help set up the materials and equipment before the session.
  - Make eye contact with them.

- **Aggression** – going after ideas in a critical or unkind manner, blaming others, showing hostility and anger, putting down ideas or status

  Tips for handling aggressive participants:
  - Stay calm and keep your cool.
  - “I see you have strong opinions. Let’s hear what the others think.”
  - Respond to the whole group, not to the one person.
  - Remain neutral.

- **Complaining** – finding fault, blaming, complaining that things are unfair, always expressing dissatisfaction with the way things are
Dealing with Challenging Participants continued

Tips for handling complaining participants:
• Shift gears for a few minutes and try problem solving.
• Be patient with the participant.
• Commit to getting the person to focus on solutions.
• Identify the key points of the training (even if you have to interrupt).
• Shift focus to a solution that is agreeable for everyone.
• **Put Downs** – discouraging anything new or different with “It will never work,” or “We tried that once, and it was a failure.”

Tips for handling participants who put down new or different ideas:
• Ask how the rest of the group views the idea.
• Ask the person to offer a replacement idea.
• Tell the participant the idea is a possibility and ask the others their view point.
• Focus on the discussion.
• **Talking** – does not relinquish the floor or monopolizes the conversation.

Tips for handling the talkative participant:
• Refer to the ground rules of respecting timeliness and listening.
• Use non-verbal signals such as glancing at your watch to indicate your concern with time or using your hands to indicate that it is time to wrap up.
• Speak privately with participant to seek understanding of what the person wants.
• **Attention-Seeking** – clowns around and disrupts the team’s efforts to come to a conclusion or calls attention to self.

Tips for handling attention-seekers:
• Shift focus to the task at hand.
• Restate the purpose of the work or discussion.
• Ask how the interruption or behavior relates to the topic or task.
• Call on the person for serious dialogue to show that he can contribute. Ask “I missed the point of your joke. Could you give me your point straight?”
• Reward the serious side of the person by complimenting desired behavior.
• **Arrogance** – highly assertive and outspoken, intends to get things done in the way they know is best, very controlling and self-assured.

Tips for handling an arrogant participant:
• Know your subject matter.
• Restate the participant’s ideas.
• Agree with parts of these ideas.
• Present ideas using words like “maybe,” “perhaps,” or “I wonder if.”
• Use “we” or “us” instead of “I” or “you.”
• Use questions to get expanded ideas.