

# Episode 092: Managing Disruptive Behaviors in Meetings *mini-guide*



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Disruptive meeting behaviors make it hard to accomplish even the most well planned meetings. Effective meeting leaders are prepared to facilitate through these moments of frustration to keep the meeting on track.

This mini-guide includes an overview of how to address the disruptive behavior of going off on tangents, along with ideas for why it happens and suggestions for how to address it. The full guide includes all five common disruptive meeting behaviors and recommendations for when and how to speak with people outside of a meeting about their behavior.

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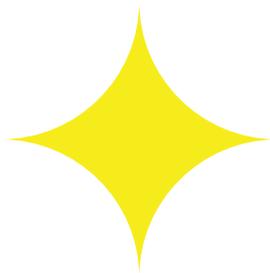
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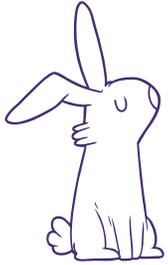
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"When everyone is clear about exactly what the meeting will accomplish, it's easier for people to keep their own minds focused, and, it's easier for you to redirect the meeting when it does wander."



## Tangents and Rabbit Holes

Conversations naturally wander. When the discussion goes off topic or gets deep into the details, it's time to refocus.

### Why it happens:

- People have other things on their mind so they carry the conversation in that direction.
- People are processing out loud.
- People care about the details and want to discuss them now.
- People aren't invested in the meeting / desired outcome so they don't realize their comments are off topic.

### What to do about it:

- Start the meeting by stating the desired outcome so everyone is reminded what this meeting is meant to achieve.
- Refer to the desired outcome when the topic doesn't relate.
- Use a bike rack to capture off agenda items for a future conversation. Assign someone to be responsible for taking the topic to the next step.
- Use questions to redirect the conversation.

### Try saying:

- "I want to remind us that this meeting is about *Desired Outcome* so I suggest we hold this topic for later so we can accomplish this goal. I'll add it to the bike rack and *Name* can be responsible for the next step."
- "It sounds like this is an important conversation but I'm not sure everyone here needs to be a part of it. Can we take this off line as a next step?"
- "Sorry to interrupt but I'm struggling to see how this topic will help us get to the *Desired Outcome* today. Can we get back on agenda and discuss topic this later?"