

HANDLING “PROBLEMS” AS A TABLE LEADER

Recognize that God’s plan is being worked out in other people’s lives and that what appears to be a problem may be an opportunity for people to grow in grace. Problems may arise but recognize that this can be a natural part of the Cursillo process. Remember that you are not alone; God’s Spirit is at work in you and in those around you. Trust that God is at work transforming us all.

Do not discuss table “problems” with the whole team/staff at meetings. Keep confidence for your table family.

Some examples of “Problems” and ways to respond:

Dominating Talking in Discussions

- Ignore it for the first 2-3 talks. This person may have a need to lead others. Don’t cut the person off, since this may have a damaging effect so early in the Cursillo. He/she may realize it and adjust. Other table members may step up to neutralize things.
- Determine if the domination is causing stress to the group.
- If you have a table “note-taker” ask him/her to do that. It’s hard to talk and take notes.
- At a break, ask him/her to help facilitate others to join in talking.
- Be open to the whole group – express the desire to hear from everyone.
- During a break get them on board to help you to facilitate other members of the group to talk more.

Doesn’t Participate in Discussions

- Get them involved in something that doesn’t involve talking – artwork, for example.
- Suggest they act as “note-taker” one of the discussions, which encourages them to participate in the group’s work.
- Recognize that some people find it easier to feedback other people’s ideas.
- Don’t stress over the person’s style. Sometimes people who don’t talk much are really processing things on a deep level.

Doesn’t Want to Participate in Artwork/Skits

- Invite them to participate, encourage them to speak up with ideas.

- If their reluctance is so extreme that feeding back to the larger group would make them very anxious, let it go.
- Let the group start their ideas and pray that the discussion will generate interest.

Wanders around during the discussions or artwork

- Follow them, engage them in conversation and then remember that we are meant to be taking part in the group work, inviting them to come back to the table with you.
- Remind the group that nothing starts on Cursillo till everyone is present, unless they have given prior notice of their absence; the group should wait till they return before proceeding.
- Ask them to help get specific materials for the table or get someone a drink, etc., which may help them to re-engage with the group.
- Consult the Lay Rector or Spiritual Adviser in private if necessary.

Theological arguments

- Intervene firmly with a statement such as “we all have opinions to be considered” and remind everyone that there are a variety of theological understandings.
- If someone feels distressed or concerned about something in the discussion suggest that they have a conversation with one of the Spiritual Advisers.
- If the discussion becomes heated or disruptive it may be appropriate to invite a Spiritual Adviser to join the group for the discussion.

Clergy Table Members

- Participants may defer to clergy for theological answers. Most clergy will deal with this in their own way.
- If it seems to be a problem, talk honestly to the clergy member and if he/she wants, involve a staff Spiritual Director as well.
- Intervene during the discussion and re-direct the question to the group as a whole.
- It may be appropriate to highlight to group, or the questioner in private, that the clergy person is there as a participant in their own right to learn and listen; they are not there as a theological Adviser, that role is fulfilled by the Spiritual Adviser for the weekend. Get help from a Spiritual Director for this.

Personal/Personalities

- Problems of friction may resolve naturally over the course of the weekend.

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- During a break get into conversation with the person who is distressed or causing the problems; ensure they are aware of your care and concern for them and ask them if there is anything troubling them, offering them the opportunity to talk; listen to what they say, listen to what they don't say. Don't offer solutions, if necessary, suggest they talk to a Spiritual Adviser. Tell them you are praying for them and arrange to pray with them if they would like.
- The prospect of having some participants on your table may appear daunting, e.g. Clergy, Clergy Spouses, or other professionals. As with all participants, make a point of talking to them and starting to get to know them at the welcome on the first evening. Remember that they are there as themselves, to listen and learn more about God's love for them. Unless they prefer otherwise, they will prefer to be treated as any other participant.

In Conclusion

- Pray, pray, pray, pray.
- Listen, listen, love, love.
- Trust the Holy Spirit to guide everyone involved.
- No matter how much love you give away during a weekend, you always leave with more love than you brought with you! That's how it is with God's love.

Resources:

- Episcopal Cursillo Ministry – Guidelines for Table Leaders
- “The Cursillo Table Leader” by Jim Baker
- British Anglican Cursillo Table Leaders Guide 2018