



How to Refocus Dominant Group Members

The best way to engage all your Connect Group members and ensure buy-in is to include everyone in the discussion. This can be difficult to do if you have a few members that have strong opinions and dominate the conversation. Their thoughts are important, but you don't want other members to feel excluded or silenced. Here are some ways to lovingly refocus dominant group members and work to create a more inclusive conversation:

1. **Create group expectations in your first meeting.** Set the tone right away by clearly stating this is an equal opportunity group and you look forward from hearing from everyone. This establishes a healthy framework and helps the group have a conversation about creating a collaborative, inclusive group environment.
2. **Model what you want repeated.** Your role as a leader is to facilitate conversation, not control it. You may feel pressure to do a large percentage of the talking. Resist that feeling. Be inclusive and ask questions. Allow for pauses in conversation so people can collect their thoughts and prepare what they want to say. These actions can help create the feeling that everyone on the group is on the same level.
3. **Direct questions or topics at specific members.** Dominant members are often the first to jump in to answer questions. By opening the floor to one person at a time, you intentionally share the moment with a specific member, cutting off opportunities for others to answer without interrupting. If someone tries to interrupt, calmly ask that they allow the person you originally engaged to answer.
4. **Redirect the conversation.** If you sense a member beginning to dominant, use your role as facilitator to take back control. Say, "I'm, so glad you shared that with us. I'd love to hear what Kate thinks," or "That's good insight. What do you think, Marcus?" Constantly look for ways to engage various members and create a conversation, not a monologue.
5. **Meet one-on-one with the dominant member.** Individual meetings can give you new perspective: perhaps a dominant member struggles with silence, so they feel the need to quickly fill any gaps in conversation. Or they genuinely think they're helping the group with their contributions. Consider their perspective, then calmly share your own. Let them know that while their thoughts and opinions are appreciated, it's important to the health of the group that everyone gets a chance to talk. Avoid making accusations; you don't want the member to become defensive or leave the group. You want to create a shared understanding and improve your interactions.

6. **Be slow to judge.** Especially in a young group, you may be tempted to quickly identify individuals as dominant personalities. Relationships take time to cultivate. Your initial judgement may not be accurate and it could influence how you treat and respond to someone. Maintain an objective point of view until dominant behavior persists meeting after meeting.
7. **Prayer for the person, and for wisdom.** Prayer is your most powerful tool! Pray for the talker and that God would reveal ways for you to understand them and their perspective. Ask for wisdom in engaging with the dominant person in a calm manner that doesn't hurt feelings.