

HELP! MY SINAI CONNECTIONS GROUP HAS BEEN HIJACKED!

FOUR COMMON HIJACKERS AND WAYS TO RESPOND.

It's possible for Sinai Connections Groups to be dominated by one or more participants. During a session, it's always good to re-emphasize the Brit. The Brit emphasizes the key elements that create a respectful and enjoyable space. It is also appropriate to review the goal of Sinai Connections: *Strengthen Temple's culture by developing innovative and inclusive ways for Temple members to connect and enhance their relationships with each other and Temple.*

There are different ways a Sinai Connections group can be hijacked. Here are some examples and suggestions of how to deal with these sensitive situations. As you read through this document, please consider:

1. Have you encountered these hijackers? What, if anything, did you do?
2. Do you currently have any of these hijackers in your group? If so, create a plan.
3. Should I seek assistance from my Sinai Connections Liaison?

THE TALKING HIJACKER

This is the person who answers every question before anyone else can respond. While most of the members of the Sinai Connections Group are still pondering the question, the talking hijacker is spurting out a response. Though you may be grateful for their contributions, the talking hijacker doesn't give anyone else a chance to respond. Instead of encouraging others to participate, the talking hijacker makes others withdraw.

SOLUTIONS FOR THE TALKING HIJACKER

- First, try to pull the person aside, one-on-one. Thank the person for their contributions, and ask them how they could encourage the quieter members to be involved.
- Remind them that we have a Brit, which distinguishes our Sinai Connections groups from any outside groups. The Brit encourages giving everyone an opportunity to contribute.
- Encourage the person to only respond to every other or every third question and keep responses brief.

- Encourage the person to allow two or three other people to share before speaking.
- If the talking hijacker still can't help him/herself, the Lead may need to structure discussions differently. Set up this ground rule for the next session: The Lead will call on specific members to respond to questions. This will encourage the quieter members while deterring the talkative one.

Example: Today we are going to hear from everyone. I'm going to call each member by name. "JoJo, what is the best advice you ever received?"

THE EMOTIONAL HIJACKER

This Sinai Connections Group member shows up every week with an emotional crisis. Before you know it, the majority of the gathering is spent trying to unravel the problem and the majority of time and energy is spent on the emotional hijacker.

SOLUTIONS FOR THE EMOTIONAL HIJACKER

- Have a private conversation with this person. Once they have space to share everything going on in life, they may not need as much of the group's time to share. Spending more one-on-one time may also allow you to better understand the person's needs. Discuss the Brit and remind them that we need to consider all members during the group time.
- Depending on the situation, you may be able to suggest a conversation with Temple clergy.
- If the member tries to hijack the group with another crisis, acknowledge their issues/pain and suggest that you discuss it after the group meeting.

THE BACK-SEAT DRIVER HIJACKER

This hijacker gives the Lead constant directions on how to best guide the group. They assume they have the best approach and frequently mention past leadership positions. The other members don't know who to listen to: the Lead or the hijacker.

SOLUTIONS FOR THE BACK-SEAT DRIVER HIJACKER

- Talking directly with the hijacker will take courage, but it's the quickest way to a positive outcome. Sift through their comments to see if you can glean anything helpful. Sometimes there will be good ideas that can benefit the group. If so, mention these in your conversation, which will keep the atmosphere positive. Tell them how you appreciate their willingness to share leadership skills and then politely ask the hijacker to discuss their suggestions with the Lead in private.
 - *Example: Let the hijacker know that sharing these ideas during the meeting promotes conflict in the group. At the same time, confirm that you are leading in a way that suits your*

personality and leadership style, noting that it may be different from the hijacker's. If this behaviour continues, respond by saying: "Let's talk about that suggestion outside of our gathering."

- This type of person may be exhibiting leadership potential. The Lead might want to explore with their Sinai Connections Liaison, the possibility of giving this person a 'specific task' within the group or grooming this person to become the Lead of another Sinai Connections group.

THE LATE HIJACKER

Without fail, this person walks into the Sinai Connections group meeting late and disrupts the conversation. The momentum and focus are lost.

SOLUTIONS FOR THE LATE HIJACKER

- Approach the hijacker privately and encourage them to make a better effort to be on time. If the person can't get there any earlier, encourage them to enter more quietly and sensitively. Explain how it's hard to get the group refocused once everybody is distracted.

