

## ***You're Working With Challenging People? Let's Strategize!***

### **Handbell Musicians of America Virtual Winter Workshop**

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Face it – we all have some challenging people in our choirs. The constant talker... the interrupter... the know-it-all... the always late... the prima donna... the whiner... the negativity spreader... those with physical and mental health issues... and more.

Let's look at characteristics of the challenging folks in our groups, dig deeper into the obstacles they bring, and discuss strategies for working with them successfully and with less stress. The class format will be part webinar and part roundtable discussion.

There is no "one-size-fits-all" approach for working with challenging people, since each of our situations has unique characteristics. Let's look at a wide range of tips and strategies to see what might apply to your group.

Structure for this class:

A) Best practices from behavioral science professions

B) Strategies that have been helpful in my choirs

Please share in the Chat: Do these ideas resonate with you? Have you used any of them? What stands out as helpful? What would you like to discuss further?

What issues are you not seeing represented? Please share!

C) Round Table format for discussion

**Behavioral Professionals** agree that having a strong foundation in place for your group will yield huge dividends in working together in a healthy way, and will strengthen your ability to deal with the challenging people in your choir.

Three Levels of Organization & Planning

#1 – Establish Over-Arching Goals for your group (Mission Statement)

Why?

It helps us define and stay focused on our goals and values

It helps us stay motivated

It builds a shared sense of purpose

It keeps us accountable

Example – my church’s Handbell Ministry Goals:

- + Give glory to God through our music
- + Share our musical gifts to enhance worship services
- + Provide appropriate educational opportunities which strengthen each individual’s musicianship
- + Share fellowship together as we continue to grow as a community of believers

Take time to do this work now, even though we are halfway through the year.

#2 – Plan Music Seasonally/Monthly - Share the Plan with your Group

#3 – Have an Agenda/Plan for Each Rehearsal – and Share it with your Group

How & why

Using these 3 Levels of Organization & Planning, you have now set everyone up to be a partner in the success of the Rehearsal, the Season, the Program Year and beyond.

This equips your ringers to be part of the Team, moving forward together toward your goals.

Mindset coming into each rehearsal – a powerful tool!

Example: “I would like to start exercising.” You plan to begin tomorrow.

Approach #1 – “I want to do some exercise, but I don’t know what the day will be like... I might not wake up feeling very motivated... I might end up sleeping in. If it rains I won’t do it. I just don’t know.”

Approach #2 – “ I AM someone who values exercise & taking steps toward a healthier life. I AM a person who will follow through on walking/treadmill, etc”

Now consider your Mindset at you go to your bell rehearsal:

#1 – “Well, we will see if people are talking or being negative tonight... I don’t know what to expect – I’m really at the mercy of the behavior of those who show up.”

#2 – “I am someone who values this rehearsal and I’ve planned well for it – I am going to step up to the challenges presented and invite everyone into a collaborative approach for success.”

Caveat – We are human!

Touchstone

Be transparent and honest

Some key strategies for dealing with challenging people include:

Stay calm and professional

Don't take it personally

Set clear boundaries

Focus on solutions

Empathy and understanding

Choose your battles

Seek support

Phrases I use regularly:

+ In the interest of time...

+ Looking at our Rehearsal Plan – we need to keep moving

+ Can you put a pin in that conversation until after rehearsal – lots to do today

+ (When a ringer raises their hand) – Real quick, so we can finish X

+ (If a ringer was talking and didn't start ringing with the group) We missed you – jump in at ms 27 (DON'T give extra time or oxygen to them... they don't get to explain WHY they didn't start, what they were doing instead, how they feel tired... just move on professionally and with energy)

+ Let's experiment with not talking – we will stop at measure x, but don't talk – we will go right back to measure y.

Some rehearsal techniques

“Air Bells”

“Sectionals”

Mental Health

Ringers with dementia issues

Ringers with depression/anxiety issues

Round Table – Open discussion