

---

# LDW: Being Assertive in Dealing with Problem Members

**Jon Gruebele**

**American Mensa Vice Chair, Region 4**

**Phoenix AG, 5 July 2019**



# Topics

- **Cultural norms**
- **Formal processes**
- **Being assertive**
- **Scenarios**



## Cultural Norms

- **Americans value being “nice”**
- **Some people aren’t – and maybe don’t even know it**
- **How can nice people effectively deal with people who aren’t?**

*Passive?*  
*Aggressive?*  
**Calmly Assertive!**



If it's gone too far already . . .

- **Dispute resolution**
  - **Ombudsman**
  - **Elected officials**
  - **Elections**
- **Disciplinary hearings**
  - **Regional**
  - **National**
- **Law enforcement**



## Goals

- **Ensure the safety and well being of everyone**
- **Collaboration**
- **Education**
- **Resolution**

## Collaboration is About What You Say

- **With your body language**
  - **Open posture**
  - **Eye contact**
  - **SMILE!!! – at least at first approach**
- **With your words**
  - **Define the improper action**
  - **Why the action was improper**
  - **Offer an alternative**

## Collaborative Language

- **Whenever possible, start with something positive**
- **Use “I” and “We” statements**
- **Focus on the BEHAVIOR, not the person or their motivations**

We do have rules

- **Gathering rules**
- **Social norms**
- **Laws of society**



## Gathering Rules (Example: 'WeeM)

- **No animals in event rooms, except for service animals**
- **No entry into the kitchen**
- **Your badge must be worn visibly at all times**
- **No alcohol for minors, and don't be overserved**

## Harassment Guidelines

- **Put your policy in writing**
- **State you are committed to a harassment-free environment**
- **When defining harassment, be very general**
- **List contacts in case of issues**
- **Spell out penalties for non-compliance**

Source: “Why Your Meeting Needs a Harassment Policy”, <https://www.pcma.org/>

## Example: 'WeeM Harassment Policy

**Goal: HalloweeM will be a friendly and safe environment for our attendees.**

**Unwelcome physical contact, verbal abuse, and other forms of harassment will not be tolerated.**

**Failure to comply with this policy may result in removal from the event without a refund.**

**If you have concerns or need to report misconduct, find someone with a blinking peace sign necklace. If you need immediate and direct intervention for your personal safety, go to the hotel lobby and request assistance from security at the front desk [or call 911].**

## Laws of Society

- **Groping**
- **Unwanted contact**
- **Physical attacks**
- **Threats**

# Social Norms



## Dealing with Complaints

- **The “Rashomon Effect”**
  - **The contradictory but plausible interpretations of the same incident by different people**

Number of versions of every event  $\gg N+1$

# How to Deal with Complaints

- **Active listening**
  - **Take notes**
  - **Ask questions**
  - **Empathize (without assigning blame)**
  - **Be attuned to and reflect feelings**
  - **Repeat / summarize**
- **Buddy system**
- **Document**
- **Escalate**

## Good Phrases to Use when Listening

- **I'm sorry to hear that happened**
- **That must have been difficult**
- **I can see you're upset because you feel ...**



## Good Phrases to Use when Questioning

- **I wanted to hear from you what happened**
- **Why do you think he/she would say/think that?**
- **Can you see why he/she would have felt threatened/been upset?**
- **We want to ensure this is a safe and welcoming environment for everyone**
- **We want to be sure that you're safe (good for drunk people)**
- **How do you think this could have gone differently?**

## Documenting

- **Observable state of the people involved (drunk, sober, agitated, calm, disoriented)**
- **Anything you remember hearing**
- **Anything you remember saying**
- **Immediate actions taken (if any)**
- **Witnesses**

Don't be afraid to fall back on a higher authority!



# Scenarios

## Scenario 1

- **You see someone in hospitality without their badge on**

## Scenario 2

- **Someone has their pet dog in hospitality**

## Scenario 3

- **The vegetarian option has run out at lunch, and a member starts screaming at a hospitality volunteer that they suck because their dietary restrictions can't be met at this meal**

## Scenario 4

- **Someone reports that a 20-year old is playing Cards Against Humanity with a group of 12-15 year olds**



## Scenario 5

- **You have a report that a member is continuously interrupting presentations to challenge the speakers and ask irrelevant questions**

## Scenario 6

- **You have a report that someone is clearly overserved in hospitality and is attempting to get another beer**

## Scenario 7

- **A woman reports that after a man hit on her, she told him in clear language that she wasn't interested. He followed her to the elevators and attempted to strike up another conversation.**

## Scenario 8

- **A woman is volunteering in hospitality. As she bends over to pick something up, a man sees her lower back tattoo and lifts her shirt to get a better look.**

## Scenario 9

- **A woman is clearly overserved, and is trying to grab the young hotel workers who are cleaning in hospitality. At one point, she pins one against the wall and tries to kiss him.**

## Scenario 10

- **Someone is upset because other attendees were saying derogatory things about Hillary Clinton, calling her “Crooked Hillary”, and laughing about her loss**

## Scenario 11

- **A known “problem member” has, unprovoked, just roundly cussed out a new member in hospitality**

## Scenario 12

- **During a dance, you get a report of a man going around and trying to get selfies with all the women, yet in doing so he's "accidentally" groping their breasts. He is drunk when you confront him.**



## Scenario 13

- **At a dance, a woman is grinding up against a married man (not her husband). He seems thoroughly uncomfortable with the situation**

## Scenario 14

- **Another member has taken video of the provocative dance in the previous scenario. He is showing it to other members. When confronted, he says: “It’s a free country – I can do what I want!”**

