

National Center for Family Philanthropy Board Chair Peer Network

Thursday, July 21, 2022

10 Tips & Tools to Improve Meetings & Navigate Uncomfortable Conversations

1. Get curious not furious.
2. Frame discussions and decisions to be made properly (use an agenda that specifies topic, length, type of conversation and intended outcome).
3. Get clear on who needs to be in the room to serve the purpose, decision, conversation. Then stick to it!
4. Be the thermostat not the thermometer (set the tone and temperature; don't reflect it).
5. Establish and enforce board norms.
6. Evaluate each Board meeting (see [Practitioner's Guide to Governance as Leadership](#)).
7. Use a Parking Lot or Bike Rack (Record discussion visually – people fear things will be forgotten if they don't see them).
8. Summarize and reinforce each discussion – What did we decide, agree on? What are the action items and next steps?
9. Vary options for input (e.g., polling during meetings or surveys before meetings – anonymous, avoids “anchoring” to most influential voices).
10. Use committees effectively.

BONUS: Add joy and fun!