



# DEAL WITH INTERRUPTIONS SUMMARY

# Deal With Interruptions

## Lessons

- Why it's a problem
- Why it's hard
- Why they interrupt
- How to handle interruptions
- How to interrupt politely



## WHY SPEAK IN MEETINGS

- Convey your ideas
- Be heard and acknowledged
- Be viewed as having more authority and power

## PERCEPTION



Perception of you when you let others interrupt

- Those who get interrupted are seen as having lower power
- When you get interrupted and do nothing, sometimes others will start to interrupt more

## FIGHT OR LET GO?

### Fight back

- When the interrupter is at the same level or more junior
- When you have something important to say
- When it's recurring behavior
- When it's intentional
- When culture is of interrupting
- When you are expected to speak up more

### Let go

- When the interrupter is a lot more senior then you
- When it's one off
- If you give up on what you had to say (e.g. realize it's not right)
- If the interruption is supportive (correction, detail to add)
- If the interruption is respectful (meeting organizer says it is off topic)

## FIGHTING INTERRUPTIONS



- Adapting to the group interruption culture
- Changing the group culture
- Changing the behavior of one individual
- Getting used to interrupting more

# CULTURAL SENSITIVITY



- More interruptions in Western culture vs. Asian cultures
- More interruptions in certain company cultures

# BY COMMUNICATION TYPE

Passive	Aggressive	Passive-aggressive	Assertive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gets interrupted</li><li>• Rarely interrupts</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interrupts often</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Gets interrupted</li><li>• Rarely interrupts</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Handles interruptions well</li><li>• Interrupts when it makes sense</li></ul>

# THE CHALLENGE

## Interruptions make us feel:

- Angry
- Disrespected
- Frustrated
- Ignored
- Not valued

## Why it's challenging to react:

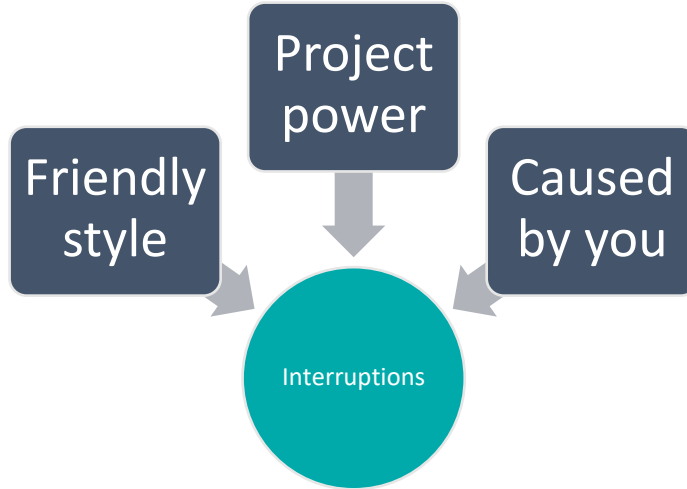
- Shyness
- Impostor Syndrome
- Conflict avoidance
- Fear of retaliation

# MYTHS



- Stopping an interruption is conflict
- It's always rude to interrupt others
- It's not a big deal

## 3 INTERRUPTION TYPES



## SELF CAUSED INTERRUPTION

- Do you ramble?
- Do you speak with hesitation?
- Do you speak fidgeting?
- Do you speak in soft voice?
- Do you avoid eye contact?
- Are you not to the point?
- Do you interrupt others often?



## FRIENDLY INTERRUPTION

- Some people might not see interruptions as **something bad**
- Some people are **uncomfortable with** moments of **silence**
- Some people find that talking at the same time is a **sign of positive engagement**
- In some cultures, like in Italy interruptions are a **sign of approval, interest, and liveliness**, and no interruptions mean boring

## POWER INTERRUPTION



- Take up more space
- Be seen as higher up or more powerful
- Discredit others
- Play politics

## GOOD VS. BAD

### Not all interruptions are equal:

- Reinforce same topic or change topic
- Support an argument or oppose
- Raise the voice
- Be excited or try to dominate conversation

## KEEP PERSPECTIVE

- **Not** every interruption is **always bad**
- How you **perceive** interruptions may be **different** than how others perceive it
- Getting a **second opinion** about the interruption with someone in the meeting can be helpful

## WHY PEOPLE INTERRUPT

Personality	They have a lot of ideas and comments	Ego	They may not realize they are doing it
Gender differences	Power differences	Expertise level differences	Confidence levels
	Different expectations about who should speak more	Cultures (Japan vs. Italy)	

## 2 ELEMENTS



# OPTIONS POST INTERRUPT



1. **Let it go**
2. Yield to interrupter, **acknowledge or build on what they said** and then speak again
3. **Continue to talk** or say “almost done”, “I have more to say”, or “one moment” and continue. Don’t say “may I ask” (permission)
4. Right after interruption, **ask to finish your point** “please let me conclude my point” or “I’m not done yet” “please let me finish”
5. **Share what you feel** - like you aren’t able to get your point across and ask to not be interrupted until you finish
6. Meet after and **ask why it happens**
7. **Meet after the meeting**, explain behavior to interrupter, say how you feel, ask for a change, and get confirmation

# WHY PEOPLE INTERRUPT

	Let go	say nothing
	Yield & return	“You are saying that ... I’ll add that ...”
	Keep going	“one moment”
	Ask to finish	“Please let me finish”
	Share feeling	“I feel I can’t get my point across because I get interrupted”
	Ask why	“I’ve noticed you tend to interrupt me in team meetings. Why is that?”
	DESC	“I’ve noticed you interrupt me in team meetings. I feel frustrated when that happens because I can’t finish my thoughts. Could you let me finish speaking?”

## NON-VERBAL TIPS

### Body language

- Engaged
- Leaning forward

### Facial expression

- Strong eye contact
- As if you are about to speak

### Voice

- Confident voice
- Clear and loud enough

## PREVENT INTERRUPTIONS

- **Speak early on** before conversation gets heated
- Request for **more structure** in the meeting
- Say **how many points** you want to make before you share them "I'm going to share 3 ideas now"
- Say **how long you need** to make your point "I'll take about 5min to explain my thought"
- Ask others to **leave comments to the end** of your point "Please leave your comments until after I conclude"
- If you are interrupted you can then **restate what you just said** "as I said, I'll take your comments at the end" or "I have 1 idea to finish"
- Appoint a friend who can say "she / he is still speaking"

## IS IT RUDE TO INTERRUPT?

- It all depends on the context
- If everyone is interrupting and you can't change that aspect of the culture, then you'll need to interrupt
- Remember, for some people and cultures certain types of interruption are considered a sign of engagement

## INTERRUPT POLITELY

- Keep positive tone and body language
- Cut people at the end of their thought rather than right in the middle of it
- Speak a little louder than who's speaking
- Reference what they just said if you want to connect further
  - "Marty, what a great point, and ..."
  - "wow, that's tough! I ..."
- Speak
  - "Quick question..."
  - "Susan, sorry to interrupt, I believe ..."
  - "Let me add to that point..."



# Deal with interruptions

Strong characteristics  
Subtle characteristics

## Passive

- Gets interrupted often.
- Rarely interrupts even if everyone interrupts (prevailing culture).
- Doesn't deal with disruptive interruptions the same day / week they happen.
- Often gives up on sharing a view after being interrupted.

## Aggressive

- Doesn't allow anyone to interrupt them and does so in an abrupt way.
- Interrupts often to project power and control – interrupting feels good.
- Interrupts significantly more with juniors.

## Assertive

- Handles interruptions well and quickly.
- Interrupts when it makes sense.
- Is aware of interruption cultural differences.
- Uses specific strategies to reduce interruptions.



# Deal with interruptions – Activity

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## **Answer the following questions**

- Where and by whom do you get interrupted the most?
- What is the myth you tell yourself about interruptions?
- Do you know anyone who is a friendly interrupter? What about a power interrupter? Do you contribute to being interrupted?
- What interruption management strategy do you want to apply at work?
- Do you ever interrupt other people? Why?
- What is your key takeaway from this lesson?