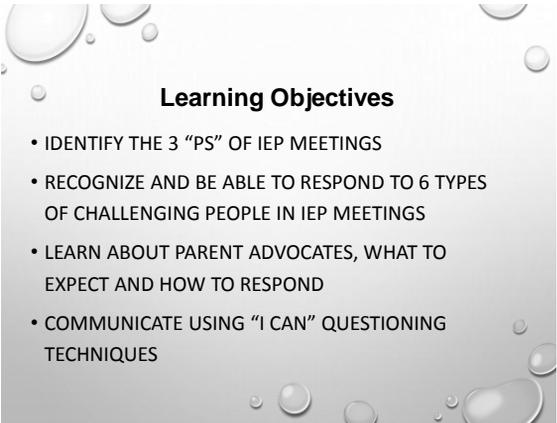


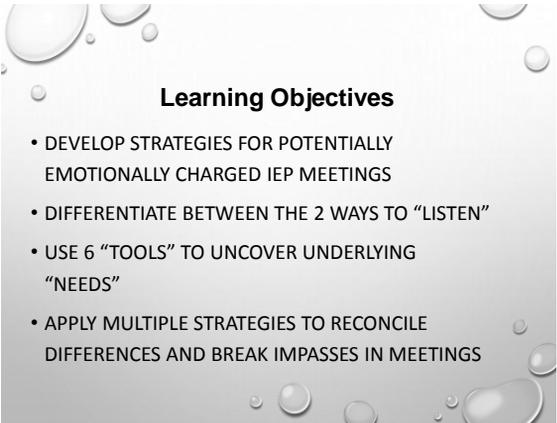
WHY GOOD IEP MEETINGS GO BAD – PARENTS, ADVOCATES, AND TEACHERS, OH MY!

Chip Fair
www.agreeability.com



Learning Objectives

- IDENTIFY THE 3 “PS” OF IEP MEETINGS
- RECOGNIZE AND BE ABLE TO RESPOND TO 6 TYPES OF CHALLENGING PEOPLE IN IEP MEETINGS
- LEARN ABOUT PARENT ADVOCATES, WHAT TO EXPECT AND HOW TO RESPOND
- COMMUNICATE USING “I CAN” QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES



Learning Objectives

- DEVELOP STRATEGIES FOR POTENTIALLY EMOTIONALLY CHARGED IEP MEETINGS
- DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN THE 2 WAYS TO “LISTEN”
- USE 6 “TOOLS” TO UNCOVER UNDERLYING “NEEDS”
- APPLY MULTIPLE STRATEGIES TO RECONCILE DIFFERENCES AND BREAK IMPASSES IN MEETINGS

When does an IEP meeting start?

- With the first contact with the parent.
- Everything you say and do prior to the meeting could come back to bite you.
- There are no "off the record" comments in SPED.

The 3 P's of IEP meetings – P1

- **Prepare**
 - Training for Key Personnel
 - IDEA
 - Advocacy
 - Facilitation
 - Dispute Resolution

The 3 P's of IEP meetings – P2

- **Plan**
 - § 300.501 (b) (3)
 - A meeting also does not include preparatory activities that public agency personnel engage in to develop a proposal or response to a parent proposal that will be discussed at a later meeting.

The 3 P's of IEP meetings – P3

- **Propose**
 - When the meeting occurs
 - Review the IEP
 - Propose and discuss
 - Involve all participants
 - Respond to questions/concerns/issues

IEP meeting challenges

- People with their minds already made up
 - Could be parents or school personnel
- Statements being misunderstood or misinterpreted
- Participant(s) hijacking the meeting
- People becoming polarized with opposite opinions
- Misstatements breeding suspicion, mistrust, and anger

Types of people you may encounter

- The Confused / Incompetent / Absent person
- The Angry / Hostile / Defensive Person
- The Righteously Angry / Indignant Person

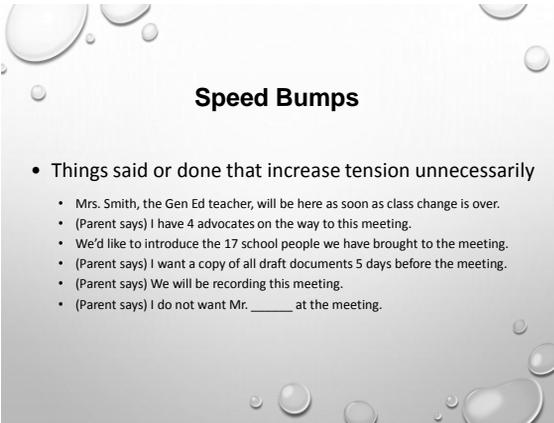
Types of people you may encounter

- The Confused / Incompetent / Absent person
- The Angry / Hostile / Defensive Person
- The Righteously Angry / Indignant Person
- The Irrational / Unpredictable Person
- The Addicted / DUI Person
- The Litigious Person

*Before you speak, take a breath...
 think about how you would feel, what you would
 think, if someone said or did to you what you
 are going to say or do to the other person.*

Speed Bumps, Roadblocks, and Dead Ends

- Things said or done that increase tension unnecessarily
- Things that stop a meeting dead in its tracks
- Things that may guarantee you will lose in Due Process



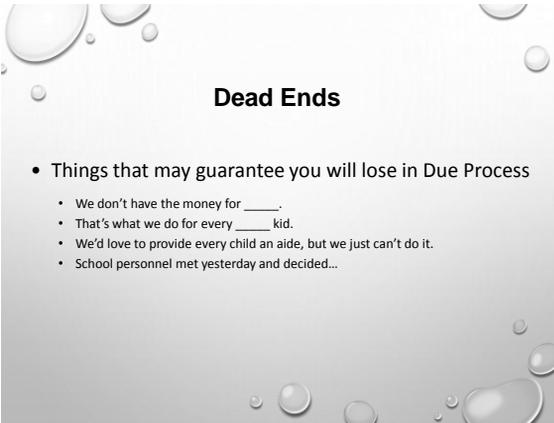
Speed Bumps

- Things said or done that increase tension unnecessarily
 - Mrs. Smith, the Gen Ed teacher, will be here as soon as class change is over.
 - (Parent says) I have 4 advocates on the way to this meeting.
 - We'd like to introduce the 17 school people we have brought to the meeting.
 - (Parent says) I want a copy of all draft documents 5 days before the meeting.
 - (Parent says) We will be recording this meeting.
 - (Parent says) I do not want Mr. _____ at the meeting.



Roadblocks

- Things that stop a meeting dead in its tracks
 - We could not get a Gen Ed teacher for this meeting, they are all in class.
 - (Parent says) Mr. _____ is here as a family friend, not as our attorney.
 - That is our proposal, take it or leave it.
 - (Parent says) I want what I want and you'll give it to me or I'll sue.



Dead Ends

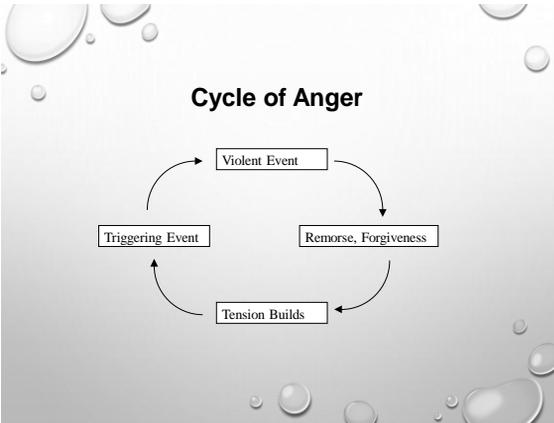
- Things that may guarantee you will lose in Due Process
 - We don't have the money for _____.
 - That's what we do for every _____ kid.
 - We'd love to provide every child an aide, but we just can't do it.
 - School personnel met yesterday and decided...

In today's society some of the things that make people feel angry and stimulate aggressive thoughts are:

- Perceived disrespectful treatment: Of thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and needs
- Perceived provocation or suspicion and hostility

In today's society some of the things that make people feel angry and stimulate aggressive thoughts are:

- Perceived threat: To the continuation, or success of something to which we are strongly committed
- Perceived unfairness



Recipe for a great IEP meeting

- **Agenda**
 - Items may vary from meeting to meeting
 - Welcome and introductions
 - Procedural Safeguards
 - Purpose of the meeting
 - Review and revise (if appropriate) existing IEP
 - Specifics could be listed here
 - Additional concerns
 - Summarize and plan for the future

Soft Skills

- All feel valued and that you sincerely care
- Your behavior sets a positive tone
- Discussion based on clear and reasonable expectations
- Frequent and useable feedback during the meeting
- All feel they have been treated with fairness

Situational Awareness for IEP Meetings

Critical
Elevated
Average
Low

One of the most important things you will do in an IEP meeting...

E.A.A.P.

Words to lose and words to use

- Words to eliminate from your IEP meeting vocabulary

- Budget	- Won't
- Money	- Best
- Funds	- Maximize
- Can't	- Minimum

Words to lose and words to use

- Use these words instead

- Appropriate	- Reasonable
- Individual	- Progress
- Consider	- Needs

Words heard at IEP meetings that are not in the IDEA...and some that are

Agenda = 0	Try = 0
Advocate = 0	Maximize = 0
Draft = 0	Trial = 0
Wants = 0	Log = 0
Demand = 0	Master = 0

Words heard at IEP meetings that are not in the IDEA...and some that are

Appropriate = 150+
Individualized = 20+
Request = 86+
Needs = 64+
Progress = 21+

Remember: it doesn't matter what anybody "wants" in an IEP meeting, the only thing that matters is what the child "needs".

IEP meeting philosophy

- **Have a logical sequence**
 - Personal information
 - Strengths, concerns
 - Present levels
 - Goals, objectives
 - Accommodations
 - Services, related services

7 Tips for Successful Meetings

- Be a willing and enthusiastic participant
- Share your experiences and expertise
- Keep confidences and assume others will
- Stay on topic
- Listen alertly and pay attention
- Provide, and accept, constructive feedback
- Appreciate the other person's point of view

Parent Advocates

There are 2 schools of thought, 2 approaches, to being a parent advocate in Special Education.

Parent Advocates

- **Help the parent speak**
 - Support, guide, and assist the parent through this maze that we know as Special Education
- **Speak for the parent**
 - Insert themselves between the parent and school
 - Aspire to be the contact person
 - Impose the advocate’s “alternate reality”

Parent Advocates

- **Can help**
 - Identify issues
 - Offer ideas/suggestions
 - Be the voice of reason, a calming influence
- **Can hinder**
 - Dominate the meeting
 - One position, unwilling to discuss alternatives
 - Make demands, threats, and accusations

Heard at Parent Advocacy Training

- You’ll have to fight for everything
- The school system only cares about money
- Prepare for Due Process from day-one
- School personnel will testify against you
- School Personnel will not tell the truth
- The hearing officer will be biased against you

Heard at Parent Advocacy Training

- Never sign anything at a meeting
- Request “draft” copies before meetings
- If you request someone specific attend the meeting, they must be there
- Decisions are 50% school and 50% parents
- School cannot implement IEP w/o signature
- Wear them down and they will give in to you

Everything on the Internet is true!?!?

“The trouble with quotes on the Internet is that it is difficult to determine whether or not they are genuine.”

-Abraham Lincoln, ca. 1862-

The 2 Most Heard Questions in IEP Meetings



A cartoon illustration of a person lying on their back on a brown table. Two speech bubbles are directed at them. The first bubble on the left says "What do you want?" and the second bubble on the right says "Are you OK with that?". The person has a small black figure on their back, possibly representing a burden or a specific role in a meeting.

Questions that actually work

Identify, Clarify, and Address the underlying "Need" instead of responding to the "request".

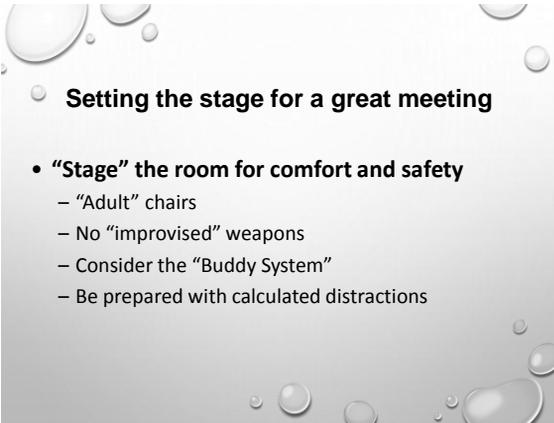
Questions that actually work

Identify, Clarify, and Address the underlying "Need" instead of responding to the "request".

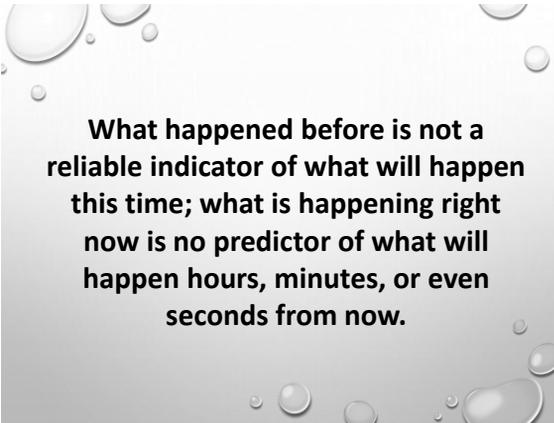
I CAN AGREE TO THAT.

Questions that actually work

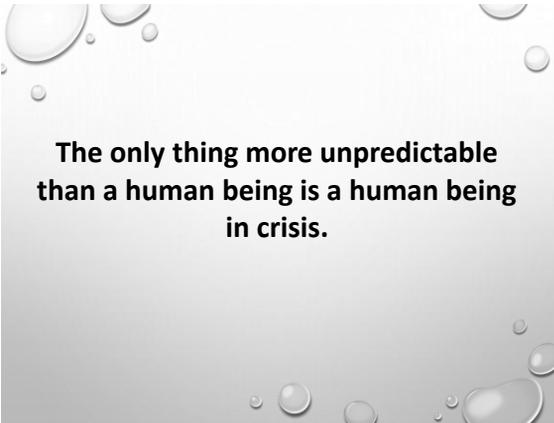
- Ask for explanations
- Ask for reasons / evaluation of reasons
- Ask for connections / distinctions
- Ask for clarification / explanation
- Ask for counter examples / alternatives
- Ask for evidence



- **Setting the stage for a great meeting**
 - **“Stage” the room for comfort and safety**
 - “Adult” chairs
 - No “improvised” weapons
 - Consider the “Buddy System”
 - Be prepared with calculated distractions



What happened before is not a reliable indicator of what will happen this time; what is happening right now is no predictor of what will happen hours, minutes, or even seconds from now.



The only thing more unpredictable than a human being is a human being in crisis.

Stages of Grief

- ↻ Denial
- ↻ Anger
- ↻ Bargaining
- ↻ Depression
- ↻ Acceptance

How do you listen?

IT'S ME VS. YOU!

- AS AN ADVERSARY
 - PURPOSE
 - DEFEND, RESIST, OPPOSE
 - STRATEGY
 - MAKE THEM WRONG, DISPUTE EVERYTHING, DOMINATE THE DISCUSSION
 - BEHAVIORS
 - JUDGING, ARGUING, INTERRUPTING, DEBATING
 - IMPACT
 - DISTRUST, RESENTMENT, LITTLE TO NO PROGRESS

How do you listen?

WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER!

- AS AN ALLY
 - PURPOSE
 - UNDERSTAND, SUPPORT, ASSIST
 - STRATEGY
 - INTERESTED IN IDEAS OF OTHERS, EXHIBIT EMPATHY
 - BEHAVIORS
 - SUSPENDING JUDGMENT, REFLECTING, PARAPHRASING, ASKING QUESTIONS
 - IMPACT
 - TRUST, APPRECIATION, CREATIVE IDEAS, NEW OPPORTUNITIES

Tips:
Listen more – Talk less.
Ask about alternative options.
Ask open-ended questions.
Focus on facilitating a collaborative discussion instead of an adversarial confrontation.

Useful tools to help you uncover the underlying “need”

- **Note: there is not a screwdriver in the bunch**
 - Bracket
 - Reflect
 - Paraphrase
 - Body language
 - Open-ended questions
 - Soft skills

Guidelines for reconciling differences

- Restate each party’s position and empathize with their respective situations
- Discover each party’s underlying interests
- Ask for or propose options without asking for commitment
- Build small agreements



12 tips for breaking an impasse

- 1) Recap the small agreements and praise their efforts so far
- 2) Take a short break (minutes, not days)
- 3) Focus on the future
- 4) Suggest a trial period
- 5) Develop criteria for a successful outcome

12 tips for breaking an impasse

- 6) Encourage Brainstorming
- 7) Ask Questions!
- 8) Shift to another topic or issue
- 9) Practice Positive Advocacy
- 10) Reality check
- 11) State the system's proposal and move on
- 12) Beg (just kidding)



Chip Fair

(931) 808-2697

www.agreeability.com
