



## **POTENTIAL GROUP PERSONALITIES**

These are some of the group personalities you might run into in your group. Every person is unique and it is not our desire to stereotype individuals. We have, however, found some consistent conversation types and patterns that can show up in groups. This is a document that can help deal with some of those conversations.

### **Silent Shyla:**

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#### **Description:**

*Silent Shyla rarely engages in conversation and may deflect the question or comment to someone else when asked to speak. When forced to answer, she may use humor to deflect or answer questions on a surface level. She has no desire to be vulnerable and open up to others. It's hard to tell if Shyla is avoiding the conversation, just there for the show, or just terrified of saying the wrong thing, so she says nothing. She will respond with one-word answers or simple responses to direct questions, but won't elaborate or provide any personal details.*

#### **Great things:**

- They are present in the room despite their inactivity.
- They will not overtalk, which allows others to have more time to share.
- They will not be a disruption in the meeting.

#### **Things that may help:**

- Privately acknowledge their discomfort. Try to find the root: are they afraid of being vulnerable, or do they think this conversation is unimportant.?
  - If it's a matter of vulnerability - encourage them that their voice is essential. Help them to see true life change happens when we are vulnerable.
  - Ask them to share what brought them to the group and what they hope to get out of the experience.
  - Call on them specifically with less intimidating questions. This approach will allow them to build trust with the group and with you gradually.
  - Protect the space around their process/verbalizing their perspective - encourage others to do the same.
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## **Chatty Charlie:**

### **Description:**

*Chatty Charlie lacks self-awareness and has no idea how much they share in a group setting. They tend to always answer questions and dominate conversations by the length of time they talk. They may even interrupt or interject over others.*

### **Great Things:**

- Great conversationalist, and many times you enjoy talking with them because they have something to say about everything and are always willing to contribute.
- They bring excitement into the room just by participating in the conversation.
- They bring comfort to others that are afraid they will have to talk a lot.

### **Things that may help:**

- Acknowledge their contribution. They really like being helpful and overtalking may be their way of avoiding awkward silences.
- Remind them that we are here to learn together and see different perspectives and that uncomfortable silences are inevitable in uncomfortable conversations.
- Enlist them as your accomplices to generate more discussion by having them ask questions directly to other group members.
- Head them off at the pass by calling on other people directly to answer questions.
- Enact a 2X1 rule. Each person in the group, after they speak, waits for two others to talk before they can contribute again.

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## **Triggered Tamera:**

### **Description:**

*Tamera Acts defensively to the conversation about race, specifically about their own race/culture. When something they don't like is said they may raise their voice, interrupt, accuse and with a red/strained face, become verbal or even physically aggressive.*

### **Great Things:**

- They are showing real and raw emotion. That is a kind of vulnerability
- They create an opportunity for the group to practice WAGE and other de-escalation techniques.
- You find out how they are truly feeling about something.

### **Things that may help:**

- Ask the group to take a pause
- Ask questions about how they are feeling and what bothered them.
- Pray together and specifically for help with reconciliation of perspectives by asking them to walk through the WAGE tool.
- Reset with agreements to honor one another's perspective and current limits.

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## **Conspiracy Craig:**

### **Description:**

*Conspiracy Craig is generally coming from a slanted point of view. He can quickly derail the conversation into politics (or whatever topic they are fixated on) and often offers accusation before facts (generally gained from one-sided sources). Generally, they believe the worst of most situations.*

### **Great Things:**

- In many cases they have thought very deeply about the topics
- They may bring out some surprising facts.

### **Things that may help:**

- Defining terms can make go a long way toward diffusing their points (especially in the company of others)
- Fear is the main driving force behind Craig. He is afraid of being “the bad guy”, “on the wrong ‘team’”, or of “losing”. Addressing the fear can sometimes re-center the conversation.

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## **Microaggression Maria:**

### **Description:**

*Maria, through verbal and nonverbal ways, unintentionally communicates subtle forms of discrimination or stereotypes, predominately about marginalized or culturally non-majority groups of people. It may be masked as a joke or even a pointed insult*

- Examples include:
  - “I bet you are a really good dancer...”
  - “When I go to Best Buy I am looking for staff that are Asian to help me...”
  - (To a Black person with dreads) “You can’t run your fingers through your hair.”
  - “Where are you from?”
  - “You are so articulate!”
  - “White men can’t jump!”

### **Great Things:**

- They are culturally unaware but speak and act as though they know certain things about cultural groups.

### **Things that may help:**

- Take a deep breath. This is important for your on self-care and well-being
- In the group preface your confrontation with something like: “ I would like to address something that was said that may be a bit sensitive. I know that this group will be able to handle talking about this and I am grateful for that.” Envision the best (WAGE).
- Ask Maria if she believes that all (insert the group for the microaggression was pointed) do or or like that. Can she or anyone else in the group present an alternative example.
- Ask people of color in the room how they felt about Maria’s comment
- Remind Maria that this group strives to be a place where everyone feels safe and valued.

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## **Blissfully Ignorant Bernadette:**

### **Description:**

Bernadette refuses to acknowledge there is a problem historically, locally, or even personally. She may even believe that we all should be colorblind. Although her approach may seem positive, it is a toxic positivity that works to make sure everyone gets along and ignores the evidence of conflict. She is not experiencing issues in her life so there are no issues.

### **Great Things:**

- Bernadette will most likely not bring unnecessary conflict into the room
- She is able to see the positive in most things.

### **Things that may help:**

- Allow blatant willful ignorance to “hang in the air” until the right time, if possible, particularly if no one else in the room is in agreement with her. Sometimes no response is the best response.
- Remind them that colors, including the colors of people’s skin are no mistake, but rather they are intended by God. Why would God want us to ignore color?
- At the right time, perhaps personally, use what’s learned in the group to gently confront the behavior. Ask questions like: “How did you come to that thought?” “What evidence do you have to support that?” “Is there a payoff for the Kingdom ignoring a different point of view?”
- Eventually make space for Betty to itemize what’s lost if she believes the perspective of other group members (and allow her to process grief about the loss).

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## **Gospel-Only Greg:**

### **Description:**

*Greg believes that preaching the Gospel will solve all problems. He uses this as a reason to not participate in any social action on behalf of others or conversations about the racial divide in America. The Christian’s purpose is evangelism not “social justice.”*

### **Great Things:**

- Having a discussion about the Gospel can be beneficial at times.
- This may allow your group to come to a clearer understanding of the Gospel
- This will protect your group from approaching the social issues without the inclusion of the Gospel truths of the Bible.

### **Things that may help:**

- Get clarity on how Greg describes the Gospel.
- As a group, list Biblical stories or passages (not single verses) of Characters in the Bible engaging people from other cultures. What happened in those moments? (ex: Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus and the parable of the Good Samaritan, The book of Jonah, etc...) How does the Gospel interact with these moments?
- Ask the group to give brief examples of how the Gospel has influenced their life experiences/perspective on race.
- Ask Greg if they can take time to process their perspective on how race has/hasn’t affected their trajectory, and set a specific time at a subsequent meeting for the group to listen.

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## **Trolling Tyrone:**

### **Description:**

*Tyrone, generally, is not interested in listening to the other side of an argument. Tyrone may feel he is there to instruct on his perspective and centers his emotional response above all else. At times, Tyrone is just there to trigger people emotionally. He may do this out of anger or just plain fun.*

### **Great Things:**

- Tough to find a positive. Typically, Tyrone just, to quote a Batman movie, “just want to see the world burn.”

### **Things that may help:**

- Remind them of the group rules. If they are not willing to abide by the rules, they must be excused.
- When a true troll is identified, they have to be asked to leave the conversation. Trolls have zero interest in mutual growth... only chaos.

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## **Political Pat:**

### **Description:**

*Pat is prone to center the conversation around political thoughts and ideas. They may join in some of the conspiracies of Conspiracy Craig and any chance they get they will look to demonize the other political side. In Pat's mind faith and politics are dependent on each other.*

### **Great Things**

- Looking to find a way to make principles practical
- They tend to be active members in the community and political arena.
- They are not passive participants in the conversation.

### **Things that may help:**

- Pat needs to understand that not all Christian solutions will come through governance.
- Pat is likely tribal, and therefore fiercely defensive of their tribe. Reminding them that the conversation is not solely a political one can help calm down their sense of loyalty.
- Remind Pat that God's Kingdom is a one-party system and we, as Christians, are all connected to that party forever.
- Reminding Pat that the objective of our group is not to advance a political agenda, but to learn together from differing points of view. It's not always a right/wrong conversation. Sometimes it is just about seeing life through different eyes. (this can be done one-on-one or through the group)
- Establishing group rules about political alliance could help with this as well.

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## **Know-It-All Nadia:**

### **Description:**

*Nadia, has a subtle way of making everyone else feel stupid because she knows all the “right” answers. Takes great joy in knowing about topics that are obscure or unfamiliar to the rest of the group. Often appears condescending and belittling.*

### **Great Things:**

- Nadia is a wealth of knowledge and will contribute to the conversation
- Much of her knowledge is very helpful
- They are someone who is not afraid to study up on issues.

### **Things that may help:**

- Acknowledge their possible insecurity about being in a group that is not culturally familiar - but to overshadow others' perspective will rob them of valuable knowledge.
- Remind the group that the need to be right (above the need for grace and truth) is violence on the group dynamic.
- Direct questions to Nadia when you are confident the answers will shine light on their specific perspective.
- Reach out personally and ask Nadia if she has ever personally experienced the wisdom of someone other than her cultural group/perspective.
- Ask Nancy to be a co facilitator for a specific meeting, while sharing the portion of the facilitator training “role play characters”

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## **Paternalistic Paolo:**

### **Description:**

*Has a way of promoting his desire to offer help to others, clearly from a place of authority, achievement, entitlement, strength, or perceived maturity. Paulo may say things like:*

- *“Those people...”*
- *I only want to help (them)*
- *I realize that I have been given so much.*
- *I need to be around folks who have suffered more than me (so that I can work out my own baggage - often unaware of the depth of it).*

### **Great Things:**

- They can admit that there are those who are suffering in the World
- They are at least willing to participate in helping those in need

### **Things that may help:**

- Clarify definition of poverty: Broken relationships. Pointing out if one lacks diversity in their relational experiences and past, they might be far more impoverished than others.
- Debunk the myth of meritocracy by reminding Paul and the group that our salvation is not based on merit, Thank God!
- Explain that to honor the image of God in others is to trust that God is at work in others no matter their situation (how comfortable or oppressed).

- Encourage Paulo to deal with their own suffering (even as it relates to loss of ego identity in the group process), as it is human to suffer - leading with an identity in materialism screams insecurity and fear of exposure. Don't let the group miss the opportunity to help them with sloughing off surface ego layers. It is transformational.