
Reasons why people don't contribute during discussion / groupwork

(contributed by Margit Szesztay)

1 A disbelief in the value of discussion.

"Ah well, talk never changes anybody's mind – why bother."

2 An attitude of detached observation.

"I just like to hear what other people have to say about these things."

3 A lack of confidence in one's ideas.

"It doesn't make any difference if I say anything or not because I never have anything original to contribute."

4 A lack of skill in verbalising ideas.

"The others can state their ideas so much clearer than I can so I would rather just sit back and listen."

5 Habitual shyness.

"Well, I never talk very much."

6 A solidified pattern of participation.

"Everyone in the group has got used to my not talking much so I feel uncomfortable when I do. People seem very surprised when I do speak."

7 Submissiveness to more aggressive members.

"Well, I can hardly get a word in edgeways so I'll keep quiet."

8 A lack of emotional involvement in the matter being discussed.

"I just didn't feel excited about the subject."

9 Fear of being rejected.

"I'm afraid that everybody will think that what I have to say is just stupid."

10 An inability to think quickly enough to keep up with the general pace of the discussion

"By the time I thought over the point long enough to have something to say on it, the rest of the group has moved on to something else."

11 Distraction to more personal problems.

"The reason I didn't talk today was because I was worrying about something."

12 A lack of sleep or general tiredness.

"I can hardly keep my eyes open."

In addition

In foreign language classes lack of sufficient language competence.

Based on: Francis, E. 1986. Learning to discuss. Edinburgh: The Scottish Curriculum Development Service