

# 8 IDEAS TO KEEP PARTICIPANTS AWAKE

By Eli Mina

<http://www.elimina.com/insights/awake.htm>

---

People often sit through agonizing and wasteful meetings and suffer quietly. The following 8 ideas on asserting yourself in a meeting support the notion that "suffering is optional".

1. Do your homework and be as informed as you can be. Knowledge is power. You will gain credibility and confidence and you will be able to back up your assertive passion with logic.
2. Talk to the facilitator before the meeting and share ideas on how to run an efficient, inclusive and well focused meeting, and thereby make it easy for all members (including quiet ones) to participate. Suffering will be reduced substantially.
3. Interject if there is a problem that affects the quality of the meeting and don't wait until things become unbearable. It may be hard to interject the first time (pounding heart, sweaty palms) but it does become easier with practice.
4. Make your interjection soft on the people but hard on the principles. Instead of "*You are being rude to me*" try "*I think we will achieve more if we can speak without interruption*". Asserting yourself is not synonymous with being aggressive or unpleasant. You can be soft yet powerful!
5. Try this if the meeting is dominated by vocal members: "*We are missing a few important pieces of the puzzle. It would help if we hear from members who have not spoken yet, like Bob*".
6. Avoid apologies ("*I am really sorry to have to interject*"). Just state the problem ("*We seem to be getting off track*") and the required action ("*Can we get back to the agenda?*"). Your reward will come at the end of the meeting in the form of gratitude by other members. So why apologize?
7. If you become irritated, slow down and ask yourself "why?" before interjecting. Use the power of listening to understand what motivates others and integrate this into your arguments. "*I must say I am somewhat puzzled. Didn't we already make this decision? Did I miss something?*".
8. Remember that it is easier to be a critic than to be a creator. Finding flaws in a proposal is easy. But you'll come across as proactive and confident if you propose a more holistic alternative.