

Not to boast, but I'm currently a member of over **three** consistently active group chats. Every group chat has a unique dynamic, and it's rarely transferable to in-person interactions. No one person plays the same role in every group chat, the positions are dynamic.

Here are the archetypes I've observed in my group chat rotation- what they bring to the table, why they are important, and why they may be problematic to the dynamic. ***Remember: take what resonates and leave what doesn't.***

The Initiator: Typically, this member has something they need to get off their chest before 10am. They are the person who starts the conversation when the night before doesn't roll over.. Whether it's checking in everyone's schedule for the day, sharing breaking pop culture news or simply inserting a friendly anecdote to ramp up the rapport, they play a crucial role in maintaining the steady flow of conversation.

The initiator tends to be the least problematic of the group. However, they can become volatile when the conversation doesn't match their expectations. They often play the victim, claiming that the lack of responses is a direct representation of the respect the group has for them. It's best to give their kickoff message a quick reply, usually along the lines of "kk."

The Ghost: We all have one —the friend who has an opinion on everything, yet when the time comes for them to speak up, they're silent. The Ghost, while aggravating at times, is also crucial to group chats. Nothing brings a society together more than a common enemy. When morale begins to fade in a chat, it's the perfect time to direct attention to the member who hasn't replied in 3 hours. The steps to addressing the Ghost are as follows: identify the target, form an alliance, and attack their character from the inside out.

The Ghost is surprisingly not the most problematic member of a chat. While their absence may cause a whirlwind of emotions among the other members, they also act as a scapegoat when times get tough.

The Gif Dealer: Always ready with the perfect reaction pic, the Gif Dealer holds a lot of power in setting the mood of the chat. If a picture is worth a thousand words, a GIF is worth a million. From decade-old reaction pictures to memes that have existed for 12 hours, this person is on top of it. They have a finger on the pulse and they know how to use it. There is one caveat to the Gif Dealer, and that is if the role is held by someone over 55 years old. That is no longer a GIF dealer; they are just a boomer and most likely choose an unrelatable, dated photo that can put everyone on edge and bring the conversation to a swift halt.

The Gif Dealer can often be thought of as lazy, as someone who doesn't take the time to craft a tactical response to their friend's joke or update. However, there are over 20 million GIFs available on the apple photos extension, making their job one of great prestige.

The "Yes" Man: Always ready with a peppy and optimistic response, the Yes Man is essential. They bring a certain childlike wonder to the conversation, and their ignorance is admirable. When the conversation gets heated or a disagreement on photo dump order arises, they will level the playing field and remind everyone why they're in the group- to support their friends and ultimately, to develop deeper human connection.

The Yes Man can be problematic when their blind optimism contradicts someone in the group. When a member asks for advice and the Yes Man responds with an inspirational quote, they can be met with distrust. When dealing with the Yes Man, it's important to remember that they have no ill intent, they just want to make people smile, and in doing so they might present as fake and annoying as hell. Give them grace and remember, on days when all you hear is "no," they will be lurking with open arms and a freshly baked "yes."

The Contrarian: Arguably the most frustrating member of the group, The Contrarian is combative and, well, difficult. They may be agreeable Andy in real life, but, when hiding behind their tiny keyboard, they're willing to die on ant hills. New restaurant in town? Already tried it. Thinking of seeing a movie Thursday? That's laundry day. Like a new song? Wrong. It's terrible. The Contrarian is snappy and irritable, but don't let that fool you. Sometimes referred to as "The Bummer," the contrarian also plays a crucial role in the group. They make us better people. They remind us that the world, while not always made of sugar and spice, is still beautiful. Their disinterest in all things enjoyable reminds us that we have a lot to live for, and helps us build a stronger sense of self. While going head-to-head with the contrarian, tread strongly. Remember that you are valid, loved, and respected. Gather your data and come with a strong argument. Or promptly remove them from the chat until they act right.

The Contrarian is problematic because they want to be. Don't try to change them or your character and music taste will be attacked.

The Sound Machine: The soundtrack to the group chat, this member loves onomatopoeia, and they're not afraid to show it. As repetitive as fart sounds can get, they always land. Some people are auditory story tellers, and their 3 minute voice note may go unopened by the rest of the group, but

they're never ignored. Often faced with "I'm not listening to that," the Sound Machine is resilient and not to be underestimated. Their power lies in their inability to be silenced. They make great friends, spouses and dog moms. They think on their feet and they stand by their beliefs.

The problematic qualities of the Sound Machine falls on the other members of the group. When they do not receive the appreciation they deserve, the Sound Maker can quickly devolve into the Ghost, leaving the chat without a sharma. Listen to the voice notes. Tell them you love them. Don't be an ass hole.

The Regurgitator: Not to be confused with the Gif Dealer, you may find yourself wondering if they came up with that punchy line themselves- but they didn't. The origin of their comment can be found in their saved sounds on TikTok. People may have trouble thinking on their feet, but that's far from the truth. Their mind is a mecca of information, and the rest of the group is lucky to have them. Their wit can be overshadowed by their tendencies to respond with a quote or trend, but don't let that fool you. They just might have the key to the city- and they got it through repetition.

There's nothing inherently problematic with the Regurgitator, but they can be unreliable. You may see them shy away from conversation when there isn't a corresponding viral sound or trend. Don't be so quick to put them down, they are a crucial source of trend information and are often steps ahead of the crowd.

The Planner: They have one goal and one goal only and their love language is quality time. Hopelessly devoted to getting a date on the books, they will make it happen. Most get-togethers wouldn't be possible without the Planner. When the time comes, they will provide a home cooked meal and a craft that no normal person can perfect in the allotted 2 hour hang out.

The Planner can often come across as needy. They get upset easily and they likely get in tufts with the Contrarian. They are probably type A and need to have things the way they want them. Don't ignore their messages, or you will be called out, personally, and potentially by your legal birth name.