

## Challenging Topics – strategies for success

- Stick to the history. Know your sources! Know where secondary information came from and learn contrary points of view.
- Refer to and use primary documents (diaries, quotes, etc.) as often as possible. Let the past speak for itself.
- Be sincere and show empathy—both for the subject and the visitor. Understand the visitor point of view (even if you don't agree with it).
- Allow visitors time to react. Sometimes they just need to feel.
- Be honest and realistic. Don't try to sugar coat awful truths, but don't inflate them either.
- Be objective. Avoid personal agendas and bias.
- Acknowledge what happened without either making excuses for it or personally apologizing for it.
- Be professional. Allow for other opinions, but you do not need to agree with them.
- Be careful with exceptional examples. They can weaken the basic points.
- When difficult situations arise, take a deep breath and consider how to handle the situation. Choose your words carefully. Stay calm and see if you can calm them, redirect their attention, ask to speak privately, etc.
- Do not dwell on negative situations after they are over; move on to the next interaction with a positive frame of mind.