

Probe

Ways of de-emphasising this voice:

1. In meetings which are drawing on other people's time, don't just probe to satisfy your own curiosity; probe matters of shared concern or organisational importance.
2. Recognise that some probing may be better done outside the meeting, for example through internet research, by consulting third parties or by deeper individual reflection.
3. Build yourself a set of tell-tale signs from the behaviour of others (usually some form of distancing), which will warn you when you are probing too hard. Use these clues to develop your sensitivity to choosing the 'right' time and place for probing.
4. Probe sensitive issues in off-line, one-to-one conversations rather than in an open forum.
5. Show that you are aware of how it can feel to be on the receiving end of a difficult probing question by first 'inviting permission' to ask it: *'May I ask a very direct question...?'*