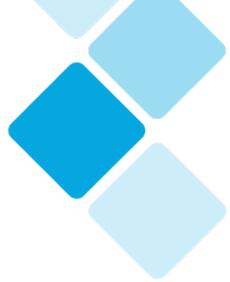


# Understanding group dynamics to improve teamwork

Marilyn Ghezzi & Hayden Dawes



# Goals for successful team



Full participation

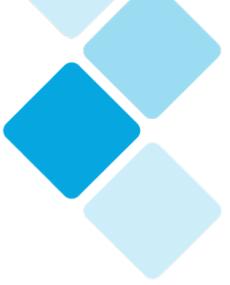
Mutual understanding



Inclusive solutions

Shared responsibility





**Diversity asks:** *Who is in the room?*



**Equity responds:** *Who is trying to get in the room but can't and whose presence in the room is under constant threat of erasure?*



**Inclusion asks:** *Has everyone's idea been heard?*

**Justice responds:** *Whose ideas won't be taken seriously because they aren't in the majority?*



# Workshop objectives

- Upon completion of this experiential workshop, participants will be able to:
  - Understand basics of group dynamics and group development in any group setting
  - Describe how to influence group dynamics and processes to improve teamwork and encourage full participation of all team members.
  - Explain how to ensure all team members feel included and heard



# Your experiences

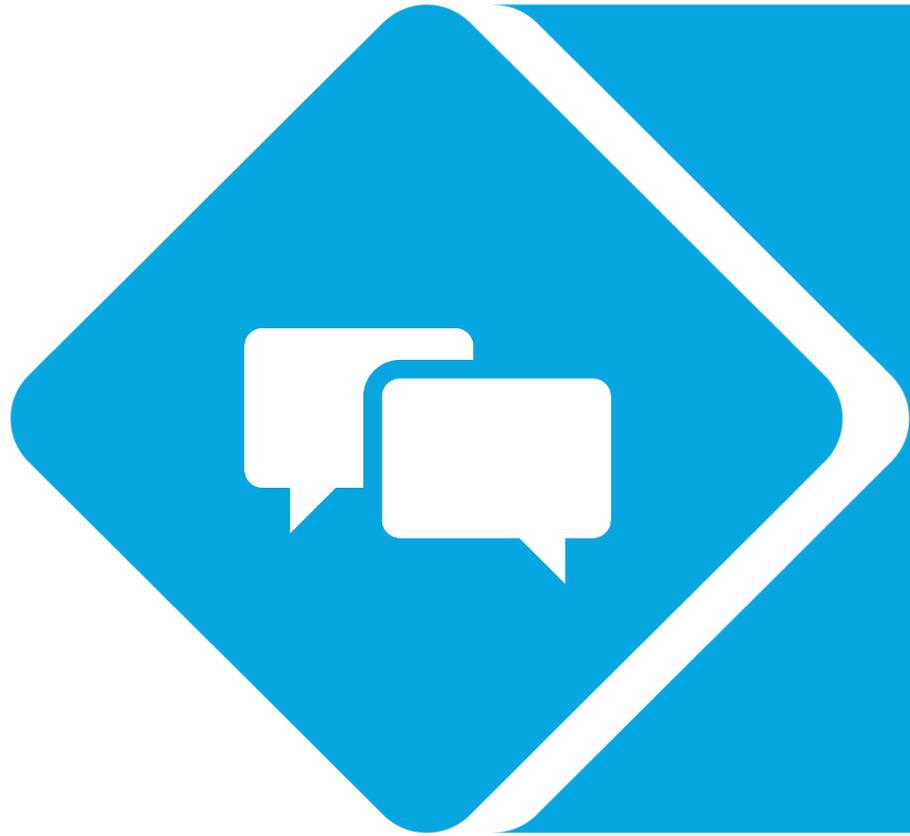


Think about your experiences in work groups both as a member and a leader:

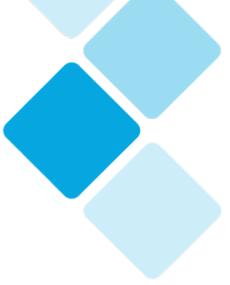


- When have you felt marginalized in a group experience?
- When have you felt fully heard in a group experience?
- What makes a group “safe” and supportive of full participation and inclusion?



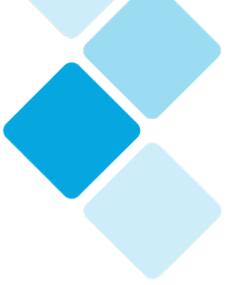


# Group Dynamics



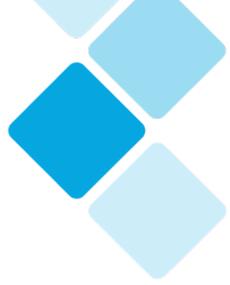
# How groups work best

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- Groups work best when members become interdependent
    - Independence= relying on one's own feelings, impressions and judgments as guide to action
    - Dependence = relying on others as a guide
    - Interdependence = learning to accept dependence (influence from others) when it is needed or is more likely to achieve the group's goals
    - Interdependence develops as a group works out new procedures, standards and values appropriate to the goals and resources (e.g. skills, capacities, abilities) of the group
  - Groups achieve interdependence through:
    - Resolution/negotiation of differences
    - Optimization of cooperation and collaboration
    - Suspension of judgment
    - Maintenance of independent thought
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# Group dynamics

- **Group dynamics** - term coined by Kurt Lewin, a social psychologist
  - Lewin observed that people who **work in groups** usually adopt certain behaviors and roles. **Group dynamics** refers to the impact those behaviors and roles have on other **group** members, as well as the **group** as a whole
  - The principles of small group dynamics are applicable to groups with a size of 3 to 12 people
  - Ideal group size is 6 to 8 people
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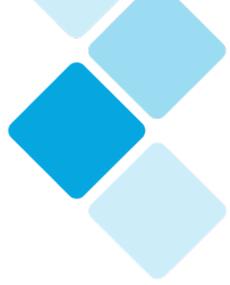


# Group Dynamics



- Group dynamics include:
  - Group norms
  - Interaction patterns
  - Roles
  - Stages of group development





# Group Norms



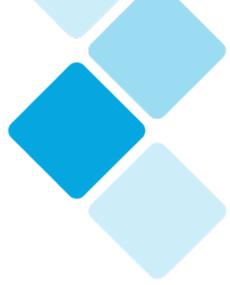
- Definition- "shared expectations and beliefs about appropriate ways to act in a social situation"
  - "ground rules that define what is appropriate and inappropriate behavior in a group".



- Norms develop gradually, the process may be "invisible" to the members and leader. They are created as the group members influence each other.



- Functions of norms
  - Express group's values which help to give members a sense of who they are as a group.
  - Establish common ground thereby making groups more orderly and predictable and coordinating the group's activities.
  - Define appropriate behavior --helping members to avoid embarrassing or difficult situations
  - Creates a distinct identity for the group—differentiates them from others



# Leader's role



Leader works to establish positive norms explicitly and implicitly.

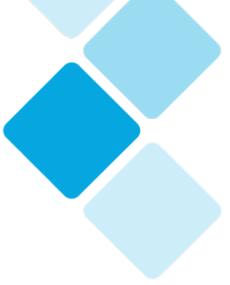
It is preferable that the norms develop over time through the give and take of the group, rather than being **imposed as rules** by the leader.



Leader is constantly shaping norms and must be aware of this function

“Norms are established early on in the life of a group and once established are difficult to change” - Yalom, 2005





# Leader shapes norms



- Leader needs to encourage:

- Honesty and spontaneity of expression
- Active involvement by all members
- Nonjudgmental acceptance of others



- This is achieved by:

- Responding positively and showing interest
  - Explicitly exhorting, direct instruction
  - Expressing appreciation for members who interact
  - Challenging members who undermine adaptive norms
  - Modeling these desirable behaviors
  - Avoiding being the “hub of the wheel”
  - Asking members for reactions (to another member, to group as a whole)
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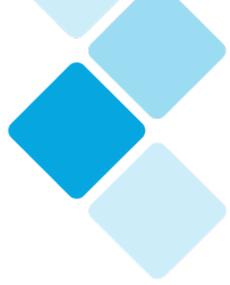
# Leader is always attending to both **process and content**



- Leader monitors:

- Boundaries regarding time, space, membership
- Levels of involvement: Who is active? Who is silent?
- Types of involvement: Supportive? Challenging? (important to monitor tone as well as words themselves)
- Roles of involvement: Socio-emotional leader, task leader, monopolizer, helper, challenger
- Communication patterns: Who speaks to whom? How do decisions get made? Who is influential?
- Tone of group and anxiety level
- Productivity- Is group engaging or avoiding its tasks?
- Group development stages





# Helpful leader interventions



- Empathizing and validating, convey understanding
- Seeking concreteness
- Focusing- keeping group on track



- Clarifying and questioning
- Scanning for non verbal cues
- Identifying themes and summarizing– both what individual members say as well as summarizing group themes and processes





# Helpful leader interventions

- Linking- make connections between similarities in feelings or experiences that exist among members
  - Reaching for difference- support member's differences while maintaining unity
  - Encouraging participation and supporting
  - Amplifying and Softening- can be very helpful in equalizing status among members
  - Cutting off discussion when necessary, interrupting attacking comments and discouraging excessive member disclosures
  - Shifting focus- from one person to another or one topic to another, or from discussion to activity
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Lost at Sea



# Questions and Discussion



# Supplemental Materials

# Groupthink

- Concept developed by Irving Janis in 1982
- His definition- “ a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive ingroup, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of actions.”
- Alternate definition- Occurs when “group member's desire to maintain good relations becomes more important than reaching a good decision”

# Causes of groupthink

- Cohesiveness- limits dissent –disagreements help to make good decisions
- Dissenters may be isolated or even scapegoated
- Isolation- limited input from outside sources
- Domineering and/or charismatic leadership
- Decisional stress - such as time pressure and/or the magnitude of the decision
- Belief in morality of the group
- Stereotypes of outgroups- enhances sense of righteousness
- Self censorship- people hide their misgivings
- Illusion of invulnerability leads members to engage in risk taking
- Self appointed “mind guards”- act as censors who keep opposing viewpoints out of the group

# Remedies for Groupthink

- The leader should assign the role of critical evaluator to each member
- The leader should avoid stating preferences and expectations at the outset
- Each member of the group should routinely discuss the groups' deliberations with a trusted associate and report back to the group on the associate's reactions
- One or more experts should be invited to each meeting on a staggered basis. The outside experts should be encouraged to challenge views of the members.
- At least one articulate and knowledgeable member should be given the role of devil's advocate (to question assumptions and plans)