

## Group Dynamics

Groups are wonderful microcosms of humanity. Each person brings her or his own unique gifts and talents to the gatherings and events. Each person also brings, at some point, their own unique baggage – their shadows, unresolved family issues, their feelings of not being heard by people of a certain age group or gender, fear of certain kinds of voices, impatience for certain thinking or talking styles – and opens the suitcase during group time.

Have you watched preschoolers try to interact and play together? What happens?

- Take toys away from each other
- Bite
- Scream
- Pinch
- Yell
- Tell the teacher
- Kick
- Walk away

As adults in groups we still have all the same feelings we did as toddlers, we are just trying to manage them in “adult ways”! And sometimes, our management is less than stellar. We may raise our voices at inappropriate times, or snap at someone to “Shut up!” when we think they are rambling on with lots of repetition. Some of us may just walk out in a huff and not explain ourselves.

These group dynamics are, of course, normal and will happen in our Networks. We are Christians and we are going onto perfection. We are, however, not quite perfect yet!

So, our grumpiness will show – and so will our skepticism, weakness, fatigue, and frustration, along with all our gifts and graces!

Our Networks will be most effective if we are authentic and honest with each other about where we are. Trying to ignore an issue, negative personality or someone hogging the “air time” will not create good group dynamics.

When someone’s suitcase falls open and all the laundry tumbles out, we need to work with the person to get stuff bag in the bag with dignity, while honoring and respecting the group and the group’s time.

This can be a tricky road to walk as many of us know from church or family life experiences.

**To help all of us get comfortable with being a Network leader/facilitator, we will discuss several things:**

1. Types of groups – have participants name types within each category
2. 5 things groups do and Tuckman Model
3. Roles people play in group settings
4. Red Flags in your Network – have participants build this list. Add stuff they didn't name.
5. Handling awkward situations – have participants build this list. Add stuff they didn't name.
6. Culture, Power, and Group Dynamics
7. From Group to Team
8. Team-building

### **TYPES OF GROUPS**

1. Formal, informal
  - a. Formal – PTA, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts
  - b. Informal – redheads, left-handers, those who attended Weird Al concert in 2014
2. Primary, secondary/social
  - a. Primary – family, work team
  - b. Secondary – church, YMCA membership

### **FIVE THINGS GROUPS DO**

1. Interact with each other – build relationships, create ideas
2. Have goals they want to accomplish together
3. experience interdependence among members
4. Have a structure – formal and informal, intentional, or unintentional
5. Are tied together by a bond named by a covenant and recognized by those inside and outside (DS, members of congregation) the group.
6. Communication – formal and informal, intentional, or unintentional

### **TUCKMAN MODEL**

Each group creates its own norms and culture whether on purpose or accidentally. In 1965 an educational psychologist, Bruce Tuckman, came up with what we now call the Tuckman model of group development. It had 4 stages. In the 1970's he added a 5<sup>th</sup>.

Each group does create its own unique way of being and operating together. At the same time, there seems to be a universal process groups go through so they can build trust and be effective.

1. Forming
2. Storming
3. Norming
4. Performing

## 5. Adjourning

### GROUP ROLES

Each person in a group usually has a role or several roles they regularly take on in a group:

- **Manager** – keeping the calendar of the group clear and consistent, making sure there are snacks, etc.
- **Visionary** – big dreams. May not be goal oriented.
- **Facilitator** – leading and guiding conversation. What are we about? What are we doing next?
- **Gatekeeper** – controls flow of conversation and sometimes the topic of conversation. What are we about? What are we doing next?
- **Hinderer** – I think we need to discuss this more? I'm not comfortable moving forward yet? What if we haven't thought of all the ramifications? I like this part but not that one, so I'm not quite ready to vote.
- **Comic relief** – "class clown". Can relieve tension or keep conversation from going deep
- **Data seeker** – has lots of questions. May not want to make final decisions or choices
- **Data provider** – always has ideas or answers
- **Historian/Recorder** – takes notes and later reminds group members of what they said
- **Harmonizer** – just wants everyone to get along
- **Interpreter** – rephrases or reframes what is happening what's being said to lower tension or move group process forward.

### RED FLAGS

things to address early on so they don't get out of control. The Network needs to address these together as part of their covenant. One person who:

- always seeking attention – in positive or negative ways
- monopolizes time
- Regular joking that keeps real issues from being addresses or topics discussed
- No attendance on days of difficult topics
- Constant acquiescence – doormat. Never has an opinion, doesn't care what the group does
- Someone who is present physically, yet not engaged spiritually or emotionally
- Bullying

### some things we can do in difficult or awkward situations:

- Take a deep breath. You don't have to speak immediately. Give a bit a time for the group to self-mangage, or for the upset person to work toward clean-up/reconciliation.
- After a bit of space, ask the person a question like:
  - What can we do to be helpful?
  - What would you like us to know about this?
  - Where would you like the conversation to go now?

- What steps would you like to take to help the group move forward?
- If a person leaves, allow the group to talk about why they are, or are not uncomfortable with what just happened and why and next steps of how to follow up with the person and how also to move on with the agenda and mission of the group. (The person who left could be a person who is a “hinderer” – one who is acting out to prevent change.)
- If a person leaves, do not allow the group to talk about the person, judge or diagnose the person. The conversation needs to be about the people in the room and how the group responds.
- Sometimes a person just needs to talk through a difficult church or family situation. In these cases, the whole group can decide they want to support so-and-so for the day and listen. Or the group can set aside some time for the person.

### **CULTURE AND POWER AFFECT GROUP DYNAMICS AND VICE VERSA**

People bring all types of things to a group – consciously and unconsciously. We bring ideas, processes, and ways of leading from our families or origin, school, birth culture and adopted cultures and more. What are some of the things we bring –visible or invisible – to a group’s dynamics?

Things we bring with us to groups: (have participants create a list. You can start off with 1 or 2 to prime the pump

- How decisions are made – democratically, one person, consensus
- Who makes decisions – leader, patriarch, whole group, outside entity
- How deal with conflict – face head on, get quiet, change the subject, ignore, walk away
- Perceptions of power – does everyone have it? Only those with titles have power? Only those with authority in the system have power? Do some races or genders have more power than others?

All of this affects how we use and perceive power, how we use it and think other people should use it.

### *DO A CASE STUDY PERHAPS IN SMALL GROUPS*

- Give small groups 20 minutes to discuss the case study and answer questions on the case study
- Take 10-15 minutes to report out learnings and insights gained from the discussions
- Have large group think about what these listed learnings might tell us about how culture, power and perceptions of power influence group dynamics and what impact these could have on our Networks.

## FROM GROUP TO TEAM

Not all groups want to be teams. Teamwork takes extra time and commitment. To be a team, a group must decide together on goals, strategies, and accountability measures to which they will all agree and uphold to achieve their greater purpose.

Networks are ideally teams of laity and clergy who are on a mission to make disciples to transform the world for Christ.

If you should accept your mission, Patrick Lencioni's understanding of teams and teambuilding will be important for your work and our work together.

## TEAM-BUILDING

Patrick Lencioni, in *5 Dysfunctions of a Team*, says that there are 5 key things needs for teams to function well. And, these 5 elements build on each other – meaning you can't have numbers 4 and 5 for example without first having 1, 2 and 3.



From: <http://www.healthyplan.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/5-Dysfunctions-of-Team3.jpg>