

STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

WORKING TOGETHER

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Every group has its own dynamic, but they all go through certain stages – whether a family, friend group, work team, club or neighborhood association. It can be easy to forget that these stages are normal, especially during challenging times. Some stages may be prolonged, overlap, and even be repeated (like storming) as members and goals change.

This information references Bruce Tuckman's "Stages of Group Development."

FORMING

This is the initial stage when members of a group are first coming together and forming impressions of each other. There can be a mix of anxiety, uncertainty, extreme politeness, wanting to be liked, and trying to avoid conflict. This process is often less focused on the work itself and more on becoming familiar with each other and the purpose of the group. The outcome is usually determining the structure of the group, organizing and assigning roles, outlining expectations and frequency of meetings, etc.

STORMING

This is when members start to drop the formalities, express their opinions, disagreements arise, and competition and conflict emerge. Questions arise, people want more clarification, roles and tasks may be questioned. It is important to understand that conflict is a normal and necessary part of group development, even though it may be very uncomfortable for members. Try not to be disheartened or think the group is a failure. This can be the make or break point where some groups dissolve or give up. Don't forget to listen to one another, work through the conflicts, and things will smooth out into the next exciting stage!



NORMING

As the conflicts get resolved, the group starts to become more cohesive and aligned, feeling a sense of belonging and community. The level of morale, motivation, and creativity is higher, and members recognize and acknowledge the skills and talents of one another. People start trusting each other more, and become more flexible within the group. Information and leadership flow better.

PERFORMING

This is the goal stage for the group, where it is productive and fully functioning. Members feel confident in their roles, and there is a healthy, positive interdependence within the group. Members can work in subgroups or independently with ease, and roles and 'authority' adjust more fluidly to changing needs. There is a focus on problem-solving and optimal solutions. Morale is very high, group identity is established, and there is a strong sense of unity.