

Effective Teaming

A Resource Designed For and With Students



“Teamwork begins by building trust. And the only way to do that is to overcome our need for invulnerability.”

– Patrick Lencioni



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Effective Teaming

...is inclusive, equitable, and produces positive outcomes



Have you ever been a member of a dream team where everything went super well? Or, perhaps you have been part of a team where things did not go so well. A variety of factors contribute to effective teamwork which we define as inclusive, equitable, and leading to positive outcomes, such as goal achievement and deeper learning.

Learning how to work effectively in groups is important both while you are in college and in the future. Given its significance, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) includes *teamwork* as one of eight critical career readiness competencies, defining it as one's ability to "build and maintain collaborative relationships to work effectively toward common goals, while appreciating diverse viewpoints and shared responsibilities" (NACE, n.d.). NACE presents sample behaviors that are components of teamwork:

- "Listen carefully to others, taking time to understand and ask appropriate questions without interrupting.
- Effectively manage conflict, interact with and respect diverse personalities, and meet ambiguity with resilience."



I have had many teamwork experiences where I have allowed my frustration at other group members to accumulate when I perceived that I was doing more work than they were doing and that they didn't care. However, when I took the time to consciously put my frustrations aside and treat them as I would a friend, I was able to form a **deeper connection** with them and they have opened up to me about the variety of responsibilities on their plate or personal struggles they are going through. Through this deeper understanding and putting my resentment aside it has allowed for **better teamwork** moving forward on both sides.

- “Be accountable for individual and team responsibilities and deliverables.
- Employ personal strengths, knowledge, and talents to complement those of others.
- Exercise the ability to compromise and be agile.
- Collaborate with others to achieve common goals.
- Build strong, positive working relationships with supervisor and team members/coworkers.”

The purpose of this resource is to provide recommendations that empower you to take action and create effective team experiences in your courses and beyond. The guidance debunks a few common misconceptions about group work. For example, there is a prevailing myth that one needs to be good friends with their group members to have a successful experience. Another is that it's necessary to have all high performers on a team to be successful. Research suggests other factors to be essential, particularly how teams behave (Duhigg, 2016). Additionally, there is a misconception that group conflict is always negative and a major goal should be to avoid it. Some conflict is expected within groups, and sometimes it can also help the group achieve better outcomes. Problems may occur when teams are unable to navigate such conflict constructively.

Consult this guide as a resource for anytime you engage with teamwork. The principles and strategies described are research-based and versatile across different group scenarios.

What is NOT Effective Teaming?



You know it when you see it is a phrase that might be used to describe effective teamwork, however we want to be quite explicit about what effective teamwork *isn't*:

- Lack of trust between team members.
- One person dominating and doing all of the work.

I think some students dominate and not give others a chance to express their ideas just because they received a higher grade, performed better in the past, etc. Professors must **encourage equal participation**, and then grade students on their willingness to take action. If a student acts as a leader, they have to **give everyone a chance to show their best work** - and then follow along with a decision if the contribution is fair or not.

This is definitely a problem for everyone in the group. The one that is doing everything believes that their peers do not want to contribute at all. The others believe that the person doing everything is happy to do it and do not leave room for others to catch up with them, and they also feel lost because they contributed little to the project, thus making them even more uncomfortable to contribute because they have no idea what's going on. **So in order for a team to work, everyone should be on the same page** all the time. Everyone should at least understand the input and output of other parties' work and how that work contributes to the project.



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- **A team dividing tasks into equally divided parts with each member working on their own part devoid of the integration of efforts and contributions from their team members.**

I think a lot of times this is the general approach students have to group work. I encountered many groups that want to 'divide and conquer' in order to finish the assignment quicker. At times like these I sometimes wish that we can just ***go through the assignment step-by-step together and offer input to each other based on our own perspectives.*** This way we can actually learn from each other and work together!

- **Lack of or poor communication between team members.**
- **Team members not fulfilling their roles and responsibilities.**
- **Persistent complaining or negativity by team members that can lower team morale.**
- **Group members from diverse backgrounds not being given the opportunity to contribute or substantial roles.**
- **Assumption of roles and responsibilities that reinforce gender stereotypes without open consideration of other options.**

In general, team members should focus on “We” rather than “I” (Ramachandran, 2021). In a group, it’s really important to leave all egos at the door as exemplified in this quote and to see it as an opportunity to be your best self:

“Many of us came in from aircraft flight testing, and our egos were much bigger than this auditorium. It was tough to get people to work together, but we knew that success would only come as a team, so we became one, and we learned to check our egos at the door.”

– Gene Kranz, former NASA Flight Director

This resource describes how to prevent (most ideal) or mitigate (necessary when issues arise) the problematic behaviors described above to support effective and inclusive teaming.

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Ingredients for Effective Teaming

An understanding of several key psychological concepts



All team members should be aware of the importance of **psychological safety**, or “a shared belief that team members will not be rejected or embarrassed for speaking up with their ideas, questions, or concerns” (Bresman & Edmondson, 2022). Sometimes students might describe this construct as the importance of building trust within their teams. Diverse teams with high psychological safety outperform teams that do not have it (Bresman & Edmondson, 2022). Two important ways to establish such safety in your team experiences are *framing* and *inquiry*. For **framing**, a common understanding is needed to ensure that the group is aware of the goals and that everyone’s expertise is valued. **Inquiry** can help establish psychological safety when team members ask each other questions about their ideas and listen thoughtfully. Such small actions can go a long way to build trusting relationships within teams and support a sense of belonging (Edmondson & Bransby, 2023).

Psychological safety is a process. Clark (2000) presents a theoretical framework composed of four main stages, and notably that groups can move back and forth through any of these states.



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As described on the [Psychological Safety](#) website, the four stages are:

- **“Inclusion Safety** – members feel safe to belong to the team. They are comfortable being present, do not feel excluded, and feel like they are wanted and appreciated.” They feel safe to be themselves, including all their distinctive characteristics and social identities.
- **“Learner Safety** – members are able to learn through asking questions. Team members here may be able to experiment, make (and admit) small mistakes, and ask for help.
- **Contributor Safety** – members feel safe to contribute their own ideas, without fear of embarrassment or ridicule. This is a more challenging state, because volunteering your own ideas can increase the psychosocial vulnerability of team members.
- **Challenger Safety** – members can question others’ (including those in authority) ideas or suggest significant changes to ideas, plans, or ways of working.”

Below we discuss how you as a student can positively influence the psychological safety for your team.

Case Study: Google’s Quest for the Perfect Team

Through Project Aristotle the company Google invested a considerable amount of resources and time to find out what makes the perfect team. The prevailing thought was that they needed to hire top people. They found that team composition did not matter. What mattered the most was how the teammates treated each other and their social norms. Everyone was able to get a chance to speak equitably. These teams also had high social sensibility and were able to pick up on cues illustrating how team members felt. Such raised the team’s collective or group intelligence, an important characteristic of effective teams. Their research demonstrated that high performing teams established psychological safety (Duhigg, 2016).



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In addition to **psychological safety**, all groups should be aware of the stages of **group development** as when teams form they may take time to reach maximal performance in working together. Tuckman's model describes that group development and evolution undergoes the following stages: *forming*, *storming*, *norming*, *performing*, *adjourning* (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977). This is a natural process for any group. Imagine that you are members of a laboratory or other team assigned to a particular group. You might not know one another or you might have experience working together in other classes. There will likely be a time where you *storm* as you learn how to work together. This is a very natural process that you can anticipate. As you start to learn how to work as a team, you will start to *norm*, and ultimately the goal is to *perform*. By recognizing these stages of group development exist, you can better prepare to identify them when they occur.

Diverse teams can outperform in problem solving and innovation

Diversity can be an asset in group work. When you work on a team you are often with others who are dissimilar from you. This can be a very good thing as such teams have been shown to outperform more homogenous teams. Yang et al. (2022) found that teams with more gender diversity produced more innovative ideas. Hong & Page (2000) showed that teams of diverse problem solvers outperformed those who had high ability. Honoring the expertise of diverse group members is important for inclusive and effective teamwork. Valuing diverse, distributed expertise is critical, rather than succumbing to the notion that one student who is categorized as the “most knowledgeable or skillful” should do all the work. Additionally, teams with more gender diversity, specifically more women, have been found to be “smarter,” that is, have higher collective intelligence, and perform better (Woolley & Malone, 2011). Furthermore, Hofstra et al. (2020) “found that demographically underrepresented students” innovate at higher rates (Hofstra et al., 2020). Be sure to value the contributions of all of your team members.

In the remaining sections we discuss techniques that can be used to intentionally design effective group experiences.



Setting Your Team Up for Success

Connect before content. Establish *psychological safety*.



There are concrete steps that you can take to make this happen that are supported by research on effective teams:

- If you do not know each other introduce yourselves when the team forms.

I feel it is good that the professors ***give some time in class for the group members to get to know each other*** and maybe share a document with the work habits, schedules, strengths, and weaknesses of each partner. Also, you can add the best way to communicate and this document can be shared with the professor.

- Take time to share aspects of yourselves to build trust (e.g. hobbies or interests, your major, co-curricular activities, an interesting fact about yourself, etc.).



In one of my past long-term group projects, my team consistently struggled to turn assignments in on time due to scheduling conflicts. We were each busy students, and our involvements around campus had conflicting time restraints. We were unable to meet outside of class time (which was required for a successful outcome of the project). Overall, we struggled to effectively delegate group roles, and it was a stressful experience. When it came time for the presentation in front of a high-stakes audience, I had no idea how the presentation would go, especially considering we had never met to practice the presentation. During the presentation, I discovered that one of our group members had a talent for public speaking because they were heavily involved in performance-related activities at Lafayette. The presentation was phenomenal because of their contributions, and our team ended up getting a shoutout at the very end. ***Had we known each other's hobbies, involvements around campus, and potential strengths and weaknesses, we could have more effectively delegated roles within the team at the beginning of the project. Ultimately, it would have relieved stress to know that we were each assigned roles that set us up to succeed.***

- Give all team members air time, a chance to contribute their ideas and thoughts. If it seems one person is not being given enough time, intervene as a team.
- Actively listen to all team members even if you might not agree with their suggestions. For brainstorming, allow all ideas to be brought to the table before eliminating them.
- Be observant of any social cues shown by group members that demonstrate they are having challenges in the group, and acknowledge them or ask them how everything is going.



It is a good practice for the members to check on each other and be open-minded or create a safe space where they all feel comfortable sharing their ideas. Once the group members build that trust, they might feel more comfortable asking for help from each other and communicating or even the other members to reach out to help without making the members or the group feel awkward.

Agree on group expectations and roles from the start.

- Where and when to meet to work on the group project (as applicable)
- How to best communicate (e.g. email, text/group chat, phone, etc.)

I find that communicating either in person when possible or through texting/group chats is the most effective. This is because it allows the conversation to be more fast-paced, and I find it easier for all the information to be in one place for everyone in the group chat to see, unlike in an email.

- **Create roles and responsibilities for each team member.**
- **Share known major scheduling challenges and constraints (e.g. an inability to meet on a particular evening because of work schedule, an upcoming exam interfering with meeting at the end of the week).**



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Knowing a partner's schedule before the deadline of the assignment is extremely helpful. In a group project that I was in, we met with each other to work on the assignment, but we did not share when we would be able to do our corresponding parts on our own time. This caused extra stress on one of the members that the rest of the group would not do their part. Rather, ***expressing when you are going to work on your part of the assignment can help alleviate the pressure for one member to have to 'pick up the slack' of everyone else.***

- **Establish expectations for responses to group member communication (for example, agree early as a team that you will respond to team members within 24 hours).**
- **Stay on track with deadlines (and give yourselves mini-deadlines).**

I have found that ***it can be especially helpful to keep people accountable in group work if each person is given clear deadlines for certain tasks.*** Then, groups can establish appropriate days and times to check in where each group member must give an update on their progress for certain tasks and the rest of the team can reflect on how everyone's progress and how members can collaborate and help each other if anyone is experiencing any issues. After each check-in meeting, group members make an action plan to complete any additional tasks by certain deadlines before the final project deadline. I have found that community building within these meetings is especially important. When group members respect and trust each other, they are more motivated to keep up with their responsibilities for the team to succeed and hope for the other group members' success just as much as their own.



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- **Agree on checking in about group roles, both reflecting individually and collectively on contributions.**
 - **Identify processes for mediation when (not if) conflict arises.**
 - **Discuss any initial concerns about the project goals to help start to build trust.**

Case Study: Why Roles Are So Important in Teams, Lessons from the Apollo 11 Mission

One of the most famous NASA expeditions was when the United States landed on the moon. This mission took a substantial amount of teamwork. Many had specific roles that in the end made the mission successful. To name a few - Dick Koos was one of the “SimGuys” responsible for training the flight crew using simulation. John Wolfram also known as a frogman was part of the NAVY SEAL rescue team trained to rescue the astronauts from the water. Margaret Hamilton was a mathematician who played an important role in writing the onboard software for Apollo. Ferenc Pavlics and his family had a key role in designing the rover, a vehicle used by the astronauts to travel on the moon. There were many others who had specific roles that all made the mission possible. Had any of them not assumed their role, the mission might not have been so successful. (Reichhardt, 2019)

Choosing roles and responsibilities is an intentional, iterative process.

There are many ways to go about choosing roles, and having a probationary period to try them out, check in and accommodate revision is recommended. Team members can initially reflect on their strengths and interests to go through the process of identifying roles. Groups should be careful to not inadvertently select roles based prevailing stereotypes (gender, etc.). Generally, any team member should have the capacity to assume any role, and the decision of which roles to assume might be better informed by strengths, interests, and nature of the work. Some roles might be irrelevant to a project, need to be further tailored to meet the needs of the project or be collapsed because of the practicalities of how many group members there are in a team. Others roles might need to be assumed by multiple group members.

Teams might consider using or appropriately adapting roles that have been described elsewhere. Belbin’s characterization of team roles as social roles, thinking roles, and action or task roles can be helpful (Belbin, n.d.).

13 Belbin's Roles

Below are several roles within each category as defined by Belbin:

Social

- **Resource investigator:** Uses their inquisitive nature to find ideas to bring back to the team.
- **Teamworker:** Helps the team to gel, using their versatility to identify the work required and complete it on behalf of the team.
- **Coordinator:** Needed to focus on the team's objectives, draw out team members and delegate work appropriately.

Thinking

- **Plant:** Tends to be highly creative and good at solving problems in unconventional ways.
- **Monitor Evaluator:** Provides a logical eye, making impartial judgements where required and weighs up the team's options in a dispassionate way.
- **Specialist:** Brings in-depth knowledge of a key area to the team.

Action or Task-Oriented

- **Shaper:** Provides the necessary drive to ensure that the team keeps moving and does not lose focus or momentum.
- **Implementer:** Needed to plan a workable strategy and carry it out as efficiently as possible.
- **Completer Finisher:** Most effectively used at the end of tasks to polish and scrutinize the work for errors, subjecting it to the highest standards of quality control.

When you are in a team, identify team roles that would be important for carrying out the project. Select initial roles and try them out. Check in to determine whether these roles need to be refined.

I find that whenever I do group work, we do not split up into specific roles like this unless the professor explicitly tells us to and sometimes to write it down. Rather, in groups we often split the work up in randomized ways. ***I think this strategy would be effective because it will allow people's strengths to be highlighted in the work that the group produces.*** It also can save time to know what people specifically are doing, such as having one person proofread the assignment, rather than multiple people having to worry about doing it.

14 Contributor Roles

In addition to the roles provided above, below are several contributor roles adapted from CRediT, Contributor Roles Taxonomy, which is used for academic projects (NIST, n.d.). Not all roles likely apply to each type of team project. Decide which roles are most pertinent and who will carry them out. Be sure to check in during the duration of the team project and consider whether any roles should be modified.

- **Conceptualization/Literature Review:** Ideation; formulation or evolution of overarching project goals and aims.
- **Paperwork:** Preparing relevant paperwork such as institutional review board applications for research involving human subjects, or other necessary documents or forms.
- **Documentation:** Taking notes during the duration of the project.
- **Data curation:** Management activities to annotate (produce metadata), scrub data and maintain research data (including software code, where it is necessary for interpreting the data itself) for initial use and later re-use.
- **Analysis:** Application of statistical, mathematical, computational, or other formal techniques to analyze or synthesize project data. Can also include testing.
- **Investigation:** Conducting a research and investigation process, such as performing experiments, prototyping, or data/evidence collection. This might also include reaching out to stakeholders (e.g. to better understand the problem, build trust, etc.).
- **Methodology:** Development or design of methodology; creation of models.
- **Project planning:** Management and coordination responsibility for the research activity planning and execution.
- **Resources:** Provision of study materials, reagents, materials, patients, laboratory samples, animals, instrumentation, computing resources, or other analysis tools.
- **Software/Physical Design Elements:** Programming, software development; designing computer programs; implementation of the computer code and supporting algorithms; testing of existing code components. Also includes the design of physical elements for the team project.

- **Synthesis:** Tying all research and ideas together.
- **Validation:** Verification, whether as a part of the activity or separate, of the overall replication/reproducibility of results/experiments and other project outputs. Includes testing (e.g. working in different conditions).
- **Visualization:** Preparation, creation, and/or presentation of the project output, specifically visualization/data presentation.
- **Writing – original draft:** Preparation, creation, and/or presentation of the project output, specifically writing the initial draft. Team members identify which parts they will complete or have completed.
Writing – review & editing: Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work by those from the original research group, specifically critical review, commentary or revision.
- **Presentation - original draft:** Preparation, creation, and/or presentation of the published work, specifically writing the initial draft (including substantive translation). Team members identify which parts they will complete or have completed.
- **Presentation – review & editing:** Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the presentation by those from the team, specifically critical review, commentary or revision.

Navigating Challenging Behaviors



Within any team, issues can arise that challenge effective teamwork. As we mentioned above, not all conflict is bad, however certain times, it can have significant impacts on the success of the team. Prevention is always the best approach by having initial team discussions and agreements of team expectations. Conflict can be uncomfortable, however when managed constructively it can have very positive outcomes for teams. Address issues as they arise and do not wait until they get larger and fester. This section presents several problems that can occur during group experiences and strategies for handling them.

Carefully diagnose the team problem

A common issue that can arise within any team is **attribution error**, as people are often quicker to blame or praise people rather than the situation at hand (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2017, 211). Unfortunately, this can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies where blaming a team member for a problem can exacerbate the issue. In the event that a problem is occurring in a team, first, and foremost, it is important for members to diagnose it.



The following steps can be useful for diagnosing team problems (212):

- “State the problem explicitly
- Specify the standard(s) violated
- State the problem in specific behavioral terms
- Specify whose problem it is
- Avoid stating the problem merely as an implied solution
- Avoid stating the problem as a dilemma”

I have often been in groups that did not operate very efficiently, but it wasn't easy to place the exact reasoning. For example, members were all doing their work and attending group meetings, but there was **tension** and **disorganization**. **When we were able to take the time to diagnose problems through communication we saw improvement** even if the problems may have remained on some level. This required creating a safe place to talk about where each group member was at. From there we could use various strategies to improve our team dynamic.

Next we discuss the following challenging group behaviors and ways to address them:

- **Domination**
- **Competition and Gaslighting**
- **Freeloading**
- **Ghosting**
- **Groupthink**
- **Persistent Complaining or Negativity**
- **Procrastination/Late Work**
- **Low Quality Work**
- **Cultural and Personality Conflicts**



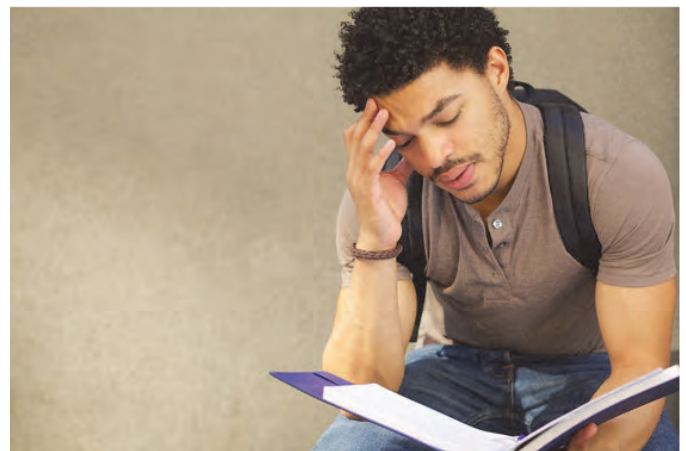
Domination

If a team member takes over and wants to complete the project on their own without input from teammates or an acknowledgement of distributed roles, they are not engaging in effective teaming. If this situation repeatedly happens, team members might try two different strategies. One is to identify a Parking Lot Attendant and the other is to call a Flare and Focus (Inclusive Teaming, n.d.). The Parking Lot Attendant has the role to call a time-out when team members' contributions are not acknowledged. They ask the team if they want to park it or address it at the moment. The team can also declare a Flare and Focus, where they take a moment to "Flare" and ask everyone their thoughts about the problem, in this case that not everyone is able to contribute equitably to the project. After everyone has a chance to be heard they can "Focus" on the main issue at hand and have a team discussion. The Pass the Mic technique might also be implemented in these situations to ensure that all members of the team have a chance to be heard. This involves a facilitator or team lead passing the mic in a figurative sense so that everyone gets a chance to speak. Discussing these strategies during team agreement discussions can prevent challenges from occurring.



Competition and Gaslighting

There are two other challenging behaviors that might be considered subtypes of domination: competition and gaslighting. Both behaviors reduce the full participation of group members and interfere with the team benefitting from the insights and efforts that come from an inclusive and diverse team. In competition, a group member has a high need to garner recognition, either from the instructor teaching the course or from other group members or the class in general. They may hope to establish that they are the best or the smartest contributor in the group. As a result, other team members feel undervalued and subordinate.





Competition & Gaslighting Continued

When gaslighting occurs, a group member (the gaslighter) persistently disregards or disagrees with team members (the gaslightees)--even calling them out repeatedly as being wrong or not understanding the project--when, in reality, the gaslighter's views are unfounded. The gaslighter presses their views with such assurance that the gaslightees, who are actually on track, question their thinking and perspective, which decreases their participation and willingness to work on the project. In either competition or gaslighting, the team likely does not have "inclusion safety"—the first stage of psychological safety—and it is desirable to return to some of the basic techniques to work on either establishing or re-establishing psychological safety so that the team can move forward together. Take a pause from the content work of the project to connect as team members. Review expectations and components of what makes an effective team. You might also use one of the techniques described under the "domination" behavior to ensure that everyone has an opportunity for input.



Freeloading

If a team member "does not carry their share of the workload" and are just along for the ride they may be engaging in freeloading or social loafing even if their roles have been explicitly defined during team conversations (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2017, 212). There are a variety of reasons why this might occur in teams such as members experiencing challenging circumstances outside of the course but not feeling safe to share it with the team, avoidance behavior, or low motivation for completing the project. Such actions threaten an equitable team experience and may put undue pressure on other team members to pick up the rest of the load. An important approach for this scenario is not to accuse until you have enough information. First, without expecting them to share the details, try to rule out whether this teammate is facing a personal challenge. You might simply tell them what you noticed about them not doing the work and asking if everything is OK. If things seem to be fine, then consider changing the team's practices. In addition to team roles, be specific about what each individual team member is to contribute—write it down and share it with everyone—and ensure that these roles are interdependent with the rest of the team's work.



Ghosting

Such occurs when a team member stops responding to, or communicating with the team. Ghosting ultimately negatively impacts the group work when the team member does not fulfill their roles. There may be a number of reasons why a team member ghosts their team which might also be for personal reasons, but ultimately, the team can choose how they respond. If the team has reached out multiple times to this individual to make sure that everything is OK and they still fail to respond, the team has good reason to collaboratively reshuffle their roles and responsibilities to account for this change. Document the times that the team has reached out to the member. If there are accountability measures in the course, this teammate's behavior can be reported. To prevent ghosting, always create group expectations for communication from the start which include a discussion of how to address ghosting as a preventative measure.

“It’s also important to **put yourself in the other student’s shoes**. If they’re non-responsive, they could be facing some challenges that aren’t visible on the surface. If they don’t respond after reaching out to them a few times, it could be beneficial to keep your professor in the loop with their well-being in mind.”



Groupthink

This phenomenon is “the mode of thinking that persons engage in when concurrence-seeking becomes so dominant in a cohesive in-group that it tends to override realistic appraisals of alternative courses of action.” (Irving Janis, cited in Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2017, 215). Groupthink can impede innovation, problem-solving, and effectively diverse ideas being brought to the table by all group members. As described above, the Flare and Focus can be an effective intervention when this seems to be occurring in a group. Additionally, group members might consider individually brainstorming and then bringing their thoughts together to discuss as a team.

I think groupthink can especially arise when groups are not very diverse, leading to limited ideas and ways of thinking. I think it can also occur when there are one or a few **dominating voices** within a group and others **don't feel as comfortable** sharing their thoughts. Sometimes teammates would rather compromise and appease others than share their unique ideas in fear of ridicule or non-agreement. **I think having each member write multiple ideas down separately without knowing the other members' responses and then making those responses available to everyone could aid in this. No one would feel pressured to change their ideas at all to agree with others**, which may happen if members see the other ideas beforehand or if they were to share their thoughts out loud one at a time.



Persistent Complaining or Negativity

If members of the team are always complaining about various matters related to the group experience they can lower the morale of the team. For this situation, deflect their comments if they are talking about other team members. For example, you might say, “It sounds like you and he [she/they] have something to talk about” (Aldag & Kuzuhara, 2017, 213). Redirect to focus on the tasks at hand. If this does not work, consider holding a Flare and Focus conversation and addressing this issue as a team. Sometimes it is helpful to have a team pep talk and revisit group goals and the importance of needing everyone to be a contributing member.

I have been in a group where one member constantly thought that everything we were doing was wrong, even though we were trying our best to follow the directions the professor gave us. ***The constant criticism over our work and even their own made it difficult to try and push past the fact that it was challenging, and discouraged us from collaborating effectively with one another.***



Procrastination/Late Work

Members of a team might not only vary in their work ethic, but also their commitment to follow through on deadlines even when they have been agreed upon. If a group member is not completing their assignments on time and the group’s project depends on their contributions, which it should since this is a basic tenet of teamwork, this can be a source of frustration for the rest of the team. Similar to previous suggestions, ruling out possible personal challenges can help build trust with the team member. Additionally, teams can revisit their expectations together on deadlines for group work, and hold a team meeting allowing for discussion of this topic and actions for moving forward. Try to address these concerns early so that frustrations don’t build up and you can stay on track with the project.

In past projects, it’s been helpful for me to ***negotiate and establish an earlier due date with my team***, or a “goal date” to strive for. For example, if the majority of my teammates and myself had busy Mondays and Tuesdays, but the project deliverables were due on Tuesday, we’d agree to work towards getting the deliverable done before Sunday night each week.



Low Quality Work

A team member might produce work that has significant issues or is below the quality expectations of the team. While in these scenarios it might be tempting for another team member to just revise the work without communicating with the team member, this can dissolve trust in a team. Agree to all assignments being preliminary drafts that have the potential for all community members to provide input and revise. Essentially, such a charter would state that the team has collective ownership over the materials produced, not solely the individuals. Additionally, it might be important to revisit the outcomes as a group of what is conceived of in the final product and map out a plan for being able to produce such work.

It can be offensive to delete or make severe edits to someone in the group's work without asking to make the change first. If it is apparent that someone put low effort into the assignment, I would **suggest leaving a comment, or asking if you can further elaborate on it.** In other cases, asking them directly if you can make the changes and explaining your reasoning for why would be a better approach than just changing it yourself.

Cultural and Personality Conflicts

Group members from varied cultural backgrounds might differ in how they engage in team experiences. For example, some students might not readily speak up while others might be very dominant in their communication styles. First, it is always important to recognize that everyone brings different experiences, cultural backgrounds, and personalities into group experiences. Revisit the suggestions for psychological safety. Once trust is established, acknowledge and discuss such differences and ways to work together through them as a team. For example, those with dominant communication styles might need to agree to take a back seat at times to allow for equitable participation. Being candid during the forming stage of your team about communication styles and having team members who take on the “social role,” as described above, can also help.

What to do if an egregious problem arises with your team?

In general, you will learn practical skills by navigating conflict as a team in the strategies described. However, if something very serious arises or if the team has tried a number of attempts without success, you might need to involve your professor for mediation.

Concluding Remarks

Using the principles and practices described in this resource can help you engage in effective and inclusive teaming within any type of group experiences you encounter, whether in a laboratory group, a presentation group, a project-based learning group, community-engaged team, or even beyond the classroom such as within your club or organization, athletics team, or internship. Teamwork can be among the most rewarding aspects of learning and growing.

There is one person that I enjoyed having as a project partner because we were efficient in breaking down the project into smaller tasks, prioritizing tasks based on our situation, sharing the tasks based on our personal strengths and interests, and keeping each other up to date on our individual task progresses every two days. We were almost having friendly competition to finish our tasks before the other. We would have a quick meeting (20 - 30 minutes) about every 5 days to present our progress to one another. ***Overall, one thing for sure is we had great faith in each other's abilities and willingness to get our tasks done on time or earlier.***

Team Exercises



Complete the following reflection exercises to set your team up for success.

Exercise 1: Completed at Your First Team Meeting Team Formation Psychological Safety Discussion

Purpose: To brainstorm actions that can help your team establish psychological safety.

Tasks:

- Read the resource.
- Reflect on your prior group experiences. Drawing from the content of the guidebook, describe actionable steps that you can take to support psychological safety for your current team. Take time for everyone to discuss their initial ideas during your first group meeting and agree upon which approaches the team will pursue.

Criteria for Success: Your individual reflections should detail specific strategies that you and team members can undertake. These examples should build off of or in some way refer to the content of the resource.

Exercise 2: Completed at Your First or Second Team Meeting Teamwork Roles & Responsibilities Discussion

Purpose: To reflect on team member strengths, interests, and the nature of the assignment to brainstorm possible roles and responsibilities that could be assumed.

Tasks:

- Review the resource.
- Reflect on the following:
 - What do you see as the greatest strengths and interests that you bring to this group project? Consider examples and evidence. Which of the team roles (or others) described by Belbin (n.d.) might capitalize on your strengths and interests?
- Take time for everyone to discuss their initial ideas during one of your initial group meetings and agree upon which roles and responsibilities would make sense for you to assume

Criteria for Success: Your reflection should detail specific roles and evidence in support. You should refer to the Belbin roles described in the resource or build off of them in some way.

Team Exercises (cont.)

Exercise 3: Completed Periodically Team Check-In

Purpose: To revisit group processes and provide a space for individual and group evaluation, reflection, and potentially iteration.

Tasks:

Individually reflect on the following questions:

- How have you contributed to your team?
- What have you done to carry out your roles and responsibilities?
- What areas can you improve?
- Is your team functioning well?
- Take time as a team to hold a check-in and have everyone share and consider any changes as appropriate that would support your team's functioning.

Criteria for Success: Your check-in should provide all group members with the opportunity to discuss their experiences and end with time to revisit or resolve any issues.

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