

Unit III: Group/Organizational Leadership Skills

Module I: Productive Groups

Overview

Productive groups are the foundation for accomplishing the work of formal organizations (such as clubs, councils, boards, associations, or coalitions) or less formal groups (such as task forces, committees, or project work teams). A productive group communicates with respect and openness, accepts and supports differences, and works effectively together to achieve mutual goals. Such a group shares leadership, serves others, and is willing to take risks.

Every group or team develops its own pattern of interaction as it goes through various phases. As trust and cooperation develop, group members and the leaders or facilitators begin to think in terms of “We” instead of “I” or “They.” Loyalty and respect for one another are shown. Shared leadership is exhibited, as working together for the common goal and taking responsibility for group tasks becomes a high priority.

Objectives

- To recognize different types of groups and their roles or functions.
- To understand some of the basic needs of people in groups.
- To identify ways to build and maintain effective groups.
- To work with groups during the different stages of formation.
- To facilitate different types of activities that promote group process and group task development.

Teaching Tips

As you plan ways to use this module, refer back to the experiential learning, or “learning by doing,” model in the introduction.

Experiential learning lets people learn from one another. Each person:

- experiences, performs, or is involved in an activity,
- reflects or looks back on what took place by sharing and processing, and
- applies the new information or ideas by generalizing about the results and using the new information in other ways.

Experiential learning provides opportunities for active involvement and offers a variety of activities and techniques.

The real learning comes from the thoughts and ideas created as a result of the experience. Include time to debrief or process. Let participants reflect and share what happened so everyone understands the point of the activity and how it relates to their leadership roles.

Productive Groups

Many different types of groups are involved with community activities. Some are loose and unstructured; others are formal organizations or associations. Some are temporary committees or task forces; others are ongoing parts of a structured organization or coalition. A productive group accepts and supports differences, communicates openly and with respect, and works together for mutual goals. A newly formed group doesn't have clear rules on what is appropriate behavior. Fear of not being accepted or respected can create problems. It is important that all group members get to know one another and feel comfortable with one another. A variety of activities and approaches can help meet the needs of group members and encourage effective decision making and action.

When a new group is being formed, or when an individual joins an existing group for the first time, similar problems are encountered by most people. The usual way of interacting with others doesn't work because the situation isn't familiar. Often people hold back, waiting to see what others are going to do. Not only is the situation strange, but it's unclear what others think is proper behavior. In a sense, group members have an identity problem. They know who they are as individuals, but not who they are in relation to others in the group.

What is a Group?

A group is a collection of individuals where:

- Interaction among members occurs. Members work together and relate to each other in an interdependent manner.
- Individuals see themselves and each other as a member of the group and find their membership rewarding. Greater benefits are provided to a group than to separate individuals.
- Members share a common purpose or goal that they understand and accept.
- Members have an established, mutually acceptable structure for accomplishing tasks and interacting with each other.
- Members successfully complete different tasks to accomplish a common purpose.

A collection of individuals is not a "group" at its first organizational meeting. The cohesiveness and team spirit that characterize a group come with time, while people gather to share ideas and skills to achieve a common goal.^{1,2}

Types of Groups

Groups may be very loosely structured or be a formal organization with by-laws and specific operational procedures. Committees, task forces, teams, clubs, and other organizations are examples of groups.

I. Collections of individuals with loose ties.

Example: An informal network of persons who know one another and who exchange ideas and sources of information.

2. Informal groupings.

Example: Volunteers for different organizations who get together occasionally to discuss their activities.

3. Loosely organized groups.

Example: A self-selected volunteer task force that meets a few times to carry out a community service project.

4. Formal groups.

Example: Organizations such as a civic club or hospital auxiliary.

Networks, Teams, and Coalitions

There are many specialized types of groups associated with organizational and community activities. Some are loose and unstructured, such as informal networks; some are temporary, such as task forces designed to address a specific project or issue. Teams, while generally associated with sports, have become a more common method of organizing work groups and project groups. When goals require more resources than any one organization or agency can provide, coalitions, formal alliances, or collaborations often develop. A wide variety of committees, study groups, political action groups, and other special groups go through similar stages of development and action.

Coming Together

As a group forms, it goes through stages of development. The sequence and progression of group development are interrelated, and each stage exhibits a different level of trust and dependence or independence. Each stage builds on the preceding one.

In the beginning stages of group formation, a group facilitator who understands the various developmental phases will guide the group toward the performing phase. If there is no progress, a climate of conflict or disappointment could spread quickly among group members.^{2,3}

Social Environment

The social environment is defined as the way in which group members relate to one another. It is important to the emotional state of the members. Trust is one of the most basic parts of a satisfactory social environment for a group. Until the individuals learn to trust each other, little progress on the group task is made. Forming a climate of trust is one of the most important stages of group development. In fact, the first crisis most groups face involves the ability of two individuals to trust themselves and each other. A comfortable physical environment also contributes to the productivity of a group.

Basic Needs of People in Groups

If you want loyalty, interest, and the best effort from each person in a group, you must take into account that individuals in groups have needs. The situations in which group members are placed should make sense,^{2,4} not only to the leader, but to each individual as well. As individuals, group members look for the following basic needs:

1. A Sense of Belonging.

- A feeling that no one objects to his or her presence.
- A feeling that he or she is truly welcome.

- A feeling of being honestly needed.

2. A Share in Planning the Group Goals.

- A feeling that all ideas have had a fair hearing.
- A feeling that the goals are within reach and make sense.
- A feeling that the group is doing something worthwhile.

3. A Share in Making the Rules of the Group.

- Ground rules ensure respect and participation.
- Guidelines describe the way in which the group works together toward common goals.

4. Clear Expectations.

- Goals and responsibilities should be spelled out in detail so work can be done effectively.
- When addressing new issues and situations, the group members themselves may have to chart their own expectations.

5. Challenging Responsibilities.

- To use their abilities to contribute to reaching the goals.
- To match interest with activities.

6. Progression Toward the Common Goal.

- This can be achieved by keeping everyone informed through updates, consultations, and briefings on current accomplishments and future expectations.
- Allow time for sharing and discussion.

7. Confidence and Trust in the Leader and Other Group Members.

- To recognize that everyone has knowledge and skills to contribute to solving problems.
- To know that everyone is working toward the common goals, rather than on “hidden agendas.”

Forming a Group

Groups, large and small, are drawn together in a variety of situations that lead to some initial anxiety or expectancy, which is common with new experiences. Groups commonly go through these stages: forming, storming, norming, and performing. Most organizational groups do not go on forever. They may complete their work and then a new group may form or reform.

Other names may be applied to the stages. Forming may be called Pre-affiliation or Gathering. Storming may be called Chaos or referred to as High Power and Control Struggle, while Norming may be referred to as Unity or Intimacy. Performing is called

Differentiation, while Reforming may be termed Separation. The names are less important than recognizing the developmental stages.¹

Facilitating Group Development

Group facilitators can get things started off on the right foot by employing some warm-up activities, often referred to as “icebreakers.” These activities help support the early stages of the group’s development or energize the group for work. Group-building activities are far better than icebreakers at a party.²

A group-building activity is an organized method used to acquaint the group members, to form them into partnerships or teams, or to promote openness and sharing. Before beginning a presentation, discussion, or other type of meeting, it is important to help members get to know one another and build a sense of comfort as well as a sense of belonging.

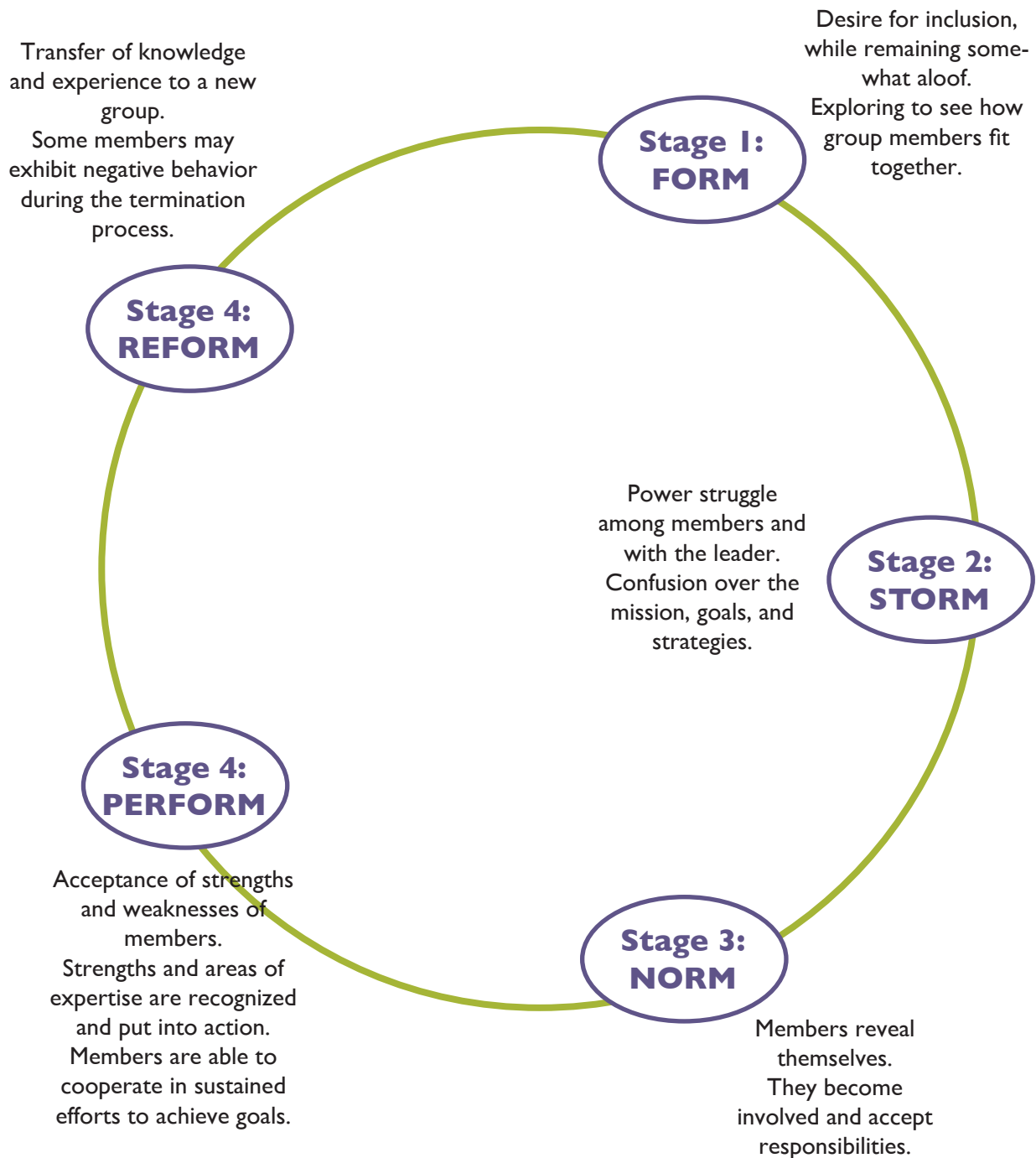
Groups can be formed in a variety of ways, but one of the best ways to introduce group members is through an activity that serves as a mixer or get-acquainted device. Beginning group involvement in this way provides the facilitator with some direction — from the beginning — and promotes interaction among the participants.

Icebreakers and group energizers can help pave the way for the main subject area to follow. Sometimes it is helpful to select an activity that relates to the theme or goal of the upcoming session. The opening activity can be used as an experience from which inferences may be drawn pertaining to the discussion topic. It also provides an opportunity for participants to begin to feel comfortable with sensitive or emotional issues.

Generally, it is better to be on the side of conservative risk-taking, rather than have participants left feeling manipulated or vulnerable. This is especially true when the issues are sensitive or controversial. In this way, you will be able to lead the group progressively to new levels of skill, trust, and creativity.

Group size will also affect the choice of activities. The facilitator needs to match the process to the size of the audience. Suggested discussion areas and procedures are presented for most activities, but you should determine the activity’s appropriateness to individual groups. With a smaller group, you may wish to have every individual report. With a larger group, you may need to limit the discussion to the smaller work groups, or have one reporter present for each team. Whatever procedure you choose to use, you should allow participants the opportunity to process what has occurred during the activity and to relate it to the session that will follow. The larger the group, the longer the time required for the activity. Processing and discussion are essential to the development process.

Stages in Group Development



Building Group Trust

Group-building activities serve four main purposes:^{2,4}

1. To get acquainted or reacquainted.

- The discomfort of not knowing each other is reduced.
- People are recognized as human beings, instead of just their official career or volunteer identity.
- A positive, social climate is promoted, which reduces the fear of speaking in front of the group.
- Group-building is more fun and less threatening than going around the table introducing yourself and your affiliation, which often involves oneupmanship.

2. To focus on the meeting.

- A transition is made from prior thoughts and activities.
- Attention is turned to the topic or issue to be discussed.

3. To build energy and willingness to participate.

- Reduces tendency to just sit and observe.
- People are put into the mood for active learning.

4. To bring closure to a project or series of meetings.

Elements of a Group

Environment

The environment of a group can help or hinder interaction among group members. There are two ways in which a group can be affected. One is by the physical environment, and the other is by the social environment. A comfortable physical environment includes temperature, furnishings, space, noise level, and other surroundings satisfactory for the participants and the purpose of the group meeting. The social environment is defined by the way in which group members relate to one another. It is important to the emotional state of the members. If the social environment encourages positive feelings among group members, they can work together effectively.

Coming Together

As a group forms, it goes through stages of development. To know and recognize these stages is the blueprint of forming a group. The sequence and progression of group development are interrelated. Each stage exhibits a different level of trust and dependence or independence and builds on the preceding one.

In the beginning stages of group formation, the group leader must understand the various stages of development in order to bring the group to the problem-solving phase. Anxiety levels are already high within the group, and relationships are still formal and distant. When there is no progress, a climate of disappointment could spread quickly. It might terminate the group before it even gets started.

Comparisons of Productive Groups and Less Productive Groups

Productive	Less Productive Groups
Communication:	Communication
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Purposeful, relevant. 2. Understandable language, common meaning achieved. 3. Different ideas and points of view expressed freely and positively. 4. Feeling expressed directly when essential. 5. People listen and pay attention to one another. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Superficial, irrelevant. 2. Different or specialized language, common meaning not achieved. 3. Differences kept hidden or expressed aggressively. 4. Feelings hidden, expressed indirectly through ideas. 5. People do not listen and all tend to talk at the same time.
Goals:	Goals
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Parallel or commonly-shared goals. 2. Use of group for growth; growth purposes clarified and/or understood. 3. Both group and individual goals are permitted and encouraged. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Individualistic, unshared goals. 2. Use of group for ego-satisfaction. 3. A single group goal is defined and held to at all costs.
Atmosphere:	Atmosphere
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Friendly and accepting, but realistic. 2. Collaboration seeking. 3. Authorities analyzed and utilized. 4. Supportive and encouraging of change. 5. Everyone's ideas and suggestions are welcomed. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Aggressive, hostile or over-friendly, demanding. 2. Prestige seeking. 3. Authorities demanded and accepted. 4. Hostile to change. 5. Some members' ideas don't seem "to count," so these people do not act as if they really belong to the group.

Trust is absolutely essential for groups to grow and develop. It reduces each group member's fear of betrayal or rejection. Trust builds the hope of acceptance and support. Creating a climate of trust involves everyone's self-disclosure. A person who dares to entrust himself or herself to others goes far in creating a climate of trust in a group. Forming this trust among group members is called bonding.

Trust is one of the most important ways of creating a good social environment for a group. Until the individuals learn to trust each other, little progress on the group task is made. Because of this, forming a climate of trust is one of the most important tasks. The first crisis most groups face involves the ability of two individuals to trust themselves and each other.^{5,6}

Guidelines for Producing a Climate of Trust

- **Accept Others.** If group members accept each other, they feel safe in being honest with each other.
- **Speak For Yourself.** You cannot accurately speak for anyone other than yourself. No one else can accurately speak for you.
- **Avoid Put-Downs.** The goal is to support — not criticize — either seriously or in fun.
- **It's Okay to Pass.** Group members agree to let each person determine the degree to which they can respond — without judging.
- **You Are Responsible.** It will be up to you to determine how much you will be involved and how much you will gain from the experience.
- **Expect Unfinished Business.** Learning and growth are never completed. People are constantly developing skills and uncovering ideas.

Other ground rules and procedures may be added by group members. Remember that it is not necessary for everyone to become best friends. Trust, respect, and accountability are the foundations for successful cooperation in the public arena.

Identity

When a new group is being formed, or upon entering a group for the first time, most people encounter similar problems. The usual way of interacting with others doesn't work because the situation isn't familiar. Often people hold back, waiting to see what others are going to do. Not only is the situation strange, but it's unclear what other members think is proper behavior. The result is that a person feels uncomfortable. In a sense, group members have an identity problem. They know who they are, but not what they are in relation to others in the group.

Acceptance

Other responses to being in a new group are to like and dislike members, and to be unsure of how to present oneself in order to be liked or not rejected. The group does not have clear rules on what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior. Fear of not being accepted and of being left out are all important concerns. Identity and acceptance questions create tensions and uneasiness. They are important issues in establishing a group. For this reason it is important that all group members get to know each other and feel comfortable with one another.

Ownership

A group that learns how to work together from the beginning will have ownership of its plans and actions. Group formation indeed takes time. It means hard work for its members. But this very investment also implies their commitment. They are declaring ownership for the group's goals. Ownership of the group and its tasks are critical to the overall success of any project.

Group Work or Teamwork

Being part of a productive community or organization work team can be a rewarding and fulfilling experience. But what is it that makes some groups develop into a cohesive team? What is the secret of successful teamwork, and how can you develop into productive teams that produce the bonus of greater work output and greater personal satisfaction for everyone?

Teamwork is nothing new. Much of your lives are made up of team activities, even though you may not recognize it. For recreation, you participate in or watch athletic team competition; you spend time with your families, which informally operate as a team; and you participate in religious, political, or social groups. All of these usually demonstrate team principles.^{5,6}

The word “synergism” is used to describe what teamwork can accomplish. Synergism means a cooperative action where the total effect is greater than the sum of the effects taken independently. This is an additional benefit from successfully uniting your individual talents.

To fulfill these principles, members may need to adopt different behavioral roles. Real team development does not happen until members begin thinking of the team goals first, and individual goals second. This is also important in the development of work teams.

Roles of Team Members

The following behavioral roles are described to help develop team spirit:

1. *The involving role:* A team member motivates others by getting them involved in an idea, opportunity, or problem.
2. *The listening role:* A team member makes an effort to actively listen to others, expressing that he or she is really hearing what is being said.
3. *The compromising role:* One member gives up something so the team can progress.
4. *The supporting role:* A team member gives added dimension to good ideas through his or her support.

In addition to these roles, a team leader will need to perform additional roles. Key words describing these roles are:

Guidance — The process of directing the discussion and providing structure for planning and action to take place.

Stimulation — Subtle methods of reinforcing productive team efforts and checking to see if all members are involved in the process.

Coaching — Asking members if they are having problems, giving helpful suggestions, and recommending outside resources that may be helpful. It can be done both formally and informally.

Coordination — Checking communication and feedback among team members and indirectly doing things that help produce a harmonious work team.

The leadership role is challenging and somewhat specialized since the leader will need to provide some structure and support while still being a team member. Learning to be an effective team leader will take time and practice. The temptation to revert to a more directive style of leadership is always prevalent in the early stages of growth, but this change could delay team cohesion and limit long-range output.

The early stages of the group or team development are the most critical. Here are some concepts to keep in mind:

- Every team needs a convener or facilitator. Therefore, if this role has not been assigned, your group will need to get someone to serve, at least temporarily, in this capacity. This position can be rotated to give several participants experience in serving in this kind of leadership role.
- The team members need to know each other.
- In early stages of development, teams will also need some added structure. This may involve:
 - A. Deciding how long meetings will last.
 - B. Developing an agenda of items to be covered.
 - C. Developing the priority of items to be dealt with.
 - D. Assigning team roles such as recorder and timekeeper.
 - E. Determining how decision-making will take place — through consensus or voting.
 - F. Developing an evaluation of the group process and leadership.
- Get the group to discuss and agree on team-meeting ground rules. This gives them experience in working as a group, and also helps members feel they are really an important part of the team. Work to agree on common missions, goals, and action plans to give direction and structure. This is hard work, but is essential to accomplishing the group's task.
- Periodically check to see if work is progressing and working relationships are satisfactory. Extra effort may be needed when things bog down or tensions arise.

More Comparisons of Productive Groups and Less Productive Groups

Productive	Less Productive Groups
<p>Responsibility and Involvement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Group allows and encourages individuals to take responsibility for own growth. Individual is personally identified with the group. The groups continuance and/or function is important to the individual. One or two members are appointed to summarize the discussion and to see that everyone has had a chance to speak. Members understand group decisions and are committed to them. 	<p>Responsibility and Involvement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Group discourages or denies individual's responsibility for growth — demands independence. Individual is not personally identified with the group — “it's just another group.” No one summarizes or checks to see if everyone who wants to speak has actually spoken. Discussions go on and on until people get tired. Decision-making is muddy and people are not committed to the group's plans.
<p>Internal Processes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Group changes its method of operation freely and flexibly as needs arise and as group development and growth continues. Group varies in tempo of work and allows itself periods of relaxation. Group feels free to express its moods — excitement, enthusiasm, concern, tension, etc. People discuss the subject at hand. The group uses its agenda as a guide for discussion. Members know and use problem-solving steps. 	<p>Internal Processes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Groups sets up a standard ritual (like “we must always be democratic” or “the leader tells us what to do”). Group demands a constant and continuing level of productivity. Group does not allow any expression of mood other than polite friendliness. The discussion jumps from one idea to another. The agenda is not clear and there is no written guide for discussion. No order is followed for identifying and solving problems.
<p>Standards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> All in the group serves as a resource to help the group and each other. Differences within the group are useful. Roles are defined, but may easily move from member to member. Member has the chance to try out his or her new insights or skills in the group. 	<p>Standards:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Only leader or resource persons help others. Differences must be kept “out of sight.” Clearly defined and fixed roles are assigned to particular members. Member given no opportunity to test out their new insights or skills.

Builders and Blockers

As you examine groups and observe their behavior, realize that understanding the process of building groups may take time. Much of your previous training and work experience has stressed competition and individual accomplishment. The following lists describe group behaviors that are either builders or blockers.

Builders

1. Humor
2. Starting on time
3. Short meetings
4. Fun
5. Compromising
6. Similar backgrounds
7. Common goals
8. Enthusiasm
9. Cooperation
10. Assigning a leadership role on a temporary basis (rotating facilitator)
11. Listening
12. Taking an extreme, absurd position to help others realize where they stand
13. Having clear goals which are understood by all
14. Following through and accepting responsibility
15. Alternative ideas
16. Consensus decision-making
17. Respect
18. Defined roles
19. Commitment
20. Flexible structuring
21. Support for others
22. Facilitation rather than leadership
23. Initiative
24. Sensitivity to people's differing needs
25. Trust
26. Being process-oriented, as well as task-oriented

Blockers

1. Not listening
2. Unclear issues
3. Disorganized
4. No facilitator
5. No defined goals and objectives
6. Not buying into goals and objectives
7. Not being involved in decision-making
8. Impatience with group decision-making process
9. Being afraid to speak up at a meeting because of what others might say
10. Using words and jargon that some members might not understand
11. Lack of information
12. No prepared agenda
13. Suppressing conflict
14. Rejecting other's ideas without hearing them out
15. Animosity and dislike in the group
16. Inflexible group structure
17. Lack of planning
18. Time pressures
19. Outside pressures
20. Ego
21. Pushy people
22. Hidden agenda/self-interest
23. Lack of well-defined roles
24. False humor or too much

Summary

Groups may be loosely structured or a formal organization. Whatever the type, members of this “collection of individuals” need to feel included and important in the workings of the group. Developing trust within the members will create a good social environment, and progress toward the group’s goals will follow.

References

1. Heiny, Pat and Mary Jo Clark. “The Performing Community.” From: Findings of the Indiana Leadership Initiative. Contemporary Consulting, 1999.
2. McFarland, Marcia. Moving Ahead Together. Army School Age and Teen Project, Kansas State University, Cooperative Extension Service, Manhattan, 1995.
3. Lesmeister, Marilyn. “Leadership Development Within Groups.” Fargo, North Dakota: North Dakota State University Extension Service, Sept. 1992.
4. Pitrak, P. and L. Hoopfer. Group Dynamite. East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Cooperative Extension Service, 1979.
5. Beal, G. M., J. M. Bohlen, and J. N. Raudabaugh. Leadership and Dynamic Group Action. Ames: Iowa State University, 1962.
6. “Group Development” in Family Community Leadership Resource Packet, Washington State University, Pullman, 1988.

Learning Activity: Cooperating Squares

Purpose: To cooperate in accomplishing a group task.

Items Needed: Squares of paper with one letter per square spelling “Cooperation” (one set per each group).

- Procedure:**
1. Provide enough sets of the paper squares for each group. Have approximately three to five members per group. Pass out envelopes with the squares inside. Each square has a letter which, when placed together, spells “COOPERATION.”
 2. Tell the participants to begin sorting the squares when given the signal.
 3. The groups are to put the squares in sequence to spell a word associated with helping.
 4. The first group to unscramble the squares and spell “COOPERATION” is recognized.

- Discussion:**
1. How was the task organized?
 2. Did someone assume a leadership role?
 3. Did everyone participate?
 4. Knowing what you know now, how would you do the activity differently?

Summary: This activity shows that with proper leadership and group cooperation a task can be completed successfully in a short time.

Learning Activity: *Alphabet Names*

- Purpose:**
- To help build trust among group members.
 - To help the group focus on content being presented.
 - To help participants experience teamwork in problem solving.
 - To help participants see the value of individual contributions to the team.

Items Needed: Newsprint, markers, tape, pencils, and paper.

- Procedure:**
1. Ask participants to list the letters of the alphabet from “A” to “Z” in a vertical column on the left side of a sheet of paper.
 2. Randomly select 26 letters from any document and read them out loud. Ask participants to write down the letters in a second vertical column on the right side of the page.
 3. Working individually, ask participants to fill in the blanks to create 26 names of famous people. List one name per line, and use the alphabet letter and random letter as the first and last letter in the name.
 4. Provide 5 to 7 minutes to finish the exercise. Participants should then stop, exchange papers with a partner, and tally 1 point per legitimate name.
 5. Record the high score and the group’s average on newsprint.
 6. Direct participants to team up with two more individuals.
 7. Repeat the exercise with the new, larger group. However, provide a new set of random letters for the groups.
 8. Review the list and check names. Compare group and individual scores (high and average) from both rounds.

Discussion: Discuss the following as a group:

1. Any differences of scores, motivation, or frustration. Usually the larger group will have a higher score and less frustration.
2. The concept of synergy, commitment, competition vs. collaboration, and individual vs. group potential.

Summary: This activity illustrates that more gets accomplished when the talents of individuals are combined to address a specific task.

Learning Activity: Building a Representative Group

Purpose: This activity can give direction in deciding who would be represented in your group for the discussion of an issue.

Items Needed: Copies of the form below and pencils.

- Procedure:**
1. List groups, organizations, or types of representation in your community in the first column. Make a complete list.
 2. Decide which are critical to your issue, and place an asterisk (*) by the name.
 3. List names of people who can represent these groups. You may want to list several names from each organization.
 4. Decide which persons would best represent the views of their organization and be understanding of your issue.
 5. Use the third column for making notes of who will contact the person, or who might be a personal friend, or go-between.

Group/Organization	Name of Representative	Notes

- Discussion:**
1. Review the group of names you have developed. What type of environment will be needed when you bring the group together for the first meeting?
 2. What type of bonding exercise would be appropriate for the group you are building?
 3. How will you ensure that group members will take ownership of the group goal?

Summary: It is important to recruit the correct organizations and the best persons to assist in advocating a specific view or issue. This activity illustrates how those organizations and persons can be best identified.

Learning Activity (skit): 'Heavenly Days Cemetery Board'

Purpose: Participants in this meeting play familiar group member roles. Identification of tasks, maintenance, and self-serving roles will be influenced by your interpretation of the situation.

Items Needed: The following skit script plus the Learning Activity, Group Member Function (Observer Form).

Procedure: Select the Cemetery Board members and have them act out the skit. Following the skit, have the audience (observers) respond to the discussion comments. Finally, have the audience (observers) complete and discuss the Group Member Function (Observer Form).

THE SCENE: Seven members of Heavenly Days Cemetery Board are holding a special meeting. The item of business being discussed is, "Should Heavenly Days Cemetery Board build a fence around the cemetery?"

THE CEMETERY BOARD:

Judy: Chairperson

Swen: Vice President

Joe: Secretary

Betty: Treasurer

Carol: Director

Andrew: Director

Roger: Director

JUDY: Let's call the meeting to order. As you know, we are here to discuss building a fence around our cemetery. Is there any discussion?

CAROL: I believe we should build a fence. Furthermore, I believe this fence should be built with stones from the area. This would make a fine addition to our community and would blend into the natural setting of the cemetery.

ROGER: What would this type of fence cost?

CAROL: It should be fairly inexpensive. We can get the stones from the quarry, so our biggest expense would be labor. I would estimate \$500.

ANDREW: I don't like stone fences.

JOE: I think a stone fence is too hard to build. I feel we should build a board fence. We could paint it white and it would look nice. This type of fence could be built much faster too.

ROGER: How long would this fence last, and what would it cost?

- JOE: A board fence wouldn't be as permanent as a stone fence, but it should last 15 to 20 years. I'm not sure about the cost, but I'd estimate we could build a board fence for \$800.
- ANDREW: I don't like board fences.
- BETTY: Well, Andrew, we've got to build a fence. We've had two ideas, natural stone and board. Perhaps we could combine these two ideas and build a nice fence.
- ANDREW: I don't like either a stone or a board fence.
- JUDY: We've got to build a fence. We've had two suggestions. Are there any more?
- BETTY: What kind of fence do you think the people in the community would like?
- JOE: I think they want a simple, nice-looking fence that will last a long time. A fence that would look good around the cemetery.
- ANDREW: Most of the people in this community don't think. And, if they don't think, they don't really know what kind of fence they want.
- BETTY: Well I think we've got to build a type of fence that most of the people in the community will want and support.
- ANDREW: We're on this board to run the cemetery. I don't think we have to worry about what the people will want.
- JUDY: Now let's stop arguing! As I said before, we've got to build a fence. We've had some good ideas. Let's get some more so we can begin to sort out the best type of fence to build.
- ROGER: Well, I think we ought to build a steel fence. A high, steel fence like the type they put around football fields. This would be a permanent fence. We want something that will last. We also want a fence that requires little or no maintenance. I believe a steel fence is the best type of fence for us.
- CAROL: This type of fence could be pretty expensive.
- BETTY: It would be easy to build.
- ANDREW: I don't like steel fences.
- JUDY: Now Andrew! Be reasonable. We've got to build some type of fence. We won't get anywhere by ignoring every idea that comes along. What would a steel fence cost?
- ROGER: I've checked cost. This type of fence should cost about \$2,000.
- ANDREW: That's too expensive.
- CAROL: A fence like this would last 50 to 60 years so it would be fairly reasonable in cost.
- JOE: I believe people in the community would buy this type of fence.

- CAROL: Well, we've had three ideas for a fence. Stone, board, and steel. I think we should begin eliminating some ideas so we can come to a decision.
- JUDY: That's a good idea, Carol. We don't want to spend all night or several meetings on building a fence.
- ROGER: Well, I think we should eliminate the board fence.
- ANDREW: That's cheaper than steel.
- ROGER: Sure it's cheaper, but it won't last. Over time a board fence will cost more than a steel fence.
- JUDY: As I've said before, we have to build a fence. We need ideas. Somehow we've got to narrow our thinking to one type of fence. Let's not argue — let's stick with the facts and come to a conclusion.
- BETTY: I don't think people in our community would like a board fence, so you can eliminate this idea as far as I'm concerned.
- ANDREW: It's still a cheap fence.
- JUDY: We're arguing again.
- ROGER: Well, I still believe a steel fence is what we want.
- JUDY: Swen, you haven't said a word all night. You are the oldest in the group. Perhaps with your experience you can help us decide between a stone, board, or steel fence. What are your ideas?
- SWEN: Ladies and gentlemen. In my opinion, you build a fence for two reasons — to keep people out, or to keep people in. Now, I'm sure that no one in this community wants in the cemetery. I'm also sure that nobody that's in the cemetery is going to get out. There's no reason to build a fence, so I'm going home.
- JUDY: Swen is right. Meeting adjourned.

- Discussion:**
1. Using the handout, Builders and Blockers (in notebook) name two builder statements from the skit discussion.
 2. Using the handout, Builders and Blockers, name two blocker statements from the skit discussion.
 3. Using the handout Comparisons of Productive Groups, and Less Productive Groups (in notebook), discuss the skit and list what was productive and less productive in each topic communication, goals, atmosphere, responsibility and involvement, internal processes and standards.

Summary: Different members of a group have their own beliefs and agendas when discussing a particular issue or topic. This activity illustrates several views that result from a group discussion and identifies how these views might assist or disrupt the discussion.

Learning Activity: Group Member Function (Observer Form)

When you take the observer's role in a group, you monitor the flow and the types of contributions from group members. This table can help you identify, clarify and record the types of participation you witness.

List the names of participants in the blocks on the first line, and note their contributions in the appropriate squares.

Name of Participants							
Initiating: Proposing tasks or goals; defining a group problem; suggestion procedures or ideas for solving a problem.							
Information or Opinion Seeking: Requesting facts; seeking relevant information about a group concern; stating a belief; giving suggestions or ideas.							
Information or Opinion Giving: Offering facts; providing relevant information about a group concern; stating a belief; giving suggestions or ideas.							
Clarifying or Elaborating: Interpreting or reflecting ideas; restating suggestions after the group has discussed them; offering a decision or conclusion for the group to accept or reject.							
Consensus Testing: Sending up trial balloons to see if the group is nearing a conclusion; checking with the group to see how much agreement has been reached.							

Learning Activity: *Balls of Yarn*

Purpose: To illustrate the importance of each member of a group and how each member contributes to the network of the group.

Items Needed: Two or more yarn balls of different colors.

Procedure: Have participants stand in a large circle, facing one another. Give the balls of yarn to people who are far apart, and ask them to hold the yarn until you say, “Go!”

Explain that the group will be making a network with the yarn. The people with the yarn balls hold the end of the string and gently throw the balls across to someone else, calling out that person’s name. Then, those people hold the string and throw the balls to a third person, and so on, until the balls have been unwound.

Discussion: 1. When the yarn net is complete, ask group members to pull back very slightly. What happens?

(Net gets tighter. The network has been “activated.”) The yarn represents connections.

2. Ask one person to drop out. What happens? (Others must pick up the slack. There are fewer potential contacts.) How does the person who withdrew feel? Note that it is important for a group to be able to count on all its members.

Summary: This activity points out that connections (the strands of yarn) connect different people in different ways, just as networks do. Some individuals serve as nodes, connecting many different people or networks.

Unit III: Group/Organizational Leadership Skills

Module 2: Effective Meetings

Overview

Good meetings don't just happen. They are carefully thought out, well-executed events that affect the way a group — large or small — carries out its business. Whether your leadership role is called president, chairperson, facilitator, or convener, certain tasks must be carried out before, during, and after the meeting to make things run smoothly. Members want to know their time will result in constructive action.

Objectives

- To develop the abilities to set up an effective meeting.
- To learn how to conduct a productive meeting.
- To learn what should be done as a follow-up.

Teaching Tips

As you plan ways to use this module, refer back to the experiential learning, or “learning by doing,” model in the introduction.

Experiential learning lets people learn from one another. Each person:

- experiences, performs, or is involved in an activity,
- reflects or looks back on what took place by sharing and processing, and
- applies the new information or ideas by assessing the results and using the new information in other ways.

Experiential learning provides opportunities for active involvement and offers a variety of activities and techniques.

The real learning comes from the thoughts and ideas created as a result of the experience. Allow time to debrief or process. Let participants reflect and share what happened so that everyone understands the point of the activity and how it relates to their leadership roles.

Effective Meetings

Would you plan a bus or airplane trip without consulting a schedule of times and destinations? Probably not. A meeting agenda is your group's schedule of departure and arrival. It marks the way toward achievement of goals.

What's going to happen at the next meeting? What business will be discussed? What issues will require a decision? Will someone give an informational report? Don't be taken by surprise at your meeting. Plan! First, prepare a list of what business to discuss. The list should name items that require the attention of the membership. Next, consider how items will be presented, what to discuss, and how to present it. All members of the group can and should be involved in planning and participating at meetings.

The Agenda

An agenda is a step-by-step order of points to be covered. A tentative agenda should be sent to all members prior to the meeting:

- To insure that important business is not overlooked.
- To remind people of the meeting.
- To help members identify important items and prepare to discuss them.
- To help members focus on issues, contribute, and feel a sense of progress.
- To insure meetings start on time, move forward, and stop on time.

Developing the Agenda

Days or even weeks before the meeting, the facilitator, chairperson, or presiding officer should begin preparing the agenda. You should review program plans and actively involve other officers, chairs, and group members who may have items of business to offer.^{1,2}

Expected Action

Agendas that are too brief or vague can actually hinder the progress of a meeting. Properly prepared agendas almost always help meetings run smoothly. In a well-prepared agenda, items are elaborated. For example: An item listed simply as "Fair Board Report" doesn't tell very much; adding "select representatives and consider alternative date," says more. Be certain to indicate the expected action for each item. Here are some common phrases for conveying expected action: "for information," "for discussion," and "for decision." These phrases will help members anticipate and prepare for the action. If a particular person has responsibility for an item, place that person's name in parentheses just below or to the right of the item. This information tells members who the contact person is and serves as a guide for you, as the chair.¹

Setting Priorities

The order of items can be critical to the success of a meeting. For some items, the order is obvious. For example, you usually don't discuss the budget for equipment purchases before you discuss your equipment needs. Some agenda orders, however, are not so obvious. Informal meetings for planning or problem-solving may benefit from these suggestions.

Guidelines to Help Establish Priorities

1. The early part of a meeting is usually the most lively and creative. Therefore, items requiring mental energy, bright ideas, and clear heads should appear early on the agenda. An item of great interest to everyone might be scheduled for 15 or 20 minutes into the meeting to avoid the attention lag that typically occurs at this point and to involve any late arrivals.
2. The order of items influences the meeting atmosphere. Some items tend to unite the group, while others divide it. The leader may want to start on a point of unity, prog-

ress to items likely to evoke differing opinions, and end the meeting on a unifying note.

3. Long agendas require momentum because members need to feel that progress is being made. Use your labels of “information,” “decision,” and “discussion” to help set the agenda. Information items should come first or last. Since they require no group action, they should be brief. Decision items should come early on the agenda. If a decision item becomes a discussion, table it until you are ready for the discussion items. This procedure may not cover the entire agenda, but it will keep the meeting on track and leave members with a feeling of accomplishment.
4. The order of items can save valuable time. Listing “Any Other Business” on the agenda may save time in planning, but it can turn into a frustrating waste of time. Unstructured or informal discussion is healthy, but it must be managed so it comes near the close of a meeting and only if time permits.

Using the Agenda

Copies of the agenda should be distributed to all members several days before the meeting. Minutes from the last meeting or an abbreviated set of minutes listing decisions and needed action should also be distributed when possible.

The meeting agenda must be flexible and open to revision. Early in the meeting, the presiding officer should ask the group to review the agenda. Have any pressing issues been omitted? Is there need for some revision? When making revisions, consider meeting time. Do not lengthen the meeting time; instead, decide which items can be deferred to a later date.

About Time

When it comes to time, flexibility can be more of a hindrance than a helpful tool. Time is important to most people. Therefore, you should start and stop at the time specified on your agenda. Starting late penalizes people who arrive on time and makes it difficult to end on time. Repeated late starts encourage people to arrive at a later time and to form bad habits. Meetings that drag on past the ending time can contribute to feelings of guilt, resentment, impatience, and tension. Schedule breaks during long meetings.

Information Sent with the Agenda Should Indicate:

1. The name of the group.
2. The title or topic of the meeting.
3. The name and phone number of a contact person.
4. The time, date and location.
5. The decision-making method to be used.
 - Majority Rule (most people have to agree)
 - Consensus (all people have to agree)

Agenda Items for Formal Meetings Should Include:

1. Call to order.

2. Reading and approval of the minutes from the last meeting.
3. Reports of officers and standing committees.
4. Reports of special committees.
5. Unfinished business.
6. New business.
7. Adjournment.

Preparing for a Meeting

Learning and working will be at its best when everyone is comfortable and relaxed. Participants should feel that the time they have spent at the meeting is worthwhile. Although no one can guarantee that all meetings will be regarded as meaningful, you can take some steps to make the meeting as effective as possible by carefully arranging for facilities and materials, as well as a comfortable social environment.²

Physical Setting

Participants in meetings will contribute more and get more out of the meeting if the physical setting is comfortable and the atmosphere is informal, supportive, and relaxed. Desirable physical arrangements will vary depending on the size of the group and the purpose of meeting. Informal room arrangements are recommended to make everyone feel reasonably comfortable and equal in the group.

Pre-Arrangements

If at all possible, check the meeting room in advance. Some rooms just are not suitable. They might make an undesirable impression on the group members or require exceptional arrangements.

Arrive 20 to 30 minutes early to check that arrangements have been completed. This will also allow you to make any corrections if necessary.

Name Tags or Table Tents

If group members are unfamiliar with each other, name tags or table tents are important. They will speed the development of group cohesiveness since participants will be able to use names in addressing each other. To be useful they should be large enough to read across the table. Made with markers on light paper, they can be pinned to the person or set on the table in front of them.

Room Arrangements

Select a room that is large enough for several small groups to meet simultaneously or to accommodate a single, large group. If possible, select a room with furniture that can be moved easily, especially if a rearrangement for small group discussions seems likely.

In small groups (up to 20 people) chairs can be arranged so everyone is facing each other. It is important for each participant to have plenty of space in which to sit and work, take notes, or spread papers for notebooks and handouts. Tables should be available, unless it is a very short or very active meeting.

Effective Meeting Planning Sheet

Session Number/title	Date:
Purpose or Objectives	Time: Location:
Committee(s) Involved: Members:	Chair(s) of Committee:
Facilitator(s) for the Session:	

Tasks	Specifics	Who Will Do It?	(By) When?
FACILITIES (check the following): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central location • Large room (so small groups can meet at the same time) • Can walls be used to post newsprint? • Can temperature & ventilation be controlled? • Can lighting be controlled? • Enough tables & chairs available? • Can the furniture be moved around freely? 			
ACCESS (check the following): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keys available to all areas that will be used • Restrooms are accessible • A phone is available • Adequate parking 			
MATERIALS (check the following): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Microphone set up & working? • Enough easels/chalkboards? • Markers & chalk? • Newsprint & tape? • Overhead projector? • Audio/video tape recorder? 			
PUBLICITY/PROMOTION: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute brochures/fliers to public places • Distribute news releases to local media • Media contact with reporters • Arrange for pictures 			
REGISTRATION: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direction map • Parking permits • Name tags & tent sign if using a panel of speakers 			
Food/Refreshments			
Transportation (if needed)			
Budget/Finances			
AGENDAS/PROGRAM: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select & contact speakers or other resource people • Handouts, questionnaires, notebook information • Paper, pencils, pens 			
Certificates/Awards			
Follow-up: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation(s) • Thank you notes 			
OTHER TASKS (list): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parking • Exhibits • Door Prizes • Speaker Gifts 			

To accommodate a large group, rows are a better arrangement. Curving the rows in a half moon shape with ends closer to the front, improves this. Make sure extra chairs are available to accommodate a larger than expected crowd.

In a small group, you can sit among the group members. In a larger group, you should stand so that you can see the group and be seen by the group. Avoid a head table at informal meetings since it emphasizes the “power role” of the facilitator through its physical separation. It also indicates a larger difference in status than if you are standing in front of the group without a lectern or a table as a barrier.

Materials

It is necessary to have a chalkboard or marker board, newsprint pad, or computer and projector for writing that is visible to the entire group. Don't forget the appropriate writing equipment: chalk, markers, pens, etc.

The speaker or facilitator may want to use visual aids. Double check equipment needs, such as a computer and projector, marker board and markers, and other tools. Extension cords, connectors, and a small table to hold the equipment and visual aids should also be on hand.

Access

Make sure you have keys to open all the rooms that will be used during the meeting. Make sure restrooms are accessible to meeting participants.

Determine how you can regulate the temperature and ventilation. As the meeting progresses, someone may need to make adjustments to keep the room comfortable.

Social Setting

The social or emotional environment describes the way group members, including the leader or facilitator, relate to one another. Trust and respect are among the most important foundations of the social environment for a group. Until individuals learn to trust each other, little progress on group tasks is made. Information about learning and working styles, as well as enthusiasm and enjoyment, are also key features of a satisfactory social environment.

Refreshments build group togetherness and congeniality. Food and beverages should be prepared ahead of time so they are available when the first person enters the room or the break starts. Make sure there are enough napkins, cups, and paper plates on hand.

How to Run a Better Business Meeting:

The Facilitator of the group is responsible for conducting meetings, guiding discussion, and ensuring the group is using effective processes for doing its work.

The fundamental difference between a Chairperson and a Facilitator is the power of the Chairperson role. The Chairperson makes rulings, determines procedures, rules people out of order, etc. The Facilitator proposes, suggests, invites, and then consults with the participants to generate a consensus. The Facilitator's “power” comes from the group. An effective Chairperson will follow many of these same procedures.^{3,4}

Choosing the Specific Site

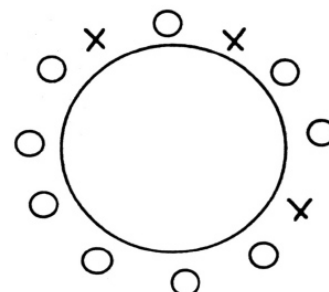
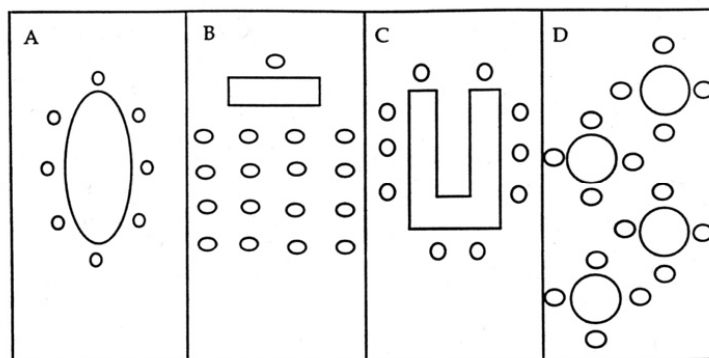
1. Consider the possible rooms within the selected location.
2. Ensure the site is appropriate for the structure you plan to use to attain meeting objectives.

Site Selection Checklist	Yes	No
1. Is the size of the room suitable for the number of meeting participants?		
2. Are the chairs in the room appropriate? Are they comfortable?		
3. Are the temperature controls visible?		
4. Is there someone available to help set up the room?		
5. Do you know where the light switches are?		
6. Do you have adequate light sockets and extension cords?		
7. Is there space to hang up completed wall charts?		
8. Are there drapes that close on the windows?		
9. Does the room provide clear views for visual aids?		
10. Is the room located away from kitchens, hallways, and coffee-break areas?		

Room Setups

Using the diagrams below, think about which room alignment:

- Suggests “we talk, you listen” or “you talk, we listen.”
- Implies participation and work to be done by audience.
- Will allow for maximum participation by the most people in the shortest amount of time (people talk to each other).
- Will allow an “axe grinder” the largest audience.
- Fosters confrontation among diverse or polarized interests.
- Will allow input from all participants on an equal level.
- Will allow a maximum quantity of information to be presented in a short time.



X = Empty Chair
 Empty Chair = Energy Hole

Leadership Roles

Group Leader: The group leader is responsible for conducting meetings, guiding discussions, and ensuring the group is using processes for doing its work.

Secretary or Recorder: The role of the secretary is to record the meeting notes while performing the role of a group member.

Timekeeper: The timekeeper assists the group leader with the enforcement of time frames established for agenda items, in addition to performing a regular group member role.

Monitor: In the formative stages of group development, it may be helpful to ask one group member to monitor the group process. An evaluation form is helpful for this meeting.

As group leader, the Facilitator should be conscious of the potential to dominate the group, and try to control such tendencies. Therefore, the Facilitator should avoid talking a lot, not argue intensely with group members, and record everyone's comments. He or she should also try to draw everyone into group deliberations.

Below is a list of things a Facilitator has to be concerned about, as well as ways to handle each situation:^{1,3,4}

1. Keep the meeting focused on the topic:
 - Point out when the discussion has drifted. Usually, the meeting will quickly return to the topic.
 - Watch the time.
2. Clarify and accept communication:
 - Summarize the contributions of participants. Summarize in particular, the contributions of participants who have not been actively involved. "Your feeling is that..."
 - Relate one participant's idea to another — "If I understand it correctly, your idea would add on to Tracy's by..."
 - Help develop incomplete ideas — "Could you develop that idea a little more?"
 - Point out when a group member's contribution is cut off and invite him or her to complete it — "I'm afraid that we may have cut Kelly off. Did you have more you wanted to contribute, Kelly?"
3. Accept feelings as valid data:
 - Summarize feelings as well as content — "You feel angry when—"
 - See that ground rules are followed.
4. State a problem in a constructive way so group members can work on a solution:
 - State the problem in such a way that it doesn't sound like blame-fixing or an accusation of the participants. Reframe issues if needed.
 - State problems, not solutions. Often, asking a question is useful.

Room Setups (continued)

Room Setup	Advantages	Disadvantages
1. Classroom	a. Allows for many people. b. Leader is clearly in charge.	a. Encourages one-way communication. b. Encourages side-bar conversations. c. Hard to hear in back of room.
2. U-shape	a. Convenient for 6 to 20 people. b. Easy for leader to have eye contact with all.	a. Discourages small group team-building. b. Reduces getting to know other people. c. Limits movement of leader.
3. Participatory	a. Builds teams. b. Easy for leader to move around.	a. Increases side-bar conversations. b. Requires wide room.
4. Herringbone	a. Allows use of tables for many people. b. Creates center aisle.	a. Hard to hear in back of room. b. Creates impersonal mood.
5. Circle	a. Hard to select a leadership position. b. Good morale for people.	a. Hard to select a leadership position.
6. Rectangle	a. Good for staff meetings. b. Leader can assert control in front of the room.	a. Limits number of people to size of table. b. Encourages discussion.
7. Focused rectangle	a. Creates leadership position. b. Allows for more people than a rectangle.	a. Creates distance between the leader and group.
8. Doughnut	a. Equalizes status of group members. b. Easy to see everyone.	a. Limits number of people to size of doughnut.
9. Office/desk	a. Creates authority. b. Allows intimacy.	a. Can be seen as threatening.

- Help clarify the areas of decision making — “As I understand it, the Wilderness Act does not allow for development of recreation areas. However, it is open to us to recommend classification of this land.”
5. Suggest a procedure or problem-solving approach:
 - Point out when it may be useful to move on to the next problem. “I’m wondering if we’re ready to move on to . . .”
 - Develop a visible way to make notes for later discussion.
 6. Summarize and clarify direction:
 - Summarize your understanding of what the meeting has accomplished and indicate what the next steps will be.
 - When delegating tasks, be sure the “delegate” agrees to accept the responsibility and the time frame.
 7. Avoid dominating behaviors:
 - Critiquing of ideas.
 - Making procedural decisions without group consent.
 - Exploiting your role to propose or argue for positions.
 - Providing lengthy comments.

Conducting the Meeting^{1, 2}

1. Call the meeting to order promptly.
2. Introduce the members and guests. Consider a group building/get acquainted activity instead of formal introductions for less formal meetings.
3. With cooperation of group participants, establish priorities and decide how much time to spend on each agenda item. Ask the group for additional agenda items.
4. Keep the group focused on the subject by monitoring the discussion and informing the group when it strays from the agenda.
5. Have the group follow the time commitments for each agenda item. A 2-minute overtime may be allowed for those agenda items not completed in the allotted time. During this overtime period, the agenda item should either be completed or assigned as an agenda item for the next meeting.
6. Be attuned to, and help avoid confusion through ground rules. Present the agenda on newsprint or chalkboard. When possible, specify how many minutes can be spent on each topic and who will speak. If anyone takes up too much time on one topic, you can remind the group they need to stay on schedule. This will help move the discussion along.
 - If there is hostility about subjects to be discussed in the meeting, bring it out in the open immediately. For example, you could say, “I’m well aware that there are strong feelings about matters on the agenda today. I know some of you are not happy to be here. I understand how you feel in these circumstances.” They should know that you do indeed understand.
 - Keep discussion lively and moving.
7. At the end of each agenda item:

- Check that everyone who wanted to talk was able to contribute to the discussion.
 - Summarize or ask someone else to summarize. Make sure the secretary also records the summary.
8. Conduct or ask someone to conduct a feedback session during the last 10 minutes of the meeting. Ask the following questions:
 - Did we accomplish our goals for the meeting?
 - What remains to be done?
 - Was any time wasted? If so, when and how?
 9. Schedule the next meeting time.
 10. Call the meeting to a close.
 - If the meeting needs to be continued at another time, be sure to recap. At the end of the meeting, give a summary of what has transpired. Be positive and make sure the group understands the next steps. After the meeting, notes of relevant discussion and action plans decided upon should be recorded and distributed to the participants. This will serve as another reminder of responsibilities and assignments. It also becomes a permanent record of actions taken.¹

After the Meeting

1. See that the meeting room is left clean.
2. Check with the secretary for clarity of minutes.
3. Transfer leftover agenda items to the agenda for the next meeting.
4. Send thank-you notes to guest speakers.
5. Distribute copies of the minutes.
6. Conduct any correspondence necessary for carrying out agenda items.
7. Contact any speakers identified for the next meeting.

Sharing Responsibilities

The facilitator's role is to ensure essential tasks are accomplished smoothly. Others can and should carry out some of the work.

Committees

Contrary to what some critics claim, committees don't have to be "many-headed monsters." Committees can open avenues for sharing work and responsibility among group members. Given realistic goal setting and careful selection of members and leaders, committees can achieve a great deal.

Unless a specific committee job can be stated in writing, a committee is probably unnecessary. Confusion and vagueness about a committee's purpose can lead to frustration. Do not appoint a committee to do a task better accomplished by one person. Re-examine each existing committee and, if necessary, redefine its purpose or eliminate it.¹

If a committee is proposed, you must be able to answer these questions:

- Why should the committee be established?
- What is its job?
- What are its responsibilities and limitations?
- When should the committee's job be completed?
- What is the budget?
- What other resource are needed and what resources are already available?

It is the parent group's responsibility to define the committee's purpose and specify its limitations and responsibilities. A clear understanding of these factors enables committee members to function more effectively. In new situations, a group may have to develop its own goals within a broad framework.

Standing and Special Committees

Standing committees are reappointed regularly to handle ongoing concerns. Examples include membership, finance, publicity, and program committees. Special committees are ad hoc. They are appointed as needed to accomplish special objectives within a specified time. They rarely exist longer than 18 months. Examples include a special project committee, a building committee, and a one-time special event committee.

Committee Members: Selection and Orientation

Selecting committee members for a particular job is more effective than asking for volunteers. Selection enables you to consider the skills and interests of available people and to ensure that the group is neither too large nor too small to get the job done. Committees of five to nine people usually work well. Some committees have as few as three members; others have more than 15. When the size approaches 15, consider selecting subcommittees or dividing the task among several smaller committees of equal standing.

Orienting the committee is usually the responsibility of the committee chair. Members must understand the committee's purpose and specific assignment. They need to know what is expected of them individually and as a group.

For a committee to be effective, members must accept responsibility. As a member, never accept a committee assignment unless you have sufficient time and interest.

Committees should be appointed when a job is too large for one person. Committees can help define an issue, resolve a complex problem that requires several perspectives, and involve group members in the work of the organization. Planning ahead is a key element for successful committees. With proper planning, committees can reduce the workload of an organization's chair or president.

Committee Chair: Selection and Orientation

Chairing a committee means coordinating committee activities. The chair must see to it that the job is completed and that work and leadership roles are fairly distributed among committee members.

Select a chair that is a team worker — someone who is interested in the job to be done and who can motivate the committee to do it.

Train the person chairing the committee. People are often told, "take the job. There's nothing to it." This approach is both unwise and unproductive. Orientation should acquaint the chair with the specific purpose and duties of the committee, how the com-

mittee fits into the overall organization, and what will happen to the committee “product.” Consider how the person’s interests and skills can be used in chairing a committee. Giving people an outlet for their abilities show them how their personal involvement can help the group. Reverse the usual pattern — rather than trying to make the person fit the job, build the job around the person’s skills and interests.

Building the Committee Agenda

An effective committee needs an agenda. A step-by-step outline is occasionally enough, but more often a detailed agenda is necessary. Generalized goals are too vague and provide little direction for committee members. Detailed agendas bring items into clearer focus. Items must be specific, measurable, and realistic. Poor agendas are the biggest cause of committee failures.

Follow Through with Responsibilities

The committee should write a short (one-page) report when requested, when major jobs are completed, or annually. The report should describe how the job was carried out, give suggestions for the next committee, and discuss both successes and failures.

The organization has the responsibility of responding to committees’ efforts. Regularly filing committee reports shows acceptance and requires no further action, but does not necessarily imply agreement. Approving or adopting a committee report shows that the group agrees to follow the recommendations in the report. Finally, the parent organization must give the committee feedback concerning the usefulness of its work. Feedback should include how the report or recommendations were used and what results the committee’s work achieved.

Summary

An effective meeting begins with a well-prepared agenda and a comfortable physical setting. Learning will be best when the participants are relaxed and the facilitator is well organized and aware of roles. With proper planning, committees have a vital function in the work of a group. The more aware participants are of their roles, the more likely the desired results will be achieved.

References

1. Moore, Dan E. and Lee Hamilton. *Skills for Working Together*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Cooperative Extension Service, 1986.
2. “The Meeting Will Come to Order,” 4-H 440. Manhattan: Kansas State University Research and Extension Service.
3. “Groups: How they Decide.” Family Community Leadership Curriculum, FCL 321. In Family Community Leadership Resource Packet. Pullman: Washington State University.
4. Pitrak, P. and L Hoopfer. *Group Dynamite*. East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Cooperative Extension Service, 1979.

Learning Activity: *Introductions*

Purpose: This get acquainted activity works both as an ice breaker and for making introductions. It works best when the individuals present are not well known to each other.

Items Needed: None.

Procedures:

1. Find one person in the room that lives at least five miles from you.
2. Team up and gather the information below from your partner.
3. Introduce your partner to the group, using the information gathered.

Name:

Community:

Something you like to do that you are willing to tell someone about.	One of your favorite foods or restaurants.
A place you like to be that you feel good about.	One thing that is happening in the near future that you wish to announce.

Discussion: None

Summary: An activity such as this one generates more enthusiasm and rapport than just “going around the table” having people introduce themselves.

Learning Activity: *Puzzling Puzzles*

Purpose: For group members to communicate and cooperate while working on a task.

Items Needed: Duplicates of patterns of puzzle pictures or cardboard puzzles purchased from a local dime store.

- Procedure:**
1. Puzzle pieces for each puzzle should be taken off of the puzzle and put in an envelope. There should be approximately 4 to 5 people per group, with each group receiving one puzzle and an envelope of pieces. Prior to giving the puzzle packages to the groups, one piece from each puzzle should be taken out and placed in a different group's envelope, which would ensure that the puzzle could not be put together without the appropriate piece.
 2. Pass out the puzzle pieces in the envelope.
 3. Instruct the groups to wait until the signal to begin is given, and tell them that they should cooperate and put the puzzles together. The winning group will receive some surprise or token.
 4. Once the signal is given, the participants should begin to put the puzzle together. As the participants begin to notice that they are missing a piece or have a piece that doesn't belong to them, they will begin to ask you what they should do. Where is their piece?
 5. Continue to walk around observing the participants putting their pieces together. Do not respond or attempt to answer their questions.
 6. The groups will generally proceed looking for their pieces, and will discover that another group has the necessary piece. The winning group is the first to put their puzzle together.

Discussion: What did this activity illustrate about communications and networking?

Summary: This activity demonstrates that by networking with group member and asking questions, a task becomes much simpler.

Learning Activity: Improving Your Meeting Skills

Purpose: To help determine the difference between good and bad meetings.

To help the group focus on the development of positive, effective meeting skills.

Items Needed: Activity Sheet on following page.

Newsprint, markers, pencils, and paper.

- Procedure:**
1. Distribute the activity sheet.
 2. Have each person complete the sentences on the activity sheet.
 3. Divide the large group into six small groups. Assign each small group a question to discuss. Advise the small groups to arrive at a consensus answer (reaction, response, etc.) to their assigned question.
 4. Have small groups return to the large group. Ask each small group to report their group's consensus answer to their question, and record their consensus answers on a flip chart or newsprint.

Discussion: Ask the group as a whole:

Were there any similarities among the responses to different questions? For example: Was the best meeting you ever attended (question 1) the same as the meetings that you enjoy attending (question 2)? If so, why?

Summary: Everyone attends meetings. This activity illustrates the reasons why some meetings are better and more productive than other meetings. Once these reasons are recognized and practiced, participants' meeting skills will be improved.

Activity Sheet: *Improving Your Meeting Skills*

1. The best meeting I ever attended was ...

2. I enjoy attending meetings that ...

3. To contribute to a meeting discussion, I need to feel ...

4. I appreciate agendas when they ...

5. Most meetings could be improved by ...

6. A good chairperson should ...

Learning Activity: Getting a Good Start

Purpose: When planning a meeting or a discussion, remember that a good start is half the job. In this activity, you will prepare three written items to help you get started.

Items Needed: Pencils, paper, newsprint, markers, and masking tape.

- Procedure:**
1. Choose an issue that your group may actually use as a discussion program in the near future.
 2. Divide into three subgroups. Each group should receive several pieces of newsprint, a pad of paper, and pencils.
 3. Have each subgroup select one person who will report back to the larger group.
 4. Have subgroups plan and prepare their reports as follows:
 - Group 1: Prepare a discussion announcement (agenda) to be distributed before the actual discussion. This announcement should include a brief statement of topic, purpose of discussion, and an outline of main points to be discussed. It may also include background information, if available, and some thought-provoking questions.
 - Group 2: Prepare introductory remark(s) restating the topic, the purpose of the discussion, and the ground rules.
 - Group 3: Formulate a few appropriate “starter questions.” The opening question should be easy to discuss, easy to understand, phrased to provoke discussion, and problem oriented.

- Discussion:**
1. After an appropriate work time, ask the Group 1 spokesperson to present the discussion announcement. Others should critique the announcement and, if desired, edit it.
 2. Ask the Group 2 spokesperson to introduce the discussion. Others can give feedback. The introduction may have to be edited to reflect changes inserted in Group 1’s presentation.
 3. Ask Group 3 to present sample starting questions. The variety of openness should show how different leading questions take a discussion different ways. Other group members should critique the starter questions.

Summary: This activity demonstrates the importance of getting a meeting or group discussion off to a good start. The observers’ critique of the material presented contributes to the positive learning experience.

Unit III: Group/Organizational Leadership Skills

Module 3: Group Decisions

Overview

Important decisions must be made when goals are determined during the problem-solving process, when action is implemented, and when results are evaluated.

To help groups make decisions, the facilitator must guide individuals as they work through the decision-making process each time a choice must be made. Group members must work together to define the problem, identify issues, gather information, list alternative solutions, analyze the consequences of each option, decide on an action, follow through with the action, and evaluate the results.

Groups may use informal methods, such as consensus decision-making, or more formal methods, such as parliamentary procedure, to reach decisions. The most effective method varies depending on several factors: the type of decision, the size of the group, and the timeline.

Objectives

- To improve the ability to work as a group to make decisions.
- To improve individual and group decision-making techniques.
- To assess the appropriateness of the decision-making process to the choice being made.
- To recognize advantages of group decision-making in problem-solving situations.
- To select appropriate methods for the group and the choice to be made.

Teaching Tips

As you plan ways to use this module, refer back to the experiential learning — or “learning by doing” — model in the introduction.

Experiential learning lets people learn from one another. Each person:

- experiences, performs, or is involved in an activity,
- reflects or looks back on what took place by sharing and processing, and
- applies new information or ideas by assessing the results and using the newfound information in other ways.

Experiential learning provides opportunities for active involvement and offers a variety of activities and techniques.

The real learning comes from the thoughts and ideas created as a result of the experience. Allow time to debrief or process. Let participants reflect and share what happened so that everyone understands the point of the activity and how it relates to their leadership roles.

Group Decisions

Every group makes decisions. The way a group makes decisions influences how people feel about the group. It can also determine how well the group members support the decision, as well as how they convey their support to others.

Groups make decisions regarding their functions and purposes, plans and programs, community projects, and political activities. The level of group agreement affects the feelings various group members have when decisions are being made. The way a group feels after making a decision becomes especially important if the group plans to have a continuing positive relationship.

It is increasingly difficult today to solve serious problems for two reasons: (1) the complexity of the issues facing organizations and communities and (2) the number and diversity of people who expect to participate in making decisions.

Decision-Making Processes

The following information will provide details on two very different decision-making processes: parliamentary procedure and consensus agreement.

Parliamentary Procedure

The purpose of parliamentary procedure is to help a group transact business efficiently, protect the rights of the individual, and preserve a spirit of harmony.¹

Some groups avoid parliamentary procedure because they assume it is too complex. Others assume that they need a “professional parliamentarian.” Both assumptions are wrong. A basic knowledge can make parliamentary procedure work for your group.

Most people belong to one or more organizations that use parliamentary procedure, thus they need at least a basic knowledge of the correct procedures. Parliamentary procedure’s purpose is to help a group transact business efficiently, protect the rights of the individual, and preserve a spirit of harmony.

Everyone in the group must know parliamentary procedure in order for it to work. When some know it and others do not, the rules can actually prevent participation. Even the most formal meetings have a provision for clarifying procedural confusion. Under this provision, called “rising to a point of order,” anyone can ask the chair to explain exactly what’s going on. If the chair or some other “expert” cannot explain the procedure to everyone’s satisfaction, then it is best to begin with a simple motion. Don’t hesitate to request a clarification of procedure at any time. If you understand what’s going on, but see that a number of people do not, ask for clarification.

Principles

Parliamentary law is simple in principle. It is based on common sense and courtesy:

- Only one person speaks at a time.
- Every member has equal rights.

- Each item presented is entitled to discussion time.
- The decisions of the majority are upheld, but the rights of the minority to offer dissenting opinions and differing views are respected. Most groups get along very well with relatively informal procedures. However, the larger the group or the “hotter” the issue, the more important a carefully planned procedure is.

The Standard Order

Groups often establish a standard order of business to give members a sense of security. Knowing what to expect allows members to focus on relevant issues rather than try to anticipate the unknown. The following agenda outline is commonly used.²

1. Call to Order:

“Will the meeting please come to order?”

2. Reading and Approval of the Minutes:

“Will the secretary please read the minutes of the last meeting?” “Are there any corrections to the minutes of the last meeting?” “There being no corrections, the minutes will stand approved as read.”

3. Officers’ Reports:

- a. President — announcements, discussion of agendas and important agenda items, time limits, “ground rules,” welcomes, introductions.
- b. Vice president — reports or comments.
- c. Treasurer — given and filed at each meeting, but differs from other officers’ reports in that it does not receive formal approval until it has been audited.

4. Standing Committee Reports:

Standing committees are those that are reappointed year-to-year.

5. Special Committee Reports:

These are special project or one-time reports prepared by ad hoc committees.

6. Unfinished or Postponed Business:

Items related to this category are often included in the committees’ or officers’ reports.

7. Old Business:

If items of unfinished business are included in officers’ and committees’ reports, no further old business may need to be discussed.

8. New Business:

Ask the group if there is any new business to come before the meeting.

9. Announcements:

10. Adjournment:

Group decisions with substantive content are generally required in the “Business” sections of the agenda.

Motions

The main motion is the basic tool in formal decision-making. To introduce a motion, a member should first receive recognition from the chair and then state the motion. Motions should begin with the phrase, “I move that . . .” Another member, without waiting to be recognized, may say, “I second the motion.” Seconding indicates that at least one other person wants the group to consider the matter. When a motion is seconded, the chair restates it and opens the matter for discussion. Members must be recognized by the chair before speaking to a motion. Normally, the first person asking for recognition is entitled to speak. However, when several members wish to speak at the same time, certain guiding principles should determine the chair’s decision.

1. The chair should always show preference to the person who proposes the motion.
2. Generally, the chair should show preference to members who have not yet spoken and to those who seldom speak.
3. If the chair knows the opinions of the various members, he or she should alternate between members who favor the measure and those who oppose it.
4. The chair should confine discussion to what is before the group — the motion!

Kinds of Motions

For most groups, motions are not complicated. Even so, you should be aware of the five types of motions:

A **Main Motion** introduces an action to the group. It is always debatable and amendable. Only one main motion may be “on the floor” at a time.

A **Subsidiary Motion** proposes to alter, postpone, or temporarily dispose of other motions, usually main motions. Amendments, referring to committee, and tabling are subsidiary motions.

An **Incidental Motion** originates in another motion and affects the process of conducting business. Such a motion must be disposed of before action can be taken on the original motion. Motions to close nominations, to rise to a point of order, or to establish a method of voting are common incidental motions.

A **Renewal Motion** lets the assembly bring a previous motion back to the floor for reconsideration. Example: taking from the table and reconsidering.

A **Privileged Motion** is an action of the entire assembly. For example: taking a recess or adjourning.

Amendments

When someone thinks the right topic is before the group, but would like to see the wording modified, he or she can propose an amendment. The purpose of an amendment is to change a motion already under consideration. After the discussion, the amendment is discussed and voted on. Then the group votes on the motion as amended.

Technically, a motion can be amended, and the amendment to the motion can be amended, but no further amendments may be made. If more amendments are needed, the motion was probably badly phrased in the first place. In such cases, it is better to withdraw the original motion and start with a new one.

The following is an example of how amendments are proposed and voted on:

First Member Recognized by the Chair: “I move that we purchase a new coffeemaker.”

Another Member: “I second the motion.”

Chair: “It has been moved and seconded that the committee follow through with its report and buy a new coffeemaker. Any discussion?”

Member Recognized by the Chair: “I move that we amend the motion to read, ‘a new drip coffeemaker.’”

Another Member: “I second the amendment.”

Chair: “Is there any discussion on the amendment to add the word drip before the word coffeemaker?” (Following the discussion, the chair may sense that the group is ready to vote, and say, “Are you ready to vote on the amendment?” The amendment is then voted on.)

Chair: “Since the amendment to the motion was passed, we will now vote on the amended motion, which reads, “We shall purchase a new drip coffeemaker.” Is there any discussion? If not, we shall proceed to vote. All in favor say yes. All opposed no. The motion as amended is passed.”

Important Points and Terms

- Introduce complicated ideas by discussion; uncomplicated ideas, by motions. This practice eliminates the need for most amendments.
- Unless stated otherwise in the constitution and bylaws, the chair has the right to vote.
- A quorum is the number of persons who must be present at a meeting to take legal action on business matters. This number is usually specified in the bylaws.
- Most motions require a simple majority for passage. If a higher percentage is required, the chair or parliamentarian should tell the group what that percentage is.
- To table a motion means to delay action on it. Unless a specific time is given for removing a tabled motion, the motion automatically comes back for consideration at the next regularly scheduled meeting.
- Occasionally, as the discussion begins to lag, a member of the group may call “Question.” Some take this as a mandate to move on a vote. It is not. The chair should call for further discussion and decide if it is time to vote.

Calling “question” is sometimes confused with the very formal parliamentary motion, “I call for the previous question,” which is a motion requiring the end of discussion. This motion requires a second, is not debatable or amendable, and requires a two-thirds majority to pass. If the motion is passed, the chair must move immediately to vote on the main motion (without discussion). If the motion calling for the previous question fails, discussion of the main motion resumes.

Consensus Decision-Making

Consensus decision-making is a way of working together, a way in which everyone’s values and interests can be considered. It is a process of coming to an agreement on a particular problem or issue.³

A meeting conducted by consensus is less formal than one using parliamentary procedure. A problem or opportunity for the group is brought up for discussion, without requiring a formal motion. The group discusses the suggestion, working toward clarifying the issues and the need for action. The leader/facilitator encourages input from all and then guides the group toward making a decision. A formal motion is not made, but the leader states the consensus agreement and checks to make sure everyone is willing to support the decision.

In a consensus process, different interests work together to identify issues, to educate each other about their concerns, to generate options, and then to reach agreements that all sides can accept. This does not mean that all sides will be equally enthusiastic about a solution; rather, participants recognize that it is the best solution available.

In consensus decision-making, the group can take no action that is not consented to by all members. Consensus does not necessarily mean unanimity, where everyone is of one mind and in full agreement with a decision, although it may. Everyone must agree that they can “live with” and support the decision. Consensus is a synthesis of values and ideas rather than one side winning. The consensus decision-making process is different from the use of parliamentary procedures and accepting the vote of the majority. Voting results in a “win-lose situation.” Sometimes the losers are unwilling to support the winning position, which hampers implementation of the decision.^{3,4}

Why Use the Consensus Process?

Open communication. People talk with one another regarding their perceptions of the situation, the issues associated with the problem, their concerns and needs, and their ideas about possible solutions. Problems are clearly identified. This exchange provides the basis for designing workable and acceptable alternatives.

More informed decisions. Drawing on the thinking of a diverse group usually encourages greater creativity and a larger number of options. Several options may be combined to make a more satisfactory decision.

Acceptance of the outcome. People who have worked together to understand the issues and who have developed solutions using consensus will see the reasoning behind a recommendation or solution. Seldom will they challenge the results of a consensus decision.

Faster implementation. The process sets the stage for an action plan — who, what, when, where, and how. People will not block implementation if they understand that a plan reflects their interests.

Creation of new networks. Participants establish a constructive relationship with one another that serves the organization or community into the future. As new issues surface, individuals are more likely to contact one another to discuss and initiate joint problem-solving activities.

Cooperative effort. Consensus is a cooperative group effort, and all members have a share in the decision. Members are given the opportunity to propose changes, thus helping the group reach a decision.

When to Use Consensus Decision-Making

Consensus decision-making is an appropriate way to make group decisions. The process can work well whether the group is small or large. With a large group, a sequence of small

group discussions is used. Reaching consensus takes more time than just voting, but the outcome is often worth it. The group leader must be willing to share control; group members must be willing to express their views honestly.⁵

The process is especially useful when:

- People must work together over a period of time.
- An issue is complex.
- Many parties are involved.
- The issues are negotiable.
- People are willing to participate.
- The concept of a losing side is undesirable.

There are times when consensus approaches are not appropriate, such as when:

- The group is facing an emergency and quick action is needed.
- The timing is not right, relevant information is not available, or there is not enough time to achieve a consensus decision given mandated deadlines.
- Legal clarification is needed.
- The group is so polarized that productive face-to-face discussions are not possible.
- The level of concern about the issue is not great.

Implementing Solutions

A consensus agreement must also address how the recommendations will be implemented. Along with a description of what is to be done, an agreement should also specify how each decision will be implemented, who will be responsible, what tasks are expected, within what period of time the tasks are to be completed, and where the resources will be obtained.

Steps in Decision-Making

The general decision-making process involves a sequence of steps. Group facilitators and members should understand each of the following steps:

1. Recognize the problem or opportunity. The process begins with recognizing a possible need for change.
2. Analyze the situation. Once a difference is recognized between “what is” and “what could be,” study the situation carefully to determine exactly what is causing the difference.
3. Consider the goal or goals you want to reach. The goals you choose are influenced by the values you have — what you believe is important. Becoming more aware of your values and the priorities you put on them helps you see more clearly what is desired.
4. Look for alternatives. Look for as many alternatives as possible to solve your problem — not just the obvious or habitual ones. Creative thinking, reading, and talking to other people may uncover more possibilities.

5. Consider the consequences. One of the key elements of the decision-making process is looking ahead to see “what might happen if we do this.” Consider the use of resources: how much time, energy, skill, money, knowledge, and resources are required?
6. Select the best alternative. Look at the alternatives and select the one that seems best for you. If there is no “best” alternative, or none seems satisfactory, perhaps a new alternative can be made by combining some of the possibilities.
7. Act upon the decision. Making a decision doesn’t end with choosing the best alternative — it must also be put into action.
8. Accept the responsibility for the decision. Most decisions are made under conditions of uncertainty, imperfect knowledge, and limited resources. You do the best you can with what you’ve got.
9. Evaluate the results. The outcome or results of decisions should be evaluated to determine their effectiveness.⁵

Negotiating Decisions

Dealing with both your interests and the other person’s or group’s interest is the basis for negotiating a satisfactory agreement.

In focusing on interest as opposed to positions, recognize that behind everyone’s position are interests that are both compatible as well as conflicting. The idea of successful negotiation is to find those interests in common. Pay attention to their interests, ideas, and choices, and generate as many multiple interests as possible.

Separate the people from the problem

Many times people confuse the problem with the personal relationship. When people become angry on a personal level, it is very difficult to reach any kind of solution even though everyone would benefit from the solution. Using your relationship as leverage will tend to damage any ongoing commitment from the other party. When a people-problem has developed, this should be dealt with directly, independently, not as part of the decision that needs to be negotiated.⁶

Listen to understand

In trying to differentiate the problem from the people, it is important that you try to listen and understand what is being said in the meeting. When you talk, you should focus on being understood rather than just making your point. People are less defensive if you talk about yourself rather than them. For example: “I am feeling uncomfortable,” rather than, “You seem to be feeling uncomfortable.” People are more willing to share their feelings if you can be straightforward about yours.

Try to understand the framework in which the other person is operating. If you were in their situation, what would your viewpoint be about the problem? You have certain ideas, feelings, or fears about an issue. Others may not have the same frame of reference as you do. It is helpful to discuss their perceptions as well as yours and understand their vantage point. When everyone becomes involved in the process of reaching a solution, they tend to have more ownership in the outcome, which is felt by all. Try to find areas where it is possible for you to agree without sacrificing your interests in the negotiation.

Make emotions legitimate in your discussion

Do not react to emotions or outbursts as if they were a personal attack. Deal with those feelings by acknowledging them. Whenever possible differentiate emotions from the facts in trying to solve a problem.

You need to learn from the group why certain ideas are acceptable, why others are not, and how they fit into the underlying interest of all parties. Many interests stem from basic needs, such as economic well-being, recognition, being well-liked, feeling secure, and being seen as a successful human being. Always make sure, if possible, that these needs are being met in any negotiation. A lot of times other people's interests can be met without any compromise of your interests. Be concise and clear about the problem and as helpful as possible in dealing with people.

Allow enough time

Avoid making difficult decisions at just one meeting. Choices are often not satisfactory when they are made before enough information has been generated. They usually end up as a single answer to a complex situation. Generate many ideas and incorporate those in meeting people's needs. There are always many ways to come up with a satisfactory solution.

Try to separate the solution from the discussion of the problem. There should always be a period of brainstorming to generate ideas before the decision is made. The broader you can make the scope of the situation, the more possibilities you generate as options. This suggests that you are trying to identify differing interests and meet as many of them as possible without giving in.

Reaching agreement

Often it is possible to generate an agreement when the various parties understand these kinds of interests and differences. When decision points are near, make it as easy as possible for the other party to accept. This may mean paying a lot of attention to people's feelings, while considering face-saving and relationship building.

In setting out to reach an agreement, try to set up objective criteria that will be mutually acceptable to all parties. Deciding on ground rules, procedures, and data sources are often the first steps to building agreement. Think about the fairness of standards with which you will judge your agreement. Tactics such as fear and threats are not productive in maintaining relationships.⁶

Summary

The decision-making process is a lengthy one that involves a series of steps. By following these steps members will feel the item in question has been clearly analyzed and they have had a part in reaching a decision.

References

1. Moore, Dan E. and Lee Hamilton. *Skills for Working Together*. University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Cooperative Extension Service, 1986.
2. *Webster's New World Robert's Rules of Order: Simplified and Applied*. New York: Webster's New World, 1999.
3. "Groups: How they Decide." Family Community Leadership Curriculum, FCL 321. In Family Community Leadership Resource Packet. Pullman: Washington State University.
4. Ayres, Janet and Laura Hoelscher. "Leadership Letter." Department of Agricultural Economics and Department of Agricultural Communication Service. Purdue University.
5. "Solving Community Problems by Consensus." Program for Community Problem Solving. Washington, D.C., 1990
6. Tirella, O.C. "Russ" and Gary D. Bates. *Win-Win Negotiating: a Professional's Playbook*. New York: American Society of Civil Engineers, 1993.

Learning Activity:

How Many Beans?

Purpose: To make a group decision and compare the results to individual decisions about the same problem.

Items Needed: A large jar filled with any type of beans. Only the leader should know how many beans are in the jar.

Pencil and paper.

- Procedure:**
1. Introduce the exercise as focusing on the accuracy of a decision made by different combinations of people. Then, set a large jar of beans in front of the participants. (You need to know exactly how many beans are in the jar.) Tell the participants they will be asked to estimate how many beans the jar contains.
 2. Have each person, working individually, estimate the number of beans. Record the estimates.
 3. Have the participants pick a partner and work out a system for estimating how many beans are in the jar. Again, record their estimates.
 4. Have each pair join another pair, and then have the four-person teams estimate the number of beans. Record their estimates.
 5. Have those groups pick another foursome and estimate the number of beans as a group of eight. Record their estimates.
 6. Have the groups of eight pick another group, and then have the 16-member groups estimate the number of beans. Record their estimates.
 7. Ask for the final estimates and then tell the participants the number of beans in the jar. In groups of eight, ask the participants to discuss their experience, how they felt while making the decision, and the way in which they operated in the groups.
 8. Finally, ask the groups to build a set of conclusions about the effect an increasing number of members had on the accuracy of a group decision? How did the number of members influence decision accuracy? The conclusions are shared among the participants.

(Continue to Discussion on next page)

Discussion: Ask the group as a whole:

How much did the decisions change from the first estimates to the large group estimate?

Why did members change after talking to others?

Which estimates were most accurate? What conclusions can be drawn from this?

Summary: This activity compares individual decisions to several different sizes of group decisions. It then draws conclusions on which decisions are the most accurate.

Learning Activity: Tree of Knots

Purpose: For the entire group to pick up a rope that has been passed around a tree and, without letting go, tie a square knot in the rope against the tree.

This activity provides an answer to the question: “What can I do with 30 feet (9 meters) of rope?”

Items Needed: 30 feet (9 meters) of rope approximately 3/8 inch to 1 inch (9 to 25 mm) in diameter.

Procedure: If you have heard the phrase, “When you reach the end of your rope, tie a knot in it and hang on,” this is the realization of that phrase. Your entire group has been exploring a cave, seeing some beautiful rock formations and underground geology in the process. Suddenly, an enormous wind comes sweeping through the cave. In an effort to keep your group together, you begin to tie a strong knot around a pillar using the safety line that you are all attached to.

The solution techniques can vary considerably depending on how the group chooses to pick up the rope. If the facilitator says, “Wherever you touch the rope with your right hand, that hand must remain there throughout the activity,” it is possible that some groups will realize that only using their left hands allows them to move anywhere they want. If half of the group picks up each side of the rope (which is very typical), both sides will usually complete about half the work. If a single participant chooses to hold the left side of the rope and the rest of the group is on the right side, it is fairly easy for the single participant to do all the work of tying the knot.

Learning basic knot tying is a teachable moment that can occur prior to this activity. If all of the participants are not familiar with a square knot, having enough rope segments for each participant to create their own knot will be helpful. You can also tie a square knot using a brightly colored rope at eye level on the same tree for the group to use as a model.

- Discussion:**
1. What was your contribution to the group’s effort?
 2. Did you have a clear picture of what was needed to tie a square knot?
 3. Was it helpful to have an example of the knot to look at?
 4. What would have made this process easier?
 5. How can we connect this experience to influencing group or public policy decisions?
 6. Why is this relevant?

(Continue to Summary on next page)

Summary: This activity illustrates several different concepts. You can think of the rope as an example of resources, and address the question of how best you can use these resources and how people can work together to achieve a goal. Using a square knot instead of a slip or granny knot illustrates the need to be efficient in using our resources. To apply this example to influencing policy decisions, you can think of the knot as a policy decision. Different people approach decisions in different ways, even when the goal is clear. Working together is important to accomplish a goal in a safe and effective way.

Learning Activity: Wing It

Purpose: Here is a simple initial problem-solving activity that teaches some useful skills and provides some interesting debriefing opportunities early in the challenge program. The challenge is for each participant to place their own wingnut on the threaded rod, and then for the group as a whole to move all the wingnuts to the far end and off the rod as quickly as possible.

Items Needed: You'll need one ¼-inch × 12-inch long threaded rod and 5 wingnuts for every group of 5 participants. You can creatively cheat and use 4 to 8 participants per threaded rod. This equipment is available at most hardware stores.

Procedure: You might be surprised to know that the solution to many of the problems presented in the challenge and adventure activities is, in fact, NOT the goal of the activity. The goal is typically to assess the ability of the group to function as a team, to work together, to be supportive of each other, and to have fun as a group. See if you can tell what the true goal of this activity is.

Rather than giving each participant their own wingnut, you can provide a bowl of wingnuts and instruct the group to “take as many as you like.” The group is then responsible for using each of the nuts they take.

In addition to providing a bowl full of wingnuts, you can also mix in some regular hex nuts. These are probably more difficult for some groups to spin effectively but provide an interesting variation.

- Discussion:**
1. Were you able to create a plan and then stick to it throughout the activity or did you change techniques during the activity?
 2. Do you think that everyone in the group had an equal role?
 3. Did you feel pressured to perform?
 4. What do you think the true goal of this activity is?

If you happened to be racing against other groups, answer the following questions.

5. Do you think that the equipment you were given was equally challenging?
6. Did any groups appear to have the initial advantage because of the length of their threaded rod or the number of wingnuts they had in their group?
7. Did these groups finish first?
8. What else is important here?

(Continue to Summary on next page)

Summary: This activity shows the group decision-making process. It helps the group to function as a team and be supportive of each other.

** Adapted from *Teamwork and Teamplay* by Jin Cain and Barry Jolliff. Kendall/Hunt Publishers, 1998.*

Learning Activity:

Nominal Group Techniques

Purpose: This activity gives practice using the nominal group technique.

Items Needed: Paper, pencils, newsprint, markers, and masking tape.

Procedure: Select a problem confronting your group and use the nominal technique to gather information and set priorities. The nominal group technique involves having all individuals within the group give ideas that are compiled and then rated by each person in the group using a point system. The following (optional) problem may be used if desired:

(Optional) Present this problem:

An anonymous donor has just given your community \$1 million to “benefit the community.” Your group must decide how to spend the money. Select six to 10 priority projects or places to donate the money. You need not put a dollar amount by the projects.

- Discussion:**
1. Did all members participate?
 2. Were new ideas or attitudes brought before the group?
 3. How can this technique be used in groups you work with?

Summary: This activity gives each group member the opportunity to participate and contribute to the group discussion.

Unit III: Group/Organizational Leadership Skills

Module 4: Managing Conflicts in Groups

Overview

Conflict is defined as a “difference of opinion.” With that definition, it is easier to see conflict as something that is natural to groups and relationships. Conflict is best dealt with openly. There are many techniques for handling conflict in a positive way.

In creative management of conflict, all parties seek to find common ground — that is, the goals and interests they share. This serves as a foundation for resolving differences. Reframing the issue as a question often makes it easier to look for satisfactory solutions for all parties.

Objectives

- To realize that differences of opinion are common in any community volunteer organization.
- To identify the stages of the conflict cycle.
- To recognize common causes of conflict.
- To identify their own methods for handling conflict.
- To learn techniques for managing or resolving group conflict situations.

Teaching Tips

As you plan ways to use this module, refer back to the experiential learning, or “learning by doing,” model in the introduction.

Experiential learning lets people learn from one another. Each person:

- experiences, performs, or is involved in an activity,
- reflects or looks back on what took place by sharing and processing, and
- applies the new information or ideas by generalizing about the results and using the new information in other ways.

Experiential learning provides opportunities for active involvement and offers a variety of activities and techniques.

The real learning comes from the thoughts and ideas created as a result of the experience. Include time to debrief or process. Let participants reflect and share what happened so everyone understands the point of the activity and how it relates to their leadership roles.

Managing Conflicts in Groups

Differences of opinion and the resulting conflict are common to any volunteer organization or community group. When people of different backgrounds and interests come together to share decision-making, expect disagreements. Finding common ground and resolving differences will result in a stronger organization or more effective action.

The potential for conflict exists whenever and wherever people have contact. It typically involves one or more of the following:

1. Competing interests or goals.
2. Different ideas about methods to reach the goals.
3. Incomplete understanding of (or hidden) personal values and feelings.

In public decision-making, even when a goal is agreed upon, ways to implement and finance the goal may also be a source of disagreement.

Finding Common Ground

In creative management of conflict, all parties need to find the common ground — that is, the goals and interests they share. This serves as a foundation for resolving differences. Rephrasing the issue as a question often makes it easier to look for solutions satisfactory to all parties. It is helpful for people to:

- Recognize and acknowledge that differences (conflict) exist.
- Facilitate open, accurate communication and active listening.
- Maintain an objective perspective — stay on the issues, not the personalities — while still acknowledging values and emotions.
- Find common interest and goals so everybody agrees on something.
- Make the necessary adjustments, reinforce, and confirm to make the agreement work.
- Remember that conflicting ideas lead to stronger, more effective groups.

Conflict as a Difference of Opinion

Conflict can be defined as a “difference of opinion.” With that definition, it is easier to see conflict as something natural to community groups and relationships.¹

Conflict is often suppressed in favor of group harmony. However, suppressing conflict only drives it underground — it is likely to reappear later in some more destructive form. Also, discouraging strong feelings and convictions reduces group vitality. Conflict can stimulate new thought, lead to more creative solutions, and keep a group aware of the various interests of its members. Conflict brings internal dissension and dissatisfaction into the open, where it can be used in making the group more responsive to its members.

As long as conflict is focused on the job to be done, rather than on personalities, the gains usually outweigh the costs.

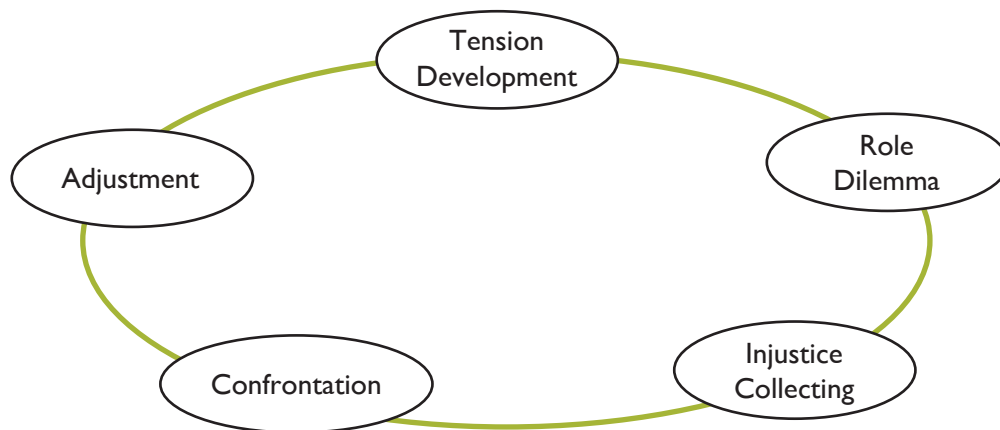
Why Does Conflict Occur?

Some conflict is inevitable in human relationships. Often clashes occur more over perceived differences than real ones. People anticipate blocks to achieving their goals that may or may not be there.^{1,2} Conflict often results from:

- **A lack of communication.** Failure to share ideas and feelings allows the other person to “fill in the gap.” It is easy “read in” what you think the other person or persons will say or anticipate how they will respond. Then, you often suspect negative things that provoke anxiety, which leads you to look for the worst. If this continues, trust becomes lower and you may become suspicious and defensive.
- **A value conflict in which two people have different attitudes, beliefs, and expectations.** These differences may interfere in making decisions if you are inflexible and hold rigid beliefs about the “right way” to do things. Two people choose different goals or different methods to achieve the same goals because they have different values and beliefs. Because each goal requires an investment of time, effort, and some sacrifice, you often cannot pursue one goal without sacrificing the other to some extent.
- **A lack of effective leadership or decision-making.** Lack of agreement about “who’s in charge” or “how we are going to get things done” in any situation can be a source of conflict. For example, if one person in a group expects democratic decision-making (all members have input) and the other expects someone to be in charge and tell the members what to do, they may have difficulty resolving differences of opinion. Then when differences exist, members become sidetracked into a hassle over who will decide or whose opinion is going to be accepted as the “right” one or what the decision-making processes should be. The resulting conflict becomes a “win-lose” struggle.
- **Discrepancies in role expectations.** Difficulties can arise if people see their own and each others’ roles differently. For example, if the officers see their role as “running the organization” and the members see themselves as not only contributing information and opinions but also having a real voice in decisions, conflict may arise.
- **Low productivity.** Being able to accomplish tasks and achieve goals is a necessary ingredient in the organizational environment. Therefore, if the task is not done, the chairperson may get angry. If the other person responds to this anger by performing the task, a response pattern of anger is established to get results. Groups with low productivity may use nagging, making trade-offs (“I’ll do this if you do that”), and criticizing, but these “motivators” tend to produce only short-term success.
- **Change that causes disequilibrium.** While change is considered to be a “given” for people working and living together, another “given” is that people tend to prefer secure, predictable patterned responses to the unknown. When changes occur abruptly and unpredictably, conflict may follow.
- **Unresolved prior conflict.** As the number of unresolved conflicts increases between people, so does the possibility of future ones. Many people shy away from conflict management because memories of past conflicts still hurt. Probably the most lasting of those “scars” have been caused by conflicts with those they are closest to — family, close friends, and trusted colleagues in volunteer or work groups.

The Conflict Cycle

Conflict tends to follow a cycle, as represented in the following diagram.²



Tension Development: As the disagreement or threat begins to develop, the various parties start taking sides. The conflict can appear immediately or over time.

Role Dilemma: People or groups who are involved raise questions about what is happening, who is right, what should be done. They try to decide whether they should take sides and, if so, which one.

(Tension Development and Role Dilemma often happen at the same time.)

Injustice Collecting: Each party begins to gather support. Each itemizes the problems, justifies their position, and thinks of ways to win.

Confrontation: The parties clash. If both parties hold fast to their opinions, barriers may develop. Confrontation may be lessened or avoided by one or both parties making adjustments.

Adjustments: If one party is weak and the other strong, the strong party can win by “domination,” but the conflict may reappear. If parties have equal power and neither party decides to change, they can wage a “cold war,” each party trying to weaken the other. One party may choose to “avoid” the other. The two parties may choose to “compromise,” each gaining a little and losing a little. The two parties can actively participate in looking for a solution that takes care of both parties’ needs.

In most organizations and communities, only compromise or working together resolves the conflict over time. Compromise in this context means giving up some of the less important factors, not giving up one’s principles. Other adjustments are, at best, short-term solutions.

Methods of Dealing With Conflict

People and groups may use several different methods of dealing with controversy. Some methods focus on preserving the relationship and resolving the issue, while others tend to have negative results.^{3,4,5}

Avoidance

Some people attempt to avoid conflict situations altogether or to avoid certain types of conflict. These people tend to repress emotional reactions, look the other way, or leave the situation entirely (for example, quit a job, leave school, get divorced). Either they can-

not face up to such situations effectively, or they do not have the skills to negotiate them effectively.

Avoidance strategies usually do not produce a high level of satisfaction. They tend to leave doubts and fears about meeting the same type of situation in the future.

Diffusion

Diffusion strategies are delaying actions that try to cool off the situation, at least temporarily. Examples include: resolving minor points while delaying discussion of the major problem, postponing a confrontation until a more appropriate time, and avoiding clarification of the issues underlying the conflict. Similar to avoidance strategies, these tactics typically result in feelings of dissatisfaction, anxiety about the future, and concerns about oneself.

Confrontation

The third major strategy involves an actual confrontation of conflicting issues or persons. Confrontation can be divided into win/lose (power) strategies and win/win strategies. Power strategies include the use of physical force (a punch in the nose, war), bribery (money, favors), and punishment (withholding love or money). Such tactics are often successful from the winners' point of view — they win; the others lose. A closer look at the power struggle suggests that it is probably not this simple. All win/lose strategies suffer from the “conflict trap.” The loser has been given justification in her or his own mind for reversing the situation next time. As a result, win/lose strategies, particularly the power strategy, are as much conflict generators as conflict resolvers. The feelings of the loser are the seed from which the next round of conflict will likely grow.

Arbitration

Arbitration is often the result of a fight strategy. When both sides in the fight are equally powerful and have equal rights, a stalemate begins and a third party may be asked to decide the issue.

The problem with this strategy is that when the third party or judge decides between the conflicting parties, the loser seldom feels that justice has been done. The issue has been decided but the hostility carries over and becomes a cause for renewed conflict.

Voting

Voting is a civilized form of fighting. A vote, rather than an open fight, is possible when the following conditions are present:

1. It is possible for participants in a conflict to change their position on the issue if they are convinced (election campaign).
2. There are beliefs and commitments to principles or to an organization that hold the parties together in a continuing relationship (democracy).
3. The participants will generally abide by the preference of the majority.

Compromise

Compromise strategies use negotiation and bargaining in order to “split the difference.” The premise behind compromise is that partial victory is better than winning nothing at all. Ideally, in a compromise each side gives up something of lesser value in order to

achieve or retain a great goal. Compromise in this context is a form of negotiation. It does not involve giving up one's principles or values. Compromise, at its best, turns into consensus — a win-win result.

Consensus

Consensus seeks to bring all parties in the conflict to a mutually satisfying resolution of the issue. Consensus is possible in an atmosphere where better answers and solutions are likely to emerge from differences. This is often called problem-solving based on common interests.⁵

Synergy

Synergy is the highest form of conflict resolution. Imagine a ping-pong game in which your objective is to return the ball in a way that maximizes the probability that your opponent will hit the increasingly difficult shots successfully. This reverses the win/lose strategy.

Competition is invigorating, but synergy is used to increase mutual winning. The better each play, the more both win — and the more both enjoy it.

Synergistic thinking encourages you to use the mind, resources, and values of others to enlarge the amount of winnings.

In a win-win strategy, unlike power confrontations, both sides can win. The aim of these strategies is to resolve the conflict with a solution that is mutually satisfying to all parties involved in the conflict.

Conflict Management Process

In any group situation, there is occasionally a struggle over guidelines or rules: Who will set them? What kinds of rules exist? What happens when rules are broken?

Guidelines and Procedures

Here are some suggested guidelines that all parties must agree to for the creative conflict management process to proceed. If they don't, the process will quickly deteriorate as people try to "win" as much as possible.

- **Agree that now is a good time to attempt to resolve the conflict.** Allow "prime time" when energy is high and motivation is positive, not when you are angry, tired, or trying to meet a deadline to adjourn.
- **The goal of creative conflict is deeper understanding, not "I win, you lose."** The people involved share a common goal.
- **Review the ground rules for maintaining trust and respect for others.** See if the group wishes to add any others. The group, as well as the facilitator, has a responsibility to see that discussion focuses on the issue and that people listen to one another. Discuss the specific issue or specific behavior, not the person, personality, or motivation. However, emotions should be discussed.
- **Focus on the present.** Avoid engaging in fault-finding from the past.
- **Agree on which sources of information** will be used.
- **Provide "face-saving" mechanisms.** Don't corner the other person. Allow a "time out" if emotions become too intense and then set a time to resume again. Sometimes

you have to agree to disagree. At other times, a trial period to see how something works out will be useful.

After everyone has agreed on guidelines about how to resolve a conflict, implement suggestions for negotiating that consider both the relationship and the issue at stake.

Recognize that personal and emotional issues may be involved. The facilitator's job is to keep both the conflict itself and the processes of conflict resolution from including personal blame and the use of offensive language. It helps to break down a big issue into smaller parts. Increasing the number of points that can be discussed separately offers more scope for negotiation and trade-offs. Bring in factual evidence whenever possible. Skilled negotiators try to re-frame issues and provide different ways to look at the conflicting positions. They focus on interests, rather than on single proposed solutions.^{5,6,7}

Third Party Mediation

Conflict resolution can often be assisted by a third-party mediator. From time to time, any person may serve as a mediator to help others work out differences.⁵

To be helpful, the mediator must remain neutral. The role of mediator is similar to that of a traffic cop, whose main responsibility is to direct traffic — not promote a given solution or solve the problem for the other parties. The mediator suggests different approaches to resolving conflict, ensures an open and balanced conversation flow, enforces ground rules, and protects the involved individuals from personal attack.

Conflict Resolution

The distinction between conflict management and conflict resolution is important. You can manage conflict by withdrawing, by attacking or overpowering the other person, or by working out a compromise, but these strategies will not resolve the conflict. Each of these strategies carries a certain cost to the relationship. Also, because the conflict is only managed, not resolved, the conflict is likely to resurface.

For a conflict to be resolved, two conditions must be met:

1. A cooperative rapport must be established between the conflicting parties, with a genuine concern for each other's needs.
2. A solution must be found that is acceptable to both sides.

Results of Conflict Resolution	
Successful	Unsuccessful
Better ideas are produced.	People feel defeated and humiliated.
People are forced to search for new approaches.	The distance between the parties increases.
Long-standing problems surface and are addressed.	A climate of distrust develops.
People are forced to clarify their views.	Cooperation may decrease
Tension stimulates interest and creativity.	Resistance develops when team work is needed.
People have a chance to test their capabilities.	Some people leave because of the turmoil.

A solution acceptable to both sides must be found. Not all conflicts can be successfully resolved at a particular time. A willingness to develop a cooperative spirit and to engage in joint problem-solving, along with some specific strategies, are often successful. This is often called interest-based negotiation.

Improving Conflict Management Skills

Most conflict in groups stem from “communication gaps.” For the effective management and perhaps ultimate resolution of conflict, two skills are absolutely necessary — active listening and the clear sharing of concerns through “I-Messages.”

Listen. The area in which people most often fall short in their efforts to manage conflict is in listening. They often fail to listen to other people — their needs, wants, concerns, fears and feelings behind them. Rather than listening, they come on strong. They question, confront, defend, and use power and influence to overwhelm the others. They feel they have heard and understood the other person’s view. They instead focus on getting the point across. They try to convince others of how right they are. They bring rational, logical ideas to bear, but with limited results.

In order to manage conflict effectively, you first have to listen.^{4,6} You must:

- **Stop talking.**
- **Give the person total attention.** You are not listening if you are thinking about what you are going to say next.
- **Be attentive.** Get in a straight line with the person. Assume an open posture and make regular eye contact. Physically react — smile, nod your head in agreement, take notes. Clearly show through your actions that you are listening.
- **Open the door.** Invite the person to share his or her thoughts, feelings, or frustrations about the issue at hand. Use phrases such as: “Tell me about it.” “Go on.” “Good point.”
- **Reflect.** Summarize back to the person what has been said. “You feel...” “You are concerned with ...”
- **Reflect the feelings** as well as the words spoken: “You were quite annoyed over...” Reflective listening clearly shows that you are listening, develops rapport, and ends miscommunication.
- **Probe.** Ask for more information: “Please explain what you mean by...” Don’t interrogate — seek to clarify the person’s needs, interests, and concerns.
- **Show genuine interest.** Not until people feel listened to, understood, and respected in their views will they be open to your views.
- **Use “I-Messages.”** Active listening is key to your effectiveness in conflict management. Conflict is not, however, resolved through listening alone. You must also clearly convey your opinion, needs, concerns, and feelings — hopefully, to the other person’s understanding and respect. Only then can collaborative problem-solving begin. The “I-message” provides an effective means for expressing your thoughts in an assertive but non-threatening manner. It simply involves expressing your concern, needs, opinion, or feelings through an honest, straightforward statement that begins with the word “I”: “I’m concerned about...” “I would prefer if we...” “I was embarrassed by...” “I suggest...”
Take care to express yourself in a direct but non-threatening, non-judgmental manner.

Much conflict is resolved through a simple process of shifting back and forth between active listening and “I-messages.” This allows the parties to clarify and understand each other’s needs and concerns and the feelings behind them. As you begin to better understand each other’s points of view, you move on to collaborative problem solving — to the resolution of the conflict. The key is having a willingness to be involved in the process of listening and sharing clear “I-messages.”^{4,7}

Techniques to Remember

1. Initiate an open and honest discussion about the conflict.
2. Be assertive, but not aggressive. Do not be afraid to state your own position, but do it in a non-threatening way without attacking the other person.
3. Communicate the idea that even though you disagree with their views, you still love them as a person. (This is similar to the idea of telling a child that even though you may not like some bad behavior, you still love the child.)
4. Again, affirm your positive feelings for the other person. This will often open the door to more acceptance on their part. Your positive affirmation of them removes some of the threat from the disagreement and makes them more open to change.
5. Don’t be reluctant to consider compromise. Meet them halfway.
6. Suggest that the other person consider a compromise. Find a common ground of agreement. Use it to help resolve the conflict.
7. Consider the use of humor to help defuse the tension in arguments.
8. Every argument seems to have at least two “innocent victims” who are each suffering a “wrong” from the other. Examine your own behavior. Are you being unreasonable or inflexible?
9. Remember, constructive conflict resolution begins with your actions, feelings, skills and willingness to change.
10. Outline a plan of action to resolve a particular conflict. What are you going to do to try and resolve the conflict? How do you expect the other person to respond? What will you do if they don’t behave in the expected way?
11. Keep conflict resolution efforts constructive. Gently challenge their views, but never threaten their person.
12. Initially, you can begin your conflict resolution efforts by building a mutual climate of trust. Work together with the other person on a joint cooperative effort. Cooperative interaction builds trust and has a powerful positive effect on the relationship between two people.
13. Refrain from “labeling” the other persons’ position. If you label their ideas as “wrong,” “simplistic,” or “ridiculous,” it will elicit an equally negative reaction from the other person and may cause them to get defensive.
14. Avoid “no-win” situations where, even if you win, the relationship costs are too high a price to pay. Is the issue of the conflict really worth the grief it may be causing?
15. Define the conflict. Actually write out the issues on a piece of paper. Think small. The more limited the definition of the conflict, the easier it will be to resolve.

Summary

Conflict can be managed by withdrawing, by attacking, by overpowering the others involved, or by reaching a compromise, but these do not resolve the conflict and it is likely to resurface. To truly resolve the conflict, a cooperative rapport must be established between the conflicting groups, with a concern for each other, and a solution must be found that is acceptable to both sides.

References

1. Dunn, Douglas. "Community Leadership and Resource Development." Tucson: Arizona Cooperative Extension, 1986.
2. Robinson, Jerry Jr., Roy A. Clifford and Carol Louise Moorhead. *Management In Community Groups*. Illinois: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1974.
3. Griffin, Charlie. "Creating a Win-Win Environment in the Workplace." Presented at: Kansas State University's Annual Extension Conference Workshop. Manhattan, Kansas, 1989.
4. Lindgren, Herb. "Managing Conflict Successfully." Presented at: University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension Service Workshop. Lincoln, Nebraska, 1990.
5. Fisher, Roger and William Ury. *Getting to Yes: Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In*, 2nd ed. Bruce Patton, editor. New York: Penguin Books USA, Inc., 1991.
6. Pfeiffer, J. W. and L. D. Goodstein. *The 1982 Manual for Facilitators, Trainers, and Consultants*. University Assn., Inc., 1982.
7. Walker, James L. and Lilly J. Walker. *The Human Harvest, Changing Farm Stress to Family Success*. Brandon, Manitoba, Canada: Brandon University, 1987.

Learning Activity: *Fish Boning* — An Exercise in Conflict Resolution

Purpose: To address the following case study and to determine the best recommendations to resolve the issue.

CASE STUDY:

Your organization has always had a Christmas Bazaar and Craft Sale. The strategic planning committee has recommended that this tradition be discontinued in favor of more emphasis on educational programs. However, the organization is desperately in need of money to restore the treasury balance and finance future projects.

Your group is the subcommittee that must make a recommendation to the executive committee about whether or not to accept the planning committee's recommendation.

Use the fish bone diagram to chart your group's ideas on ways to resolve this issue. What will be the recommendation?

Items Needed: Pencils, paper (see attached Fish Bone exercise form), newsprint, marker, and masking tape.

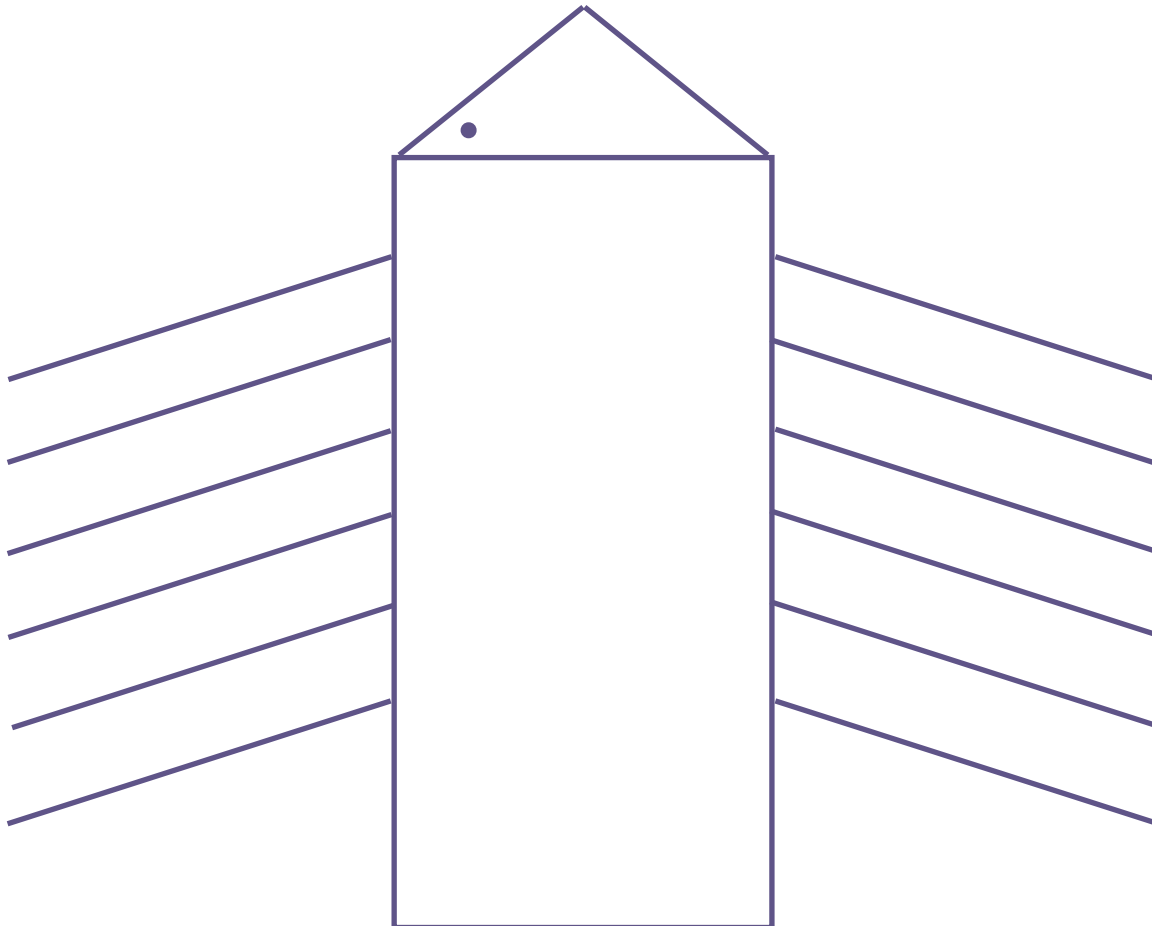
- Procedure:**
1. Agree on the problem or opportunity. This time, create an example. In real life, spend enough time discussing the problem (or opportunity) to be sure everyone is clear on a definition. Often group members move to proposed solutions too soon.
 2. Select a leader to keep the process moving along.
 3. Each individual should think of at least three solutions. Jot them down in the space below the fish so you don't forget them.
 4. Go around the group and have each person suggest one solution. Everyone should write it on a "bone" line. Don't discuss them yet.
 5. Go around again. Suggest a different solution, and write those down. Again, don't discuss yet.
 6. Now, look at the total list. Have each person decide which solution he or she favors and why. Don't indicate your choice yet.
 7. Begin with the person to the leader's left. That person should state which solution he or she picked and why. (Argue briefly in favor of your solution).
 8. The next person on the left should indicate his or her best solution choice and tell why. Continue until everyone has had a turn.
 9. With the group's help, the leader should look for similarities. Is there a consensus? If not, identify your sources of disagreement or conflict. Have people repeat (or add to) their original state-

ments (reason or arguments) to describe why their solution is the best. See whether you can compromise or reach a consensus now. If not, vote on the two top choices.

Discussion: Take a minute to reflect. Think about how you feel about the results of this exercise. Think about your own style of dealing with conflict and the method(s) the group used. Now, report back to the group and discuss the results and the feelings that were produced.

Summary: Groups must deal with conflict. This activity addresses a conflict situation and comes to a consensus on a solution.

Fish Boning — An Exercise in Conflict Resolution



Jot down your ideas here:

Learning Activity: What Are Your Attitudes on Conflict?

Purpose: To determine how the participants feel about conflict and the best ways to manage and/or resolve conflict.

Items Needed: None.

Procedure: Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by placing a check on the continuum.

1. The presence of conflict means something is wrong in a relationship or organization.

Strongly Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree

2. The success of individuals within an organization depends on their ability to ignore conflicts and concentrate on getting the job done.

Strongly Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree

3. The best way to deal with conflicts is to smooth them over as much as possible.

Strongly Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree

4. Most conflicts won't be resolved until one person or party accepts defeat.

Strongly Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree

5. Conflicts are inevitable simply because the needs of individuals are different.

Strongly Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree

6. Conflict is resolved by bringing rational, logical ideas to bear when emotions are high.

Strongly Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree

7. The use of force, law, or authority is often necessary in resolving conflict.

Strongly Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree

8. The only lasting basis for resolution of conflict is restoration of trust between those involved.

Strongly Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree

9. It is not possible to manage conflict successfully when personally involved in the conflict.

Strongly Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree

10. To manage conflict successfully, it is important to deal with both facts and feelings.

Strongly Agree	Undecided	Strongly Disagree

Discussion: After participants have completed the worksheet, ask for a quick show of hands to how the participants responded. (Remember that they may choose the option to pass if they are unsure or unwilling to share their opinions, because this may be a sensitive area for some.) Each of the statements is open to interpretation, so there are no definite right or wrong answers.

The following suggestions describe the usual situation.

1. *Disagree* — Conflict is normal in healthy relationships. Conflict in an organization or between individuals or groups doesn't mean that something is wrong, but rather that something is going on. There is a lack of information, misunderstanding, or unmet personal or job-related needs.
2. *Disagree* — Getting the job done to everyone's mutual satisfaction requires dealing openly with differences of opinion (conflict).
3. *Disagree* — Smoothing things over doesn't help. It only postpones.
4. *Disagree* — Accepting defeat is difficult for most people. If handled properly, conflict can be resolved to everyone's mutual satisfaction. Conflict is successfully resolved by taking a "win-win," rather than a "win-lose" approach. When conflicts end up "win-lose," the side that lost usually feels alienated even if they have "accepted" defeat.
5. *Agree* — This is a good definition of conflict, although there are others who often address conflict in specific contexts.
6. *Disagree* — Logic and rational advice are rarely effective in dealing with emotions. Feelings are involved in all conflict. Effective conflict management must begin with the feelings and then move to the facts. To ignore the emotions ensures failure.
7. *Disagree* — Force sometimes works with children, but rarely with adults. The use of force, whether physical or through fear of legal sanctions, may drive the conflict underground. It will resurface again and again. Force seldom resolves conflict, though it may manage it for a time.
8. *Agree* — Conflict is resolved only through restoration of trust and mutual respect.
9. *Disagree* — The individual's involvement is the key to effective management of conflict. People may seek assistance (a third party) to help in the process, but resolution primarily depends on the parties involved.
10. *Agree* — Unfortunately, in dealing with conflict people often tend to focus on the facts and avoid the feelings. Feelings must be dealt with before the facts if conflicts are to be resolved.

Summary: Differences of opinion and conflict are common to any community group. When people of different backgrounds and interests are brought together for community or group decision-making, differences of opinion are to be expected.

Learning Activity:

Neighborhood Problems

Purpose: To identify stages of the conflict cycle.

- Procedure:**
1. Select one or more of the following letters, which describe a neighborhood problem.
 2. Divide the group into small groups of five or six. Ask one person to read the letter aloud. The group's task is to decide which stage of the conflict cycle this letter represents (not to try to resolve the conflict).
 3. Have someone in each group report back to the total group. There may be some overlap between stages.
 4. Remind group members that conflicts are usually easier to deal with if addressed early in the cycle.

Letters:

I. Road Improvement

Dear Neighbor,

Have you noticed the wear and tear on all our cars? We know that the small amount of grading on our road isn't enough to take care of the chuckholes and mud puddles.

In the past, we've tried to form an improvement district for our area, and most people have opposed it because of the cost.

Now there are revenue-sharing funds available to pay half the cost. We would all have to agree to give up some of our frontage. Probably only about 10 feet would be needed to widen the road and put in drainage ditches.

Some people have been opposed because they would have to move their fences, take out trees, and shorten driveways. A few are concerned about property values. Other people favor the idea because it will make a better neighborhood and there is federal money to help share the cost.

I would like to invite you to a meeting next Tuesday night to discuss this possibility.

II. Crowded Classrooms

Dear Parent,

Have you seen how crowded the first- and second-grade classrooms are at Sunflower School? Many parents think the children are not getting as much individual attention as they need in the

first years of school. They say all children will learn better, especially slow learners and those with learning disabilities, if the classes were smaller. As it is now, teachers are busy keeping order instead of having time to teach.

Some parents think that changing the student/teacher ratio means hiring more teachers and needing more classrooms. They worry about costs and higher taxes. Other residents, particularly those without children, just don't seem to care.

Please come to the Sunflower School PTO meeting next Monday to discuss this situation.

III. Snack Foods

Dear Parent,

Have you heard that the Extension Council is going to make a decision about the kind of snack foods the vending machines in our 4-H/Youth Camps will sell? Because some parents have complained about the candy in the vending machines at one camp site, the council had them removed in all the camps in the state.

A policy for the sale of snacks on camp property is probably a good way to settle this. But, some parents are upset. They think their children will want to leave the camp to buy snacks.

Other parents don't want snacks to be so readily available because children have been choosing snacks instead of eating the camp food. If snacks are sold at the camp, they should at least be nutritious food, they say.

Let's get together and talk about this at next Monday's Extension Council meeting

- Discussion:**
1. Is the issue worth the effort to resolve it?
 2. HOW important is the other person/group in the conflict?
 3. Will talking about the issue improve our relationship and/or productivity?
 4. Are we willing to spend the necessary time and energy talking about the issue — and even more important, the necessary time and energy listening?
 5. Is there a “bottom line” — something we are not willing to give in on?
 6. What will happen if we can't negotiate this item? (Remember that agreeing to disagree may be an option. This is often the case where personal values are directly involved.)

Summary: The conflict cycle goes from tension development, to role dilemma, to injustice collecting, to confrontation, and finally to adjustment. This activity assists in identifying these various conflict stages in the examples provided.

Learning Activity: “I-Messages”

Purpose: An “I-Message” is a technique that can be learned quickly. An “I-Message” allows you to tell people what impact their behavior has on you. At the same time, it lets them decide whether or not to change that behavior. Since you describe your responses and do not evaluate behavior or suggest changes, you are not forcing them to accept your ideas.

A “You-Message,” however, often makes others feel badly, and as if they have to defend themselves. Then they resist making any change at all. “You-Messages” can be orders, commands, blaming or name-calling statements. They can provide unasked-for solutions. Or, worst of all, they can be threats. This activity demonstrates how to use “I-Messages.”

Items Needed: Copies of the activity below (including the situations) and pencils.

Procedure: An “I-Message” consists of three parts:

1. The specific behavior.
2. The feeling you experience because of the behavior.
3. The tangible effect of the feeling.

Example:

- a. “When you tap on your desk with your pencil I feel upset because I get distracted.”
- b. “When I try to help you and you don’t say anything, I am confused because I don’t know how you feel about my help.”

Practice using the “I-Message” by adapting the statements below. Pattern your messages after the two examples and use this guide:

When you

(behavior)

I feel

(impact of behavior)

because

(explanation)

Situations:

- Your co-worker on a committee keeps telling you the workload is too heavy and, consequently, you should not bother making an effort to turn reports in on time.
- Your co-worker does not seem interested in helping you re-organize the office filing system so it will be more efficient.
- You and a colleague are organizing a fund-raising event. The colleague doesn't do his or her agreed upon task of arranging publicity.

Counter any defensive responses with reflective listening. Summarize back in your own words what you understood the person's verbal message and feelings to be: "You feel . . ." "You think . . ." "I can see your point." When people become defensive, it is generally useless to keep stating further "I-Messages." Instead, take time to listen. Restore mutual respect.

Discussion:

1. Was this a difficult task? Why or why not?
2. Describe how it felt to summarize back in your own words what you understood the other's person's verbal message and feelings to be.
3. How does it feel to let someone know what impact their behavior has on you?

Summary:

The "I-Message" provides an effective means of expressing your thoughts in an assertive but nonthreatening manner. It simply involves expressing your concerns, needs, opinions, or feelings through an honest, straightforward statement that begins with the word "I."

