

1.1: Chapter Introduction

Introductory Exercises

1. Have you ever been in a group that seems stuck in endless loops of conflict, where nothing gets done, and all the energy was spent on interpersonal conflicts? Can you share an example? Share and compare your results with classmates.
2. Have you ever been in a group that gets things done, where everyone seems to know their role and responsibilities, where all members contribute and perform? Can you share an example? Share and compare your results with classmates.

The ratio of We's to I's is the best indicator of the development of a team. - Anonymous

Getting Started

A group is people doing something together. It can be a large group of thousand and we'll call them a crowd. It can be a small group of just three members. People might be social, or work together, formal or informal with each other, they might be assigned or self-selected as members—the range is great and varied, and as the group grows so does the complexity.

In this section, we explore group development. Groups start out as a zero in our lives. They require no time, no thought, no energy, and no effort. Then we choose to be part of one or receive an assignment. Now the group is no longer a zero in our lives. It might have a number, like 10%, meaning we spend about 10% of our work time on a project with a group. It could be 100%, as in we work every day within the group. We could call it a 10 for the ten hours a week we invest in it. Regardless of what we call a group in our lives, we have to call it something because it now exists for us, where once it did not.

We can also anticipate conflicts in a group. At work, we may see people in terms, or between departments, conflict with each other. Even at home, we may observe the friction that occurs between family members even after years of interaction. Where there are groups there will be conflict.

We find norms and expectations within groups. Every group has a code of conduct, no matter how informal, of who does what when and how. Power, status, and even companionship all play a role in group expectations for its members.

Finally, all groups end. Families end, change, and transform. Work relationships change as well. Groups accept new members, lose former members, and they themselves become new groups, rising out of the ashes of the old.

All groups form, have conflicts, form norms, and dissolve. In this section we'll explore three related theories on group development, comparing their similarities and differences. We'll learn more about why we need groups, and why they need us. We will explore how it that we come to know each other, and how important groups are in our lives.

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