

Group Dynamics and Conflict Management



*Institute for Transforming
Undergraduate Education*



Yuan Ze University, Taiwan

January 14-15, 2008

Dr. Deborah Allen's contribution to this presentation is acknowledged and appreciated.



Why Use Groups?

- Simulates the “real world” use of teams
- High motivation when actively involved
- Learn more fully and with less effort
- Learn in context
- Allows exploration of more complex problems
- Can allow students to self-select their major areas of interest.



Trust and Teams

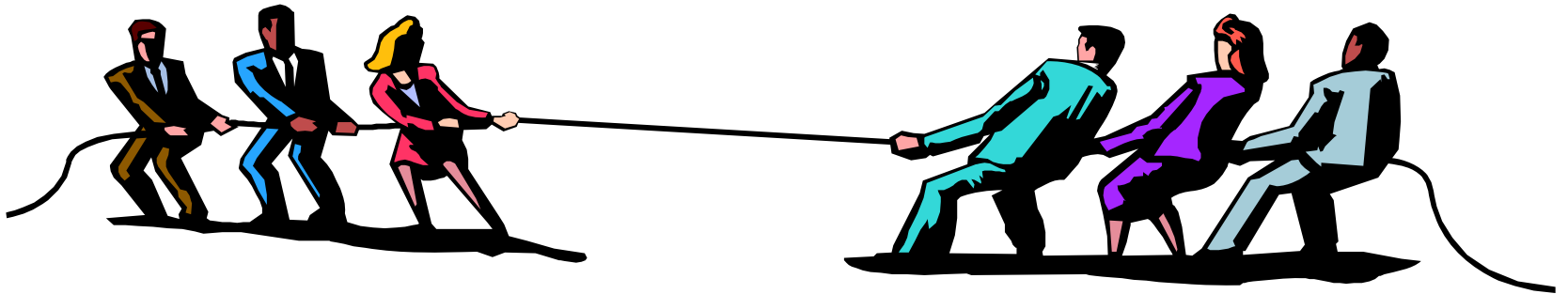
- Trust is “a willingness to put oneself at risk within a specific context.”
 - Trusting behavior: delegation of tasks to a team member
 - Distrusting behavior: Completing all tasks on your own.
- To be “trustworthy,” indicates one has characteristics that merit another’s trust:
 - Competence—one has the capacity to complete the desired task.
 - Benevolence—one cares about my needs and will act in my best interests.
 - Integrity—the person is honest and keeps his or her commitments.



Nurturing and Eroding Team Trust

List five actions that inhibit the formation of team trust. Use competence, benevolence, and integrity as a guide.

Report out in 5 minutes





Phases of Group Development

Forming



Storming



Norming



Performing

Group Task

Define purpose

Determine objectives

“Best Behavior” / Inwardly focused

Competition for ideas

“What are we supposed to do?”

Determine & accept roles

Ease into roles and ground rules

Development of trust & consequences

Agenda setting

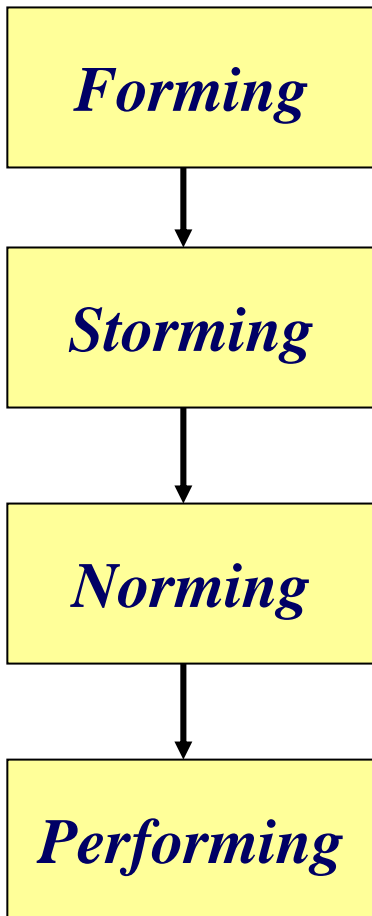
Comfort in assigned roles

Autonomous

Dissent expected and encouraged



Phases of Group Development



<u>Group Task</u>	<u>Evidence of Failure</u>
Define purpose Determine objectives “Best Behavior”	Group lacks focus Attends to wrong things Conflict over objectives
Competition for ideas “What are we supposed to do?” Determine & accept roles	Not completing tasks Conflict within group Confusion over roles
Ease into roles and ground rules Development of trust Agenda setting	Poor standards Conflict within group & w/instructor Late assignments
Comfort in assigned roles Autonomous Dissent expected and encouraged	Poor performance continues Conflicts go unresolved Sense that grades unfair



The Team Grid & Code of Conduct Exercise

Name, Phone, and Email Address	Things I Love to Talk About	Why I Am Taking This Class	Personal or Professional Achievement for 2007	On Teams, I tend to be a...

Code of Conduct: How should we handle poor performance on this team?



Purposes of “Completing the Grid”?

- Forming:
 - What does everyone expect to get out of this class?
 - Do we have 5 leaders? Entertainers?
 - How do I contact you?
- Storming
 - What role do I want to play? (Leader vs. Entertainer)
- Norming
 - How do we handle poor performance?
- Encourages the movement through the phases and the formation of trust



My Group from Hell

Take 5 minutes to trade stories with your neighbor about your “group from hell.”

How was the conflict resolved?

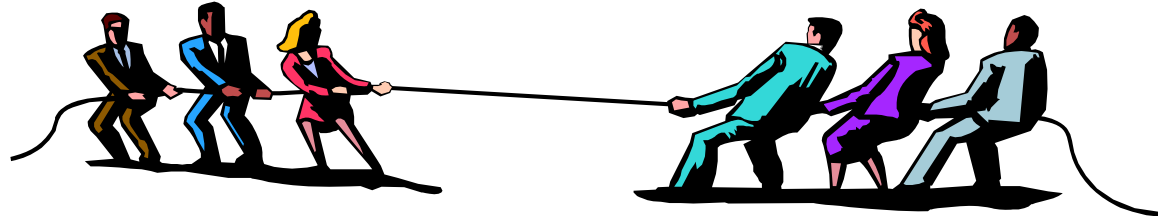




Resolving Conflicts

Level 1 - Preventing escalation

- Monitor groups for early signs of conflict
- Intervene on the spot
- Group evaluations
- Encourage spontaneous verbal feedback

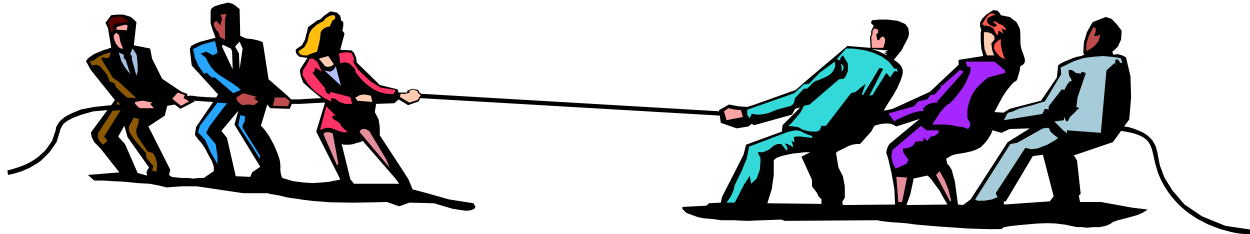




Resolving Conflicts

Level 2 - Empowering students

- **Listen to student concerns (all viewpoints)**
- **Encourage students to resolve the conflict**
- **Coach students on possible resolution strategies**

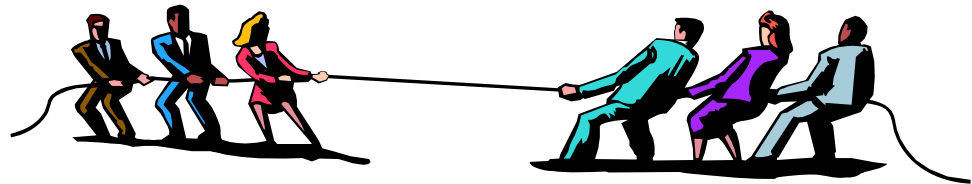




Resolving Conflicts

Level 3 - Serve as mediator

- Establish ground rules/review code of conduct
- Ask each student to present point of view while others listen
- Ask each student to define ideal outcome
- Review group ground rules
- Facilitate discussion of possible outcomes





Resolving Conflicts

Level 4 - Instructor intervention

- “I reserve the right to....” statements in the syllabus

Levels 1-3 are loosely based on:

Weider-Hatfield (1981) A unit in conflict management skills. *Communication Education* 30: 265-273.

Adler, Rosenfeld, and Towne (1983) *Interplay: The Process of Interpersonal Communication*. New York: Rinehart & Winston.



Final Suggestions for Using Groups

- Set expectations early
- Form heterogeneous groups
- Use permanent groups
- Rotate roles of responsibility
- Rely on group-selected ground rules
- Conduct peer evaluations