Group Process: What Every Public Health Professional Needs to Know

Nini DeBraganza, MSESS
Ph.D. Candidate
Dept of Clinical & Health Psychology
University of Florida
nini@ufl.edu

Objectives

- Gain a Basic Understanding into the Dynamics of Groups
- Learn About 3 Styles of Communication
- Observe Listening Skills
- Learn the Problem-Solving Approach

YOUR ULTIMATE GOAL: Develop competencies in health promotion using a multidisciplinary team approach

What is a Group?

- a collection of people who interact with one another, accept rights and obligations as members and who share a common identity.

- "two or more people..." (Goujon & Meja, 2002, p. 202)
- "at least three and no more than twelve or fifteen..." (Buchanan, 1994)
Criteria for a Group (Team)
- formal social structure
- face-to-face interaction
- 2 or more persons
- common fate
- common goals
- interdependence
- self-definition as group members
- recognition by others

Why Join a Group?
- Inclusion: the need to establish identity with others.
- Control: the need to exercise leadership and prove one's abilities.
- Affection: the need to develop relationships with people.

or REQUIRED for class/work ☺

Terms to Know
- Group Dynamics
  - The way groups and individuals act and react to changing circumstances (Lewin, 1947)
- Group Processes
  - Patterns of communication and coordination
  - Patterns of influence
  - Patterns of dominance (e.g. who leads, who defers)
  - Level of task focus vs social focus
  - How conflict is handled
- Group Cohesion
  - Sticking together
Group Development

- **Tubbs’s Theory (1995)**
  - Orientation
  - Conflict
  - Consensus
  - Closure

- **Fisher’s Model (1970)**
  - Orientation
  - Conflict
  - Emergence
  - Reinforcement

Group Development

- **Tuckman’s Theory (1965)**
  - Forming
  - Storming
  - Norming
  - Performing
  - Adjourning

![Bruce W. Tuckman](image)

Task Roles

- **Initiator-contributor**: Generates new ideas.
- **Information-seeker**: Asks for information about the task.
- **Opinion-seeker**: Asks for the input from the group about its values.
- **Information-giver**: Offers facts or generalization to the group.
- **Opinion-giver**: States his or her beliefs about a group issue.
- **Elaborator**: Explains ideas within the group, offers examples to clarify ideas.
- **Coordinator**: Shows the relationships between ideas.
- **Orienter**: Shifts the direction of the group’s discussion.
- **Evaluator-critic**: Measures group’s actions against some objective standard.
- **Energizer**: Stimulates the group to a higher level of activity.
- **Procedural-technician**: Performs logistical functions for the group.
- **Recorder**: Keeps a record of group actions.

(Benne & Sheats, 1948)
Pros and Cons of a Group Work

Are two heads better than one?

OR

Are there too many cooks in the kitchen?

Are Competitive Group Members Helpful or Harmful?

Is the best leader the person who is the most well liked?
Problems Can Arise in Group Work
- Conformity
- Group Think
- Social Loafing
  - bystander effect ("Genovese syndrome")

Communication

“How to NOT listen”
Body Language and Listening

- Maintain eye contact
- Lean slightly forward most of the time
- Give non-verbal feedback—smile or frown in accord with what is being said or in what you observe in the other person
- Use an open posture—do not cross arms or legs!
- Avoid touching the other person

3 Basic Communication Styles

Passive Assertive Aggressive

The Problem-Solving Approach
**Problem-Solving**

- The self-directed cognitive-behavioral process by which a person attempts to identify or discover effective or adaptive solutions for specific problems encountered in everyday living

(D'Zurilla & Nezu, 1999)

---

**Two Parts**

- **A positive mindset**
  - Viewing a problem as both something that can be solved and an opportunity to grow
- **Effective problem-solving skills**
  - Naming the problem
  - Finding possible solutions
  - Evaluating the choices
  - Putting a solution into action

---

**Step 1: A Positive Mindset**

- Believe that problems are bound to happen
- Be confident that you can solve problems
- Identify problems when they happen
- Don’t respond emotionally to problems
**Step 2: Define the Problem**
- Learn all available facts (Who? What? When?)
- Name the facts in clear, objective language
- Separate facts from assumptions
- Find out what makes the situation a problem (e.g., how it presents conflict with your meeting your goals)

**Step 3: Find Solutions**
- Quantity leads to quality
- Put off judgment until later
- Refine the possibilities
  - Combining and/or changing ideas already listed
  - Thinking about ideas that personal models or heroes might come up with
  - Visualizing solving the problem: new solutions may come to mind

**Step 4: Make Decisions**
- Think about how likely it is that
  - The solution will be effective
  - You can overcome the obstacles to solving the problem
  - You will actually carry out the solution
- Determine the effects of the possible solution on yourself and others
  - Positive and negative effects
- Analyze answers and compare all solutions
- Conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the alternatives
- Choose the alternative that would most effectively solve the problem
Step 5: Put It Into Action
- Carry out the solution
- Evaluate the results
- Reward yourself in some way if the solution worked
- Trouble shooting if the problem is not solved

Problem-Solving for Public Health
- Broader ‘audience’ to problem-solve for
- Do your homework!
  - Describe the public health importance of the health-related event
  - Describe the purpose and operation of the solution
  - Describe the resources needed to operate the solution

Public Health
- Prevention, Policy Development, and Population Health Surveillance
- Examples:
  - Vaccination Programs
  - Educational Campaigns
  - School Nutrition Programs
  - Safety Standards and Practices
  - Recommendations for Health Promotion
Help! We Have A Group Project!

- A 'process' is a sequence of events that lead to the achievement of an outcome
- Let's get started:
  - Get to know each other
  - Talk about your expectations
  - Organize yourselves; set a plan for what you want to accomplish
  - "Assign" roles
  - Communicate

As a Group Member...

- Come to each meeting prepared
- Set expectations
- Do your best to keep up with assigned tasks
- Take part in discussions
- Support your "teammates," be non-judgmental, keep confidentiality, and share "air time"
- Let your teammates know if you are having any problems
- Stay willing and open to changes

Matching Players with Positions

- What is the purpose of our presentation?
- Who is our audience?
- What are our individual strengths and weaknesses?
- What styles and skills can we draw from?
We must all hang together, or assuredly, we shall all hang separately.
- Benjamin Franklin