

HeartWood

Centre for Community Youth Development

Stages of *Group Development*

FORMING

What is going on at this stage?

- Group members are getting to know each other
- Individuals are discovering what they can expect from the group, program, project leaders
- Individual needs are more important than group needs
- Everyone is checking each other out as to membership position, leadership hierarchy

Group behaviour?

- Overly polite
- Group readily accepts leader's ideas/suggestions
- Cliques are starting to form

Your leadership?

- At this stage you need to be somewhat directive
- Participants will see you as their role model
- They will have expectations of you to support them

What can you do (need to do) to move beyond this stage?

- Organize icebreakers/get to know the group
- Express and align expectations (both for you and the group) and then use these to help the group set "community standards"
- Explain your role
- Clarify individual/group responsibilities
- Do activities/processes to help build a team

{Note: this resource has been circulating for years and its origin is unknown. Also, it was developed – we presume – primarily to describe the development process in groups of adults. So there needs to be some adaptation when it is applied to groups of young people. We've added a few notes to help facilitate that process}

STORMING

What is going on at this stage?

- Group members are feeling frustration due to unclear process, roles, responsibilities
- They are questioning your leadership
- Also, questioning the goals, or purpose, of the program
- Individual needs are still more important than group needs

Group behaviour?

- Group is challenging everything!
- Members are avoiding conflict resolution
- There is a notable low level of participation and responsibilities
- Members are threatening to quit, getting sick, giving up trying

Your leadership?

- Be directive and supportive (e.g., coaching)

What can you do (need to do) to move beyond this stage?

- Clarify goals
- Develop and practice communication skills (especially listening and sending I-messages)
- Continue activities/processes to help build a team
- Review community standards

NORMING

What is going on at this stage?

- Group members are gaining confidence and skills
- They are establishing their roles within group
- Self-discipline is increasing within the group
- The group climate improves along with an improvement in the group's ability to accomplish tasks

Group behaviour?

- There is obviously more equal participation
- Group members are co-operating to solve problems
- The group is taking on responsibilities

Your leadership?

- Position yourself to be high on support, low on being directive
- Delegate more responsibility

What can you do (need to do) to move beyond this stage?

- Share leadership with the group (without showing favoritism for certain individuals)
- Involve the group in taking action to accomplish tasks
- Re-evaluate goals
- Develop and practice communication skills

PERFORMING

What is going on at this stage?

- Group members have a better understanding of their own/each other's values
- There is greater tolerance and respect for differences
- Team work is being actively practiced
- The group is able to work through problems

Group behaviour?

- The group is being resourceful and creative
- There is lots of flexibility and compromise
- Close and supportive friendships are evident
- The group is efficient when it comes to task accomplishment

Your leadership?

- Position yourself to be low on support and low on being directive... low, not NO! (i.e., as group members "step up" to take on leadership roles, you need to "step back" to give them room, but not so far back that they are left with no support)

What can you do (need to do) to move beyond this stage?

- Evaluate group progression and sharing that knowledge with group
- Be aware of group's learning, sharing that as well
- Keep group motivated and maintain its momentum

RE-STORMING

What is going on at this stage?

- Group members may be feeling frustration about change (approaching end of project or facing the possibility of leaving the group)
- See Storming

Group behaviour?

- Group members seek to blame someone/something for frustration
- There is a notable preoccupation with food, sleeping, writing, i.e., personal needs
- The group becomes passive, less responsible

Your leadership?

- Be directive, while respecting group's experience with participatory and shared leadership

What can you do (need to do) to move beyond this stage?

- Redefine and/or set new goals
- Express and align current expectations (both for you and the group) and re-visit the community standards to make sure they are still valid
- Facilitate acceptance that the project is over

TRANSFORMING

What is going on at this stage?

- The group is breaking up, saying good bye {Note: in the context of a youth group, perhaps some members are leaving because of age}
- Everyone is closer than ever

Group behaviour?

- Group members are feeling apathy, withdrawal
- There is a loss of motivation for the group's needs, and more focus on the individual
- There appears to be fear of the future

Your leadership?

- You might need to be directive in order to push group members for their last good experience as a group
- If the group is continuing, but some members are moving on (e.g., older youth aging out), then the new group may need to re-set its community standards

What can you do (need to do) to move beyond this stage?

- Help the group reflect upon their experience and evaluate their accomplishments for the purpose of applying their skills and knowledge to new adventures in the future
- Recognize/celebrate accomplishments
- Say good-bye

AT EACH STAGE YOU NEED TO LOOK FOR...

▶ Participation

- Who participates and who does not?
- Who talks with whom? Are there cliques?
- Are there any shifts in participation of individuals?
- How are quiet people treated? How is silence interpreted?

▶ Influence

- Which members are influential? Which ones are not?
- Are there shifts in influence?
- Does anyone impose his or her views/values on others?
- Does anyone consistently avoid conflict?
- Does anyone make a point in involving others in group decisions?
- Does anyone express feelings/ideas openly without judging others?
- Are there group members who are withdrawn or uninvolved?
- Does anyone attempt to deal with conflict in a problem-solving way?

▶ Decision-Making Procedures

- Does the group jump from topic to topic without completion of the task?
- Do individuals or sub-groups make decisions without group consensus?
- Who supports other member's suggestions/decisions?
- What happens if individual contributions are not responded to by the group?
- ...if there is majority support for an idea but strong dissent from a vocal minority?

▶ **Task Functions & Maintenance Functions**

- Does anyone make, or ask for suggestions, on how to proceed in a task?
- Does anyone summarize what has been covered?
- Who keeps the group on target?
- Who helps others get in the discussion?
- How well are ideas getting across? Is everyone listening?
- How are ideas rejected?

▶ **Group Atmosphere**

- Who prefers a friendly, peaceful atmosphere?
- Who enjoys conflict & disagreement?
- Do any group members provoke others?

▶ **Feelings**

- What type of feelings do you see in the group?
- Does anyone block the expression of feelings by other group members?

▶ **Membership**

- Is there any sub-grouping?
- Are there insiders and outsiders?

