

Roleplaying with Group Dynamics

Understanding group dynamics is important for the group to be effective. It is important to be able to identify personal and team members' attitudes and behaviors that may be impeding productivity within the group. This activity is designed to exaggerate different challenging behaviors and attitudes that can impact the group. The intent is for group members to be able to identify these challenging behaviors and attitudes in both themselves and others in a real life setting later.

Steps:

1. Introduce the activity – Let the students know that you will be doing a role-playing activity about working in groups. Let them know that participants will be randomly given a role to act out during the activity.
 - a. This activity works best with 6-10 participants. If your group is a smaller one all students can participate, if it is a larger group ask for 8 volunteers and have the rest of the students participate as observers.
2. Once the group has been chosen, pass out the roles (see list of roles on the next page), making sure that each participant has one. Let them know that they should not share what their role is with other members of the group or the observers.
 - a. Once everyone has read their role, make sure that everyone is comfortable playing their role. If someone is uncomfortable give them the opportunity to get a new role or swap with one of the observers.
3. Introduce the task – this can be customized based upon the purpose of the organization that you work with, here are a couple of examples:
 - a. The group has to plan an event to help recruit new members
 - b. The group has to choose a topic and potential guest speaker to bring in for an upcoming meeting
 - c. The group has to create a new initiative to start on campus
4. Have the person with the “Group Leader” role start the conversation off then give the group 10-20 minutes to discuss the task and try to reach a conclusion. You can end the activity when the time is up or when the group starts to get silly. Ask the participants to read their roles aloud.
5. Debrief the activity.
 - a. If you had observers in the group, ask them first what they noticed, did they notice the barriers to the groups' productivity?
 - b. For the participants – how did they feel playing their role? How did their role contribute to the group's ineffectiveness?
 - c. Are there other challenging behaviors that you've encountered in groups before?
 - d. What techniques can be used to address these behaviors?
 - e. Are there some behaviors that might be more difficult to address? Why?
 - f. Can you think of a time when you might have displayed one of these behaviors in a group?

Roles:

Group Leader: You are the leader of the group, it is your job to steer the conversation and make sure that a conclusion is reached and that everyone's voice is heard.

Talkative Rambler: Your job is to talk too much and too long on topics that derail the conversation and ignore other members attempts to keep you on topic.

Bored Withdrawer: Your job is to not be an active participator in the group, use your body language to display your boredom and impatience with the meeting and if someone directly asks for your opinion be as brief and vague as possible.

Pessimist: Your job is to point out the flaws and all the ways that things could go wrong in the ideas presented by other members of the group.

Inflexible Arguer: Your job is to pick one idea and take a strong stance on it, not allowing the opinions of others change your mind. Even when your idea is dismissed constantly bring it up.

Restating Representative: When someone presents an idea or says a comment that was said clearly, it is your job to afterwards try to speak for them saying "What so-and-so really meant to say was..."

Curious Questioner: Your job is to derail the conversation by asking too many questions, you can do this by asking about unnecessary details or coming up with improbable hypotheticals.

Agreer: Your job is to agree with everything everyone says, even if a new idea completely contradicts with one that you previously agreed with.

Playful Clown: Your job is to make jokes, either to the whole group or the people next to you, at inappropriate times to disrupt the flow of conversation.