



Mastering Group Dynamics

45 contract hours

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Course description

This face-to-face course, "Mastering Group Dynamics," explores fundamental concepts such as group types, formation stages, and structural elements like roles and hierarchies. Students will develop essential skills in active listening, verbal and non-verbal communication, and ethical persuasion techniques. The curriculum covers negotiation strategies, constructive conflict management, and fostering collaborative environments through open communication and feedback. Additionally, students will learn to identify decision-making approaches and apply structured models to problem-solving processes. The course employs an active learning methodology, emphasizing interactive exercises, role-playing, and group simulations to facilitate practical skill development. Assessment is continuous, based on direct observation of participation in these practical group settings.

Course goals:

- **Define and Differentiate Core Concepts:** Students will be able to accurately define terms like "group" and "team," while also distinguishing between various types of groups, such as formal and informal.
- **Analyze Group Structure:** Students will learn to identify and analyze key structural elements, including roles, status, and hierarchies within a group.
- **Master Communication Techniques:** A primary goal is to demonstrate active listening and effectively utilize both verbal and non-verbal communication.
- **Manage Conflict and Negotiation:** Students will learn to distinguish between negotiation styles and apply constructive approaches to resolving disagreements.
- **Apply Structured Decision-Making:** The course aims to teach students how to use structured models to guide a group through problem-solving and evaluate the quality of their decisions.

Detailed Syllabus

UNIT 1: Basic Rules and Definitions

In this unit, students will start by defining core concepts such as "group," "team," "group dynamics," and "norm". They will then learn to identify and differentiate between various group types, including formal, informal, primary, and secondary groups, while exploring their unique characteristics. The course also covers the recognition of group formation stages, guiding students through the typical development process of forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. Finally, students will explain the importance of rules, articulating why clear norms are essential for maintaining effective group functioning and overall cohesion.

UNIT 2: Role making, role taking

Moving into the structural side of the course, we will explore how a group is organized and how that structure influences its success. Students will learn to identify and analyze key structural elements like roles, status, and hierarchies. We will then evaluate the impact of different roles—such as task, maintenance, and dysfunctional roles—on overall group productivity and dynamics. Understanding cohesion is also central, as students will explain the factors that strengthen or weaken a group's bond and how this affects performance. Finally, students will apply this knowledge to propose practical structural improvements, suggesting adjustments to enhance both efficiency and member satisfaction.

UNIT 3: Mimicking sayings

Building on those structural insights, we will focus on the essential skills for effective interaction. In this section, students will demonstrate active listening techniques to ensure they accurately understand and respond to the messages of others. They will also learn to employ clear, concise, and appropriate verbal communication during group discussions to share their ideas effectively. Beyond words, students will identify and interpret non-verbal cues, such as body language and tone, which often carry significant meaning in group settings. Finally, students will learn to recognize common communication barriers and apply specific strategies to overcome them, ensuring the group stays connected and productive.

UNIT 4: Two truths and one lie

we will examine the power of influence within a group setting. Students will start by identifying and explaining fundamental principles of persuasion, such as reciprocity, scarcity, and authority. Once these foundations are understood, they will learn to ethically apply various persuasion techniques to guide group members toward a common goal. The course also emphasizes critical thinking, as students will analyze and evaluate the effectiveness of persuasive arguments presented by others. Most importantly, students will develop the skills

to recognize and defend against manipulative or unethical persuasion tactics, ensuring the integrity of the group's decision-making process

UNIT 5: Shut up, I drive

In this unit the focus shifts to managing group interactions and resolving tension. Students will learn to differentiate negotiation styles, such as distributive and integrative, and determine when to use each approach effectively. Building on this, they will apply basic negotiation strategies to reach mutually beneficial agreements within a group setting. A key skill developed here is the ability to foster collaborative environments by implementing techniques that promote teamwork and shared goals among members. Finally, students will learn to manage conflict constructively by identifying its sources and applying specific approaches to resolve disagreements in a way that strengthens the group's bond

UNIT 6: I fess that I am...

In this final section of the communication module, we focus on the psychological safety and integrity of the group. Students will learn how to contribute to a safe communication space that encourages open and honest dialogue among all members. They will also practice delivering and receiving constructive feedback effectively, a vital skill for improving both group performance and interpersonal relationships. The course prepares students to address difficult conversations, teaching them how to initiate and navigate sensitive topics while maintaining a high level of respect and professionalism □. Finally, students will be able to explain the benefits of transparency in group settings and identify practical ways to foster it to ensure everyone remains aligned and informed

UNIT 7: Lost at the sea

In this final module, students will focus on the mechanics of collective choice. They will learn to identify and compare various group decision-making approaches, such as consensus, majority rule, and autocratic styles, to understand when each is most effective. Building on this, students will apply a structured decision-making model to guide a group through a complete problem-solving process. They will also learn to evaluate the quality of group decisions based on specific criteria like effectiveness, fairness, and member commitment. Finally, students will develop the ability to recognize common biases in group decision-making and propose strategic interventions to mitigate their negative impact, ensuring more objective and robust outcomes.

Methodology

This course will employ an active learning methodology, focusing heavily on interactive exercises, role-playing, and group simulations to facilitate practical skill development. Regular peer feedback sessions and self-reflection activities will be integrated to promote continuous improvement in communication, collaboration, and decision-making abilities. The emphasis

will be on hands-on application, ensuring students can effectively navigate and lead diverse group dynamics.

Grading System

Evaluation will be continuous throughout the course, assessing students' ability to apply learned concepts through direct observation of their participation in practical group settings. Performance will be measured by demonstrated proficiency in communication and conflict resolution skills during class discussions and interactive exercises. Students will also be evaluated on their capacity to reflect on their own group contributions and identify areas for personal growth through facilitated group debriefs. Active engagement in collaborative activities and insightful contributions to class discussions will serve as key indicators of learning outcomes.

Bibliographical References

Basic references

- Forsyth, D. R. (2019). *Group dynamics* (7th ed.). Cengage Learning
- Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, F. P. (2017). *Joining together: Group theory and group skills* (12th ed.). Pearson
- Levi, D., & Askay, D. A. (2021). *Group dynamics for teams* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications
- Corey, M. S., Corey, G., & Corey, C. (2018). *Groups: Process and practice* (10th ed.). Cengage Learning.
- Brown, R., & Pehrson, S. (2020). *Group processes: Dynamics within and between groups* (3rd ed.). Wiley-Blackwell.
- Fiske, S. T., & Taylor, S. E. (2021). *Social cognition: From brains to culture* (4th ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Aronson, J., & Aronson, E. (Eds.). (2020). *Readings about the social animal* (12th ed.). Worth Publishers.
- Cialdini, R. B. (2021). *Influence: The psychology of persuasion* (New & expanded ed.). Harper Business.

Additional readings

- Allredge, C. T., Burlingame, G. M., Yang, C., & Rosendahl, J. (2021). Alliance in group therapy: A meta-analysis. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 25(1), 13–40.
- Beauchamp, M. R., McEwan, D., & Wierts, C. (2020). Psychology of group dynamics: Key considerations and recent developments. In G. Tenenbaum & R. C. Eklund (Eds.), *Handbook of sport psychology* (4th ed., pp. 341–359). John Wiley & Sons.
- Forsyth, D. R. (2020). Group-level resistance to health mandates during the COVID-19 pandemic: A groupthink approach. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 24(3), 139–152.
- Forsyth, D. R. (2021). Recent advances in the study of group cohesion. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 25(3), 213–228.

- Gass, R. H., & Seiter, J. S. (2026). *Persuasion: Social influence and compliance gaining* (8th ed.). Routledge.
- Lee, G. C., Platow, M. J., Haslam, S. A., & Reicher, S. D. (2021). Facilitating goals, tasks, and bonds via identity leadership: Understanding the therapeutic working alliance as the outcome of social identity processes. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 25(3), 195–212.
- Marmarosh, C. L., Forsyth, D. R., Strauss, B., & Burlingame, G. M. (2020). The psychology of the COVID-19 pandemic: A group-level perspective. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 24(3), 122–138.
- Tasca, G. A. (2021). Twenty-five years of Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice: Introduction to the special issue. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 25(3), 185–194.