

# Group Dynamics

[The Open Community](https://theopencommunity.talentlms.com/unit/view/id:2346) in Ireland have some great resources about building a strong team. You can watch the full module here:

<https://theopencommunity.talentlms.com/unit/view/id:2346>

(It is free to access, but you will need to create an account).

Below you can read a summary.

## Group Dynamics

It is very normal for groups to face tensions and frustrations together. We also know that all volunteers have the same goal – to welcome and support a vulnerable family. Understanding the theories of group dynamics and conflict resolution can help us to:

- Sense-Make: understand what can sometimes seem to be random developments in group dynamics
- Contextualise – feel a little more “normal” when things may take a strange or difficult turn, and recognise that this is often a usual part of the life cycle of a group.
- Plan and Resolve – developing plans for identifying and navigating challenging times.

## “Forming, Storming, Norming”

You may have heard of a model of Group Dynamics before, that is commonly referred to as “Forming, Storming, Norming”.



Every group is unique. But understanding this model could help to identify and reference what might be happening in our group – and this could help you to work through the challenges.

## Stage One: Forming

Features	Challenges
Excitement, eagerness & optimism Getting stuck into the task Assessing the situation Defining goals Establishing & testing rules Feeling out others in the group	Confusion Uncertainty Anxiety

## Stage Two: Storming

Features	Challenges
Getting organised Reality check – things may be more challenging than expected Critical engagement Roles reviewed	Disagreements – how, what Leadership struggles Tensions and hostilities

### *How to overcome difficulties in the “Norming” & “Storming” stages?*

Collaboratively develop and implement the following:

#### 1. Group vision and values

This is the way we choose to be together. For example, you may choose “Respect” as a group value. But what does this mean to you? For one person this might mean being allowed to talk through my ideas. For another, this might mean getting out of meetings on time. So, it is important for the group to explore and agree together.

#### 2. Role Descriptions, which include:

- The duration of the role
- Responsibilities to the group and family
- Expectations of time commitment.

#### 3. A group contract, that includes:

- Clear decision-making structures

*Are decisions made by certain individuals or subgroups? By majority vote? By consensus? Does the voting process depend on the decision to be taken?*

- Process for resolving disagreements

*What is your complaints procedure? If questions or concern arise, how does a group member bring them to the group? Are certain questions and concerns raised to the whole group, certain individuals, or no one, depending on privacy and confidentiality issues?*

- Agree meeting agenda or attendance

*How often will the sponsorship group meet? Will the frequency change depending on the sponsorship circumstances? Who will be expected to participate in the meetings?*

- Agreed standards for chairing and keeping minutes

*Will notes be taken? If so, by whom? How will they be shared with the group?*

- How general wellbeing and care is kept on agenda (e.g. Social events)

## Stage Three: Norming

Features	Challenges
Expectations and reality are more aligned Roles are more stable Trust is established People are cooperating	As goals are being achieved, less attention is paid to agreed rules, standards ,etc. Things can slip

## Stage Four: Performing

Features	Challenges
Performing well and problem solving together Strong sense of team commitment Focus on goals Flexibility and openness of tasks	Boredom Disillusionment

***How to overcome difficulties in the “Norming” & “Performing” stages?***

Remember the strong structures you developed. For example, your agreed agendas. Continue to have interpersonal check ins. Have a process to acknowledge achievements & celebrate goals achieved.

## Stage Five: Adjourning

Features	Challenges
When a group comes to an end. Sense of achievement and gratitude Timely disengagement	Untimely disengagements (people leaving too early) Anxiety of separation

### *How to overcome difficulties in the “Adjourning” stage?*

- Ensure that you work through a clear, organised transition plan with family (we have resources available for this).
- Have a scheduled discussion about whether the group will continue – if so, how, and what will your new goals be?
- Have an event to celebrate achievements
- Have a structured debrief to help members at the end

## “Problem Behaviours”

It is very important to have good self-awareness as a group member. Research shows that, on the one hand, some of us might be a hardest critics. But we are also more likely to see flaws in other people than in ourselves.

The most important thing we can do in conflict resolution is to look at ourselves, and what we might be bringing in to a difficult interpersonal situation. This is the thing we can control.

Waldroop & Butler have identified “Problem Behaviours” – i.e. archetypes of problem behaviours that each of us could bring to a group.

As you read through these, ask:

Are there times in situations where I can see myself in this? If I see myself as this archetype, what can I do about it?

## The Hero

*The person who goes above and beyond to get the job done.*

Strengths	Weaknesses	It it's you?
Productive Effective	Lack of team work Unempathetic Pushes themselves and others too hard	Remember to balance the goal of shared accomplishments and team work with achieving goals

## The Meritocrat

*Believes they know what is best and they do as well as care less for "how" is best.*

Strengths	Weaknesses	It it's you?
Believe in good ideas Strong principles Gets good evidence	Lack understanding of politics and feelings, and the importance of these things in moving things forward	It's as important to focus on <i>how</i> things are done, as people can be empowered to find, share and implement good ideas

## The Bulldozer

*Accomplishes their goal at all costs*

Strengths	Weaknesses	If it's you?
Get things done	Can be insensitive, intimidating and miss talent and values of others	Set a goal to engage others and pay attention to your impact on them. Seek feedback and apologies if you hurt people.

## The Pessimist

*Cynical, and question developments that may involve risk or change*

Strengths	Weaknesses	If it's you?
Care deeply about their group and the project, can be helpful for identifying risks.	Can inhibit group creativity, stifle enthusiasm and micro manage	Try to listen carefully to your fellow group members. Seek more information before making your mind up.

		Try to let go of your cynicism and trust fellow members
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## The Rebel

*Questions authority and people who represent authority*

Strengths	Weaknesses	If it's you?
Not afraid to challenge authority or status quo	May question or go against the grain without clear reason or rationale.	"Going against" is vital if things are unfair or may cause harm. Try to conserve working against the group to times where it's really needed.

## The Home Run Hitter

*People pleaser looking to impress*

Strengths	Weaknesses	If it's you?
Can be driven and motivated	Can take on too much, overstep their boundaries, or make bad choices for the team	Try to focus on working as a team with other group members, being patient if people aren't moving as fast as you and find out how to help others

## Questions...

Who do you identify with?

What strengths do you bring to your team?

What do you commit to doing differently?

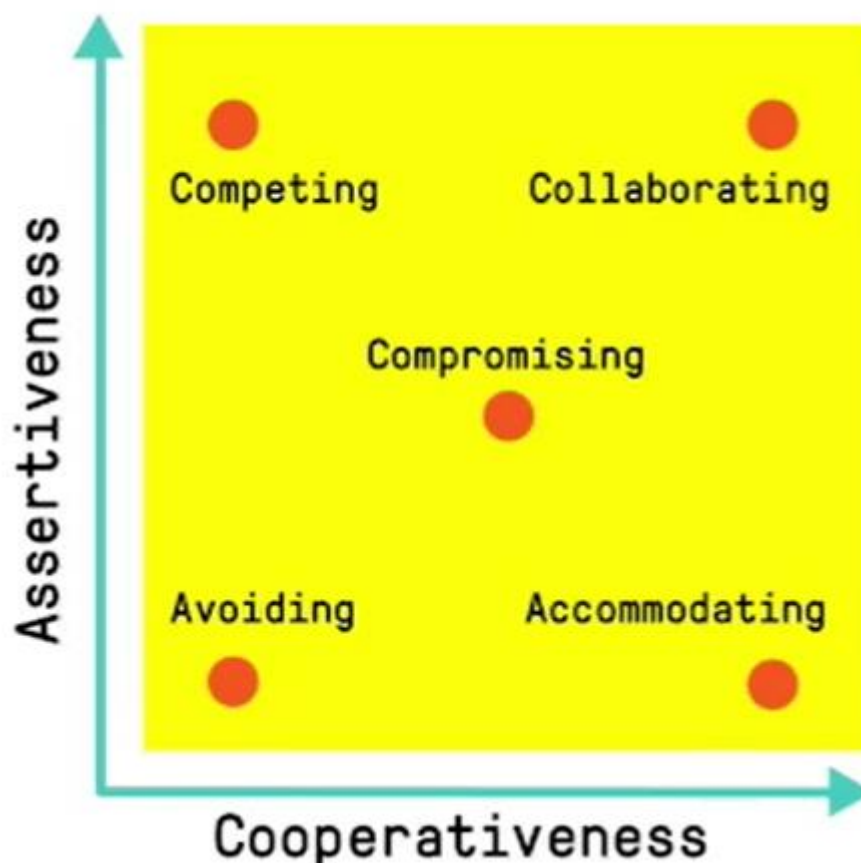
## **Conflict Avoidance**

Avoiding conflict is a natural human behaviour. But, if you work hard to address issues, and repair an underlying tension or conflict, it can bring your group together even more, and help to build greater trust.

Very often, a conflict arises when two or more people come with their passion and their creativity and are driven to achieve a goal. If our ideas differ, we may clash with one another. But, if we address our differences well, and work together, our combined passion, ideas and enthusiasm can lead to amazing outcomes.

## **“Kilman’s Conflict Resolution Techniques”**

Depending on the situation, each of us use different strategies when addressing conflict- these run on a scale of assertiveness and cooperativeness. You will recognise yourself in all of them at different times.



<b>Competing</b>	Assertive and uncooperative. Pursuing our own goals at the expense of others
<b>Accommodating</b>	Unassertive and Cooperative. We are self-sacrificing and neglect our own goals to satisfy the needs of others
<b>Avoiding</b>	Unassertive and uncooperative. Focusses on neither their own concerns or that of another person
<b>Compromising</b>	Moderate in assertiveness and cooperation – focusses on finding an acceptable solution without doing the hard work of collaboration.
<b>Collaboration</b>	High levels of assertiveness and cooperation. Working hard to fully understand issue from both sides and finding a solution that works for all.

Each of these strategies will be important at different times.

For example, sometimes we do need to be unassertive in order to sustain a relationship, and avoiding conflict will help the group get to where you need to go.

But, when a group is working well, magic can really happen if you make an effort towards **Collaboration**.

What can you take from this model that will help you to better manage conflict in your group?