

Peer Support Tip Sheet: Tuckman's Stages of Group Development

This tip sheet briefly introduces Bruce Tuckman's Stages of Group Development which PeerNetBC incorporates into much of our work. Throughout the year PeerNetBC offers training sessions about group development and other facilitation topics. To learn more, give us a call!

The Five Stages of Group Development

In 1965 psychologist Bruce Tuckman first published his theory of the stages of group development – Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjourning. Understanding these steps helps teams and facilitators manage group dynamics more effectively. Groups may successfully navigate the first three or four stages yet regress when new participants or facilitators arrive or when someone leaves.

Forming

New groups or teams often bring together many people who don't know anyone else in the group. Participants need to learn about each other's motivations and skills and learn to work as a team. Icebreakers and getting-to-know-you activities allow participants to be sure that they have similar hopes and goals.

Storming

Team members move out of polite "forming" behaviour, expressing divergent ideas or challenging others' ideas. Some groups move quickly through this stage; other may disintegrate if they can't stop 'storming'. Facilitators try to keep the group safe for everyone and mediate some issues while allowing the freedom to explore contentious topics and grow as a group.

Norming

Team members start to think of others' needs and develop an effective ways of working together. Their motivation increases and they begin to trust each other as the group and its goals become more familiar. Facilitators' work revolves around keeping groups on track.

Performing

A 'Performing' team is highly focused and efficient. Decision-making processes work smoothly with minimal conflict and participants do not take things personally when ideas are challenged. People understand everyone's roles and accept responsibility.

Adjourning

Adjourning ties up loose ends and allows groups to celebrate their successes while recognizing their losses. Both negative and positive behaviours may emerge as the end date approaches. A new focus for an established group may rekindle the group development process all over again.