

Mental Health Resources

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Let's look at working in project groups

Your learning journey at NYP involves working on group projects with other students which can exert influences that are either fulfilling or detrimental to your sense of well-being. Hence, this section aims to supplement your existing repertoire and resources to manage and navigate working in group projects.

But first, watch the following for a really crisp description typical of group projects.



UBC LEARN. "Working in Groups." *YouTube*, 31 Aug. 2016,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=C1p_kFR5_jc.a

Consider the following example scenarios: air flights, concerts, game development, mall construction, military operations, moviemaking, musicals, orchestras, wedding banquets, soccer matches, surgeries, theatre plays etc

There are other countless examples but what do the above scenarios have in common? They all involve PEOPLE working on a PROJECT delivering products or performances of some form that are impressive in their own unique ways.

What exactly are the ingredients that contribute to the success of these PEOPLE and their PROJECTS that can apply to your project groups? We can look at the M.E.A.T that makes up a PROJECT as well as that which makes up the PEOPLE.

A) M.E.A.T for Project - Mission, Execution, Adding Value, Tools

MISSION - These are the project requirements that usually provide the general direction for your final product or performance.

Ask the group these 3 questions

1. Do we have a clear understanding of the project expectations?
2. Do we have a shared understanding of the final product or performance?
3. Is our progress aligned to the project's requirements?

Revisiting the mission helps re-align and re-focus the group so that less time is wasted with more effort relevantly re-directed.

EXECUTION - This refers to PROCESSES that need to happen to complete your project.

Work out the processes with the group:

1. Outline the specifics and details of the processes for greater clarity of tasks that need to be done
2. Involve discussions and decisions early on regarding what needs to be done, by who, by when, at/from where and how so that a PLAN of execution is clearly laid out
3. Includes CONTINGENCY/ BACKUP plans too
4. Work out deadlines to provide buffer time for troubleshooting and refining
5. Prepare to review and readjust roles and tasks along the way.

As a saying by Winston Churchill goes, 'He who fails to plan is planning to fail'.

ADDING VALUE – This is where you exercise ownership and responsibility of learning to deliver the tasks in the project and also engage in self-improvement.

At a group level, a simple framework that can be used to review for improvements to the project is

1. What went well/ is going well with our project group so far?
2. What went wrong/ is making things worse with our progress in the project so far?
3. What would work better for all of us in terms of improving on this project?

A soldier that personally trains harder is likely to add to the increased success of a mission as much as a soccer player making personal efforts to level up his skills with the ball is likely to contribute to winning.

TOOLS - Tools are the logistics (offline and online) to ensure project tasks can be managed and executed more efficiently and effectively - communications, research, documenting, rehearsals, editing, recording, facilities etc.

What matters is that your project group comes to an agreement on which tools are best suited towards the purposes of the project.

B) M.E.A.T for PEOPLE – Members, Empathy, Aiding Value, Togetherness

MEMBERS - Each one of you are assets but you may not know what contributing strengths other members bring to the group. Helpful questions can include:

1. What do you like doing and how would you like to best contribute in regard to the project?
2. What do you dislike doing but are good at that can be potentially useful for the project?
3. What are some things about group project experiences that you find really challenging/ upsetting?

It pays to spend time at the start of the group project to get to know each other better in relation to experiences, roles, and responsibilities within the group project. Doing this early can inform planning and reduce conflicts later.

EMPATHY - This involves 2 inter-related elements: communication and conflict. By virtue of being learners you are placed in positions where you are better able to understand the challenges faced by fellow learners. Members who experience psychological safety in a group tend to contribute more.

Questions useful for the project group to explore communication and conflict include

1. How will our project group choose to handle differences/ diversity of opinions in this project?
2. What can our group do to ensure honest conversations about the project can take place?
3. How will our group ensure that difficult but honest conversations by members are welcomed?
4. What reassurances can we give to each other regarding honest and/or difficult conversations?

'In our sameness we connect, in our differences we grow' – Virginia Satir

Disagreement is not dislike and diversity of views can serve to expand our worldview and perspectives. Mutual trust and respectfulness will serve your project group well in getting through choppy tides.



DocuThesis. "The Secrets to High Performing Teams." *YouTube*, 2 Dec 2010, www.youtube.com/watch?v=jj92ak9Tfc0

AIDING VALUE – This has to do with compassionate contribution to the growth and success of your group members – by looking beyond your own needs to support the growth of other members and appreciate that the value of the end product or performance is contingent on the contributions of all members.

1. Ask yourself, how else can you share/ contribute to the growth of knowledge, skills and growth of your peers in the same project group?

TOGETHERNESS – For every progress, effort or milestone made in the group project, it is a shared experience. Make effort to celebrate as well as acknowledge thanks and express gratitude frequently to your project members no matter how big or small their efforts are. Take time to bond outside of the work as closer friendships do enhance morale and motivation to contribute more to the projects, including encouragement of creativity and comfort in expressions.

There you have it! Using a food metaphor, having these double M.E.A.T portions (reflected in the table below) in your project group will pave the way for them towards being a high performance T.E.A.M. (an anagram for MEAT that also stands for Together, Everyone Achieves More)

PROJECT	PEOPLE
Mission	Members
Execution	Empathy
Adding Value	Aiding Value
Tools	Togetherness

The video below brings together the key ideas covered above



Top Tips for Group Work Projects." YouTube,
www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwjHHdd9s04



"Are We a Team?" checklist (Levin & Kent, 2001)

Check off the statements that accurately represent your group. Be prepared to discuss your choices afterwards with your group. Also consider ways to improve your group's functioning, especially as it relates to the statements you did not check off.

- We all show equal commitment to our objective.
- We all take part in deciding how work should be allocated.
- We are committed to helping each other learn.
- We acknowledge good contributions from team members.
- We handle disagreements and conflicts constructively within the team.
- We are able to give constructive criticism to one another and to accept it ourselves.
- We all turn up to meetings and stay to the end.
- We are good at making sure that everyone knows what's going on.

- When one of us is under pressure, others offer to help him or her.
- We trust each other.
- We remain united even when we disagree.
- We support each other to outsiders.
- We feel comfortable and relaxed with one another.

Levin, P., and Kent, I. (2001). Draft manual on teamwork tutoring: 28 questions and answers for academics on teamwork in universities.