



Group Dynamic Phases

Each group is unique! Nevertheless, there are some basic principles about how groups function in a generic process, whether they are private or work related groups. Understanding the basic principles of group evolution can help to facilitate and enable groups (Stania/Schnell)

In the academic literature you can find plenty group-development/ group-evolution models. With our experience we tend to use the model exploring group-development by Eberhard Stahl. He describes a model with five different group stages, based and developed on the model of Tuckman with four phases.

The five phases of group development are: forming, storming, norming, performing and reforming.

It is important to point out that the process of this model is a circular rather than linear. This means that a group evolution can happen in phases that can be combined, mixed or often reveal more.

Phase	What it means
Forming	<p>A key aspect of this phase is to get to know each other and to gain a first impression of the others</p> <p>The goal and evolutionary effort of this phase is to satisfy the group's safety needs and to build some first conventions.</p> <p>Typical pitfalls include a lack of specific definition and clear purpose. This can result in chaos and frustration, a lack of orientation, and a lack of clarity about first steps.</p>
Storming	<p>The key aspect of this phase is to show yourself as individuals and stage your point of view to find out how the group will work in the future.</p> <p>The goal and evolutionary effort of this phase is to reveal discrepancies, to understand together the possibilities and pitfalls and to start finding a way how to work with each other.</p> <p>Typical pitfalls of this phase are confusion about the 'how' and 'why' of the collaboration with each other, a lack of a code of conduct and collaboration, conflicting opinions.</p>



Norming	<p>A key aspect of this phase is to decide how to work together?, on what to focus and to do this in a way that fosters collaboration and a sense of equitable teamwork.</p> <p>The goal and evolutionary effort of this phase is to decide on actionable and doable goals and ways to work together in order to agree on the next steps and how to tackle them.</p> <p>Typical pitfalls of this phase include common agreements that do not work for some individual team members, ending the storming phase too fast which, in turn, ends the norming phase too abruptly, a lack of leadership in decision making for difficult situations.</p>
Performing	<p>A key aspect of this phase is to work with each other, to be engaged and to show both individual and group effort.</p> <p>The goal and evolutionary effort of this phase is to find a good, cooperative structure and to stabilize the group, to build trust and find structures that helps the working process.</p> <p>Typical pitfalls of this phase include a lack of individual freedom, interruptions and conflicts, the fear of failing and too much pressure from the group, the manager etc.</p>
Reforming	<p>A key aspect of this phase is to reflect on how the process went, to do some reorientation and give feedback to each other and the group.</p> <p>The goal and evolutionary effort of this phase is to find the best way to close the session, and determine if the group will continue working together to discover ideas for the next iteration. The effort required will also include finding out if the group contract is working and if it needs to be adjusted.</p> <p>Typical pitfalls of this phase include group members not participating in the reflection or there being no room for constructive feedback, trust and communication of frustration.</p>

Source/Literature:

STAHL, Eberhard (2010): Dynamik in Gruppen. Handbuch der Gruppenleitung. 2. Auflage. Beltz Verlag. Weinheim.