

Walking With God's People
Training Materials for Group Facilitators

SESSION TWO

How Groups Work: 90mins



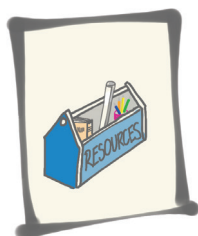
ERTP | Eastern Region Training Partnership
<http://www.ertp.org.uk>



TIMINGS FOR THE SESSION:

These timings are suggested for a 90 minute session. If your group is happy to go to 120 minutes then either the time for the core learning sessions can be extended or you could build in a short break midway.

■ Worship	5 mins
■ Résume of Inter-sessional Activity	10 mins
■ What makes for a good group experience	20 mins
■ What the theories to say	20 mins
■ The Christian Group	20 mins
■ Reflection & Inter-sessional Activity	10 mins
■ Prayer	5 mins



FOR THIS SESSION YOU WILL NEED:

1. Bibles or copies of the New Testament readings listed below
2. The Handouts on TIM and Tuckman
3. Flip Chart or large sheets of paper & felt tip pens (possibly some blu-tac)
4. Everyone to have their Learning Journal with them

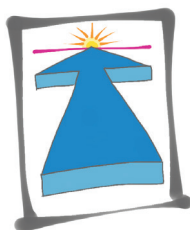
AT THE START OF THE SESSION YOU:

- Might consider asking someone to be ready to finish the session with prayer

5
MINS

OPENING WORSHIP

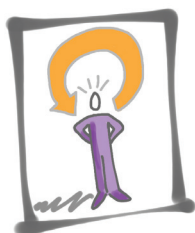
Start with an opening song and prayer. Alternatively, there could be a moment of quiet reflection focusing on a short piece of music, an idea, object or a picture followed by a short prayer.



LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Consider how preferred learning styles can help or hinder effective learning in groups
- Evaluate the factors that can lead to good or poor group sessions
- Know what the research says about how groups work
- Explore what NT teaching has to say that might affect how we behave in groups
- Identify some of the skills and approaches a Facilitator will need to help a group run well

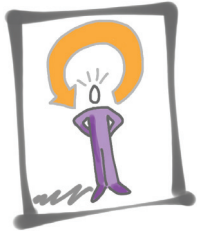
RECAP & REVIEW



In our first session, we looked at how individuals learn and types of learner. We also looked at examples from the Gospels of how Jesus helped some people learn. We thought about the implications of learning styles and approaches for Facilitators when planning group sessions.

10
MINS

RÉSUMÉ OF THE LEARNING STYLE INTER-SESSIONAL ACTIVITY



1. **Ask** participants to share what they have learned about their own learning styles from doing the inter-sessional task. You could either whizz round the group asking each person to share what they have learned about themselves or just ask for one or two volunteers if time is of the essence.
2. **Remind** everyone that we are a mix of the styles, but that one normally dominates.
3. **Ask** what a Facilitator might need to do to plan to cater for having a variety of learning styles in the group. **Capture** the group's ideas on a flip chart.

20
MINS

WHAT MAKES FOR A GOOD GROUP EXPERIENCE?

Explain to the group that we now want to focus on how groups work and what can make them enjoyable or not so successful. We are going to start by working from our own experience.

Ask participants to split into pairs (or triads) and to think about groups they have been part of – this could be at work, church or any context – and to jot down some thoughts about:

1. When things went really well in the group. Why did it go so well and why was it so enjoyable? What did the leader of the group do to make it go well?
2. When groups did not go so well. Why wasn't the group enjoyable? What was the problem? What was the leader of the group doing that contributed to things not going so well?

After 10 minutes or so **ask for feedback** from the pairs or triads on what helps a good group work well and why they sometimes don't work so well (allow 5-6 mins for this). What was the leader of the group doing that helped the group go well? Try to capture the ideas on a flip chart so everyone can see them.

20
MINS

WHAT THE THEORIES SAY

As we saw in the first activity lots happens in groups – some good, some not so good. In this section of our session we are going to look at some ways of understanding what groups are about.



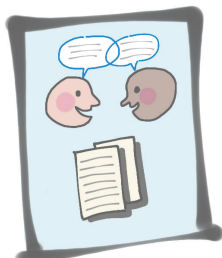
- 1 Introduce the group to the TIM (Task, Individual, and Maintenance) Fact Sheet. As there are two main theories to review in this part of the session it will probably be necessary for you to work through the sheet with the group and just give them the facts as an input session.
- 2 Use the second Session 2 Handout to introduce the group to Bruce Tuckman's views on the four developmental sequences in groups: storming, forming, norming and performing. Note that he subsequently added a fifth stage called 'adjourning and transforming'.

If time allows, ask the group what they think these two theories might mean in terms of the skills and behaviours of a group leader or facilitator.

20
MINS

THE CHRISTIAN GROUP

For this part of the session you will need either to have asked everyone to have brought a Bible with them or to have printed off enough copies of the relevant passages for people to use in three smaller groups. (Experience has shown that it is quicker and more convenient to have the passages printed out. Also, everyone then has the same version.)



The New Testament passages we are using are:

1. Romans 12 v1-21 (1-12)
2. I Corinthians 12 v12-31 (12-26)
3. Philippians 2 v1-18 (1-13)

Place participants in one of three groups (10 minute activity) and ask them to:

1. Read the passage
2. Ask the group to answer question 'What is there in this reading that would help ensure that the experience of being in a Christian group is as good as it could be?' They will need to jot down some notes and ask someone in the group to feed back shortly on their behalf to the whole group.
3. Suggest that the group looks for key phrases and ideas in the reading and then looks back at their learning from earlier in the session (my previous experience of groups, TIM, Tuckman) to help them with their thinking

After 10 minutes in the smaller group draw everyone back together so that you can capture key ideas from each group onto a flip chart. You will need each group to:

- Say briefly what their NT reading was about
- Share the main points of the group's findings on what the NT teaches that might help a group go really well.



In a sense, this section is about how the fruits of the Spirit can work out through each one of us both in our daily lives and, specifically, when we are either leading or taking part in a group. What attitudes and behaviours that might get in the way in a group situation do we need God to work on in our lives?

10
MINS

FINAL REFLECTION & INTER-SESSIONAL ACTIVITY

Ask group members to use their Learning Journal or Log to note down:

1. Something that has stood out for them today about what makes groups work well.
2. Something they have learned about what can damage a group's enjoyment and sense of fulfilment. How can this be avoided?
3. What they think they have learned today about what a Facilitator needs to do to help a group go really well.
4. What they have observed that helped today's session go well



After a few minutes ask if anyone would like to share some of their thoughts about any or all of the four areas listed on page 4.

For the Inter-sessional Activity ask group members to spend time thinking about:

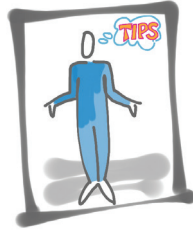
1. What makes someone a really good Facilitator
2. What sorts of behaviours and attitudes would hinder someone being a good Facilitator
3. What experience and skills they think they have already that could help them as a Facilitator

Say that it would be very helpful if everyone could come back next time ready to share with the rest of the group their thoughts on all three points.

If you would like to do so, ask participants to complete the feedback sheet before they leave.

CLOSING PRAYER

As you finish the session you could conclude by either leading with a short prayer said by yourself, or by asking for a volunteer to do so. You could, of course, have a few moments of open prayer if it feels right. It is suggested that you finish by saying the Grace together or the Lord's Prayer.



WHAT MAKES FOR A GOOD GROUP EXPERIENCE?

Because of time constraints we have suggested that participants are put into pairs to discuss what has gone well or gone badly in groups to which they have belonged in the past.

In principle, where time allows, an approach called 'Think, Pair, Share' which is often used in schools is a really good way of engaging people in taking responsibility for their own learning and breaking down some of the inhibitors to engaging in discussion. In this approach you start by giving each person a few minutes thinking time on their own before putting them into a pair or triad. The pair or triad activity then helps develop active listening and evaluation skills. Finally, sharing with the whole group gives a purpose to the activity, and creates a sense of pace as there is a deadline to meet. This active learning fits well with what is known about how adults learn and is generally felt to be enjoyable and worthwhile.

WHAT THE THEORIES SAY

An alternative approach to the Facilitator simply presenting the facts from the handouts on TIM and Tuckman etc. is to split members of the group into pairs and triads and give different pairs or triads one of the theories each. The task of each pair or triad is to scan quickly the fact sheet and then present it to another pair or triad after 10 minutes of reading and discussing the theory they have been given. This is a sound approach in that it involves active learning and gives opportunities for people to practise a range of skills they need when working in and with a group, but you will have to watch the time as only 20 minutes is allotted in the programme for this part of the session.

As you work through the TIM & Tuckman Handouts you might want to start steering the thoughts of the group (though this topic will be picked up in more detail in a later session) to explore the skills and behaviours a Facilitator might need when planning to manage or dealing with:

- The different personalities and behaviours individuals bring to a group
- The negative and destructive behaviours that people can sometimes exhibit in groups
- The natural stages every group seems to go through

It will be particularly helpful if participants can start thinking about how, as Facilitators, they can both:

- Model positive behaviours that make a group successful and enjoyable
- Encourage others to exhibit positive behaviours and roles that support the group

THE CHRISTIAN GROUP

In this session you are wanting each group to think about what St Paul's teaching has to say about:

- ▶ How a Facilitator might behave in a group so that it goes well
- ▶ How each participant needs to behave in a group so that it is an enjoyable and worthwhile experience both for they themselves and other group members

You might want to capture the feedback in two separate columns or, if this is possible, on two separate sheets - one for the behaviour of the facilitator and one for group members.

In order to stimulate discussion you may have to prompt the group to focus on what their NT passage has to say about the 'negative' group behaviours as well as on the positive group behaviours we discussed when looking at the TIM & Tuckman Handouts:



TIM NEGATIVE FUNCTIONS

(hinders the group & prevents effective working together whilst advancing personal gain)

Aggression: making personal attacks on other members of the group.

Seeking Recognition: Insists on being allowed to do a certain job.

Withdrawing: Refusing to take part in discussion or group activity.

Blocking: Making a contribution only on terms which other group members cannot accept.

Competing for attention: for example, talking to a neighbour whilst another member is speaking.

FOR GROUPS TO WORK EFFECTIVELY:

- Communication needs to be open
- Members must take responsibility for their own behaviour
- Members must cooperate
- Processes for making decisions have to be established
- Problems have to be confronted openly and conflict resolved constructively

TUCKMAN STAGE 4: PERFORMING (CENTRAL FEELING: 'WE ARE DOING IT')

- The group is creative, task-centred and effective – high standards, job-satisfaction
- Able to achieve agreement – clear purpose & focus
- Able to get things done – working together, drawing on each person's strengths
- Any interpersonal problems resolved; people accept and learn from mistakes
- Roles are flexible, leadership shared
- People take responsibility for self and for the life of the group (not rely on leader)
- Harmony, trust, self-esteem, motivation and confidence are high
- Group reviews its work regularly

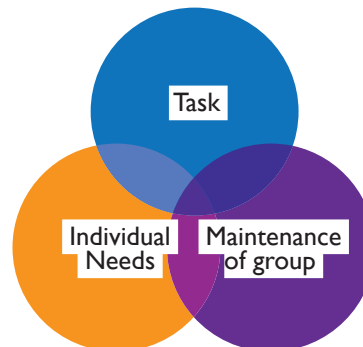
A useful way of looking at how a group works is to think about it in terms of the needs in a group: the group's task (T); the individuals (I) in the group; and what needs to be done to keep the group working successfully (M). This is known as TIM: Task, Individual and Maintenance. It is held that when task, maintenance, and individual needs are in balance then the group becomes markedly more effective and productive. However, when one or more needs are neglected, the efficiency and productivity of the group is impaired.

Group Needs (TIM)		
Task Needs	Individual Needs	Maintenance Needs
We need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have a clear goal Agree about the goal Have a worthwhile goal Get the job done Have a plan of action to achieve the goal Be able to recognise when the goal has been achieved 	I need to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Belong Be able to contribute Feel valued Have a sense that I am important and have influence Feel I fit in (See the more detailed list of individual needs immediately below)	The group needs to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Always be clear about what we are doing and why Stick together to get the job done Make sure people are able to cooperate together Support its members even if there is some disagreement at times

Task: most groups have some task confronting them, and exist primarily to carry out that task. A danger can be that the group is so conscious of the need to accomplish this task that it neglects group maintenance and individual needs which means that people become unhappy or disaffected.

Information exchange,
Consensus testing,
Opinion sharing, Clarifying,
Summarising, Giving/
receiving directions

Facing into conflict
Giving/receiving sympathy/
affection
Levelling (being straight)
Being listened to



Harmonizing, Gatekeeping
Encouraging, Being
empathetic, Listening,
Compromising, Setting
Standards

Individual: every individual member brings to a group a particular set of personal needs which impinge upon the group and its task. Frequently people aren't even aware that they bring these needs. When they are not met, group members will behave in ways which attempt to get their needs met. This behaviour can impact negatively on the group task unless it is addressed. Failure to meet individual need leads people into withdrawal and non- participation and, at this point, those members' input will be lost to the group. When a person is in a group they need to know:

- Who is in charge here?
- Who am I in this group?
- What kind of behaviour is acceptable here?
- What do I want from this group?
- What do I have to offer?
- Who else is here?
- What do people here expect I have to offer?
- Am I free to fail here?
- How are conflicts resolved here?

- How safe is it to be different here?
- Can I say what I really think?
- Will I be listened to?
- Will I have any influence here?
- Will I be accepted and liked?
- Will people trust me?
- Will I trust them?
- How free am I to really be me here?
- Will I fit with this group?

Maintenance: as people work together in a group on a task, they are also doing something with and to (and sometimes at) each other. A group needs to have a growing awareness of itself as a team, and to face the need for maintaining the relationships within it if the tasks are to be accomplished effectively.

It is possible for a group to focus all of its energy and attention on the task. This can tend to ignore the needs of individuals and the group until these are shouting for attention. However, when the task, maintenance, and individual needs levels are in balance, the group becomes markedly more effective and productive.

1 For a group to operate properly and be successful it needs to:

- Achieve a task
- Build and maintain the group
- Develop/help individuals

2 These are leadership functions. However, although it can sometimes be assumed that the group leader or facilitator is responsible for meeting all 3 types of need, group leadership is a set of functions or behaviours rather than a role. This means that any member of the team can take the lead in ensuring that the needs of the group are met. All group members have a responsibility to take on some of the functions needed to help the group work well.

Task Functions (helps the group complete the task and achieve aims)	Maintenance Functions (helps maintain a happy working group by improving relationships and maintaining harmony and morale)
<p>Information Giver: Offers facts, ideas or suggestions to the group.</p> <p>Information Seeker: Asks for facts, ideas or opinions from others.</p> <p>Starter: Initiates action towards achieving group goals.</p> <p>Direction Giver: Develops plans on how to proceed with the task.</p> <p>Summariser: Pulls together related ideas or suggestions and re-states and summarises major points discussed.</p> <p>Diagnoser: Reveals sources of difficulty the group has in working effectively and any block to progress in accomplishing group goals.</p> <p>Reality Tester: Examines the practicality and workability of group ideas and plans.</p> <p>Evaluator: Compares decisions with the group goals.</p>	<p>Encourager: warmly encourages everyone to participate; gives recognition for contributions; demonstrates acceptance of the ideas of others.</p> <p>Harmoniser/Compromiser: persuades members to analyse constructively any differences in opinions, searches for common elements in conflicts and tries to reconcile disagreements.</p> <p>Tension Reliever: eases tension and increases the enjoyment of group members by joking or suggesting breaks.</p> <p>Communication Helper: shows good communication skills and makes sure everyone understands what is being said.</p> <p>Active Listener: demonstrates that listening is taking place by clarifying and summarising, is receptive to the ideas of others.</p>
<h3>Negative Functions</h3> <p>(hinders the group and prevents effective working together whilst advancing personal gain)</p> <p>Aggression: making personal attacks on other members of the group.</p> <p>Seeking Recognition: Insists on being allowed to do a certain job.</p> <p>Withdrawing: Refusing to take part in discussion or group activity.</p> <p>Blocking: Making a contribution only on terms which other group members cannot accept.</p> <p>Competing for attention: for example, talking to a neighbour whilst another member is speaking.</p>	

FOR GROUPS TO WORK EFFECTIVELY:

- Communication needs to be open
- Members must take responsibility for their own behaviour
- Members must cooperate
- Processes for making decisions have to be established
- Problems have to be confronted openly and conflict resolved constructively

If a group member sees that the group is in trouble, then he or she can choose actively to take on one of the task or maintenance roles that will help get the group going again.

In 1965 Bruce Tuckman theorised that groups go through a series of phases of life. A group progresses through the phases – but may also regress back to a previous stage e.g. when a new member arrives, if there is a new leader, if there is a major change of direction or if they are given a new task.

► **Stage 1: Forming (central feeling: 'What shall we do?')**

- The beginning stage when group members come together
- Important issues = 'Will I be included?' 'Where do I fit?' 'What will be expected of me?'
- People may be cautious, polite, waiting to see what happens
- Group is dependent on the perceived leader. Each testing out their own place in the group, discovering what behaviour is acceptable, how the group is going to work
- No sense of belonging – people still figuring out whether or not they want to be in or out of the group

► **Stage 2: Storming (central feeling: 'We can't do it/I won't do it')**

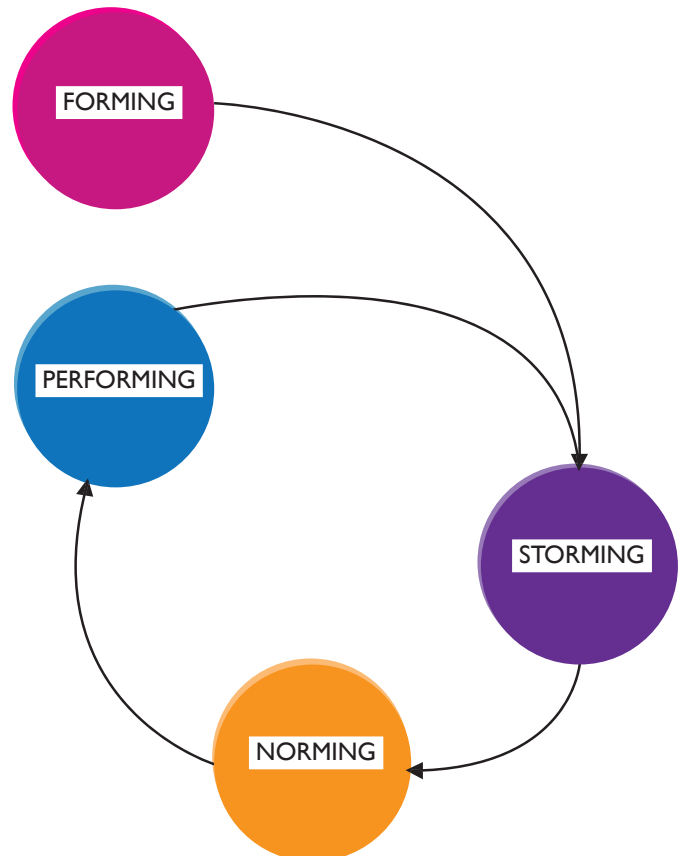
- Issues of power and control emerge
- Experience of discrepancy between hopes and reality – discover not everyone actually shares same beliefs/values/assumptions
- More openness and honesty – people expressing feelings – but sometimes just to a sub-group, not the whole group
- May be a degree of rebellion or grumbling – leader or ground rules may be challenged, material or other group members may be criticised
- Can be a sense of frustration and anger, people may even stop coming

► **Stage 3: Norming (central feeling: 'We can do it')**

- Group cohesion begins to develop
- Patterns of group life, how it operates become established – e.g. where people sit, who takes on a particular role, friendships develop
- Various responsibilities are agreed on – shared amongst the group
- Increasing co-operation and trust amongst group members. Sense of belonging.
- The group's culture is established – how it makes decisions, its norms, standards, expectations.

► **Stage 4: Performing (central feeling: 'We are doing it')**

- The group is creative, task-centred and effective – high standards, job-satisfaction
- Able to achieve agreement – clear purpose & focus
- Able to get things done – working together, drawing on each person's strengths
- Any interpersonal problems resolved; people accept and learn from mistakes
- Roles are flexible, leadership shared
- People take responsibility for self and for the life of the group (and not rely on leader)
- Harmony, trust, self-esteem, motivation and confidence are high
- Group reviews its work regularly



Adjourning and Transforming (central feeling: 'We've succeeded/It was good/We want a new challenge')

In 1977 Tuckman recognised another phase of team development during which the project is completed and the team disbanded:

- Some teams may experience a kind of "mourning" as they acknowledge the end of an era. Enlightened managers may arrange for some kind of celebratory event to mark the achievements of the team. Team members often leave successful projects with fond memories of their experience.
- Sometimes a team may move into a transforming phase in which new projects or goals are set and which may involve the team re-adjusting roles and responsibilities. The drawback is that such teams frequently do not manage to capture the same "magic" as previously. This is particularly the case when new members need to be drafted into the team because of their knowledge or expertise. Although performing teams can transform, in practice the team may revert to the forming or storming stage.

Name Date

PLEASE WRITE A SENTENCE OR TWO OR SOME BULLET POINTS IN RESPONSE TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

■ What went well in today’s session?
.....
.....
.....

■ Today’s session would have been even better if ...
.....
.....
.....

■ What did you learn in this session about yourself? What difference will it make do you think?
.....
.....
.....

■ What did you learn in this session which will most help you as either a leader or member of a Christian study/learning group?
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.....
.....

■ In what way(s) do you hope to use your learning for the wider benefit of the church?
.....
.....
.....

■ Is there anything else you need to note down about what you have learned or how you intend to follow up?
.....
.....
.....