

A sense of cohesiveness grows when there is bonding within a team. Even if people with opposite interests and needs are part of the group, through their connectedness and desire for success, they come together and find common interests within a bigger picture. As a sense of teamwork grows there is a feeling of focus and flow. Members of the team enjoy their time together, have fun, and the group complete its task with a feeling of ease.

Typically when the goal of the team is not being achieved the instinctive response is to drive the team harder, increasing the work level which usually increases the sense of disconnection. Often the goal may be achieved but the cost in burnout and stress is high, and few of the team feel a sense of success or accomplishment. An alternative response is to take steps to increase the cohesiveness of the group and remove the blocks to the bonding within the group. This resets the goals and the renewed connection and feeling of teamwork will inspire and motivate the team towards success.

With inspiration and motivation the team moves in a particular direction or towards a goal, but when we push others, or ourselves, it will be self-defeating, as the very act of pushing creates resistance. Our pushing begins to sound and feel like a demand and whatever we demand of others is what, in truth, we are not willing to give ourselves. The more we push, the more the individual or team push back. They might acquiesce to our pushing but beneath the surface, the undercurrent robs the team of success and/or the feeling of success.

### Exercise 9.1



*Take 10 minutes to share with your coaching partner a situation at work where you believe you are absolutely right about something but people won't follow your view or listen to you. See if you can identify where you are demanding and pushing others. See if you can recognise what this demand might be and understand that giving the very thing you are demanding of others will change the situation.*

### Patterns that show a group is not working

**The first and maybe greatest trap to success in a group is that it becomes dependent.** Instead of the group focusing on its goals the primary focus in the group turns to having someone or something take care of the needs of the team.

The leader starts to give advice to the group and eventually becomes like a “mother” or “father” spending time taking care of the group instead of leading or teaching. If this dynamic becomes strong the group or team will stop moving forward. In this situation team members have become like children and the leader has become an enabler. On the surface they appear

to be leading but beneath they are part of the dependency cycle and are also using the group to avoid success. You know when you have the dynamic because as much as you think you want the team to grow and progress it does not, it remains stuck.

The main symptom of this dynamic is complaining. Basically, one of the things we are saying when we complain is that the company or team is not taking care of our needs. Often our complaining is not out loud but within our minds, but either way it has the same effect, as doing something or thinking about doing something has the same energetic effect on our lives.

If there is an awareness of this dynamic the group can re-focus on its original goals and do its job. In the accomplishment of those goals the group would automatically get its needs met.

### Exercise 9.2



*Take 10 minutes to share with your coaching partner about your biggest complaint at the moment. If you are struggling for an answer refer to the answer you gave to Question 4, Benchmarks, Module 1. When we complain things are not fair it is because we are expecting others to give to us, instead we are being asked to give to others.*

*What, in your opinion, is the thing that is missing? Choose to give or contribute this quality to the situation. It will automatically move the situation towards resolution.*

**The next trap of group dynamics is rebellion and authority conflict.** This is when members of the group start to feel trapped, they believe they are being blocked and their freedoms curtailed. In truth they are beginning to feel their way forward.

This stage parallels the teenage years. However, there is a paradox here, because even while people claim they want their freedom, sub-consciously they have a fear of it. Often they also have a fear of their natural authority and leadership and, as with all of us, when we feel fear, we attack.

As the leader in these circumstances it is important to not attack back but to recognise that the attack is a well disguised call for help. If we do attack back and dominate them, it may appear as if the authority conflict has stopped but in reality it is still there and the level of fear in the group, as a whole, has increased. As a leader it is important to resist the temptation to attack back and instead step towards our attacker and empower them into taking a step towards their own authority and leadership.

Usually, as you step into your leadership, the question of how to meet the needs of the group arises. People want your time, etc and there is a

temptation to go into fight or flight or to get caught in the fights or competition. If you do this, the group as a whole will stop moving forward. If you run away or hide from this neediness it will not go away but will appear to dog you until you do eventually face it.

Now is the time to stay present (see Module 4, The Principles of Effective Communication), available to face this wave of neediness and not run away. Continue to communicate and improve the partnership. Within the group itself, ask people talk to about what they feel frightened of.

### Exercise 9.3



*Take 5 minutes to share with your coaching partner about a time when you have been tempted to attack back in a situation or to run! See if you can work out how you would respond differently. How would you see the situation change because of this? How would the pressure felt by the group change because of your response?*

**At times the rebellion gets so strong** in the group that there is an attempt to get rid of the leader. If this occurs, don't give up and accept it; if you do the group will eventually fail as it will stay stuck, not move forward and will not accomplish its goals.

When the fear is strong, if the group does not attack the leader it may often attack the person perceived to be the weakest member of the group – this is called scapegoating.

As the leader of a group you are asked to develop your skills in how to help and empower people through their fears, because where there is attack there is fear and where there is fear there is weakness.

**Another trap of group dynamics is pairing.** This is when two members of the group start an exclusive romantic relationship or an affair, which while staying hidden and secret affects the whole team. The place of work then becomes a place of romance and secrets instead of somewhere where you accomplish tasks. The effect on the group will be as if they are dragging an anchor, everything will become heavy. The group will no longer be working towards a common goal.

This is a form of being 'special' that can show up as a person being favoured over others. It can also show up not as a love relationship but a hate relationship. The resulting fight is then a form of delay, which is an indication of the hidden fear within the group as a whole. Wherever there is attack and judgement there is some fear about moving forward and seizing an opportunity.

### Exercise 9.4



*Take 10 minutes with your coaching partner and make a list of examples of each of the following: attack on a leader, scapegoating and pairing in your working situation. See if, in each example, you can identify what fear these situations are hiding – by simply asking yourself the question and allowing the answer to come to you, rather than thinking about it.*

**A destructive dynamic in any group is scapegoating.** This is when a team or group start to pick on one member and scapegoat them. There is often a belief that the team would do far better if this person were no longer a member of the team. There is also a level of sub-conscious collusion going on where the scapegoat also believes this is true and in some cases they even want to leave.

If the management do fire this person it may not a good long-term solution because this will increase the fear in the group, as everyone will now wonder who will be next. Also over a period of time another member of the team will start to be scapegoated and the whole process will repeat.

The solution is to look deeper at the dynamic in the group and recognise that the main issue going on is not bad behaviour but fear. If the fear about the next step is addressed the team will come back together and everyone will prosper. Often it can be as easy as to have a meeting and have everyone speak of their fears and then keep moving forward, for as people feel supported and understood they will face any fear.

### Exercise 9.5



*Look at the answer you gave to Question 10, Benchmarks, Module 1 and investigate the possibility that this person is being scapegoated. Look at what you think might occur if they do leave and ask yourself if this is the first time this dynamic has occurred.*

**Another dynamic to be aware of is the regression before the end.** This occurs as you approach the completion of a project or goal when, after what appears to be a time of progress and success, everything appears to go wrong. This is called the “regression before the end”. If there is awareness of this dynamic, the leader can help build a bridge over this regression and avoid the apparent falling apart, which is a result of a fear about the next step, what might happen after the project is completed.

It is good to ask the team to communicate about their fears and how the future might not be so great, have them let go of the project and their

experience of it so that they can carry that feeling over into their next phase of life. People will then be able to complete the project successfully.

### Exercise 9.6



*Take 10 minutes to discuss with your coaching partner a situation where you have witnessed regression before the end. How do you think the principle of communicating fears would have changed that situation?*

## Deeper aspects of group dynamics

Within any group, in time, we will inevitably recreate our original family dynamics. Any negative thing from the past will come up within our present groups. It is possible not to get caught in these traps but it does require some level of awareness, maturity and communication. If these dynamics are not dealt with they will create increasing distancing within the group, and the task will start to require more and more effort.

As a group or project leader it is important to recognise that members of your team will often attack you because they have subconsciously made you into their father or mother. Good leaders recognise this, they do not avoid the issue and help the team member to deal with it.

At the deepest part of group dynamics everyone in the group is a reflection of a hidden aspect of ourselves. It is also important to remember that it is not possible to change other people, and if we try the result will be some form of power struggle or fight. We can only change ourselves, and then others will appear to change. Furthermore, no one will improve or change unless we give to them in some way, unless we invest in them. As we do this, they will give of their qualities and the group and the workplace will become a more creative and successful environment.

### Exercise 9.7



*Take 5 minute to discuss with your coaching partner instances where this principle of investing and giving to others has created change.*

## Co- Creativity and Interdependence

When a group has transcended all these traps, and left its collective fear behind the team goes into a flow. It starts to move forward with ease and the feeling within the group becomes one of excitement, of effectiveness and efficiency in dealing with challenges. The bondedness of the team engenders friendship and co-operation and everyone wants to be a member of such a team. Everyone is happy to belong to such a creative force.

Without the complaining and competition each member of the team gives their contributions, giving of their gifts and therefore each one is in a place of true leadership. While everyone has different contributions to the group everyone's contributions are valued equally because equality is an essential ingredient to any successful relationship.

**Exercise 9.8**

List 2 significant people at work and another you are in relationship with.

- 1. ....%
- 2. ....%
- 3. ....%

Now next to each of their names write down as a percentage how equal you are to them or they are to you, with 100% being an equal relationship while 200% indicates they are much better and 0% naturally you are much better.

Use the teaching in the rest of this module to redress these imbalances. Anything that is not 100% will lead to problems and poor relationships, for while it is true some people have great gifts in certain areas it does not make them better or worse than us.

**Relationships, our Magic Mirrors**

Learning to be in relationship is important for a number of reasons:

- Our relationships lie at the heart of everything we do
- They can be the source of our greatest learning
- They provide us with the material for the fastest ways to grow mentally, emotionally and spiritually
- Relating brings out our greatest potential and therefore the possibility of our greatest happiness

'Relationships, our Magic Mirrors' is a title often used in our work. By this we mean that whatever is hidden within us will be acted out by those around us. Another way to say that is, "if you ever want to know what is buried in your sub-conscious mind, look to your relationships; the other people will be acting it out perfectly". When we hear this for the first time, usually, our immediate reaction is to disown it, as we often disown the negative or bad behaviour of the people closest to us.