Cell Matrix for Characteristics of Healthy Groups

The Shriver text defines a group as “two or more individuals in a face-to-face interaction, each aware of his or her membership in the group, each aware of the others who belong to the group, and each aware of their positive interdependence as they strive to achieve mutual goals” (2001, p. 392). An effective/healthy group has members who are committed to the achievement of these mutually agreed upon goals. Members take responsibility for their own actions and are accountable to the group as a whole. In healthy groups, members take responsibility for successful teamwork within the group. Healthy groups are cohesive and members are cooperative in their interactions. They expect high quality participation from each other, encourage each other to do their best, they challenge each others thoughts and ideas, and they hold each other accountable for group success. Group members share information and perspectives, but also provide support, acceptance and assistance to each other through joint efforts. Group members are committed and caring to other group members, and value members as individuals. All members of healthy groups are responsible for providing leadership, and for evaluating the outcome of their work. In effective groups, the group is greater than the sum of its component parts, and transcends the ability of the individual to collective group capacity.

Key Characteristics of Healthy Groups

- Common vision, mission, and goals
- Member perception of group membership
- Mutual identity, obligations, and rights
- Equalized and shared power between members
- Group leadership and roles
- Shared values and norms
- Shared sense of humor
- Structured, positive and healthy relationships
- Social interdependence, diversity, and inclusion among members
- Trust and cooperation
- Flexibility and acceptance
- Responsive to needs of the group and its individual members
- Clearly defined boundaries
- Commitment to teamwork and team play
- Respectful interactions that demonstrate the caring, nurturing, and rejuvenating qualities of the group
- Members possess and use effective interpersonal and social skills
- Individual accountability, and personal responsibility
- Promotive interactions that encourage & facilitate personal and group growth
- Open and clear communication of feelings and ideas
- Active participation among all members
- Clear process for evaluating the effectiveness of group functioning & decision making
• Intentional engagement of controversy by disagreement among members, the challenging of conclusions and reasoning
• Use of brainstorming to promote effective & creative problem solving and decision making
• Mutually agreed upon process for decision making
• Effective conflict management skills & processes
• Development of and commitment to win-win conflict resolution strategies

Valerie Laporte