

**Questions:**

Identify what stage a group you are involved with is in?

How long has it been at that stage?

What is needed to move on to the next stage?

## Group Dynamics

Individuals have a variety of needs and styles as well as interpersonal and social preferences. These 'agendas' give rise to a wide variety of issues and related dynamics. These dynamics show up in individuals, between members, among subgroups or across the whole group. The most common types of issues affecting individuals and interpersonal relations are:

### Trust—

When there is a lack of trust within a group it is difficult for the group to form an identity and accomplish it's work. For a group to become cohesive and productive there needs to be a **climate of honesty, safety, confidentiality, value and respect.**

#### *Techniques for Creating Trust:*

- Help members to get to know each other through ice breakers
- Let members share a bit about themselves as it relates to the groups work
- Set ground rules and clear expectations. Talk to people individually if there is an issue specific to one person

#### *Questions to consider:*

What does a group look like when there is trust among members?

What behaviors are observed?

What do people see when trust is lacking?

What could be done about it?

### Control/Power—

Issues of control and power are always a factor in any group. Recurring conflict in a group is often the result of unclear or unrecognized power relationships and struggles. For a group to be effective, each member needs to **feel comfortable, be able to express themselves and be recognized by the members as a full**



**participant.** Different kinds of power may exist within a group. (See Appendix F for What Style of Group Are You?)

- **positional power:** a person who has a more powerful position than others within a group (administrator, elected representative, etc.). Often they are listened to more carefully and their opinions given more weight. This type of power is given outside the group, and recognized within the group.
- **assigned power:** a person is assigned a particular role within the group that allows that person more power. Such a role could be: chairperson, recorder, timekeeper, treasurer, etc. This power is offered by the group and can be withdrawn by the group.
- **knowledge power:** a person who possesses specific skills or experience in an area related to the work of the group. This person may be a computer whiz, accountant, writer, parent, etc.
- **personal power:** a person with personal skills and qualities who is looked to as a guide or leader by the group members. This person may have charisma, good communication skills, life experiences, etc.
- **factional power:** several people within a group act together in an organized way to influence or dominate group process or decision making. The degree to which a faction is powerful in a group may depend on the number of people involved, whether they also have positional or other kinds of power and whether or not they form a majority.

**Questions to consider:**

- Give an example of who has the least power in your group and why?
- Who has the different kinds of power in your group?
- Are there ways the power can be more evenly shared within the group?
- Would this enhance or detract from the effectiveness of the group?

**Most common reasons why groups fail:**

1. Absence of trust
2. Fear of conflict

