

Stages in group development - one model

Tuckman and Jensen (1977) have suggested some common phases for team growth and development. They argue that all groups or teams tend to exhibit aspects of the five successive stages they propose, which can be summarised as follows:

Stages in group development		Focus in facilitation activities	
Characteristics	Description	Purpose	Strategies
<p>Stage 1: Forming.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Caution</i> • <i>Uncertainty</i> • <i>Avoidance of conflict</i> • <i>Search for direction</i> 	<p>This has been described as the cautiously excited stage, where members explore the boundaries of acceptable group behaviour. Mixed with excitement and pride at being selected for the team, there is often some trepidation and anxiety about the success of the project.</p>	<p><i>Deal with anxiety about the unknown and strengthen confidence.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Adopt a coordinating and directing function.</i> • <i>Involve the group in clarifying goals.</i> • <i>Allow uncertainties and concerns to be voiced.</i> • <i>Establish and agree on procedures to guide meeting behaviour.</i> • <i>Be supportive of all contributions.</i>
<p>Stage 2: Storming.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Conflict</i> • <i>Power struggles</i> • <i>Criticisms</i> • <i>Challenges</i> • <i>Questioning earlier decisions</i> 	<p>This phase combines some resistance to the task with fluctuations in attitude about the team's chances of success. Members may show impatience, jealousy and perhaps a tacit or overt recognition of a pecking order within the team.</p>	<p><i>Keep focus on positive outcomes. Only intervene if some individuals dominate inappropriately.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Encourage expression of feelings even if task is temporarily interrupted.</i> • <i>Accept negative feedback about process or progress.</i> • <i>Use reflective and interpretive feedback to ensure all views are heard.</i> • <i>Involve the group in resolving issues rather than presenting your personal views or advice.</i> • <i>Facilitate resolution of conflict by synthesising opinions and identifying consensus views.</i> • <i>As conflicts are resolved, remind group of agreed procedures and, if necessary, reorient group towards goals.</i>

<p>Stage 3: Norming.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohesion • Mutual support • Willingness to consider alternatives • Sharing • Joking 	<p>At this point, most of the members understand and accept the group norms, or ground rules, including the roles they are asked to play as individuals. Feelings include a sense of co-operation and helpfulness, occasionally avoidance of conflict, a growing sense of team spirit and progress on the task at hand.</p>	<p><i>Be an observer primarily.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage other group members to take on task and maintenance functions. • Encourage leadership to shift from member to member • Accept and air suggestions for alternate approaches or revised procedural rules • Encourage and assist systematic planning for task achievement
<p>Stage 4: Performing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full involvement • Acceptance of other views • Voluntary effort • Warm relationships • Creativity 	<p>This is the stage at which the group performs most effectively. The group is 'turned on' and can build on individual strengths and minimise weaknesses. People often form close attachments at this stage and show an ability to work through problems constructively.</p>	<p><i>Be a coach and counsellor.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Periodically remind group members of any criteria against which performance can/should be usefully judged. • Keep members alert to time and resource constraints, as required. • Be prepared to caution group against a natural tendency to 'over-performance' in event they enjoy marked success.
<p>Stage 5: Adjourning.</p>	<p>At this stage, the team members end the task and the relationship and move on to the next challenge. If the team has been successful, this can be one of the most difficult stages. If the team has not been successful, the sense of unfinished business can create a blockage to future individual group development.</p>	<p><i>Conduct a debrief and evaluation.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask group to 'stand back' and take stock. • Ask them to reflect on their work, comment on perceived value, the outcomes, and the experience. • Identify what the group thought went well, what could be improved.

From: Tuckman, B. W. and Jensen, M. A. (1977) Stages in small group development revisited. *Group and Organisation Studies* 2; 419-427.