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## SMALL GROUPS

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### What's To Come

- » What Is a Small Group?
- » Functions of Small Groups
- » Joining Small Groups
- » Advantages and Challenges of Small Group Communication
- » Becoming a Better Small Group Communicator

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### What Is a Small Group?



- » A small group is three or more people working *interdependently* to accomplish a task

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## What Is a Small Group?



» Interdependently:  
“Acting in a way  
where both or all  
parties depend on  
each other.”

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## What Is a Small Group?

- » Small groups share several characteristics
- Distinguished by their size
  - Interdependent
  - Experience cohesion
  - Enforce rules and norms: “Mean Girls” →
  - Include individual roles
  - Have their own identities
  - Have distinctive communication practices
  - Often interact online

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## What Is a Small Group?



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## Not every small group works well



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## Functions of Small Groups

- » Some small groups focus on discrete tasks
  - Examples include a jury and the 9/11 Commission
  - Many such groups disband after their tasks are complete



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## Functions of Small Groups



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## Functions of Small Groups

- » Some small groups evaluate and advise
  - Examples include a focus group and the president's cabinet
  - Such groups provide feedback and advice as requested



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## Functions of Small Groups



- » Some small groups create art and ideas
  - Examples include a musical band and a brainstorming session
  - Such groups generate artistic expressions and/or innovative ways of thinking

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## Functions of Small Groups

- » Some small groups provide service and support
  - Examples include a support group and a local service organization
  - Groups can provide material and emotional support



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## Functions of Small Groups

- » Some small groups promote social networking
  - Examples include Facebook Groups and hashtagged social media
  - The purpose of such groups is to facilitate interpersonal communication



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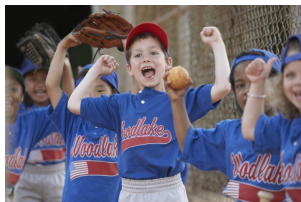
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## Functions of Small Groups



- » Some small groups compete
  - Examples include a wrestling team and a Quiz Bowl team
  - Such groups train and rehearse a set of skills and then compete with similar groups

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## Functions of Small Groups

» Some small groups help us learn

- Examples include a study group and a workshop
- Research shows that taking part in learning groups enhances critical thinking skills



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## Joining Small Groups

» We join small groups for many reasons

- Because we need to belong
- For protection
- To improve our effectiveness
- Because we feel pressure to join



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## Joining Small Groups

» People are socialized into small groups in five phases

- Antecedent phase
- Anticipatory phase
- Encounter phase
- Assimilation phase
- Exit phase



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## Advantages and Challenges of Small Group Communication

- » Communicating in small groups presents some specific advantages
  - Small groups provide resources
  - Small groups experience synergy
  - Small groups expose us to diversity



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## Advantages and Challenges of Small Group Communication

- » Communicating in small groups poses challenges
  - Small groups require sacrifices
  - Small groups experience conflict
  - Small groups can be difficult to coordinate



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## Becoming a Better Small Group Communicator

- » Socialize new members constructively
  - Help socialize new members into groups you belong to
  - Become socialized into a new group yourself



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## For Review

- » What are small groups, and what do they do?
- » Why do people join small groups?
- » How can you communicate better in a small group?

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