

## 5 Dysfunctions of a Student Group

Adapted from *5 Dysfunctions of a Team* by Patrick Lencioni



1. The first dysfunction is an **absence of trust** among team members. Essentially, this stems from their unwillingness to be vulnerable within the group. Group members who are not genuinely open with one another about their mistakes and weaknesses make it impossible to build a foundation for trust.
2. This failure to build trust is damaging because it sets the tone for the second dysfunction: **fear of conflict**. Groups that lack trust are incapable of engaging in unfiltered and passionate debate of ideas. Instead, they resort to veiled discussions and guarded comments.

## 5 Dysfunctions of a Student Group....continued

3. A lack of healthy conflict is a problem because it ensures the third dysfunction of a group: **lack of commitment**. Without having aired their opinions in the course of passionate and open debate, participants rarely, if ever, buy in and commit to decisions, though they may feign agreement during meetings.
4. Because of this lack of real commitment and buy-in, participants develop an **avoidance of accountability**, the fourth dysfunction. Without committing to a clear plan of action, even the most focused and driven people often hesitate to call their peers on actions and behaviors that seem counterproductive to the good of the team.
5. Failure to hold one another accountable creates an environment where the fifth dysfunction can thrive. **Inattention to results** occurs participants put their individual needs (such as ego, career development, or recognition) or even the needs of their divisions above the collective goals of the team.

And so, like a chain with just one link broken, teamwork deteriorates if even a single dysfunction is allowed to flourish. Another way to understand this model is to take the opposite approach – a positive one – and imagine how members of truly cohesive teams behave:

### Implications for Student Group Facilitation

Healthy Student Groups	This means as a facilitator, you must:
<b>1. They trust each other</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Incorporate trust building activities into the beginning of each meeting until the group is fully functioning at a high level of trust.</li> </ul>
<b>2. They engage in unfiltered conflict around ideas.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Make sure it is safe to speak dissenting views. Help participants learn to disagree in healthy ways. Incorporate some conflict resolution strategies in your work.</li> </ul>
<b>3. They commit to decisions and plans of action.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Help the group determine how they will make decisions. Will it be consensus, quorum, unanimous voting, and dialogue?</li> </ul>
<b>4. They hold one another</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Guide the group in a process</li> </ul>

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<b>Healthy Student Groups</b>	<b>This means as a facilitator, you must:</b>
<b>accountable for delivering against those plans.</b>	of accountability. What are the expectations for participation and are their consequences for violating those expectations?
<b>5. They focus on the achievement of collective results.</b>	○ What will the group do to celebrate milestones and achievements? Is this all for one or one for all?