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# Addressing Group Conflict

**Context, Sabotage, Blaming &  
Scapegoating, Challenges, &  
Processes**

# What we will cover today

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By the end of this session you will be able to...

- Define conflict
- Describe conflict in the life-cycle of a group
- Identify issues related to conflict
- Apply a group process to address group conflict

*Relevance...*

# What is conflict?

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- *A difference of opinion with strong feelings or ego attached*
  - Ed McKinley & Glen Ochre - (Groupwork Institute of Australia)
- Shows up in a range of ways such as behaviours, disagreements, opposed views, confusion, uncomfortable feelings

# Conflict is normal in groups

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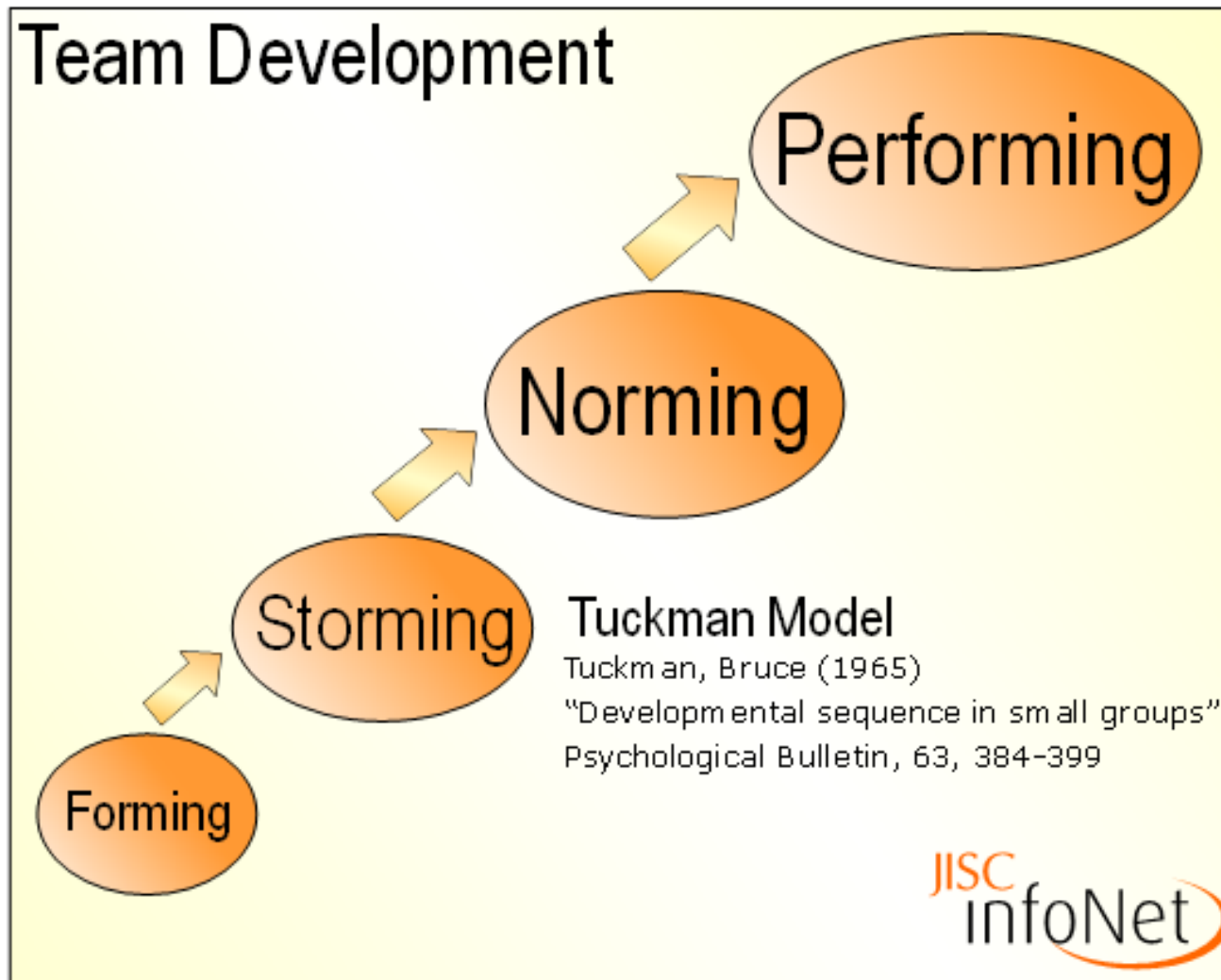


# Prevention and early intervention

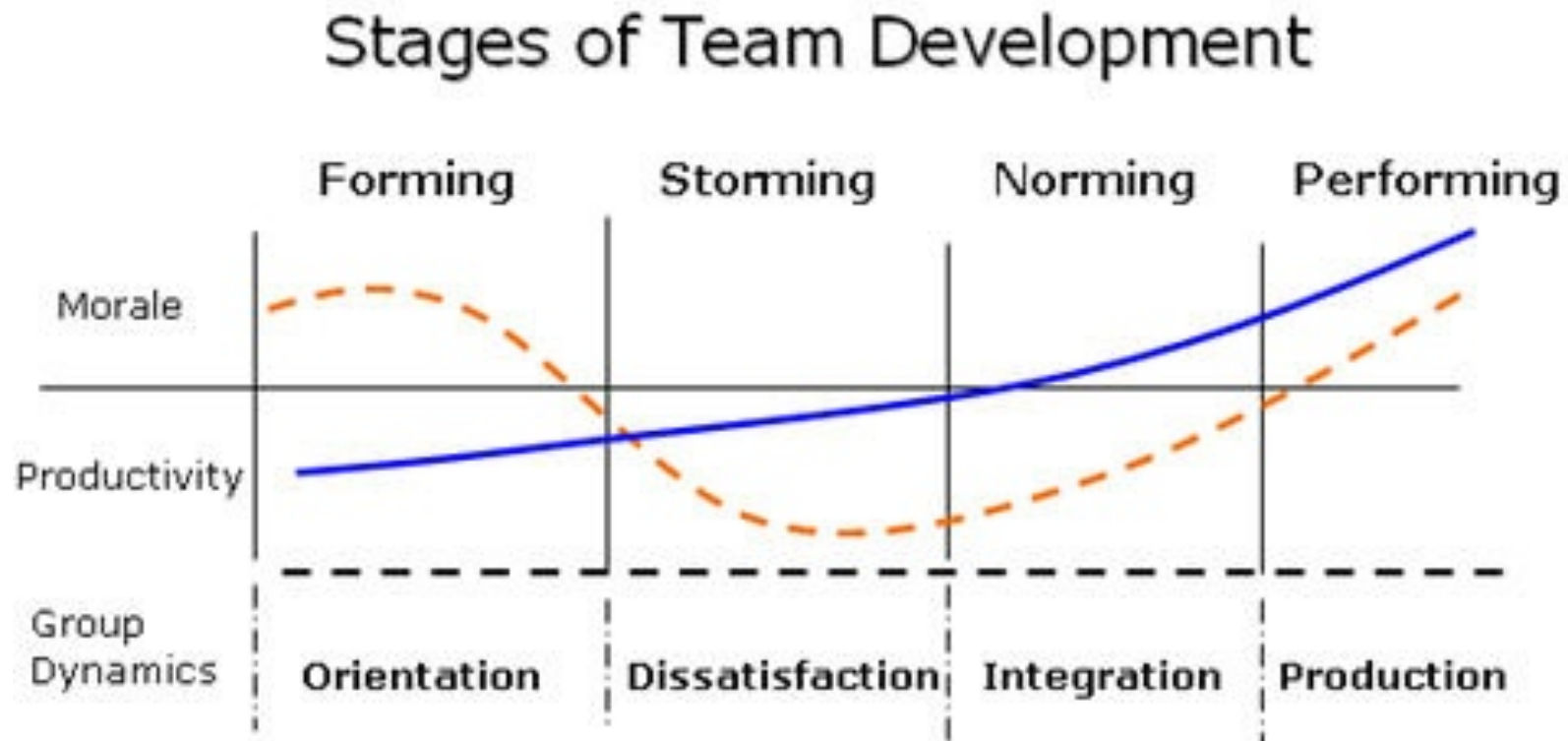
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- Create a container for your group early on:
- Align on a clear group purpose (what are you up to)
- Group culture, agreements, ground-rules, decision-making, potential flash-points, record keeping and an agreed conflict resolution process (how do you want to get there)
- Be “on the look out” for and attend to conflict straight away
- Look to channel it into a creative and constructive source

# Conflict in a group life-cycle



# Morale & Productivity life-cycle



# Scott Peck's Community Building

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BUILDING  
COMMUNITY



# Important concepts

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- *Trust the group collective intelligence* – groups can work through any conflict if they are committed
- *There are no innocent by-standers* – everyone has an important part to play and is accountable.
- *Bring your focused energy* – the energy you bring to addressing conflict can be key in transformation



2-Aug-15

# Held, Heard and Healed

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- *Held* – creating a safe place
- *Heard* – deep listening – not just to what is being said, but also to what is felt and to what is of deeper concern.
- *Healed* – sometimes there are hurts that can be healed

# Sabotage

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- *Behaviour that undermines the group's ability to fulfil its purpose*
- Often sub-conscious
- Distress or patterned behaviour acting out in the group
- Can be subtle
- Can involve power (powerlessness)
- Avoiding responsibility

# Reflecting on Sabotage

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- *What are the ways you sabotage yourself?*
- *What are the ways your sabotage plays out in groups?*
- *Are any of these situations or behaviours evident already in your contributions to your group project?*

# Blaming and Scapegoating

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- Scapegoating is when one person is consistently blamed for things going wrong
- Underlying ego pattern that when something goes wrong there must be someone (or something) at fault, someone to be blamed
- Collusion in a group (institutionalised)
- Avoiding responsibility - self, others, group

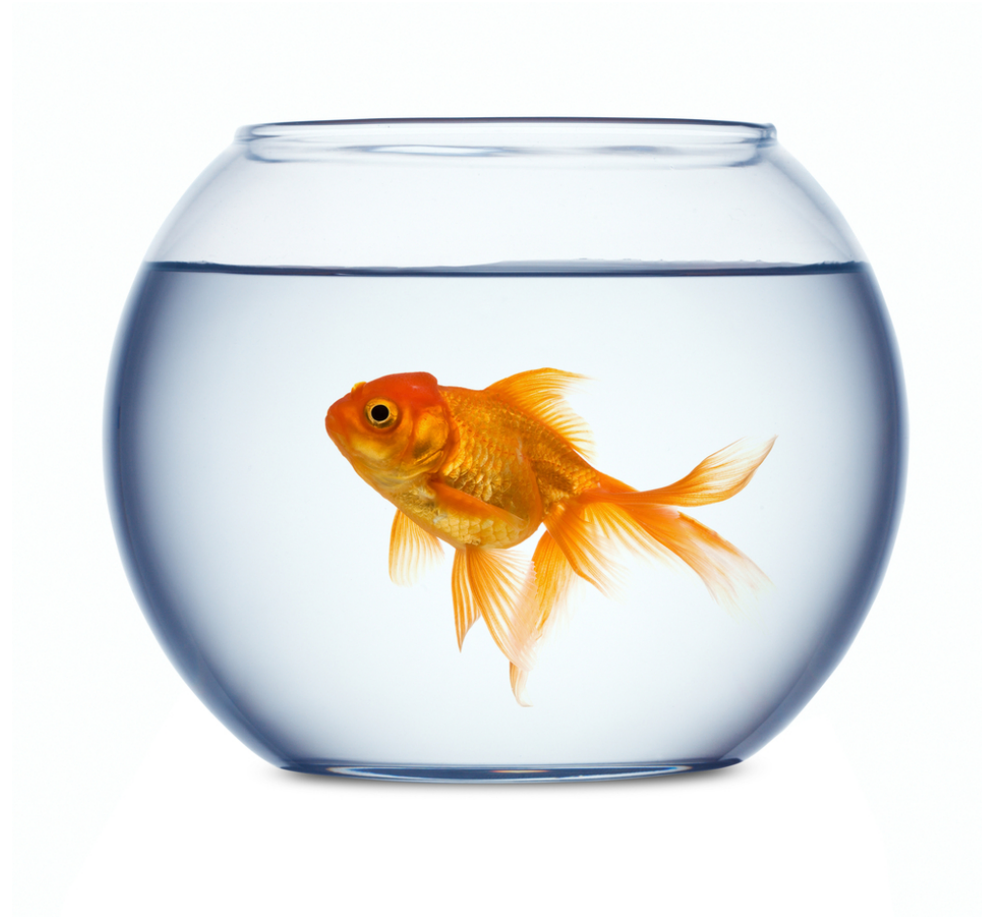
# Reflecting on Blaming

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- *What are the ways you blame yourself?*
- *What are the ways your blaming plays out in groups?*
- *Are any of these situations or behaviours evident already in your contributions to your group project?*

# Fishbowl Exercise

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# Processes to practice

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- Using rounds - structured or unstructured
- Fishing for agreement - seeking common ground
- Bottom-lining - what is not-negotiable and what is
- Proposing and counter-proposing
- Group clearing - what's getting in the way
- Scenarios - not coming to meetings, strong dominant personality and silent others, someone not pulling their weight, we have failed to achieve a result, falling behind schedule, low energy, opposing views etc...



# More to Learn... Reflective Praxis

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- Attend to your group's set up – create a clear purpose, a stated group culture or set of team rules, write down some decision making processes, record keeping and agree on a conflict resolution process
- Reflect on the play of dissonance in your group as it balances task and process with individual and collective needs throughout your project's life cycle
- Look at the blame-game – is it the client, is it the supervisor, is it someone in your team, other...
- Track and trace the antecedents and layers of sabotage and the impact they have on productive team outcomes