VALUES-BASED GROUP GUIDELINES

Conflict Management Resources

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VALUES-BASED GROUP GUIDELINES

Teams are made up of members who may have different ideas of what is and isn't acceptable conduct. This can lead to negative behaviours, such as members being late for practice, gossiping, or texting during meetings—and will ultimately result in frustration on the part of other team members and leaders. Guidelines establish a baseline for behaviour and set group norms. They provide an agreement to refer to if they're not being followed in the future. They should be developed by the group that is agreeing to them—not created as a solo exercise by a team member, leader or board executive. You need your team's buy-in for this to work.

It's a good idea to set up specific guidelines for every context you will be working together. For example you may need different guidelines for when you are traveling as a group than when you are at a practice or board meeting. Guidelines allow for predictability in these environments and create trust. Before you create Guidelines it is important to understand the "why" behind the behaviours of your team.

VALUES

Values are a set of personal beliefs used to guide our attitudes and behaviours. They are shaped by many factors, including culture, family norms and life experiences (both negative and positive)

WHY IS UNDERSTANDING INDIVIDUAL VALUES IMPORTANT TO YOUR TEAM?

When teams take the time to learn the values of each member, great things happen. They are suddenly able to understand why their colleagues choose to behave in certain ways. For example, it may become clear why some may miss social events to be home to put their kids to bed (value: family), and others are always ready to start team meetings exactly on time (value: dependability).

Teams who have members with diverse values thrive. It is through diverse skills, ideas and contributions that any group becomes stronger. By leveraging strengths that represent the diverse values of your group, your team will be well rounded. For example, if one of your team members values communication, they would make a great team spokesperson. If another values creativity, they may be the perfect choice to lead the next team fundraiser.

WHAT ABOUT TEAM VALUES?

Once you've established individual values, you are able to create a list of team values. In order for each member to fully embrace the team, their personal values need to be recognizable in the team values. This is the only way they can feel they are part of something bigger and more important than themselves alone—they must see themselves and what's important to them represented in the whole.

When new people join your team, it's a great time to explore their unique individual values so they feel included and know they belong. Once you've done that, refresh your team values list. It's imperative that, at all times, everyone on your team is represented by the list. When this is not done, the team loses the opportunity to connect and grow.

LINKING VALUES TO BEHAVIOURS IN ALL CONTEXTS

Your team values will guide what your team says and does throughout their time together. The team doesn't have to speak their values aloud for anyone to be able to see them in action; they embody them in every context the team shows up in. To support this, it can be helpful for your team to create Guidelines for Behaviour based on Team Values. This can be developed through an explicit conversation at a team meeting and should incorporate all contexts the team will be in.

Give as many examples as possible. Use the question: "What does that look like?" when exploring examples. Contexts should include all areas the team shows up in. Here is what it might look like in action:

Team Value: Equity, Fairness
Guideline: We agree to honour the opinion of every team member.
Context: Team Meetings

The beauty of having a list of Team Values and Guidelines for Behaviours in every Context is that when problems arise, you can remind each other why you're there and what you as a group have decided is important. Values serve as a compass to guide your team forward in unison, while respecting and acknowledging the diversity of each individual.

FIVE STEPS TO DEVELOP VALUES-BASED GUIDELINES FOR YOUR TEAM

1.   Explore PERSONAL values.
Create a list of your personal values. Narrow the list to your top three by grouping them together.

2.   Take turns sharing.
Meet as a team to share individual personal values. Explain why each one is important to you personally and how your behaviour reflects your values. For example:
•   Value: hard work
•   Behaviour: I arrive early to be ready to start on time.

3.   Create TEAM values.
Group together common personal values and narrow it down to three to five team values. An example of grouping might be putting the value of respect and reliability with trust.

4.   Develop a list of team CONTEXTS.
Make a list of the times your team will be together. These are contexts. For example:
•   Board meetings, practice, travel, competitions

5.   Create guidelines for each value in each context.
For each of your team values, agree on guidelines that reflect behaviour and communication for every context your team will be in. For example:
•   Value: hard work
•   Behaviour: Will stay focused by having phones on do not disturb.
•   Context: Team meeting

EXAMPLES OF VALUES

Dependability	Collaboration	Passion
Reliability	Integrity	Respect
Loyalty	Adaptability	Fitness
Commitment	Professionalism	Education
Open-mindedness	Service	Perseverance
Consistency	Volunteerism	Trust
Honesty	Growth	Efficiency
Balance	Environmentalism	Innovation
Courage	Excellence	Humility
Transparency	Fun	Fairness
Relationships	Justice	Compassion
Hard work	Adventure	Punctuality
Motivation	Family	Positivity
Creativity	Optimism	Good humour
Authenticity	Integrity	Connectedness

MY TOP 3 VALUES

1.

2.

3.

MY TEAMMATES' VALUES

Name:	Values:

OUR TEAM'S TOP VALUES

Choose 3 to 5

Value	Definition: What does it mean to us?

WHAT CONTEXTS WILL WE BE TOGETHER IN?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

BUILDING TEAM GUIDELINES

This is some of the most important work you'll do as a team. Here are some examples of group guidelines I use and have seen used successfully:

1.   Confidentiality – What is said in the room stays in the room unless everyone agrees to share the information outside the group.

2.   Listen to understand – When we do this, we are able to hear what our teammates are saying rather than focusing on our own response.

3.   Focus on the future – An easy rule to apply: Discuss the past only if it is to make a plan for the future. This helps avoid prolonged conversations that can sidetrack your group. By focusing on the future, you will ensure your group moves forward.

4.   One person speaks at a time – Allowing one person at a time to have the floor creates respect within the group and allows for more effective communication.

5.   No blaming or shaming – Blame tells someone they've done something wrong. Shame exposes them. Both inhibit trust and openness.

6.   Give feedback, not criticism – Feedback uses strength-based language describing first what is working followed by what isn't. Avoid using the word "but" between the two descriptions, as it tends to negate the first statement.

7.   Take a break if you need one – Breaks are a powerful tool to use when emotions are running high.

8.   Phones away – Phone use during meetings is distracting for everyone.

9.   Establish a meeting leader – Allow the facilitator or meeting chairperson to manage the meeting (e.g., call breaks if necessary, move people along if going off topic or taking too long).

TIP: When creating guidelines with your team, try to avoid vague principles, such as "Be respectful." These types of phrases mean something different to everyone. Each guideline should be clear and simple. If someone suggests something vague, like "Be respectful," you can say, "Can you tell me what that looks like?" They might answer, "Don't roll your eyes," "Listen before responding," or "Don't interrupt." These clarified meanings will help you and the rest of the team understand what "respect" means to the person suggesting it. The guidelines must also be specific in order for people to know exactly what to do (or not do) to follow them.

OUR GROUP GUIDELINES

Context:

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

11.

12.

Ask yourself: "What do I need in order to be safe, stay open, be curious and be willing to express new ideas and try new things?"