

## How Can We Overcome Groupthink?

After you complete this lesson, you will be able to: recognize the symptoms of groupthink and explain how it can harm team decision-making and discuss strategies for overcoming the tendency towards groupthink.

Making decisions when we are uncertain about the outcome can be challenging but can be easier to do as a group because through cooperation, we can develop a better understanding and plan of action, which can reduce uncertainty. However, the decision-making process is complex, and things can go wrong if we fall into the groupthink trap.

To overcome groupthink, we need to recognize factors that can contribute to its occurrence and use effective strategies to avoid them.

One of the conditions that can lead to groupthink is when teams lack diversity and are highly-cohesive. When members of a team are very similar to one another, it is more likely that they will perceive the ideas being presented as accurate and appropriate.

While it may feel more comfortable to surround oneself with like-minded individuals of similar backgrounds, the team will benefit more from a multitude of different perspectives, experiences, and expertise.

Therefore, the first step to overcoming groupthink is to have a diverse team so that a wider range of views and ideas are available to help the team make decisions, and of course, all members need to welcome and be open to different approaches, opinions, and ideas.

As such, it's important to make sure that in the facilitation of group discussions all members can ask questions and express their differing viewpoints and opinions.

The next factor that can contribute to groupthink is the impact of key people and their leadership styles. When there are members in the group that are influential, directive, and charismatic, other team members are likely to be influenced by their suggestions, and this runs the risk of others polarizing around the influencer's position by agreeing to their ideas because they trust them and doing so without critically evaluating their suggestion.

And for those that may not share their views, they may feel inhibited to speak up. Therefore, the second step to overcoming groupthink is for leaders, experts, and other influential individuals to give other members of the team the opportunity to express their thoughts, ideas, and suggestions, before they share their opinions or position on a topic.

The third step to overcoming groupthink is to first gather all the available facts, thoughts, ideas and options, before making any decisions or attempting to come to a consensus.

During the decision-making process, individuals should not pressure their group members to conform. A great idea is to assign a rotating devil's advocate, so that at each stage of the decision-making process one member of the team strategically challenges the ideas presented.



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It's important to note that challenging others' views and sharing differing perspectives should always be done respectfully, with good intention and purpose.

The next time you are working in a team remember, share and utilize these strategies to help your team succeed by avoiding groupthink.



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