chapter 3

WHAT IMPACT DOES GROUP DYNAMICS HAVE ON THE OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE?

- leadership styles
- distinguish between the different leadership styles and debate their suitability for different situations

Whether managing a team at work, captaining a sports team or leading an outdoor recreation group, the leadership style used can be very important in achieving success. A range of factors may influence the style a leader may use. These include:

- the amount of time given to the task
- where and what type of information is required
- prior experiences in this area
- skills the individuals bring to the group and group dynamics.

- democratic

The democratic leader shares the problem with the team members as a group. Together they form ideas and evaluate alternatives in an attempt to reach a consensus on a solution. The leader does not try to influence the group to adopt a solution and is willing to accept and implement any solution that has support of the entire group.

A good democratic leader encourages participation and delegates wisely, but never loses sight of the fact that they are responsible for the end result. The democratic leader may use skills such as encouraging group members to establish personal goals and recognising and encouraging personal and group achievement.

There are times where the democratic style is not always appropriate, such as when there is not enough time to gain everyone's input, where the group members are all new or inexperienced in their roles and when safety is of critical concern.

- laissez-faire

This French phrase means 'leave it be' and is used to describe a leader who leaves their team members to get on with their work. It is one in which the leader provides little or no direction and gives individuals as much freedom as possible. All authority is given to the group members and they are responsible for determining goals, making decisions and resolving problems on their own.

The laissez-faire style can be used for groups who are experienced and skilled in their area. They know exactly what is required and can make their own decisions without any guidance or instruction. However, it should not be used if it causes members of the group to feel insecure and unsure of their responsibilities, where there is no regular feedback, or when the leader is unsuitable to their role and is hoping the group can cover for them.
The autocratic leader likes to use the information they have and make decisions on their own. The leader does not consult the individuals and does not allow any input. Group members are expected to obey orders without receiving any explanations.

This style is effective in situations where there are new members who do not know which tasks to perform or which procedures to follow, where individuals do not respond to any other leadership style, or when there is limited time in which to make a decision.

The autocratic leader may not be effective when group members become fearful or resentful of the leader or mistrust them; and when members become dependent on their leader to make all their decisions.

– **strategic non-intervention**

Once a leader has established that their team is confident, capable and motivated, strategic non-intervention is often used to allow the group to get on with their task with minimal interference. By gradually handing over ownership of tasks, a leader can empower their group to achieve their goals. This can be effective when group members are highly skilled, educated, where individuals have pride in their work and are trustworthy and experienced.

- **understanding group dynamics**
- **work cooperatively to solve simulated initiative challenges**
- **distinguish actions that enhance group cohesion when working in teams**

**Stages of group dynamics (form, storm, norm, transform)**

**Forming**

At the beginning of any outdoor recreation experience, group members require structure and clear goals. Individuals need to know how they fit in and what part they play. This is the ‘forming’ stage where members rely on safe patterned behaviour and look to the group leader for guidance and direction. Group members may be uncertain, tentative and have a desire for acceptance by the group.

At this stage, it is the leader’s responsibility to give clear direction, get members acquainted with each other, create a positive atmosphere, assign simple tasks and be sensitive to the group’s need for direction.

**Storming**

This second stage of group dynamics is characterised by the emergence of conflict, where different members have different approaches and needs. Team members may begin to disagree with others, resist demands of teamwork and questions arise about who is responsible for what, what the rules are and what the reward system should be.

The leader’s responsibility will be to intervene and provide opportunities for conflict resolution, while at the same time looking to move toward negotiation and agreement. This can be achieved by encouraging members to assume more responsibly on tasks, so that they keep their focus on the goals at hand and allow them to contribute in an area of personal interest.
Norming

The third stage of group dynamics is characterised by team cohesion, where team members get on with their roles and ground rules address how to manage conflict and how each task will be carried out. Individuals now feel a sense of belonging, are comfortable, share willingly, enjoy their roles, and differences are acknowledged with teams working productively.

The leader’s role changes to become more a listener and facilitator. They allow the team to assign their own tasks, while providing suitable direction. Teams are also encouraged to review their own goals and progress.

Transforming

The final stage of group dynamics demonstrates that a team has a sense of purpose, a high output of work and focuses on getting the job done. Group members are connected to their task and they feel commitment to each other. The group is fully functional, flexible, innovative, knowledgeable of each other’s tasks and understand how each role links together to achieve the overall group goals.

– conflict resolution

People can become involved in conflict because they feel their interests or values are being challenged or that their needs are not being met. Conflict can be positive, as it may prompt us to examine our views at a deeper level. When this occurs we may see things from a different perspective and change our opinion. However, without early intervention, conflict situations can escalate quickly from an open discussion to an emotionally charged argument. A summary of different approaches used in conflict situations is given in Table 3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STYLE</th>
<th>CHARACTERISTICS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competing</td>
<td>• Own needs are advocated over the needs of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Relies on aggressive communication and a competitive manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Fear losing control</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodating</td>
<td>• Diplomatic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Allows the needs of others to take precedence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sees the relationship as being most important</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>• Avoids conflict at all costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Allows personal views to go unexpressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Others involved are not aware of how they really feel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborating</td>
<td>• Win/Win approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Assertive communication and cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Brings new ideas and the potential for all parties to resolve conflict</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The most advantageous result is if both parties can resolve their differences on their own, by collaborating together and taking ownership of the issue. Both parties must be willing to work together and actively participate in resolving the conflict.

Unfortunately, some conflicts cannot be resolved and require the assistance of a third party, known as a mediator. The mediator can assist both parties in presenting their issues to a non-judgmental third party who has no predetermined ideas. The third party may then be able to see new ways of looking at the issue and possibly open the conflicting parties to new and unconsidered options.

– team building

This refers to the selection and motivation of teams. In regards to outdoor recreation, teams need to be able to identify their strengths and weaknesses so that they can work to overcome their weaknesses before they participate.

As an example, this would be a particular issue for a team of people wanting to climb Mount Everest. Each member would have to be as fully prepared physically and mentally as they could be, knowing that there will be unexpected adversities that will present themselves throughout the journey. A team that is able to recognise their weaknesses will be better prepared for the demands of climbing; and in turn will
develop a team with confidence in each other’s abilities and who are willing to work together to achieve a common goal.

The following games can be used as team building activities for the classroom.

**Knots**

To form the knot, everyone stands in a circle, shoulder-to-shoulder, and places their hands in the centre. Everybody grabs two separate hands, making sure that no one holds both hands with the same person or holds the hand of a person right next to them. The aim is for all students to be standing together, untangled, in one large circle or two interconnected circles.

**Leap frog**

Using paper or witches hats create nine positions from left to right according to the following order. (Note that there is a space allocated in the middle.)

```
L4  L3  L2  L1  ___  R1  R2  R3  R4
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The aim is for everyone to be standing at the other end, that is, L1 in R4’s position, R1 in L4’s position and so. A person can only move forward and around someone they are facing, not backwards, and only one person can move at a time. A person can only move to the next square or two squares if going around someone from the opposite side. The people standing in the boxes should remain in their R or L order throughout.

**Spider’s web**

The aim of the game is for all people to get from one side of the spider’s web to the other by stepping or being carried through various sections of the web. Groups need to think about which section of the web each person will go through, as they are only allowed to use each section once.

**All aboard!**

This activity requires people to work together in close physical proximity in order to solve a practical, physical problem. The aim of the activity is to get the whole group to try to fit inside a small area which can be marked by small platforms, a circle of rope or a tarpaulin or blanket. Once the group succeeds the first time, the area is decreased and the group is challenged again.

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**cooperation**

Cooperation involves individuals working together to achieve common goals. Cooperation may be forced or voluntary, depending on the situation and group. The success of one task or activity may be dependent upon the success of another. This can be seen in outdoor recreation where individuals may be working together to set up camp one hour before nightfall. The following games are useful for developing cooperation skills.

**Helium rod**

Participants learn how to work together and communicate in small to medium-sized groups. They line up in two rows, facing each other. Participants point their index fingers and hold their arms out as the rod is laid across their fingers.
The group starts by adjusting their finger heights until the rod is horizontal and everyone’s index fingers are touching the stick. The aim of this activity is to lower the rod to the ground, while every person’s finger remains in contact with the rod.

**Sardines**

This can be played anywhere, indoors or out. The goal is similar to Hide and Seek, except that ‘it’ (the person) hides first. Everyone else then tries to find ‘it’. When someone finds ‘it’, they hide with ‘it’ in the same spot. The game ends when everyone finds the hiding spot of ‘it’.

**Caterpillar**

The players lie on their stomachs, side to side, with their arms straight out in front. The person on the end begins to roll over the top of the row of bodies until they get to the end. This can be done as a race with two teams competing to get to a predetermined point.

**Chain tag**

A person is ‘it’ and runs around trying to tag someone. As soon as they do, they join hands with each other. They both must remain hand-in-hand to tag others. If the chain breaks, then another person cannot be tagged. Only the outside hand on either end of the chain can tag others. As the chain gets longer, the group need to work together in targeting the remaining people. Runners can run in between the chain and the chain may bend lower to prevent runners getting through. The chain can split itself into parts and create multiple chains running around.

**Capture the flag**

Divide the group into two teams, playing in an area of two equal parts. Each team has to designate an area to be used as a ‘gaol’. Each team also has to place their flag at their home end from the other team. All players are equipped with Oz Tag belts.

If a player from team A crosses onto team B’s side, then a member of team B can grab the tag of the member of team A. This tag is dropped on the ground and the player having lost their tag must go to gaol. The only way the gaoled player can get out is by one of their team members getting the tag and returning it to them in gaol. Once they achieve this, they lock arms with the gaoled team mate and walk back safely to the home side.

Players can also rush or storm the opposite end by running over the line to try and grab the flag. If tagged, they go to gaol. Once a team member has picked up the flag they must run back to their home side. If caught, they must drop the flag where they were tagged and go to gaol. If they make it, the team with the opposing team’s flag wins.

**Dragon**

Form two groups. Each group forms a line and wraps their arms around the waist of the person in front of them forming a long chain. A braid is placed in the back pocket of the last person. The goal is for the front person of one group to get the ‘tail’ of the other, while the tail of the group tries to avoid getting caught.

**Trust**

Trust is a very important part of participating in outdoor recreation. Having confidence in another person and assuming that others will not cause an accident or create problems for group members can take time. One example of this would be abseiling down a cliff face, where a person is at the bottom holding the rope,
as a belayer and safety net requires a great deal of trust. The act of placing oneself in a vulnerable position of relying on others may be difficult, but over period of time will provide greater success. The following activities are designed to develop trust between group members.

Trust fall

In pairs or groups, one person stands with back to the other person or group, closes their eyes and falls backwards, trusting the person or group to catch them before they hit the ground.

Human log carry

There are two ways of completing this activity. The first is to have everyone lie down on their back, alternating the direction of their feet, and with their heads in a straight line. In other words, even-numbered people will have feet facing west and odd-numbered people will have feet facing east.

When you look down the centre of the row, you should see a straight line of heads. After everyone gets lined up, they should put their arms straight up in the air with their hands flat (palms up). One person will then stand at one end of the line with their body stiff and arms either folded across the chest or holding onto pant legs. The first person in the row will lower that person, back first, onto the row of arms and they will gently pass the body to the other end. Someone should catch the person as they come off the end.

Slice’n’Dice

The group forms two lines, facing one another, creating a corridor. Participants put their arms straight out in front. Arms should intersect, overlapping by about a hand with arms of people opposite. The first person walks down the corridor. In order to let the person pass, people raise and then lower their arms, creating a Mexican wave effect. The person then joins the end of the line.

People start to walk fast, run, and sprint down the corridor. People chop their arms up and down, only pausing to allow the gauntlet-runner through.

Mine field

This game involves communication and trust. Select an appropriate area where a range of obstacles such as tables, chairs, rope, balls and cones, can be positioned. Participants operate in pairs. One person is blind-folded and cannot speak. The other person can see and speak, but cannot enter the mine field or touch the person. The challenge is for each blind-folded person to walk from one side of the field to the other, avoiding the mines and listening to the verbal instructions of their partner.

facilitation skills

apply cooperative decision-making processes to solve problems and challenges faced in outdoor experiences

One of the tasks of caring for outdoor enthusiasts is learning to balance fun with safety. There are times when a person must make a judgment that will affect other group members. This decision can be the difference between having a great time and getting hurt. Therefore, risk assessment begins with meeting the group and making a judgment as to whether the activity requires modification.

The facilitator and group need to take into consideration the reality of the situation and make judgments according to what is known and seen. Some of these factors include:

- age, ability and fitness of group members
- behaviour, maturity and attitude of group members
- number of participants
- prior medical conditions or injuries
- the weather.
– communication skills

The purpose of communication is to get the message across to others logically and clearly. This requires active effort from both the sender of the message and the receiver. If both parties do not understand the message correctly, it can cause confusion, wasted time and effort and possibly, depending on the circumstances, create a dangerous situation.

A person must aim to reduce the problems at each stage of the communication process with clear, concise, accurate and well-planned communication. The receiver should provide feedback via verbal and nonverbal reactions to the communicated message. Paying close attention to this feedback allows the person to be confident that their audience has understood the message.

– decision-making

Decision making involves identifying and choosing alternatives based on the knowledge, values and preferences of the decision maker. Good decision making is an essential skill for effective leadership. If a leader can make timely and well-considered decisions, they can often lead their team to success. However, if they make poor decisions, their team risks failure.

Sometimes decisions are needed to be made quickly and without the opportunity to consider all alternatives. For example, if caught in a spot forest fire, a person may not be able to sit down and work through each option. Considering possible issues that could arise before participating in a type of activity may save time and lives.

– flexibility

Flexibility adapting at the time to the ever-changing needs of a group. A facilitator must be able to demonstrate flexibility on most outdoor experiences.

The skill level and willingness of the group to challenge themselves plays a major role in determining how each activity will be conducted. Activities may need to be modified before and during the outdoor experience, based on the aim of the activity and the participants’ needs.

Facilitators need to be able to think on their feet, suggest modifications and demonstrate an ability to try different approaches in different contexts, responding imaginatively to what is placed before them.

- understanding strengths and weaknesses
- debate questions such as:
  - how do you control risks when participants are encouraged to push their comfort zone?
  - what ethical considerations confront a leader in balancing challenge and safety?
  - participant readiness

Establishing the participant’s readiness is important for the instructor or facilitator, as it establishes the purpose of the session, what will happen, timing, expectations for behaviour, and offers participants opportunity to ask questions. It also allows the leader to determine physical readiness, such as clothing suitability, injuries, sickness, footwear suitability and the willingness to participate.

An example questionnaire to determine a person’s readiness for physical activity is given below. Other considerations a facilitator may use to determine an individual’s readiness include:

- What prior team activities has the individual participated in?
- Is participation in this activity mandatory or voluntary?
- What is the purpose for the individual participating in this activity?
- What are the individual’s expectations?

A general decision-making process can be used by following seven steps.

1. Determine the issue.
2. Gather the facts and consider their causes.
3. Consider possible alternatives.
4. Compare the pros and cons of each alternative.
5. Select the best option.
6. Explain the decision to those involved to ensure effective implementation.
7. Evaluate the outcome of the decision.
Regular physical activity and exercise is an important component in one's overall health and wellbeing. Physical activity and exercise is safe for most people. However, some people should check with their healthcare professional before starting an exercise program or increasing their physical activity.

Before increasing your level of physical activity and/or exercise, answer the questions below. If you are 15–69 years of age, this test will indicate if you should check with your doctor before you begin. If you are over 69 years of age and you are not used to being very active, check with your doctor. Commonsense is your best guide when you answer these questions. Please read the questions through carefully and answer each one honestly.

Please tick YES or NO for each question:

1. Has your doctor ever said that you have a heart condition?
   - YES  - NO
2. Do you feel pain in your chest when you do physical activity?
   - YES  - NO
3. In the past month, have you had chest pain when not doing physical activity?
   - YES  - NO
4. Do you lose your balance because of dizziness or do you ever lose consciousness?
   - YES  - NO
5. Do you have a bone or joint problem that could be made worse by a change in your physical activity?
   - YES  - NO
6. Is your doctor currently prescribing drugs for a medical condition?
   - YES  - NO
7. Have you participated in this activity previously?
   - YES  - NO

If you answered YES to one or more questions:

- Speak with your doctor BEFORE you start becoming much more physically active or BEFORE you have a fitness assessment.
- You may be able to do any activity you want—as long as you start slowly and build up gradually. Or, you may need to restrict your activities to those that are safe for you. Speak with your doctor about the kinds of activities you wish to participate in and follow their advice.
- If you answered NO to all questions, you can be reasonably sure that you can start becoming more physically active, but begin slowly, then build up gradually. This would be the safest and easiest way to go.
- Take part in a fitness assessment—this is an excellent way to determine your basic fitness level so that you can plan the best way for you to live actively. It is also highly recommended that you have your blood pressure analysed. If your reading is over 140/90, speak with your doctor.
- Delay heavy physical activity:
  - if you are not feeling well because of a temporary illness such as a cold or a fever – wait until you feel better;
  - if you are or may be pregnant—speak with your doctor before you start becoming more active.

Please note: If your health changes so that you then answer YES to any of the above questions, inform the instructor.

NAME _________________________________ DATE __________________
SIGNATURE ________________________________
self-efficacy

Self-efficacy is a person’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce a desired level of performance that will promote a degree of influence over situations or circumstances that affect their life. Self-efficacy determines the way a person may feel or think, how they motivate themselves and their behaviour.

Achieving success at a predetermined goal is the most effective way of creating a strong sense of efficacy. Failure to achieve the goal undermines it, especially before a sense of efficacy is firmly in place. If a person experiences a lot of success easily, then they come to expect quick results. This can cause them to be easily discouraged if they fail. Achieving a healthy sense of efficacy requires a person to overcome obstacles through a sustained effort. They must understand that setbacks and difficulties in pursuing their goals serve to teach them that success usually requires continued effort. Once a person realises that they have what it takes to succeed, they persevere in the face of adversity and quickly bounce back from difficulties and complications.

balancing challenge and safety (challenge by choice, taking risks in bounds of competence)

Many people participate in outdoor recreational activities for the challenge they present and the thrill of completing the activity successfully. Activities such as base jumping give participants a huge rush of adrenalin, however, the safety factor is of high concern. Base jumpers are admired for their courage and ‘no fear’ approach of jumping off an extremely high building with a small parachute and landing onto another roof building.

However, the adrenalin which drives these jumpers makes them seek out something bigger and better to gain the same or higher rush. So looking for the next potential jump site can become more dangerous each time, as jumpers are continually pushing for new challenges and opportunities to challenge themselves with a jump that would be considered impossible. The idea of attempting the jump outweighs the thoughts of injury or possible death.

There are other ways that people can be challenged in a controlled, safe environment. Activities such as indoor rock climbing, a ropes course, mountain biking or completing the gold Duke of Edinburgh award are ways in which individuals can actively achieve personal goals.
Experiences that are unfamiliar and take participants out of their comfort zone can provide opportunities for personal growth. Also, a positive impact can occur when groups undertake challenges such as rock climbing or orienteering. Activities that create levels of positive stress may encourage members to push outside their comfort zone and develop strategies to overcome the challenge.

Sometimes comfort zones are created when an outdoor activity does not go as planned, such as unexpected weather change. It is then that the participant needs to accept the challenge and be ready to follow a new pathway or challenge that they may not have experienced previously.

Alternatively, it is not always the organised challenges, such as white water rafting or climbing a high mountain, that become a significant challenge for an outdoor recreation participant. The challenge of completing a 10-day trek through the wilderness may be pushing through the comfort zone and can be just as rewarding. Group members may not reach moments of high anxiety and stress, but they may experience times when they are required to push past personal issues, such as wanting to go home, sleeping arrangements or preparing to cook outdoors for another night with limited food options.

### Activities

**Activity 1 (Page 243)**
Allocate four students as leaders to role play ONE of the four leadership styles. Split the remainder of the class into four groups and each leader is to address the same issue given by the teacher. For example, instructing a group how to set up a campsite.

**Activity 2 (Page 243)**
You have just been appointed the person in charge of the following situations:

- Hiking with a group of elderly people in the Blue Mountains.
- Riding mountain bikes with a group of friends.
- Canoeing with a group of adults.
- Camping overnight with a group of primary school students.

Identify the type of leadership style that would work best in each situation and briefly outline what you would do while using that style of leadership.

**Activity 3 (Page 248)**
World War Three has just occurred and 10 people find themselves to be the only people left on Earth. They have calculated that within the bunker they’re in, there will not be enough resources for all to survive over the next two years. Therefore some people will be required to leave. The table below lists the survivors.

In pairs, complete the table and determine who should live by ranking the members 1–9 (1 being highest priority). Once completed, discuss as a class and create a class ranking.
Activities cont.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character</th>
<th>REASONS TO KEEP ALIVE</th>
<th>REASONS TO SACRIFICE THEM</th>
<th>PAIR RANKING</th>
<th>GROUP RANKING</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45-year-old female scientist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38-year old male priest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34- and 36-year-old married couple</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>23-year-old single pregnant woman</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>43-year-old male army officer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68-year-old elderly woman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28-year-old male lawyer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>54-year-old male politician</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>32-year-old female doctor</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Reflect on how this activity progressed throughout the lesson.

1. What influenced your decisions?
2. Did anyone emerge as a leader?
3. Was there any conflict?

**Activity 4 (Page 249)**
Debate the following issues in class:

- How do you control risks when participants are encouraged to push their comfort zone?
- What ethical considerations confront a leader in balancing challenge and safety?
1. Critically analyse the suitability of the various leadership styles in different situations.

2. Evaluate the significance of each stage of group dynamics.

3. Describe the characteristics of the four styles used in conflict.

4. Outline the role of the mediator.

5. Using a scenario of your choice discuss the function of the win/win approach.

6. Examine the link between team building, cooperation and trust.

7. Apply the decision-making process to the question: ‘Should I go with my friends bungee jumping this weekend?’

8. Identify the factors that influence a judgment as to whether a person should participate in an outdoor activity.

9. Assess the role self-efficacy plays when participating in outdoor recreational activities.

10. Explain what is meant by the term ‘pushing the comfort zone’.