Group Decision-Making

1. Team Synergy: One Plus One = Eleven

- Concept: The whole is greater than the sum of its parts when diverse skills, perspectives, and energies amplify one another.
- Key Point: Effective collaboration turns individual brilliance into collective wisdom.
- Warning: Without intentional design, synergy can collapse into noise or conformity.
- *"True teams don't add—they multiply."*

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2. Groupthink

- Definition: Desire for consensus overrides realistic appraisal of alternatives.
- Symptoms: Illusion of unanimity, suppression of dissent, rationalization of poor choices.
- Classic Example: Bay of Pigs invasion.
- Antidote: Encourage devil's advocates, structured debate, anonymous input.
- *"If everyone agrees too quickly, nobody is thinking."*

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3. Group Polarization

- Definition: Group discussion pushes members to adopt more extreme positions than they held individually.
- Effect: Conservative groups become more cautious; risk-takers become bolder.
- Reason: Social comparison + persuasive arguments.
- *"Groups don't always settle in the middle—they often run to the edges."*

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4. Shared Information Bias

- Definition: Groups spend disproportionate time discussing information all members already know, neglecting unique or hidden insights.
- Impact: Decisions are less informed, novel solutions get buried.
- Solution: Assign roles (information seeker, devil's advocate), require each member to present unique knowledge first.
- *"Teams love familiar comfort—but breakthroughs live in hidden corners."*

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5. Parkinson's Laws of Group Dynamics

- **Law of Triviality (a.k.a. Bike-Shed Effect):**
  - Groups spend more time on easy, trivial issues (like paint color of a bike shed) than on complex, strategic matters.
  - *"The harder the problem, the shorter the meeting."*
- **Law of Time:**
  - Work (and discussion) expands to fill the time allotted.
  - *"Give a group an hour—they'll use it, whether they need it or not."*

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6. Other Communication Issues

- Status effects: High-status members dominate; low-status voices get ignored.
- Misinterpretation: Ambiguity in language or cultural differences distorts messages.
- Overload: Too much information → decision fatigue.
- Fragmentation: Side conversations and cliques derail coherence.
- *"In groups, how you talk shapes what you decide."*

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7. Group Formation Phases (Tuckman Model)

Tuckman's Five Stages of Group Development

1. **Forming** – Team members come together, polite but uncertain. Roles are unclear, and they rely heavily on the leader for guidance.
   "Testing the waters."
2. **Storming** – Differences surface. Conflicts over ideas, roles, and power appear. This stage feels chaotic but is necessary for growth.
   "Clashing before aligning."
3. **Norming** – Members establish shared norms, trust builds, and collaboration improves. Roles become clearer.
   "Finding rhythm."
4. **Performing** – Team reaches high effectiveness. Energy goes into tasks, not conflicts. Leadership becomes more distributed.
   "Flow state teamwork."
5. **Adjourning** – Team disbands after achieving its goal. Reflection and closure happen.
   "Wrapping up the journey."

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1. Forming: Polite, testing waters, dependent on leader.
2. Storming: Conflicts emerge; roles, power, and processes contested.
3. Norming: Shared norms and cohesion develop.
4. Performing: Team hits flow—productive, synergistic decisions.
5. Adjourning: Wrap-up and reflection.

- *"Teams must weather the storm to perform"*

Core Takeaway Framework for Students

When analyzing group decision-making, always ask:

1. *Is the team amplifying or suppressing individual voices?* (Synergy vs. groupthink/shared bias)
2. *Are we drifting extreme or staying balanced?* (Polarization)
3. *Are we wasting time on trivia or avoiding the real issue?* (Parkinson's Law)
4. *Where is the team on its journey?* (Formation phases)