

A WAY TO THINK ABOUT HOW RELATIONSHIPS AND TEAMS DEVELOP

Remember: 100% Human. 100% International. 100% Human.

Forming

- Beginning stages of a team, group, relationship or family grouping (adding an in-law; blended family; exchange student; adoption; marriage)
- People are on their best behavior and focused on themselves
- Working on orientation towards tasks (how to operate the laundry machines) as well as to one another
- Mature group members model appropriate behavior even at this early phase
- Preventing issues by “pre-communicating” is valuable; this is easy and sensible at the start of hosting

Storming

- Participants form opinions about the character and integrity of the other participants and feel compelled to voice these opinions
- Participants question the actions or decisions of others or the leader
- This phase can be destructive, lower motivation, become upsetting, or destroy the group
- Patience and seeking to understand each other (not tolerance) are crucial in this stage
- Successfully working through disagreements or clashes make the group stronger; build relationships, increase intimacy, create a spirit of cooperation, and make being together more comfortable
- Ideally, members can continue to feel free to share opinions and views without being judged
- Disagreements and personality clashes must be resolved before the group can progress out of this stage
- Some groups re-enter this phase repeatedly and struggle to mostly break out of this negative cycle

Norming

- Sharing a common goal and enjoying the unique personality of one another
- High level of personal ownership in group goals; sacrificially works for success of the team
- Group members accept others and make an effort to move beyond new conflicts
- Watch for signs of reluctance to share controversial ideas or bring up conflict; the group must continue to be a safe place for growth and change
- Set a norm and example for how to bring up frustrations; reverting through stages in micro ways is normal as the group adapts to changes and new challenges

Performing

- This is a final stage of the model not addressed here; I’ve melded most elements into “Norming”

Relational Strategies for Working Through This Process

- Choose to believe the best about the other person until proven otherwise. If “proven otherwise,” go to the person alone and ask for clarification. If this is successful, the problem is solved. If not, consider bringing another person with you. Under all circumstances, don’t “triangulate” (gossip).
- Several personal “heart” questions to consider:
 - Must you fight about it? Can the issue be overlooked? “Water off a duck’s back...”
 - Is it cultural, preference or personality driven?
 - Is the problem really in your own attitude or actions?
 - Clearly define the issue — how have you contributed; how can you adjust in the situation?
 - Is there something for which you need to apologize and make right?
- Might the other person need time to adjust? Will it cause undue “violence” to bring it up now? Can it wait?
- Will addressing it right away help? If it goes too long, will it be harder to bring up later? (Resolving the issue is likely less costly than letting it drag on...)
- Keep issues “right-sized” - avoid exploding something out of proportion by talking about it too much or making too big of deal of it
- Gently help students make cultural adjustments (hygiene, table manners, cleanliness, timeliness, public vs private spaces, personal space, etc)
- Try “could it be” statements (Could it be that you are..... because.....?)
- Bring up issues that the student may be avoiding; be mature and helpful
- Use the conflict as a time to serve one another; this builds trusting relationship
- Treat others as you would want to be treated; as you would want your son or daughter treated in another country as a international student
- Tolerance is a low-reaching goal—seeking to understand and honor one another is the better aim
- Set the example for addressing issues, speaking kindly, confirming understanding, and forgiving
- Build one another up by remembering what is going well—notice and celebrate successes
- Re-affirm care, love, concern, respect or enjoyment of the other person whenever possible
- Try “how’s it going” sessions; return to the agreement to discuss issues
- **Clear, effective communication is key, most of the time. Pursue honesty, kindness, and respect.**