Communicating with your Group Members

Most group conflicts are the result of miscommunication or, in some cases, a total lack of communication. If you can communicate effectively, it will be much easier for your Group Leader to represent your preferences.

These tips should help you communicate in a healthy way with your group members:

**Engage in trust-building, rather than trust-breaking**
- Talk to your group members directly when something is bothering you
- Avoid talking about group members behind their back
- A sure-fire way to break trust is to post messages about a person using social media, even if it doesn’t include a person’s name, your post could set you back in reaching a resolution or solution to your problem.

**Be clear, speak up**
- Communicate your preferences! If you don’t share your thoughts, you can not reasonably expect to have your voice heard, or your perspective advocated for by a leader
- Direct, verbal communication is the best way to be clear about a problem or issue. Posting messages on social media, using email or non-verbal communication and relaying messages through friends can result in misinterpretation and miscommunication.

**You are not a good communicator unless you are listening**
- Communication works two ways. If you are the only one speaking, something is not right. Pause, take a breath, and ask the other person to tell you their perspective.
- Dialogue is different than debate. Dialogue is preferable in a situation where those involved are looking for a resolution to a problem. Whereas debate is adversarial, dialogues allows all parties to have an opportunity to speak, and all parties have an opportunity to listen.

**Look for resolution**
- If there is a conflict, there can be a resolution, but don’t begin with the end in mind. Consider the needs of all parties involved, before you propose a solution.

**Seek to Understand and Honor Others**
- Everyone has different values, experiences, expectations and communication styles. It is easier to solve a problem with a friend than a stranger, so try to find a common ground, or something that you share. If you both find that you are approaching the limit and things are not being resolved, agree to take some time away from the discussion to give you each time to process what is going on. This will also give you each time to develop feedback that is not going to be hurtful and won’t be fueled by anger.