



Leading Group Projects with emotional intelligence

Emotional Intelligence: The ability to perceive, understand and manage emotions in yourself and others (Salovey & Mayer, 1990)

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INTRODUCTION

Group projects rarely fail due to lack of ability, but rather because of the weight of emotion: deadline pressure, efforts that are not equal, defensiveness about feedback. Emotional intelligence is what keeps a team functioning when those pressures arise. Research links EI to stronger teamwork outcomes and, vitally, it can be developed.

Consider a team member who becomes withdrawn and misses a deadline. Each section revisits this moment through a different EI lens.

EI IN TEAMWORK

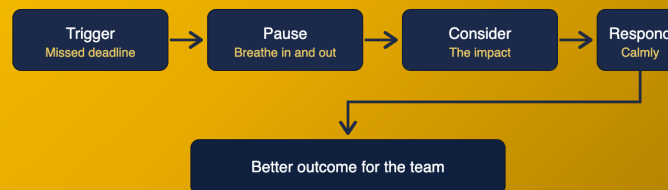
EI helps students work effectively in groups by applying Goleman's (1998) five component to real teamwork situations. Each one addresses a different moment where emotion can either damage or strengthen the team.

- Self-awareness: Stress builds quietly. Noticing it early stops it from affecting everyone else around you.
- Self-regulation: Reacting immediately to a missed deadline rarely ends well. A moment to collect yourself changes the whole conversation.
- Motivation: Group energy drops sometimes. Holding onto your own drive is often what pulls others back in.
- Empathy: A quiet teammate usually has a reason. Asking is always better than assuming.
- Social skills: Most group tension can be talked through. The key is staying calm long enough to start that conversation.

Evidence: teaching EI to student groups reduces social loafing and helps team function under pressure. (Coronado-Maldonado & Benitez-Marquez, 2023)

MANAGING OWN EMOTIONS

When emotions get high during a group project, the first thought might be to go off on your team members, but that is rarely the most effective approach. The most important thing is to pause first before you react. Before typing a message that might come as rude, take a moment to breathe in and out. Use simple mindfulness techniques such as **Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction** (MBSR, Kabat-Zinn, 1990) can help alleviate stress in the moment. Once you are calmer, think about the effect your words will have on your team members, then respond. The short pause you took before responding is what turns a reaction into a response that leads to a better outcome for the team.



We should know that managing emotion protects the relationship but doesn't auto improve the quality and efficiency of the work.

REFERENCES

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UNDERSTANDING OTHERS' EMOTIONS

A team member goes quiet and starts missing deadlines, it is really easy to assume the worst to think they are lazy and unprofessional. But empathy is noticing and asking what is wrong. More often than not, there is something wrong. When you check deeper, it might be a family problem, or they are juggling jobs. Once the group understands that, they can adjust the workload and support them rather than push them away. This is where empathy pays off, by listening, looking from other people's perspective and also giving feedback on their work without attacking the person. You keep communication open, closely knit and working together. Knowing and understanding how others feel is what holds a group together when pressure builds.

CONCLUSION

1. Pause before you post: do not send in anger
2. Ask, don't assume: disengagement usually has a reason
3. Separate the work from the person in feedback
4. Check your own state first: manage yourself before managing others
5. EI is learnable but not a cure-all. It is worth practicing deliberately.