

Roles in Groups

Every member of a group plays a certain role within that group. Some roles relate to the task aspect of the group, while others promote social interaction. A third set of roles are self-centered and can be destructive for the group. Read about the roles group members play and then complete the activity.

Task-Oriented Roles

Researchers Benne and Sheats¹¹ identified several roles which relate to the completion of the group's task:

- Initiator-contributor: Generates new ideas.
- Information-seeker: Asks for information about the task.
- Opinion-seeker: Asks for the input from the group about its values.
- Information-giver: Offers facts or generalization to the group.
- Opinion-giver: States his or her beliefs about a group issue.
- Elaborator: Explains ideas within the group, offers examples to clarify ideas.
- Coordinator: Shows the relationships between ideas.
- Orienter: Shifts the direction of the group's discussion.
- Evaluator-critic: Measures group's actions against some objective standard.
- Energizer: Stimulates the group to a higher level of activity.
- Procedural-technician: Performs logistical functions for the group.
- Recorder: Keeps a record of group actions.

Social Roles

Groups also have members who play certain social roles:

- Encourager: Praises the ideas of others.
- Harmonizer: Mediates differences between group members.
- Compromiser: Moves group to another position that is favored by all group members.
- Gatekeeper/expediter: Keeps communication channels open.
- Standard Setter: Suggests standards or criteria for the



group to achieve.

- Group observer: Keeps records of group activities and uses this information to offer feedback to the group.
- Follower: Goes along with the group and accepts the group's ideas.

Individualistic Roles

These roles place the group member above the group and are destructive to the group.

- Aggressor: Attacks other group members, deflates the status of others, and other aggressive behavior.
- Blocker: Resists movement by the group.
- Recognition seeker: Calls attention to himself or herself.
- Self-confessor: Seeks to disclose nongroup related feelings or opinions.
- Dominator: Asserts control over the group by manipulating the other group members.
- Help seeker: Tries to gain the sympathy of the group.
- Special interest pleader: Uses stereotypes to assert his or her own prejudices.

