

5 DYSFUNCTIONS OF A TEAM

and their smart solutions for busy leaders

DYSFUNCTION 1

Lack of Trust

Teams who demonstrate honesty and sincerity are unguarded in their interactions with one another. They are able to focus on patients and learners, not drama or politics.

- » **LEADERS:** Make it a regular practice to be vulnerable. Consider what stories illustrate a trusting culture and highlight them. Aim for team wins over personal gains.

DYSFUNCTION 2

Aversion to Conflict

Productive ideological conflict—where teams openly debate and disagree—allows for swift resolution and improved solutions, negating opportunities for interpersonal tension, back-channel politics, and poor idea generation.

- » **LEADERS:** Set the strategic tone that healthy, scholarly, and thoughtful debate ensures better outcomes. Encourage all voices to focus on ideas, not people. Be alert to artificial harmony.

DYSFUNCTION 3

Absence of Commitment

While a certain tolerance for ambiguity is necessary in a fast-paced health care environment, “paralysis from analysis” is not. To remain relevant and effective, committed teams make clear decisions for positive, enduring change.

- » **LEADERS:** Avoid focusing on making all team members “happy,” but recognize their thoughts and opinions. Design a plan that has the support and commitment of the team, and moderate fears for bold, risky, or uncharted paths.

DYSFUNCTION 4

Failure of Accountability

Work environments that foster a “go with the flow” culture make it difficult for teams to understand their standards, goals, and processes. Conversely, teams that value feedback and accountability establish shared benchmarks for success and understand each other’s roles and motivators.

- » **LEADERS:** Transparently define and clarify personal responsibilities, deadlines, and progress toward a shared vision. Encourage sharing constructive feedback, and recognize motivators within the team.

DYSFUNCTION 5

Distraction from Collective Goals

Self-preservation, ego, or personal goals can overshadow results. When attention shifts to personal interests instead of collective results, overall success and long-term trust among members suffers.

- » **LEADERS:** Set a precedence for team actions. Failure to prioritize the success and goals of a project communicates a clear message of acceptability for team members to act incongruent to collective goals.



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Additional Resource

Lencioni, P. (2002). *The five dysfunctions of a team: A leadership fable*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.