

As the team leader, you play the lead role in facilitating each volunteer's experience by paying close attention to the dynamics between volunteers. Understanding the personalities of your team and working through underlying issues throughout the trip will help to improve team performance, communication and cohesiveness.

Team dynamics are the processes that occur between volunteers. These dynamics are affected by each volunteer's internal and expressed thoughts and feelings, interpersonal communication and the relationships between volunteers. Team dynamics help you understand how each person's actions make sense in the context of the group and create a positive, safe, inclusive and supportive environment for all volunteers.

Watch out for warning signs of poor group dynamics and preemptively work to solve issues:

Understand the phases of team development, anticipate problems and conflicts that could arise. If you notice a team members' behavior is affecting the group negatively, act quickly to change it, providing feedback and encouraging the volunteer to reflect on how he or she might change their behavior. Discern whether the issue at hand warrants a group chat or one on one discussion.

Remind your team about their mission- to serve future homeowners as they seek to gain strength and stability through shelter.

Use team building exercises and reflection meetings to break down barriers and help everyone get to know each other. Model for others as you lead activities, sharing "safe" personal information about yourself such as valuable lessons you've learned.

Facilitate clear, open communication. If plans change, let volunteers know as soon as possible.

Team Leader Community Ideas

Pre-Trip communication: encourage volunteers to interact with each other even before they leave home by making diverse methods of communication available. Create a trip-specific Facebook group, start a whatsapp or viber chat, hold a skype webinar, or plan an in person meetup if the team is local.

Get them excited: Share photos and videos from previous builds in the same country to help build excitement. Country affiliate websites or YouTube channels are great resources.

Get them involved: Give everyone a role to play so that they feel involved and valued: back-up leader, water monitors, meal organizers, house dedication team representors, reflection leaders.

Avoid cliques: Keep promoting the group by asking people to sit by someone new at dinner or in the van or asking roommates to not pair up during the work day.

Spread yourself around equally: make sure to take the time to chat with and get to know every volunteer. As the Team Leader, your presence and attention makes a difference in each volunteer's experience - put your best foot forward to engage your group.

Frustrated volunteers: don't allow tensions to fester and let one frustrated team member derail the entire group's experience. Make sure you address issues preemptively/as they arise instead of waiting until the end of the week.