

# Factors that impede groups from making good decisions

[Life](#), [Relationships](#)



Almost all human activities; working, playing, relaxing, involve groups. Most of us live out our lives around people and these connected relationships with others have a profound effect on our thoughts and feelings. People have a great need to belong and have a drive for long meaningful relationships. For this reason, psychologists are interested in studying groups and the effects people have on each other and society whilst in a group. Three factors I will be discussing that tend to impede groups from making good decisions are groupthink, group polarization and common knowledge effect.

### **Groupthink**

Groupthink occurs when a desire for group consensus overrides people's desire to express conflicting ideas, points of view or alternate routes. This, in turn, drives out the possibility of good decision making and problem-solving, effectively forcing group members towards one conclusion. The group and its members form an unconscious unity that tends to take irrational actions and overestimate their positions. Groupthink more often occurs in isolated, insular groups with no clear rules for decision making and where the majority have similar backgrounds and standing. One well-known example of how groupthink can impact negatively is the incident of the Challenger Space Shuttle. Engineers of the 1986 Challenger Space Shuttle were aware of faulty parts well before they were due to take off but proceeded with the mission as they did not want negative press, this decision resulted in the deaths of all seven crew members.

**Group polarization**

Groupthink and Group polarization are very similar and often go hand in hand when groups form. Group polarization is a phenomenon where decision and opinions of individuals in a group become exaggerated and extreme, more than their actual beliefs. When researchers studied groups they found that many groups made more extreme decisions after they had had a group interaction. If the majority of members feel taking an exaggerated, extreme approach is more acceptable the group will shift to an agreement and become riskier despite what their personal views are. An example of Group polarization in modern day would be Pepsi's 2017 advert starring Kendall Jenner. The celebrity was instantly flooded with insults online claiming racial privilege, so much so that people who have previously no care for racism activism rallied together against her and Pepsi. Research has shown people are more honest and are to be shown more adversely when part of an anonymous platform and are unlikely to see each other face to face. Group polarization is a likely factor in articles and media online going viral.

**Common knowledge effect**

One of the main problems affecting groups is called the common knowledge effect. This has been heavily researched and shows information that a group of people know before discussions, has a heavier influence on decisions made that information not known prior. Often groups will concentrate time on common knowledge that a few of the members have rather than information that has not been shared yet, this could produce a negative outcome if the unshared information is important to the discussion. One of the ways researchers have studied the effects of common knowledge effect

is by using the 'hidden profile task'. In this task the group members are lead to believe option A is the best option, this is information known to many of the group members, but in fact, option B is the better option but this information is only known by individual group members and is not common knowledge amongst the group. As a result, the group will focus on the factors of Option A and never discuss any of its drawbacks, a consequence to this working process is groups often perform poorly when working on problems with solutions not known by the majority and can only be known by individual information sharing.