

Collaborating well and enthusiastically

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The TCI model

Working together means doing things together: getting things done, achieving things, making things happen. Any type of collaboration is determined by three “factors”: the individuals (“I”), the group (“WE”) and the topic being worked on. The three factors are balanced in effective cooperation, without neglecting any of them. The concept of theme-centred interaction (TCI according to Ruth Cohn et al.) helps to reflect on the collaboration and to change it if necessary.

“I”

Each individual in a team contributes their personality, individual expectations, needs, know-how and skills: it is not only me, but others as well. As a member of a team, I am aware of this and behave accordingly.

For this reason, we must sometimes put our own concerns or needs aside in favour of the work to be done in the team and on the topic.

Effective collaboration includes reflection on one’s own behaviour and the willingness to work on one’s own shortcomings if necessary.

“WE”

Working well together is based on having good relationships with each other, and that is something that requires effort.

It is important to listen well to each other, to recognise and respect each other’s strengths and needs as well as to see them as an asset. Collaboration necessitates tolerance and the knowledge that you complement each other and can do and achieve more together. A well-functioning group is much stronger than many different individuals.

Most people enjoy working together when they can get things done or make a difference. Learning through doing, reflecting and making necessary adjustments as a group is experienced as meaningful.

TOPIC/OBJECTIVE

Taking time to talk about the motivation, intention and drive of each individual, what they want to achieve together (purpose), is important. Explicit, that is, expressed and, if necessary, written agreements are helpful.

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION

- Working in a team is to be fun! We get involved, show humour, laugh with each other, discuss and celebrate successes.
- We trust each other and can rely on each other.
- We learn together by doing, reflecting and adapting.
- We visualise our work (e.g. using flip charts, Post-its or, digitally, with Trello, Miroboard, etc., see www.vitaminb-e.ch/digital)
- We make explicit agreements.
- We complete tasks and then turn to new ones.
- Each person alternates between different roles: sometimes I am a participant, sometimes a facilitator, sometimes I lead the team.
- Common arrangements (“rules of the game”) support us in our work, such as:
 - Everyone contributes what is most meaningful, what they are good at and what they like to do.
 - We use our strengths for each other and support each other.
 - We cede the stage to each other and listen more than we speak.
 - We accept each other’s weaknesses and help each other grow.
 - We deal with change and uncertainty as a team and act on courage, not fear.
 - We are allowed to make mistakes, because we are experimenting.

TIPS FOR INTERESTING FORMATS OF DIALOGUE

We usually just have a good old-fashioned meeting in order to share ideas, with an agenda, a person chairing the meeting and with many tasks arising from each agenda item to be completed by the next meeting. However, other formats of dialogue can complement conventional meetings optimally or even replace them in the long run.

- **Check-in:** We regularly have short exchanges between meetings about the progress of the tasks and check if anyone needs support. Ideally online, duration 15–30 minutes.
- **“Get-it-done” session:** We meet to work on tasks together. Everything works better when we work together. For example, preparing a budget, handling shipping, de-cluttering the archive, etc. Online or on site, duration 2 hours or longer.
- **Workshop:** We meet to develop ideas and/or narrow down and make decisions together. Online or on site, duration 2-4 hours.
- **Review and debriefing:** We meet after the completion of a (sub-)project, for an exchange about what we have learned and want to adapt for future projects. Online or on site, duration at least one hour.

- **One-on-one:** We meet with a person from the team to get to know each other (even) better. In doing so, we share observations, proposals and wishes with each other. Online or on site, 30 minutes structured approach, with the remainder freestyle.

Additional material on the topic

Work aids: www.vitaminb-e.ch/tools/work-aids

- Work aid: Digital collaboration
- Work aid: Collaborative decisions
- Work aid: Kanban

Website: www.vitaminb-e.ch/digital

- Digital tools for collaboration