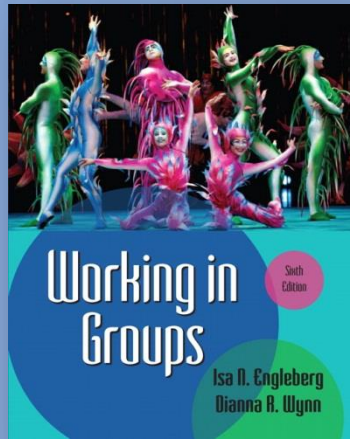


# Working in Groups *6<sup>th</sup> edition*



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# Structured and Creative Problem Solving in Groups

❧ Chapter Nine ❧

# Decision Making and Problem Solving

## Problem Solving

- A process in which groups analyze a problem and develop a plan of action for solving the problem or reducing its harmful effects

## Decision Making

- Passing judgment on an issue under consideration
- The act of reaching a conclusion

# Decision-Making Methods

## Voting

- A majority or two-thirds support a group decision

## Consensus

- All group members agree to support a group decision

## Authority Rule

- A single person or someone outside the group makes the final decision, with or without recommendations from the group

# Voting

**Voting** works best when:

- The group is pressed for time.
- The issue is not highly controversial.
- \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_.

# Consensus Guidelines

- Listen carefully to others.
- Don't change your mind to avoid conflict or to reach a quick decision.
- Welcome differences of opinion.
- Avoid agreeing to a *false consensus*.
- \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_.

# Match the Type of Question

## **A. Question of Fact**

Is it true, did it happen, what was the cause?

## **B. Question of Conjecture**

Will it happen?

## **C. Question of Value**

Is it right, moral, good?

## **D. Question of Policy**

What should be done?

- \_\_\_ Should the U.S. provide healthcare for all citizens?
- \_\_\_ How many Americans lack health insurance?
- \_\_\_ Will stem cell research help cure diseases?
- \_\_\_ Is the Canadian health care system better than the U.S. system?

# PowerPoint Quiz

“Should our company assist employees with their child care needs?” asks a question of

- a) policy.
- b) procedure.
- c) fact.
- d) conjecture.
- e) value.



# Decision-Making Styles

## Rational

“I’ve carefully considered all the issues.”

## Intuitive

“It feels like the right thing to do.”

## Dependent

“If you think it’s okay, then I’ll do it.”

## Avoidant

“I can’t deal with this right now.”

## Spontaneous

“Let’s do it now and worry about the consequences later.”

# Benefits of Structured Procedures

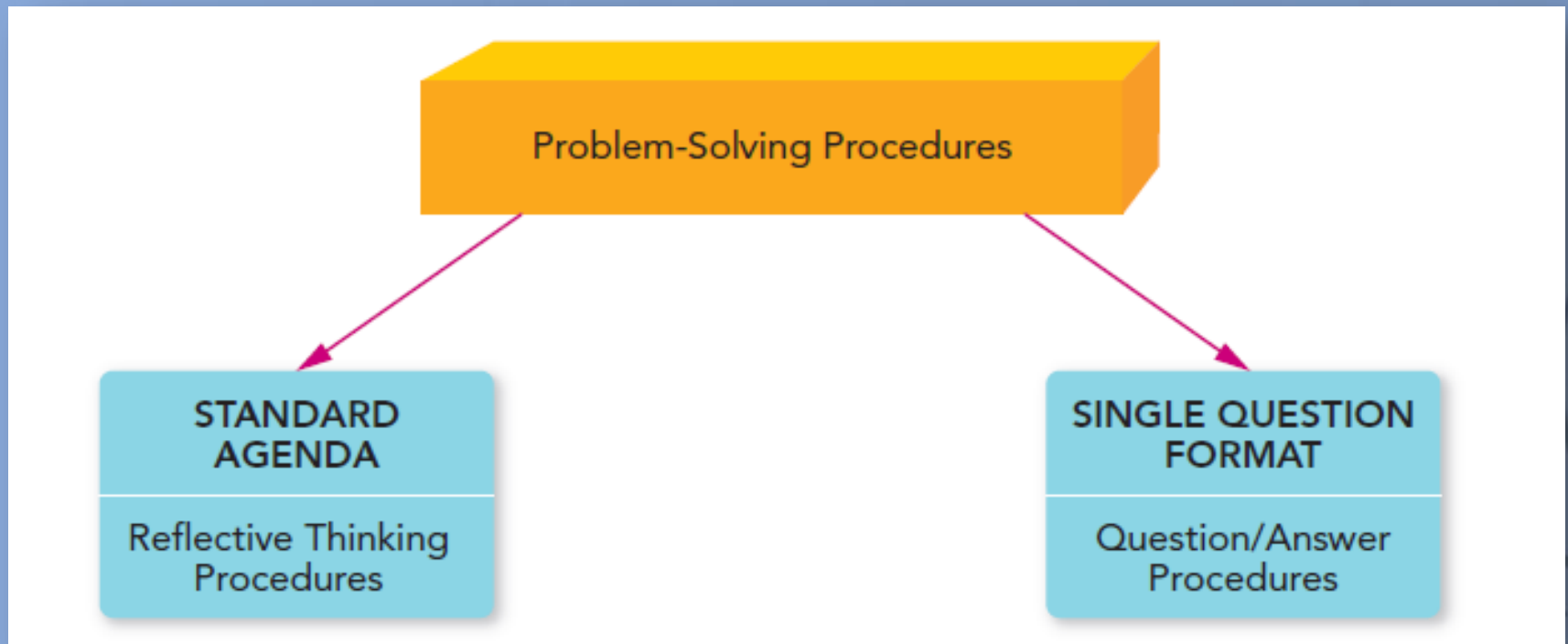
Balanced  
Participation

Effective Conflict  
Resolution

Clear  
Organization

Group  
Empowerment

# Problem Solving Models



# The Standard Agenda



# The Functional Perspective

Effective **preparation** requires that members:

- are interested and energetic.
- research and use quality information.
- select an appropriate procedure.

# The Functional Perspective

Effective **procedures** require that members:

- understand the issues.
- agree upon solution criteria.
- identify possible solutions.
- review pros and cons.
- select the solution.

# Single Question Format

Focuses on a single question that, if carefully analyzed and responsibly answered, should provide a solution

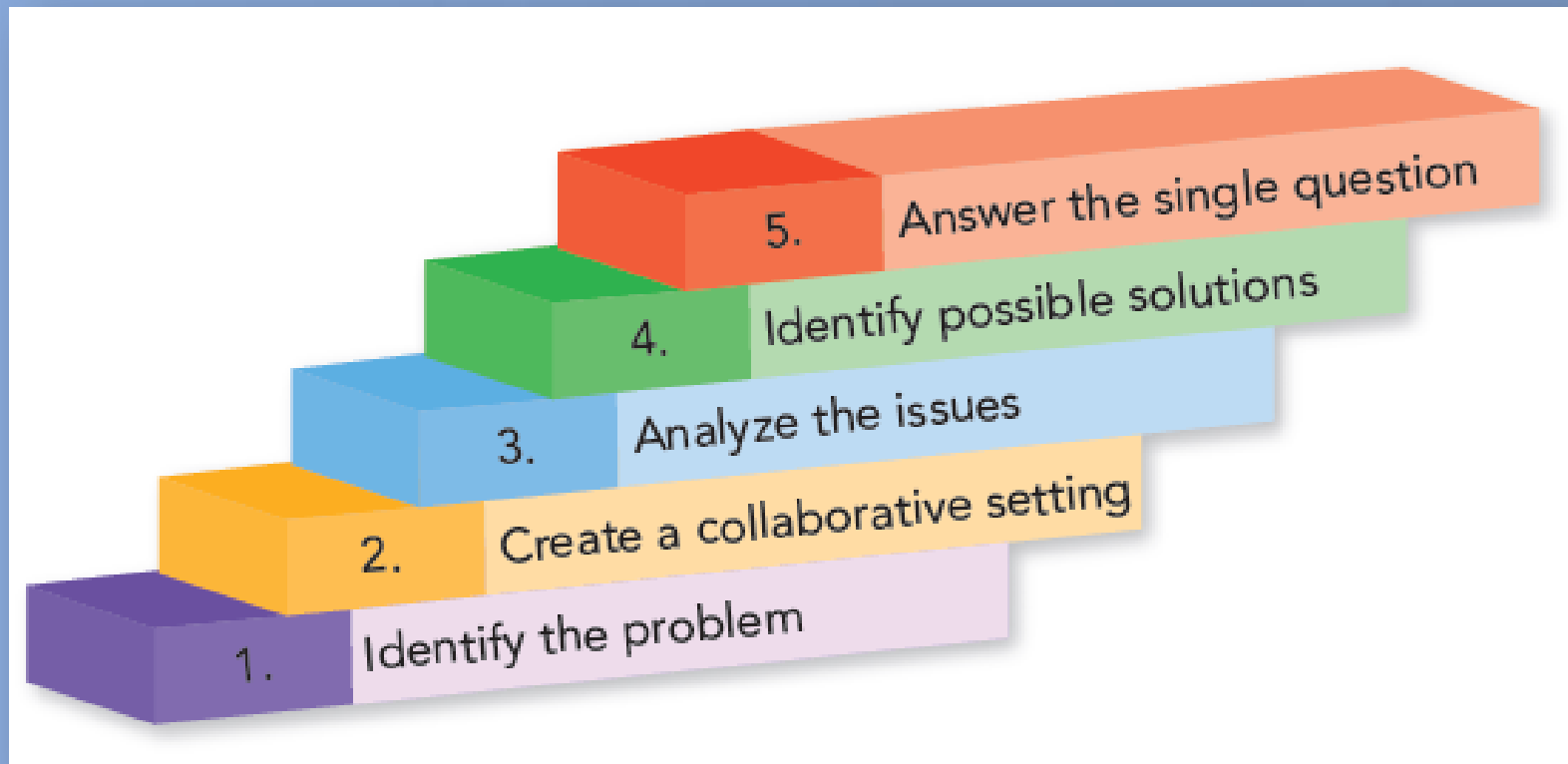
# The Creative Process

The nonjudgmental process of searching for, separating, and connecting unrelated ideas and elements

The process of combining these unrelated elements into new ideas



# Single Question Format



# Creative Methods

Creative Problem-Solving Methods

```
graph TD; A[Creative Problem-Solving Methods] --> B[Brainstorming for Generating Ideas]; A --> C[Nominal Group Technique (NGT) for Reaching a Decision]; A --> D[Decreasing Options Technique (DOT) for Refining Ideas];
```

Brainstorming for  
Generating Ideas

Nominal Group  
Technique (NGT) for  
Reaching a Decision

Decreasing Options  
Technique (DOT)  
for Refining Ideas

# Brainstorming

can generate many ideas  
in a short period of time.

works best when members  
are comfortable with a  
freewheeling process.

can fail if members are  
self-conscious and  
sensitive to implied  
criticism.

can enhance creativity and  
produce many good ideas.

# Brainstorming Guidelines

## A. Sharpen the Focus

- ✓ State the problem clearly.
- ✓ Give members time to think before beginning.

## B. For All to See

- ✓ Assign someone to write down the group's ideas.



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## C. Number the Ideas



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# Nominal Group Technique (NGT)

- Maximizes participation while minimizing interpersonal problems associated with group interaction
- At first, members work individually rather than collectively.
- Two NGT phases:
  - Idea Generation
  - Idea Evaluation and Voting

# NGT: Idea Generation Phase

1. Each member writes ideas on paper.
2. Structured sharing of ideas takes place.
3. Recorder writes all ideas on flip chart.
4. Round-robin listing continues until members have no further ideas to share.

# NGT: Evaluation and Voting Phase

1. Discussion is structured so that each idea receives attention before voting.
2. Members state or clarify support and nonsupport of each idea.
3. Independent voting by ranking ideas.
4. Group decision is a mathematically pooled outcome of individual votes.

# Decreasing Options Technique (The DOT Method)

- Helps groups reduce and refine a large number of suggestions into a manageable number of ideas
- Basic Steps:
  1. Generate Ideas
  2. Post Ideas
  3. Sort Ideas
  4. Dot the Ideas



# When to Use DOT

## Use DOT when the group . . .

- is so large that a discussion of many ideas is unworkable.
- has generated many competing ideas.
- wants everyone to contribute.
- wants to restrain dominant members from exerting too much influence.
- lacks time to discuss multiple or controversial ideas.

# Ways to Enhance Group Creativity

- A. Control judgment
- B. Encourage innovation
- C. Ask “What If?”
- D. Use metaphors

- \_\_\_ Minimizes negative responses to new ideas
- \_\_\_ Encourages members to think outside the box
- \_\_\_ Discourages preconceived notions about what can and can't be done
- \_\_\_ Forces group members to look at a problem in new and creative ways

# Bogging Down or Creative Innovation

A. Inertia

B. Instruction

C. Imitation

D. Innovation

\_\_\_ Someone showed us how to do it.

\_\_\_ We have developed a new way to do it

\_\_\_ We've seen how it's done.

\_\_\_ We've done it before.

# Problem-Solving Realities

- Factors affecting the outcome of group decisions:
  - Politics
  - Preexisting preferences
  - Power
- Use an established decision-making procedure to minimize these factors.

# Creative Process Stages

A. Investigation

B. Imagination

C. Incubation

D. Insight

- \_\_\_ Generate and discuss unusual ideas.
- \_\_\_ Let imaginative ideas percolate and recombine in new ways.
- \_\_\_ The “Aha!” moment occurs and a new solution emerges.
- \_\_\_ Gather information and analyze the problem.

# Brainstorming Guidelines

## D. Encourage Creativity



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## E. All Input, No Put Down



Don't analyze, oppose, or praise the ideas.



Keep ideas coming; evaluate after brainstorming.

## F. Build and Jump



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# PowerPoint Quiz

All of the following are guidelines for effective brainstorming EXCEPT:

- a) Evaluate ideas only at the end.
- b) Post the ideas for all to see.
- c) Wait awhile for group members to think before starting to brainstorm.
- d) Avoid combining ideas.